

War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Success Into Political Victory

Nadia Schadlow (Georgetown University Press, 2017), 321 pp., notes, bibliography, index.

Reviewed by Clayton Laurie

Dr. Nadia Schadlow, the current Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Strategy on the National Security Council, has written a seminal history that should be required reading for every military commander, intelligence officer, and political leader involved in military affairs or the projection of US military force abroad. Schadlow addresses “the challenge of governance operations—the military and political activities undertaken by military forces to establish and institutionalize desired political order during and following the combat phase of war.” (x) “Governance operations,” she maintains, “are central to strategic success in war” (272) and that when done well, as in the cases of Germany, Japan, Italy, and South Korea between 1943 and 1953, lasting strategic success has resulted. “When done poorly,” or not at all, “the failure to consolidate gains resulted in protracted conflicts, increased costs, higher casualties, and the loss of public support for the effort,” (272) with Afghanistan since 2001 and Iraq since 2003 serving as the most salient examples.

What to do after firing the last shot is a situation the nation has repeatedly faced, but one where there “has been a persistent reluctance, rooted in history and civil military relations, to prepare and train adequately for the political dimensions of war.” (x) As Schadlow demonstrates in this well-written, readable, and thoroughly researched history, military victories obtained at great cost in lives and treasure are often squandered in disappointing post-combat outcomes as soldiers, diplomats, and politicians fail to consolidate victories into stable postwar states—in effect, winning the war and losing the peace. As seen in Iraq and Afghanistan today, decisive military conflicts ended with continuing instability and chaos, forestalling a permanent peace and undercutting—if not entirely negating—the reasons why the nation went to war in the first place. As this book makes clear, this has not always been the case, and if all concerned were aware of and learned from our history, it would never occur again.

Schadlow correctly maintains that considerations of postwar military governance should form a major portion

of any war plan and receive as much attention as combat operations. Yet it has been haphazard at best, especially in the post-Cold War era, and today receives little if any attention. Schadlow emphasizes quite correctly that governance duties should always fall to the US Army as the only service “capable of decisively acquiring, holding, and stabilizing territory in sufficient scale for ample duration to provide a foundation for a transition to the reestablishment of political order.” (14) Army accomplishments in World War II would prove the point. Starting in 1940, the US Army acquired, trained, equipped, clothed, fed, transported, and sustained 10 million American men and women in uniform around the globe—in and of itself a herculean effort—prior to engaging in combat defeating Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan. The knowledge, expertise, and abilities to accomplish this mission would make the Army a natural, if not sole, force capable of reconstructing these former adversary nations in the postwar period. The Army had the personnel, organizational structure, logistics, equipment, discipline, accountability, and expertise to accomplish a multitude of non-combat missions. Indeed, in its 242-year history the Army has performed hundreds, if not thousands, of *missions other than war* domestically and internationally—non-combat duties such as humanitarian relief, in education and medical fields, to firefighting, riot control, territorial governance, constabulary and law enforcement, to interventions in labor-management disputes. The fact that the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps and wartime Manhattan Atomic Bomb Project were under US Army administration attests to this ability for effective management. Yet leaders, civilian and military, appear ignorant of this history. Schadlow quotes former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, who, referring to Iraq and Afghanistan, “admitted that there did not appear to be a sustainable vision of how to address the practical problems of reconstruction,” but then declared, “The US military was in Iraq to fight a war. They are not USAID. That’s not their role.” (ix, 273)

Schadlow emphasizes that Americans have traditionally displayed a denial syndrome concerning soldiers as civil rulers. First among the factors, she suggests,

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is age-old anti-militarism and the never-ending debate over the role of the military in a democracy dating to the Republic's founding. This raises concerns that letting soldiers govern, even if abroad, may risk a blurring of civil-military roles with soldiers thinking that what worked overseas would also work best at home, however absurd concerns of a military coup d'état are. Second, Americans have traditionally harbored anti-colonial, anti-imperialist attitudes and have a deep ambivalence about governing others—in today's parlance, anything approaching "nation building," where we foist our liberal-democratic ways, culture, and values on other nations. To most, "military government was . . . a repulsive notion, associated with imperialism, dollar diplomacy, and other aspects of our behavior we had abandoned." (17) Third, Schadlow notes the prejudice holding that rebuilding civilian societies is viewed as inherently a civilian responsibility. Finally, the traditional view of war has always emphasized "the centrality of battle and the defeat of the enemy over the achievement of broader strategic outcomes." (18)

Starting with the Mexican-American War and followed with examinations of the post US Civil War, Spanish-American War [in the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico], and the occupation of the Rhineland, Schadlow's account highlights how US Army soldiers have proven effective in establishing stable governments and societies. Throughout, the Army accomplished much with little or no guidance from diplomatic or political Washington and with little assistance beyond military funding and resources already available. The post-World War II occupation of Germany and Japan and a brief period of military government in Italy and South Korea stand as exemplars of US Army governance. The Army published its first field manual on military government in June 1940 and established a school of military government in early 1942 to train soldiers as civil administrators. In addition, the Army created a staff-level G-5 Civil Affairs organization attached to supreme headquarters staffs to exercise "military government as an instrument of American policy and as an instrument for the consolidation of political order" (95) in liberated areas even as combat continued. After hostilities, soldiers governed indirectly through surviving institutions if they still existed, or directly if institutions did not exist or were politically or ideologically compromised. The Army reconstituted governments, rewrote laws and constitutions, organized political parties, selected candidates, held elections, and pulled societies back from catastrophe. US Army government lasted just five years in West Germany, two years in Italy, and eight years in Japan, but during that time the Army restored

civil, political, economic, medical, agricultural, cultural, and educational institutions so effectively that it allowed former enemies to rapidly become peaceful self-governing nations. In the process, Schadlow maintains, "through reconstruction of governments in Italy, Germany, Japan, and South Korea the Army served as a critical instrument of political change as well as a key instrument for shifting the strategic landscape to favor US interests during the Cold War." (102) Skillful military governance turned former enemies into friends, and then like-minded enduring allies.

From South Korea, Schadlow skips to the relatively successful Cold War military governance operations in the Dominican Republic in 1965 and Panama in 1989. She notes a deterioration in capabilities during this era attributed to the active US Army moving military governance duties to the Army Reserve, starting in 1951. Military governance then became a reserve specialty dominated by civilians who served part-time when needed, removed from the active combat force. In addition, in an era of limited wars, the mission then moved to the Special Forces in 1987 becoming a counterinsurgency tool, no longer associated with conventional military operations. As Schadlow notes, military governance left the active military mindset by the end of the Cold War. This forgetfulness, or lack of living institutional memory, or ignorance of the history, resulted in a neglect of planning that caught up with the United States with disastrous consequences in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Oddly and inexplicably, Schadlow skips the Vietnam War. This historian would suggest that every failure of military governance that we see today first appeared in the Republic of South Vietnam over a half century ago. The deterioration is not just a post-Cold War phenomenon as implied here. US military commanders and policymakers alike, then as now, had to deal with a weak, uncooperative, corrupt, inefficient, and divided indigenous government, a fence-riding South Vietnamese population, a poorly trained and led, ineffective indigenous military, and nationwide combat operations where territorial control was fleeting and adversaries in off-limits sanctuaries received abundant flows of outside help. US civilian and military authorities remained divided over courses of action and neither provided useful overall guidance. There was no unity of effort, central planning, or centralized control. All witnessed the grotesque proliferation of American and international civilian and military organizations in the war zone (some 60 of which we would term NGOs today—half of them American), operating

according to their own goals, rules of engagement, and plans. The wholesale flight from anything that smacked of military occupation, military governance, or nation-building and the military's hesitancy to engage in such endeavors most everywhere thereafter started here, not after 9/11. It was not coincidental that President Lyndon Johnson demanded that General William Westmoreland consolidate all non-combat entities and activities into the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) organization under military guidance in 1967, first under former CIA officer Robert Komer and then under CIA's William Colby in 1968. Even then, except for the Phoenix Program, most CORDS efforts to fight "the other war" in South Vietnam proved temporarily effective at best, and stabilization efforts—the "winning hearts and minds"—came too little and too late to stave off defeat in 1975.

While Schadlow accurately describes the stultifying effect of moving civil affairs and military governance from the active Army to the reserves and Special Forces, she does not address the larger and far more important impact of the Army's transition from a conscript to an all-volunteer force. US Army personnel numbers shrank dramatically from a 1968 high of 1.6 million to a professional force of 771,000 in 1978, and 491,000 in 1997. All soldiers in the new, smaller, albeit more technically enabled and well-equipped professional force were warfighters—and had to be. Although tactical troops were the main players in all of the most successful examples of military governance that Schadlow describes, the reduction of the Army to several hundred thousand from the draft-era millions meant that fewer soldiers were available for stability operations either short- or long-term. The draftee US Army could permanently garrison 300,000 soldiers in West Germany from 1949 to 1990, for example, as the manpower could be made available—an impossible feat with today's active force of 460,000.

In spite of these omissions, Schadlow has thoroughly researched US Army records available at the National Archives, and examined the existing secondary literature, both US Army official histories and other government and academic publications—an all-too-rare occurrence for many writing history today, even among professional historians. The discursive endnotes are useful and informative, and the bibliography is extensive. The documentation and bibliography are useful guides for any soldier,

policymaker, or intelligence officer who wants to learn more and what to consider, should they become involved in future war-planning.

Schadlow's final chapter entitled "Afghanistan and Iraq: Lessons Ignored" is painful to read when considering that most failures seen today were utterly avoidable if only those in charge knew their history and acted on the clear lessons of the past. Her recommendations, based on historical evidence and endorsed by this historian, number five. First, governance is not separate from war. Politicians "must accept" that the political dimension is indispensable "across the full spectrum of war" and plan accordingly—not in an ad hoc, fragmentary manner when a crisis or the unexpected arises. (273) Second, all concerned must grasp the centrality of politics to war and that "unity of command is essential to operational and strategic success." (274) Third, "although civilians formulate and drive policy, they must give the Army operational control over governance operations" (274) and recognize that even if civilian entities consider the job theirs, they always lack the personnel, scale, logistics, communications, and experience managing large institutions, especially in newly liberated areas behind the front line. Fourth, wars are not won from afar. Conventional forces are necessary to hold, build, and govern. The post-9/11 emphasis on counterterrorism—drones and Special Operations Forces—Schadlow notes, is the strategic equivalent of precision bombing in World War II—grown of the desire to win quickly, cleanly, with limited human involvement or loss. This way of war can kill individuals and degrade organizational levels but it never has, and can never have, lasting strategic effects on its own. It does not hold territory, win populations, or control resources. Finally, and as much as today's warfighter may agree with former Defense Secretary Panetta that the US Army is not USAID, the US military must have some standing capabilities and organizations that are prepared to conduct governance tasks within the active duty force and with sufficient influence to affect war planning at the outset.

As we continue to search for a solution to this nation's longest wars, and avoid future such quagmires, it is hoped that Schadlow's *War and the Art of Governance* will be a well-worn, much-read, permanent addition to the bookshelf of every US soldier, politician, and intelligence officer.



