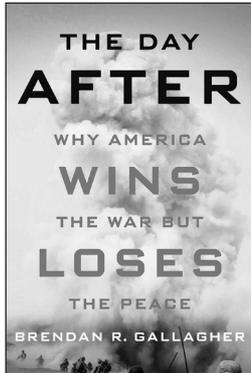


# Book Review



**The Day After:  
Why America Wins the War but Loses the Peace**  
*by Brendan R. Gallagher*

Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2019. 308 pp.

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The nation's entire cadre of junior and senior leaders have grown up in an era where the United States has enjoyed unequivocal military dominance on the battlefield, but failed to win the peace. In the three decades since the end of the Cold War, all four military services have known both sporadic low intensity conflicts and the nation's longest war in our history. As President George W. Bush declared "mission accomplished" for major combat operations in Iraq on May 1, 2003, aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), the insurgency was just getting started. The Global War on Terrorism has been going on for eighteen years now, a victim of poor postwar planning, according to Army officer Brendan Gallagher. Bringing his experience on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq to bear in a strategic level analysis of post-conflict outcomes, Gallagher proposes that the United States fails routinely in Phase IV operations due to poor efforts at three crucial tasks: 1) defining a clear, achievable political goal; 2) adequately anticipating and attempting to mitigate the foreseeable postwar obstacles; and 3) aligning the correct resources to achieve the desired end state.<sup>1</sup> While there is no correct answer to these three questions, thorough consideration of these tasks, couched in historical precedents and outcomes, will significantly improve postwar outcomes.

Gallagher analyzes the three strategic questions through the lens of four case studies: Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, with Kosovo elevated to the benchmark against which the others are measured. While Kosovo was certainly not perfect, the political outcomes in the two decades since combat operations ceased show a high degree of stability, low rates of recidivism, and the eventual Kosovar declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008. Gallagher deftly weaves the narratives, interleaving personal experiences on the ground in two of the case studies, showing where the processes have broken down. Overall, Gallagher returns again and again to the tension between the Department of State, Department of Defense, and the National Security Council as the source of many of the problems. Their collective failure to work coherently and effectively together significantly undermined the definition of the desired political objectives in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In Libya, President Obama, Gallagher asserts, was well aware of the poor postwar planning for Iraq and Afghanistan and actively sought to repeat the same mistakes in Libya.

Yet similar issues at the senior levels of the Obama administration and the sudden, somewhat unintentional death of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 resulted in very muddy objectives and rapid mission creep for which they were unprepared.

Gallagher spends the majority of his analysis looking at the interagency. The repeal of Clinton-era Presidential Decision Directive 56 by President Bush, he claims, shunted the National Security Council into a backwater power within the Cabinet. The National Security Council, having learned its lessons in the mid-1990s during Rwanda, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, was a well-functioning organization going into the Kosovo operation in 1999. The acknowledgement of the administration's history and the willingness of the usually dominant Department of Defense to let Secretary of State Madeline Albright take the lead paved the way for a superior postwar outcome in Kosovo. Heavy reliance on the United Nations for a postwar solution was a key highlight that Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya lacked. Even though partner nations were involved in all the conflicts that Gallagher surveys, the depth of support from UN member nations and the willingness to conduct sanctioned peacekeeping operations there was a key sign of effectiveness in Kosovo. Gallagher offers a basic quantitative analysis of each of the operations and shows that, per person, Kosovo commanded far higher dollars and peacekeepers per person than any of the other conflicts surveyed—by a wide margin. In Iraq, Army General Eric Shinseki's premonition of the conflict requiring half a million troops or more was born out by the time President Bush ordered the surge. Yet even at the peak of the surge, troop levels per Iraqi citizen were well below those in Kosovo. Gallagher's simple mathematical framework offers leaders an easy tool to examine postwar planning for future conflicts and think through how to overcome the obstacles they may encounter.

While Gallagher focuses at the Cabinet level of the administration as the perennial source of the problems, he offers implicit advice for junior and senior leaders in the military services: prepare whether your seniors are or not. Junior leaders may not have the resources to generate deep studies of potential postwar obstacles, but as former Secretary James Mattis notes in *Call Sign Chaos*, every leader has the ability to read books to prepare effectively for the assignments and challenges ahead. As Secretary Mattis relates, there is nothing new under the sun, and Xenophon's *Anabasis*, 2,500 years old, was the first book he picked up to begin preparing for combat operations in Iraq in 2003—he knew then that it would be a difficult, if not impossible, peace. Leaders at all levels have something to gain from *The Day After* as we enter an increasingly unstable world. Prepare wisely. **IAJ**

## NOTES

- 1 Gallagher, pp. 19-23.