

DETERRENCE AS A MEANS OF MAINTAINING AMERICAN PRE-EMINENCE

BY

COLONEL TODD A. HEUSSNER
United States Army

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USAWC CLASS OF 2010

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 26-03-2010		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Deterrence as a Means of Maintaining American Pre-Eminence				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Colonel Todd A. Heussner				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Dr. John Bonin Department of Academic Affairs				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT If America is to maintain a role as the pre-eminent power in the world it must be prepared to exercise deterrence. While there are other courses of action available none adequately addresses the issues of declining economic, informational and military control in an increasingly complex and ambiguous environment occupied by rogue states and non-state actors. Many of the voices in the debate on how best to secure American economic and political interests have given up on deterrence as a viable means of maintaining order in the emerging balance of power. Deterrence is founded on an unabashed willingness to severely punish those who would threaten to cross established norms of conduct that violate international law and rule. In order for deterrence to be effective those who are to be deterred must know, without a doubt, that actions that upset the status quo will be swiftly and severely punished. A nation who is unwilling, either morally, ethically or culturally, to exercise power is doomed to eventual decline in absolute power. America must recognize the challenge and be ready, willing and able to respond to threats or resign itself to assuming a subordinate role to an emerging power.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS National Power, Strength					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 28	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

DETERRENCE AS A MEANS OF MAINTAINING AMERICAN PRE-EMINENCE

by

Colonel Todd A. Heussner
United States Army

Dr. John Bonin
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colonel Todd A. Heussner
TITLE: Deterrence as a Means of Maintaining American Pre-Eminence
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 26 March 2010 WORD COUNT: 5,924 PAGES: 28
KEY TERMS: National Power, Strength
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

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PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH: MAINTAINING AMERICAN PRE-EMINENCE

The new strategic environment requires new approaches to deterrence and defense. Our deterrence strategy no longer rests primarily on the grim premise of inflicting devastating consequences on potential foes. Both offenses and defenses are necessary to deter state and non-state actors, through denial of the objectives of their attacks and, if necessary, responding with overwhelming force.¹

—US National Security Strategy

In order to be effective, deterrence must have credibility as an underlying foundation. A threat that is not credible is no threat at all. Enemies of America must know, in no uncertain terms, that actions deemed unacceptable by the United States government will be met with a swift and effective response. Any definition of deterrence must be widened beyond military power to encompass a range of options that includes diplomatic, informational and economic elements. These elements can and should be used either before or concurrently with the other elements of power at our disposal in an effort to dissuade any potential adversary from taking action counter to the interests of the United States. Adversaries, both state and non-state, must know without question that any action that threatens our vital interests will be met with overwhelming power and that any benefit to be gained from such action will not be worth the cost to be paid. Charles Sutherland, in an article titled "It Just Makes Sense" argues that "Deterrence is the generation of the appropriate motivation required for specific antagonists to alter their expected behavior or intentions because of the certainty that something more precious than the objective of their original behavior will be lost as a direct result of their failure to alter their behavior or intentions."² In order for deterrence to be effective the antagonist

must know that the protagonist possesses both the means and the will to inflict damage in excess of the object to be gained.³

In our recent history we have examples of both an effective strategy of deterrence and an ineffective strategy of compromise and weak reaction to provocation. The United States' failure to effectively pursue a policy of deterrence in the recent past has emboldened our enemies and resulted in a less stable world order rather than a more stable one as proponents of reconciliation would lead people to believe.

Successful Deterrence

After the conclusion of the Vietnam conflagration, America was introspective and in no mood to engage on the world stage. President Richard Nixon left the Presidency to Gerald Ford who subsequently forfeited it to Jimmy Carter. The Carter years were consumed with numerous examples of weak and passive foreign policy. President Carter was convinced that the United States anticommunist ideology had been the major cause of crucial U.S. policy errors that resulted in a more assertive Soviet Union.⁴ As a result, he undertook a naïve counter-ideology that weakened U.S. power worldwide. His crowning foreign policy disaster was immortalized by the Iranian hostage crisis during which 52 American embassy workers were held captive for 444 days. Carter's pacifist ideology resulted in a more aggressive Soviet Union, loss of United States prestige, and an overall decline in relative American power.⁵

President Ronald Reagan's exercise of foreign policy and American power ushered in a new era of American power and prestige. The presidency of Ronald Reagan provides a recent and relevant example of an effective deterrence strategy. The results of his "peace through strength" policy not only positively affected our foreign

Policy, it re-established American leadership, empowered allies, and ushered in an era of renewed optimism and economic growth.⁶

As part of the policies that became known as the "Reagan Doctrine," the United States provided financial and logistics support to the anti-communist opposition in central Europe and took an increasingly hard line against socialist and communist governments in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, and Nicaragua. President Reagan's policy was clear and incontrovertible: Communism or support of communism would not be tolerated and would be aggressively opposed using all means at our disposal, up to and including, military operations.

The invasion of the Caribbean island Grenada in 1983, ordered by President Reagan, was the first major foreign event of the administration, as well as the first major operation conducted by the U.S. military since the Vietnam War. President Reagan justified the invasion by stating that the cooperation of the island with communist Cuba posed a threat to the United States and stated the invasion was in response to the illegal overthrow and execution of Grenadan Prime Minister Maurice Bishop by communist rebels.⁷ The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) appealed to the United States, Barbados, and Jamaica, among other nations, for assistance due to the ongoing military rule in the country. The United States responded immediately and forcefully, returning the country back to civilian rule. By the conclusion of the conflict, U.S. forces suffered nineteen fatalities and 116 injuries.⁸ The defenders of the island were said to be well prepared but the United States was victorious. Grenada's Governor-General, Paul Scoon, announced the resumption of the constitution, appointed a new government, and U.S. forces withdrew that December.

Latin America

During the years of the Carter administration, the Sandinistas enjoyed tacit approval of their coup of the former Somoza regime which, although considered a military dictatorship, had been friendly to the United States. Daniel Ortega assumed leadership of Nicaragua after the Sandinista revolution. As the years progressed the Ortega regime became more authoritarian and repressive. The government started expelling moderate factions of the government and there were allegations of suppression of political dissent as well as state sponsored human rights abuses. Ortega was also a staunch supporter of Fidel Castro. Many in the Nicaraguan government sought to model their government after that of Cuba. Cuba and Nicaragua started to collaborate by sharing information, resources and military equipment. The collaboration of the two governments caused a great deal of concern for many in the American government. The Reagan administration had established a policy of combating communism whenever and wherever it raised its head. Reagan responded by supplying the anti-Sandinista Contra rebels with money and weapons.⁹ As a result of the Contra war, Daniel Ortega was forced to hold democratic elections. The Sandinistas lost the election ending the country's flirtation with communism.

Cold War

President Reagan recognized that the program of détente as practiced by his predecessors, was failing. Reagan established a new policy as described in National Security Decisions Directive 32 (NSDD-32) to confront the Soviet Union on three fronts: 1.) decrease Soviet Access to high technology and diminish their resources; 2.) increase American defense expenditures to strengthen our negotiating position; 3.) force the Soviets to devote more of their economic resources to defense.¹⁰

The United States re-established the B1 bomber program, started the production of the Peacekeeper missile, and deployed the Pershing II missile to Germany to establish a strong bargaining position in order to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons. Reagan also initiated work on a strategic missile defense shield. While the technology may not have been functional, the Soviets became alarmed that their nuclear arsenal would be rendered obsolete and, as a result they would be defenseless against an American attack.

Reagan's decisions to aggressively oppose the Soviets revived the American economy through defense spending, military growth and sweeping tax cuts. The Soviets responded by trying to keep up, but their economy was stagnant and it collapsed after the price of oil declined by more than 50% in March of 1986.¹¹

Reagan simultaneously attacked the Soviet Union on the information front. His bellicose rhetoric inspired dissidents across the Soviet Union at a time when the USSR could not afford to confront them. Reagan labeled the Soviet Union as the "Evil Empire" and predicted that communism would collapse by saying "I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are now being written."¹²

Moscow responded to these challenges by allocating money to the defense industry that it did not have. During the later years of the cold war, Moscow dedicated as much as 25% of Gross National product to defense spending at the expense of investment and consumer goods in an already decrepit system.¹³ The Soviets had an economic growth rate of zero percent combined with a sharp decline in revenue as a result of the collapse of oil prices in 1986.

Mikhail Gorbachov was elected in 1985 as a result of the problems and issues, both social and economic, that faced the Soviet Union. Gorbachev realized that he could not continue the race with the American machine. The Russian economy could not support the effort on fronts across the world. In response to the pressure, Gorbachev established a policy of "Glasnost" and "Perestroika". ¹⁴

These programs restructured the economy and liberalized personal freedoms for Soviet citizens. Gorbachov was forced to direct resources away from military commitments to more profitable areas in the private sector. As a result of the reforms Gorbachov offered major concessions on levels of conventional forces, nuclear weapons and policy in Eastern Europe.

Reagan responded to the changes in the Russian posture in a speech given in Berlin by saying, "General Secretary Gorbachov, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachov, open this gate! Mr Gorbachov, tear down this wall!"¹⁵

The combination of Reagan's forceful rhetoric, combined with Gorbachov's newly liberalized freedoms, combined to transform Russian policy and behavior. In 1988, the Soviet Union declared that they would no longer intervene in the affairs of states of Eastern Europe and withdrew their forces from Afghanistan in 1989. The Cold War was essentially over. Ronald Reagan's aggressive policy of "Peace Through Strength" deterred aggression against America, expanded our influence and peacefully concluded the Cold War on favorable terms.

Years After Reagan

The years following Reagan's presidency are a stark contrast in the use of deterrence, excepting the OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/ DESERT STORM

chapter. The attacks of September 11, 2001 startled the world. Two planes slammed into the World Trade Centers, a third hit the Pentagon, and a fourth bound for the Capital building crashed in a field in Pennsylvania after the passengers on board overpowered the hijackers. The attacks should not have been a surprise since they were merely one in a continuing series of attacks designed to erode the power, prestige and influence of the United States. The culminating attacks of September 11th were the seminal event in a nearly 20 year period of escalating and increasingly bold attacks that, until that time, elicited muted responses from the government. A chronology of terrorist attacks and the subsequent responses paints a very clear picture about the signals received by existing and burgeoning states as well as non-state actors.

Lack of Response to Provocation

A Pan-Am flight from Frankfurt to New York exploded over Lockerbie Scotland on 21 December 1988. The explosion and subsequent crash killed all 259 passengers on board, including 189 Americans. An investigation into the bombing concluded that a cassette tape filled with plastic explosives inside of checked suitcase brought the plane down.¹⁶ President George H.W. Bush reluctantly launched an investigation to determine how the attack was carried out and what measures must be implemented in order to ensure that this sort of attack was not repeated.

Ten months after the initiation of the investigation the panel issued its findings. The report cited failures of the Federal Aviation Administration as well as Pan-American Airlines for failing to exercise due caution in screening baggage and passengers.¹⁷ The final report contained some 60 recommendations to improve security and prevent future attacks.

A criminal investigation revealed that two Libyan agents planned and executed the attack. The United States demanded that the Libyan government hand over the two terrorists for trial in the court system. Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi refused and the United Nations and the United States imposed economic sanctions on Libya for their refusal. Libya held out for over a decade before finally allowing the perpetrators to be tried in a Scottish court. One agent was convicted, the second was acquitted and the court determined that the Libyan government was behind the attack.

One hundred fifty-nine United States citizens were killed and our government response was slow, weak and generally ineffective. The signal received by the world and terrorist networks was clear: attacks on American interests or citizens will not be met with overwhelming force.

The Pan-Am bombing was followed up five years later with an Improvised Explosive Device attack of the World Trade Center in February of 1993. A Ryder rental truck loaded with 1500 pounds of improvised explosives detonated in the parking garage of the World Trade Center. The blast created a 200 foot wide crater through six levels of the parking garage. The explosion killed six, injured more than 1000 and caused more than \$1 billion in damage to businesses and individuals.¹⁸

Once again the United States government responded with a criminal investigation resulting in four terrorist convictions. The mastermind of the attack, Ramzi Yousef, was a terrorist with links to Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network.

President Bill Clinton wanted to insulate the American people from the attacks and did not want the "American people to overreact to this..."¹⁹ The President's desire to downplay the attack limited exposure in the media, muted any coordinated response

and once again, sent a message to the world community that America will not respond in any substantive way to attacks on her citizens, infrastructure or economy. A subsequent investigation into the attack revealed that America was the subject of an ever increasing campaign of violence by a rapidly growing terrorist network.²⁰

Somalia Incident

In the summer of 1993, America dispatched a task force of nearly 26,000 Soldiers to initiate a nation building exercise in support of United Nations "Operation Continue Hope." The mission was designed to rebuild the nation of Somalia by helping to establish a functioning government, re-establish the rule of law and disarm the local population.²¹ Operation Restore Hope is an example of both, how and how not to, conduct an operation.

In the initial stages, there were no impediments to success. SEALs secured the beaches un-opposed and Marines occupied the ports and airfields with little resistance. The warlords recognized the overwhelming firepower of the 26,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines and quickly decided to melt into the countryside rather than openly oppose the force. The situation was so secure that the Ambassador, Robert Oakley, moved through the streets without fear, to meet personally with the strongest warlords, Mohammed Farrah Aidid and Ali Mahdi. When the Ambassador met with Aidid and Ali Mahdi he warned them to stay clear of the American forces. They agreed and ordered no interference through radio stations and by runner. The two rivals also agreed to end their disputes and established a follow-up meeting with the ambassador. During the follow up meeting the Ambassador warned the warlords of the disastrous consequences of conflict with the U.S forces. The U.N. and U.S. forces landed with no trouble.

Within days the area was secured and the relief supplies started flowing. There was a complete absence of hostilities and the areas under the control of U.S forces expanded. While the Americans secured their assigned areas, allied forces from France, Morocco, Belgium and Canada did the same and enjoyed the same results. Operation Restore Hope had secured and established nine Humanitarian Relief Sectors several weeks ahead of the most optimistic predictions. The specter of starvation was lifted with thirty five feeding stations established in the nine sectors. The stations were responsible for feeding more than one million people. The un-mitigated success of Operation Restore Hope coupled with the stable and secure environment led the newly elected U.S. President, Bill Clinton, to order the withdrawal of the bulk of the American forces. The remaining force of only 1,200 ground troops opened the door for more aggressive action by the previously muzzled warlords.²²

Soon after the departure of the majority of the American forces Somalian warlord Aidid started to attempt to gain control of the situation on the ground. He tried first through political means and then by force. Aidid offered to participate in political reconciliation if the U.N. Force would recognize him as the leader of Somalia. The UN Forces had no interest in backing one local chief at the expense of others. As a result of the refusal to accept him as the leader Aidid intensified his actions against the United Nations and American forces. Special U.N. Envoy Admiral Howe recognized the growing threat and ordered UN and American forces to begin seizing Aidid's weapons and his radio station.²³ Aidid's men had been tipped off and they were waiting for the arrival of the UN and U.S. forces. Fifty Pakistanis and three Americans were killed in the ambush.

As a result of this action United States special forces set out to capture Aidid. The mission to capture Aidid started off poorly and grew progressively worse. Two helicopters were shot down, the extraction convoy was pinned down, resulting in 18 killed and 79 others injured. The American public awakened to images of dead United States Soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu by a rag-tag militia.

President Clinton responded by ordering a cessation of operations and a total withdrawal of forces from Somalia.²⁴ Rather than responding with overwhelming force, the world's only superpower ran away and hid from a direct attack on American Soldiers and citizens. Once again the message to the world at large was that Americans lacked resolve and could be easily turned away with very little risk of response or retaliation. Mark Bowden concluded in his book, "Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War," "...the lesson our retreat taught the world terrorists and despots is that killing a few American Soldiers, even at the cost of more than 500 of our own fighters is enough to spook Uncle Sam."²⁵

The world watched, as they always do, to learn how the American military and politicians would respond to the events in Somalia. Osama Bin Laden reportedly claimed that he played a role in the Somalia attack by providing materiel and intellectual support to the resistance. He considered the retreat of American forces a seminal event in the rise of the jihadist movement against the west. Bin Laden claimed in his 1996 declaration:

Your most disgraceful case was in Somalia; where after vigorous propaganda about the power of the USA and its post cold war leadership of the new world order-you moved tens of thousands of international forces, including 28,000 American Soldiers into Somalia. However, when tens of your Soldiers were killed in minor battles and one American pilot was dragged in the streets of Mogadishu you left the area carrying

disappointment, humiliation, defeat and your dead with you. Clinton appeared in front of the whole world threatening and promising revenge, but these threats were merely a preparation for your withdrawal. You have been disgraced by Allah and you withdrew; the extent of your impotence and weaknesses became very clear.²⁶

The conclusions drawn from our rapid withdrawal after the loss of Soldiers cemented in the minds of our adversaries sensitivity to negative media attention and the belief that Americans will not tolerate casualties, no matter how minor. The events in Somalia served to reinforce the belief that the price to be paid by our adversaries may be worth the cost since in the years leading up to and including Somalia America failed to respond in any real and substantive way. In the minds of our enemies the door was wide open to active opposition and open violence against America with very little concern for the costs to be paid.

There are a number of other examples of American failure to respond to direct attacks on citizens, our economy and our military. There was an attack of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1994 that killed 19 and wounded more than 500. While it was very obvious that the attack was launched from within Saudi Arabia the administration did very little to pursue the perpetrators. To this day none of the individuals involved have been brought to justice in the United States. On August 7, 1998 the United States embassies in the major East African cities of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya were attacked. The attack resulted in hundreds of deaths. The attacks were linked to local members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and they brought Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri to American attention for the first time. As a result the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation placed bin Laden on its Ten Most Wanted list.²⁷ Several years later, in October of 2000, the US Navy Destroyer USS Cole was attacked by a small boat loaded with explosives. The resulting blast ripped a 35 foot hole in the

side of the ship, killed 17 sailors and wounded 39 others. The attack was carried out by members of Al-Qaeda under the direct supervision of Bin-laden. Bin-laden expected a counter-strike and dispersed his forces to avoid any large scale loss. The attack never came.

Consequences

These successful attacks served two primary functions for our enemies while simultaneously emboldening future adversaries. The first, and arguably most important consequence, was that the air of American invulnerability and fear of reprisal vanished. The world no longer feared the inevitable and devastating response that we are capable of delivering but unwilling to inflict. Secondly, the multiple attacks served as a tremendous recruiting tool for the growing jihadist movement.

The attacks spanned 18 years, involved three separate administrations and the responses from all were nearly the same; limited, un-sustained and ineffective in any real or substantive way. The lack of response emboldened our enemies and paved the way for the catastrophic attacks of September 11th, 2001.

In 1999, Al-Qaeda leadership in Kandahar approved of what eventually became known as the September 11 attacks.²⁸ Bin Laden personally selected two future hijackers who had fought on behalf of the Taliban to attend a special training program at Mes Aynak camp. Later that year, four members of what became known as the "Hamburg cell" of hijacker pilots arrived in Kandahar, Afghanistan where they conferred with Al-Qaeda leadership for the first time and they received instructions on the plot. Another pilot that arrived at al Faruq camp in 2000 was soon selected for participation as well. Thirteen "muscle hijackers" were selected by bin Laden from Al-Qaeda training

camps from 2000 to early 2001. By July 2001, all the hijackers had arrived in the United States.²⁹

On September 11 nearly 3,000 people were killed in the coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by hijacked civilian airliners. The attacks were quickly linked to bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. Less than one week after the events of September 11, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush identified Osama Bin Laden as the 'prime suspect' in the attacks. Osama bin Laden was understood to be in Afghanistan at the time. On September 20, 2001, in an address to a joint session of Congress, President Bush issued an ultimatum demanding that the Taliban government of Afghanistan:

- deliver Al-Qaeda leaders located in Afghanistan to the United States authorities
- release all imprisoned foreign nationals, including American citizens
- protect foreign journalists, diplomats, and aid workers in Afghanistan
- close terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and "hand over every terrorist and every person and their support structure to appropriate authorities"
- give the United States full access to terrorist training camps to verify their closure

"They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate," said Bush.³⁰ No specifics were attached to the threat, though a statement followed suggesting military action: "Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there."³¹

America Strikes Back

The massive attacks of September 11th elicited a response of size, scope and ferocity unlike any anticipated by the perpetrators. According to notes taken by senior

policy official Stephen Cambone on the afternoon of September 11, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was issuing rapid orders to his aides to look for evidence of Iraqi involvement.³² The NATO Council declared that the attacks on the United States were considered an attack on all NATO nations and, as such, satisfied Article 5 of the NATO charter.³³ Having been on an official visit to the US at the time of the attacks, Australian Prime Minister John Howard, returned to Australia and invoked Article IV of the ANZUS treaty. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the Bush administration announced a war on terrorism, with the stated goals of bringing Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda to justice and preventing the emergence of other terrorist networks. These goals would be accomplished by means including economic and military sanctions against states perceived as harboring terrorists and increasing global surveillance and intelligence sharing.

The initial operation of the U.S. Global War on Terrorism outside of the United States, and the largest directly connected to terrorism, was the overthrow of the Taliban rule of Afghanistan by a U.S.-led coalition.

Afghanistan Campaign

The War in Afghanistan, an ongoing coalition conflict, began on October 7, 2001, as the US military launched OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), along with a number of coalition allies, in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US. The character of the war has evolved from a violent struggle against Al-Qaeda and its Taliban supporters to a complex counterinsurgency effort.

The first phase of the war was the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, when the United States launched OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, to deny safe haven to Al-Qaeda and its use of the Afghan territory as a base of operations

for terrorist activities. In that first phase, U.S. and coalition forces, working with the Afghan opposition forces of the Northern Alliance, quickly ousted the Taliban regime. Once the new Karzai administration took control of Afghanistan, the character of the war shifted to an effort aimed at smothering insurgency and preventing any future base for Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The insurgents preferred not to directly confront the U.S. or NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops. They blended into the local population and mainly used improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombings to confront the coalition forces.

Enemy Lessons Learned

Those who would oppose the United States must know that supporting, sponsoring or otherwise offering assistance to states or organizations hostile to the United States risk immediate and overwhelming response that will threaten their very existence. The enemy lessons learned as a result of our response to the events of September 11th, 2001 should be very clear.

The object to be gained is not worth the cost if we are attacked or threatened. Immediately following the attacks of 9/11 America responded with overwhelming force and effectively removed two standing governments from the face of the Earth. The Taliban were removed from power in less than three weeks and the Ba'ath party in Iraq in 2003 lasted just about as long. Those in power, who desire to stay in power, will forfeit their very existence by threatening or attacking America. If a political disagreement devolves into a military contest, the outcome is inevitable and the opposing regime will not survive. If America is to be opposed, it must be a contest outside of the confines of American territory, otherwise the response will be immediate and overwhelming.

Lessons to be Learned

America has many lessons to learn as a result of our experience in the years leading up to and including the experience in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. The events leading up to the attacks on September 11th were a direct result of our failure to respond in any serious form to the series of events in the preceding 18 years. The Pan —Am bombing, attack on the World Trade Center, Somaliian fiasco, attack on Khobar Towers, the attack on our embassies in Africa, the attack on the USS Cole and ultimately the attack on September 11, 2001, were all escalations of a series of attacks during which the United States failed to respond in any meaningful way. Our lack of significant response emboldened our enemies and multiplied the number of states who would provide assistance to our enemies as a result of the belief that there were no negative consequences for supporting, sponsoring or executing attacks on the United States. The resultant increase in the number and lethality of attacks in the years leading up to the attacks of 9/11 argue strongly for the use of overwhelming force as an effective deterrent. Ralph Peters states that, "Historically only an uncompromising military approach works, not winning the hearts and minds nor a negotiated compromise. This runs counter to our politically correct worldview, but the historical evidence is incontestable."³⁴ Retired Lieutenant General Mike Short, U.S. Air Force goes even further by saying, "We use forces as a last resort... then we need to go in with overwhelming force and quite frankly, extraordinary violence that the speed of it, the lethality of it, the weight of it has to make an incredible impression on the adversary, to such a degree that he is stunned, shocked... you take the fight to the enemy. You go after the head of the snake, put a dagger in the heart of the adversary, and you bring to bear all of the force that you have at your command."³⁵

Once the decision to use military force to respond to an attack is made our armed forces are ready and capable of rapidly executing operations that result in the immediate destruction of opposing governments and institutions. The Iraqi and Afghanistan states are proof positive of our abilities to dismantle a hostile state.

The final lesson to be learned is that offense is a good defense. Since the attacks on 9/11 there have been no effective attacks on American soil despite a stated desire and a number of attempts. The terrorists and their sponsors are occupied with fleeing for their lives rather than having the time and opportunity to plan, resource and execute attacks against the United States.

Identify Red Lines

In order to avoid any future conflicts the United States must be very clear in communicating what we are willing to go to war over. The world must know with certainty what we hold vital and are unwilling to compromise on. The world community must know that attacks or credible threats to our economy, infrastructure, population or allies will be met with overwhelming force that will guarantee the annihilation of the perpetrators.

Deterrence Defined

The end of the Cold War signaled the end of deterrence as an effective strategy with many in the policy making world. The conventional wisdom is that deterrence will not work against terrorist networks and rogue states. This is a myopic view that fails to realize that terrorists and rogue states all value something that can be threatened. Deterrence can be an effective strategy today as it was in the past.

Deterrence theorists propose that several conditions must be met for this to be an effective strategy. Deterrence requires that we understand what the adversary, or

potential enemy views as vital.³⁶ We must also understand how it assesses its' security situation and the accompanying decision making processes. Once we understand what our potential adversaries hold dear we must communicate effectively with them. They must understand that they are approaching a "red line" and that we are capable of acting and that we will act if the red line is crossed. Capability and credibility are absolutely critical if deterrence is to work effectively. We must be prepared to act and act decisively in every instance or we lose credibility and run the risk of ever increasing assaults on our red lines. We have re-established our credibility with the OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM campaigns. We must take great care to ensure that we never compromise our credibility again.

Conclusion- Lessons to be Applied

America faces some contemporary threats that must be deterred before the challenges devolve into full scale conflict. It must be clear to even the most pacifist polity that peace is clearly better than war. Deterrence is un-disputably preferable to war. A credible deterrence is cheaper in terms of men, materiel and political energy. We are compelled to deter both Iran and North Korea before the friction explodes into a war. Iran and North Korea must know that threats to attack our economy, infrastructure, population or allies will result in a swift and immediate response that is an existential threat. At the most base level, both regimes value their grip on power and their place in the political world. We must ensure that the red lines are known and understood as inviolable. Any encroachment must be dealt with, with increasing veracity and ferocity. Using soft power as initial steps is acceptable, but only insofar as the soft power has a positive effect. If soft power does not work, we must be willing to escalate.

Unfortunately the Barrack Obama administration appears doomed to commit the mistakes of the past. President Obama has taken a conciliatory tone with the Iranians, with the prisoners in Guantanamo and with terrorists who attempt to attack us on our own soil. Negotiations with the Iranians are in a predictably un-predictable pattern. Agreements are proposed to the Iranians who ask for time to consider the proposal. Once the deadline for a decision approaches the Iranians balk, refuse to agree to established terms, and continue on their course of uranium enrichment and nuclear weapons development. It has happened with allowing U.N. inspectors in, with rules for controlling nuclear material, with limiting the number of centrifuges, and it goes on and on and on. The Iranians must know that they are approaching a red line and that we will respond with overwhelming force if they push too far. The Obama administration has chosen to release prisoners from Guantanamo back to unstable countries. A number of these prisoners return to terror as evidenced by an article in the New York Times which states, "... some of the 560 detainees transferred abroad has engaged in, or is suspected of engaging in, terrorism or militant activity."³⁷ Apparently we haven't learned the lesson that conciliation doesn't work. The terrorists only understand overwhelming force.

Most recently a terrorist attempted to blow up a plane on Christmas day over Detroit. The administration has decided that they will try the terrorist in civil court. In an ABC news report

Attorney General Eric Holder said he made the decision to charge the Christmas Day terror suspect in civilian court rather than the military system. In a letter to Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, the attorney general wrote that the FBI told its partners in the intelligence community on Christmas Day and again the next day that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab would be charged criminally. Holder said that the possibility

of detaining Abdulmutallab in the U.S. military system under the law of war was explicitly discussed in the days following the arrest, including at a Jan. 5 meeting that included President Barack Obama and senior members of the national security team.³⁸

Treating terrorists as common criminals is not a deterrent and may have the opposite effect of encouraging others to follow suit to martyrdom. If we are ignorant of the past we are doomed to repeat it. We must learn the lessons and act now to deter future attacks in order to avoid another national catastrophe of epic proportions.

Endnotes

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