



War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success into Political Victory by Nadia Schadlow.

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Review by Ian Roxborough, Stony Brook University (ian.roxborough@stonybrook.edu).

Nadia Schadlow, a well-connected Washington policy analyst, has worked in the Pentagon and is currently a senior program officer at the Smith Richardson Foundation. *War and the Art of Governance* is aimed at national security policymakers. Its thesis is that combat success must be followed by sensible post-conflict policies in order to achieve desired political outcomes. The author's perceptive review of relevant examples in US military history shows that generations of political and military leaders have not grasped this essential truth. Schadlow calls this failure to learn from the past "the American denial syndrome." It is perhaps heartening that Secretary of Defense Gen. James Mattis endorses her book as a "critically crafted must read.... Dr. Schadlow [he goes on] lays out the post-combat challenges no amount of denial will excuse, persuasively charting what history tells us is required for our military victories to achieve a better peace" (jacket blurb).

Drawing on an impressive number of primary sources, this meticulously researched book offers a critical survey of US Army efforts in the sphere of postwar military government from the Mexican-American War (1846-48) up to the twenty-first-century wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of the author's historical case-studies concentrates on a period when the Army was responsible for establishing and running the government of an occupied territory until legitimate power could be transferred to civilian authorities. The success or failure of a military intervention is gauged according to the efficiency of the Army's postwar administration of a given territory.

Schadlow's consistently tight analytic focus leaves little space for discussion of the larger political goals of any given military mission, typically a few sentences at most. For example, the United States fought both world wars, at least in part, to achieve a lasting peace and prevent another general war in the future. Movement toward such broad political goals is difficult to evaluate, as is the role of Army governance operations in that process. Schadlow instead confines herself to assessing relatively short-term postwar efforts to restore civilian governments.

The central question for Schadlow is "why has the US military been so resistant to learning the right lessons?" Supreme in its assigned function—fighting wars—why can it not do as well in support and stability, governance, state-building, and peacekeeping operations? Schadlow repeats the Army mantra that we must learn the right lessons from past wars, as if the central problem were purely cognitive. But surely military officials' promises to learn better next time are a *symptom* of the very denial she so convincingly describes. Still, she remains an optimist:

The Army has made progress towards fundamentally rethinking the role of governance operations in war. This progress has occurred at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.... Its manual *Stability Operations* ... explains that restoring basic order and rebuilding institutions provides the foundations for "enduring peace and stability." ... A goal [of Army doctrine] is to replace the flawed phrase "post-war" with the concept of consolidation and the need to support combat gains with political and economic measures that lead to the accomplishment of desired aims. (279)

The true test will come in practice, not in the subtle phrasing of doctrine manuals.

From a sociological perspective, the military's failure to learn stems from the nature of organizations as such. Most are resistant to change, preferring to do things as they always have, within the potentials of their core competencies—in the case of the military, warfighting. This brings us to Schadlow's primary argument: for more than a century, the US Army has routinely failed to learn and adapt when it comes to governance. We may surmise that the solution is not a purely cognitive one.

The author increasingly emphasizes unity of command as a prerequisite for success in military governance, a sort of *deus ex machina*, invoked to solve all difficulties. But politics (including that of military coalitions) is seldom amenable to top-down solutions. It requires negotiation, deal-making, and compromise; it can also entail a certain measure of inefficiency and even irrationality. Politics concerns the management of complex issues and conflicts, with little prospect of reaching definitive "solutions" that might appeal to bureaucrats and soldiers the world over. Policymakers often disagree about war aims and the best means to achieve them within the constraints of all manner of extraneous considerations. By training, however, military commanders, understandably, dislike this sort of messiness.

US planning for the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan did not, for the most part, connect combat requirements with desired political end states. Throughout both conflicts, policy disagreements over the political outcomes created organizational disarray and uncertainty, weakening US and allied influence over the course of events. (220)

Schadlow then waves her magic wand: unity of command will shrink such organizational problems to manageable proportions.

Effective military government is a necessary but not sufficient condition for political success in a postwar context. Realizing broader war aims requires astute foreign policy decision-making, particularly choosing the right fights and avoiding those that are unnecessary or unwinnable given available resources and political commitments. After-conflict reconstruction may demand major political or economic initiatives and, on a long-term basis, more substantial social engineering than most (especially military) policymakers can stomach.

Schadlow provides a detailed account of the experiences specifically of the US Army. One wishes she had extended her purview to those of the Marine Corps in running, for instance, Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic during the period of the banana wars. Have the Marine Corps and the Army responded differently to governance tasks? For that matter, is the "denial syndrome" a purely American phenomenon? What have other countries been able to accomplish in this regard? Is the problem of aligning military operations with political goals unique to the US Army? Or are the ideas about war and military "victory" that Schadlow criticizes deeply embedded in American culture generally? If so, then doctrinal reform is likely to have little effect.

Nadia Schadlow describes a very real problem, but her exclusive preoccupation with military government, unity of command, and learning the right lessons leads her to the questionable conclusion that post-conflict governance operations should be entrusted to the military: "This book has described the denial syndrome as fundamentally a problem of civil-military relations.... Civilians ... must give the army operational control over governance operations in war" (275).

Not everyone will agree with its author's analysis of the causes and remedies of the "American denial syndrome," but *War and the Art of Governance* is a thought-provoking and constructive addition to the debate over postwar governance policies.