



Backgroundunder

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RESPONDING TO THE ATTACK ON AMERICA: BEWARE OF CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED BY INTERNATIONAL COALITION

KIM R. HOLMES, PH.D.

President George W. Bush is right to speak of the need to gather a global coalition to fight terrorism. He already is meeting with some success. The Pakistani government has said that it will cooperate, including allowing U.S. warplanes to use Pakistani airspace. However, it also suggested that it would not give U.S. forces access to its territory for military operations unless the military coalition were broadly international, including Muslim states, and hinted that it would not give its approval unless the U.N. Security Council approved the action.

On a different front, Secretary of State Colin Powell has said that he would welcome Iran—that long-time U.S. nemesis and supporter of terrorism—into a common effort to combat global terrorism. Clearly, the Administration is thinking broadly as it approaches the task of assembling the international coalition.

WHAT LIMITS SHOULD THE U.S. ALLOW?

These actions raise an important question: How far should the United States go in allowing members of a coalition to limit the means and ends of any operation it must undertake? Consider the Persian Gulf War experience. The coalition assembled by President George H. W. Bush, which

included such countries as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria, may have provided invaluable logistical support and political legitimacy, but it also limited both the means and ends of the military campaign.

Surely, among the most powerful reasons the United States did not go all the way to Baghdad to remove Saddam Hussein from power was the fact that America's Arab allies and Turkey would not allow it. Fearing an Arab backlash, holding the coalition together became almost as important as the military campaign itself; the cohesion of the coalition per se was not merely a means to an end, but one of the strategic and political ends of U.S. policy.

The constraints imposed by the negotiations establishing the Desert Storm coalition were codified into a United Nations Security Council resolution sanctioning (and therefore limiting) military

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Kathryn and Shelby Cullom
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action. Thus, from the outset, the purpose of the action was to kick Saddam out of Kuwait, not remove him from power—a move that, once fighting was underway, gave the dictator the reassurance and freedom he needed to maintain his hold on power.

It is imperative, today, that the United States gain as much diplomatic support as possible for any action it takes against terrorism. Support from allies but also from countries in the Middle East, Eurasia, Central Asia, and even East Asia is politically and militarily necessary to mount an effective campaign. The United States has access to bases in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and Oman, but it will need other access if it wishes to undertake operations against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan that is harboring Osama bin Laden. It may seek, at some point, a basing agreement with Pakistan or air access agreements with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and even Russia.

In this, the United States must beware. Such requests for help may whet the appetite of would-be allies to ask for something in return. So long as U.S. demands are limited to diplomatic support, intelligence sharing, or access to airspace, the price may be bearable. But if Washington requests access to bases or closer military cooperation from would-be allies, particularly in the Middle East, the price may go up. The United States must avoid bargaining away too much of its freedom of action and reserve the right to undertake any action necessary to see the campaign through to a successful end.

EFFECTIVE COALITION-BUILDING

The United States should avoid trying to form a broad-based, unwieldy coalition of military forces that gives everybody a seat at the decision table. Doing so would restrain its actions and politicize its military decisions. The U.S. does not need the help of large numbers of allied troops, but rather access to airspace; intelligence; logistical, economic, and diplomatic support; and, perhaps at some point, bases.

There may be instances when some of its closest allies (certainly the United Kingdom and perhaps even other NATO allies) will join its military operations, but the price of entry must be unreserved support for America's political and military objec-

tives to eradicate terrorism. Washington will cooperate in intelligence and special operations with any number of countries, including some that may be unsavory, but there should be no political deals that dilute the purpose of the mission.

As the price for access to Pakistani bases and facilities, Washington should not agree to seek a U.N. Security Council resolution. Nor, for access to bases, should it agree to forgo cooperation with nations such as Israel or India, or agree to undertake cumbersome decision-making processes with coalition members that restrain its intelligence or military operations.

Pakistan must decide: Does it support the campaign to eliminate terrorism, or not? If Islamabad offers concrete support for this campaign, the United States should agree to protect Pakistan in any way it can. It should also offer aid, debt relief, and even the lifting of sanctions. But it should not agree to tie its own hands in seeing this campaign through to victory.

By the same token, the United States should be very careful in seeking support from Iran and Syria, which are still on the State Department's list of terrorist states. There can be no doubt that having their diplomatic support would be helpful in some quarters, particularly if the United States decides to move militarily against Afghanistan and Iraq, which are hostile to Iran and not especially friendly with Syria.

If Iran were to stop supporting terrorism, Washington indeed would benefit from forging closer relations. However, it should not make any deals with Tehran until it is certain that such reform has occurred. This was the recommendation of the National Commission on Terrorism in a June 2000 report. Not doing so could undermine the moral clarity of the campaign and the integrity of U.S. intelligence and military operations if Iran turns out to be playing a double game.

CONCLUSION

Washington faces a fundamental dilemma in this war against terrorism. To gain Islamic support for a broad-based war against radical Islamic terrorism, it will have to make common cause with some Islamic states that are not only corrupt and lack legitimacy, but also may be part of the terror-

ist problem. To show that this war is not with Islam per se, the U.S. could be tempted to restrain itself militarily and accommodate the complex and contradictory political agenda of Islamic states.

This, in turn, could make the campaign ineffectual, prolonging the problem of terrorism. America could find itself again making a Gulf War-type bargain—propping up allied Arab and Islamic states as a strategic end in itself. The political cover to execute the military campaign would thus become as strategically important as the campaign itself.

This is not the time to cut clever political deals that result in halfway measures in the war against terrorism. America needs to be realistic; in devising the proper means to fight this war, there may be times when deals must be made. However, no

coalition partner should dictate to the United States the terms, conditions, or nature of its military response; who should be part of the coalition; or what kind of foreign policies America should pursue.

Americans should never be asked to settle for something less than victory. President Bush must weigh the benefit of a participant's support against the potential loss of operational freedom exacted for that support. If the price is too high, the President should tell would-be allies that Americans will somehow get the job done without them.

—*Kim R. Holmes, Ph.D., is Vice President of The Heritage Foundation and Director of its Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies.*