



DEFEATING TERRORISM

STRATEGIC ISSUE ANALYSIS



The Carrot and Stick Challenge

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Conclusions:

- As the United States builds and maintains the coalition fighting the war on terrorism, it may obtain some good short-term results from the use of carrots and sticks—rewards and punishments to induce compliance with U.S. desires—but must be wary of potential negative effects in the long term.
- A just cause makes the use of carrots and sticks more effective. The justice of the U.S. cause is easily defined with al Qaeda and the Taliban, but much harder if the war is against all terrorism. The list of targets in the Muslim world must not be unnecessarily expanded.
- Even if countries see the justice of the cause, they may not make it *their* cause.
- Appeasement cannot be part of the solution, but issues that provide al Qaeda great resonance in the Muslim population—the Palestinian issue, sanctions on Iraq, and U.S. presence on the Arabian peninsula—must be fairly addressed by the U.S.

In an effort to marshal resources against Usama bin Laden's al Qaeda terrorist organization, the United States has implemented a carrot and stick approach to help build a coalition. Carrots—or rewards—are provided for "voluntary" compliance with implied preferences or explicit direction, while sticks—or punishment—are imposed to coerce compliance. Democracies generally prefer the carrot option, believing that reward will have a more positive or long-lasting effect, and that the reward provided will be viewed either as a due reward for desired performance or as just payment for services rendered. Unfortunately, the perception from the other side may be of a bribe—tainting both the donor and recipient—or of equally distasteful payment from a master to a servant.

Machiavelli did not use the same terms, but essentially argued for the stick over the carrot, noting that it is better for the strong to be feared than loved. He contended that "love" or "gratitude"—in exchange for

reward—is inherently fickle, all the more so if it appears to be a bribe. Machiavelli defined two forms of fear: one based on hatred, the other based on respect. Respect is obviously preferred, as hatred will have regressive effects in the long term. Effectively applying these two tools—using carrots and sticks, either together or as options to achieve synergy through their integration—is no small challenge. If carrots and sticks are applied arrogantly by a strong state—without proper regard for those who see them as bribes or arm-twisting—the results may be limited, both immediately and in the longer term. Improperly implemented, carrots and sticks can make the stronger state appear a bully, cost it resources to no advantage, or lead to imposition of punitive action with negative consequences.

To make the carrot and stick more effective, a state must be just and proportional in its application of rewards and punishments, which in turn should be aligned

with a just cause. Such a cause must be just in the eyes of other states, not simply in the eyes of the stronger state. In such a situation, the reward for compliance is not seen as a bribe or a payment, but simply as an expected consequence of working for a just cause. If punishment is imposed, it must be seen as a proportional requirement of justice, not the act of a "bully" which cannot buy what it wants. To make America's just cause compelling to others, their different values and perceptions must be taken into account.

Even if others acknowledge America's cause and actions as just, there can be no assumption that America's cause then becomes *their* cause. The United States does not actively support all just causes with its resources, nor do other states. This is the inherent challenge in structuring a coalition of states with different interests and characteristics. Caution must be applied in any demand that another state align itself with the United States or risk being considered an enemy. In Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War, Athens demanded that the state of Melos join an Athenian-led coalition against Sparta. When Melos resisted, stating that it wished to join neither Athens nor Sparta, Athens forced the issue, and stated ". . . the strong will do what it will, while the weak will do what it must." When Melos refused to join the coalition, Athens had no recourse but to destroy it or lose credibility. When Athens chose the former and destroyed Melos, it had less trouble getting other states to join the coalition, but the fear that caused them to join was not from respect based on justice. When the coalition came under duress later in the war, it came apart because it lacked genuine cohesion, and Athens lost the war. A demand by the United States that other states are either "with it or against it" may make good domestic rhetoric, but will be counterproductive if enforcement is attempted internationally.

The other NATO countries did not need to be bribed or coerced to support America, nor

should there be any need to resort to the carrot or stick to sustain their support. The invocation of Article 5 of the NATO treaty—declaring that the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks constituted an attack on all—was a treaty requirement. However, even without that requirement, those states' comparable values would have led them to recognize the cause as just; they identify with it and have made it *their* cause.

NATO countries are democracies; as such, their governments represent the will of their people. With nondemocratic states, it is often difficult to determine the will of the people, which may not be the same as the will of their government. When dealing with non-democratic states, their governments may be convinced to comply with American objectives through a carrot and stick approach, but if the people of that state do not see America's cause as just, then they will believe that their government has been either corrupted or unfairly coerced. In either case, this weakens whatever bond that government has with its people, destabilizing the state, and perhaps instigating insurrection or civil war, neither of which is in a coalition's interest.

The most obvious carrot or reward used recently is economic assistance. Sanctions have been lifted; direct payments have been made; food and other refugee assistance have been delivered. All of these can be useful, but they may also be more limited and temporary in value than anticipated. If the government or people felt sanctions were improper, then lifting them will be perceived as a correction of a wrong, rather than a gracious act, and may not motivate the desired action. If the government that receives the economic assistance is either corrupt or perceived by its people as corrupt, the money may be useful to persuade the government, but will have a different effect on the people. If economic assistance is diverted to military forces that the government can use to suppress its own people, the effect may be counterproductive, even if the intent was to enhance the

government's role in the military aspects of the coalition.

Use of food to influence directly the people of a country may allow governments to be by-passed to some degree. The altruistic motives of the givers may be genuine, but if the hungry recipients perceive that the food aid is given simply to bring a coalition together, it will appear a simple bribe rather than a just reward. If the hungry identify with al Qaeda or the Taliban, the appearance of such a bribe may not alter their views towards America at all. In fact, they may eat the food with an increased contempt for the United States. Food aid given to the hungry in Pakistan—in bags of grain marked USA—should satisfy hunger for a short period, but it will not correct the long-term causes of hunger and may make the Pakistani people see their government as incapable of feeding them.

President Bush recently started a campaign to have American children donate a dollar each to be used for aid to the Afghan children. This plays well in the United States, but there may be little gained in Afghanistan and the broader Muslim world, where the effort may be seen as a simple and inexpensive propaganda ploy. The real value in such a campaign may be to condition the American people to see the people of Afghanistan as worthy of American assistance. The provider again may be genuinely altruistic, but the perception may be very different, and effects overseas may be very different from those domestically.

The ultimate challenge is to make America's cause just in the eyes of the governments and people of the Middle East countries, whose physical and moral assistance is needed in the war on terrorism. There may be some utility in a simple bribe or use of force, but the returns could only be temporary and potentially counterproductive. If the American cause does not become the cause of others, the intermediate position is to at least make a compelling case that the American cause is just, and to use the carrot

and stick approach as just rewards or just punishments to support that cause. How that cause is defined thus becomes crucial.

The al Qaeda terrorist organization must be defined as an aggressor adversary because it has attacked and hurt the United States. The Taliban should be described as America's adversary because they willingly harbor those aggressors. There is great clarity in such a position, and there is no difficulty in defining the terrorist organization or the Taliban. But if the adversary is terrorism, that term must be defined. That is not difficult with NATO allies.

However, many states in the Middle East may not share the same definition of terrorism or may not find terrorism as objectionable if the target of terrorism is an oppressive government. They may see an assault on other terrorist organizations as a more general attack on Islam or as a means to neutralize the aspirations of several groups in the Middle East who have not targeted the United States. Such a view could have two negative results: first, if all terrorist groups are declared targets, such groups that have not targeted the United States may soon do so or provide previously-denied support to al Qaeda. Second, by enlarging the target set beyond al Qaeda, America makes its position adversarial to those people that identify with the goals of those newly-targeted groups, even though they may not have supported al Qaeda, either its goals or its methods. To have as many Muslim states as possible in the coalition on the war against terrorism is essential. It is thus important that there be no unnecessary enlargement of the states in the Muslim world that are considered targets.

To complement the application of rewards and punishments—or to avoid the challenges of their use—some of the root causes of Muslim disgruntlement must be addressed. The al Qaeda organization has several ways to rationalize their attack on the United States. The primary rationalization is that the values of the West—and the United States in

particular—are profane. To them, the ultimate profanity is U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia: a perceived major affront to the Muslim faithful. Secondary objections include American actions towards Iraq and support for Israel with respect to the Palestinian issue. A potential weakness for al Qaeda is that it receives far greater popular support in the Muslim world from its secondary objections to the United States than for its primary objections. There is little question that, if the situations in Iraq and with the Palestinians were resolved, al Qaeda would try to attack the United States. But if either conflict were resolved or American efforts to resolve them appeared more balanced, al Qaeda would gain far less popular support in the process.

Middle East governments, particularly Egypt, have stated that their primary difficulty in supporting the war on terrorism more aggressively is America's support for Israel, which they perceive to be at the expense of the Palestinians. That perception cannot be denied, but it is fair to say that America's real intent is not so one-sided. The central concern for Israel is security, and that will not change, but U.S. support for Israeli security should not mean support for settlements in Gaza and the West Bank or oppression of the Palestinians. The central concern for the Palestinians is sovereignty. American support for that goal appears lukewarm, but it can be reinforced without reducing support for Israeli security. American policy is sympathetic to Israeli domestic politics; it could be more overtly sympathetic to Palestinian domestic politics. Beyond domestic politics in either case, a more balanced American approach is in the interest of both Israel and the Palestinians if there is progress towards a resolution. Such a resolution is in the interest of everyone, except terrorist organizations that need popular support to sustain their efforts against the United States.

Some pundits suggest that it would be appeasement to attempt to resolve the Palestinian issue, review and revise sanctions on Iraq, or look for ways to protect U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf region without a major military presence there. Since these were bin Laden's goals—according to this line of reasoning—America should be even more resolute in denying them for fear of showing other terrorists that they can achieve their goals if they can mount a similar attack. It is not appeasement, though, if the United States can isolate al Qaeda from popular support, which may be essential to destroy it. Usama bin Laden and al Qaeda will not see America as less adversarial if the United States makes greater attempts to solve the Palestinian issue, they will instead see that as a threat to their popular support.

A carrot and stick approach may have utility in the effort to fight al Qaeda and the Taliban, although the results may only accrue in the near term. In the longer term, such an approach can be counterproductive. The carrot and stick approach will have greater utility if perceived to be fairly applied in a just cause. Ultimately, any use of carrots or sticks must be part of a more comprehensive effort to deny al Qaeda the popular support it needs to survive. That effort must demonstrate—with all available means—that America's cause is just and must create the conditions that lead others to believe that this cause is *their* cause. That is unnecessary with America's allies and fellow believers in NATO; the immediate challenge is in the Middle East, both with their governments and their people.

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