Deterrence and Terrorism.
By 2LT Mitchell Suliman

Although deterrence appeared to be successful throughout the Cold War, its utility in the 21st century is highly problematic at best given the different conditions of our current War on Terror.[1] The purpose of this paper is to examine the state of deterrence now, to analyze both proponents and opponents of deterrence, and ~~broadcast~~ suggest a possible future for deterrence as applied to the military intelligence profession. It is important to note that deterrence is only one of ~~the~~ several strategies that can be used to ~~counter~~ combat terrorism. Other strategies include persuasion, economic aid, democratization, appeasement~~,~~ and brute military force.[2] Given the tragic September 11, 2001 attacks in America and the ~~recent~~ subsequent War on Terror, it is important to discuss the strategic role that deterrence plays ~~(or should play)~~ in U.S. counterterrorism policy. In response to 9/11, the Department of Defense assembled the National Defense University Task Force on Combating Terrorism to develop a strategy which would address the ~~new deadly~~ emerging terrorist threat. Originally, the task force proposed a "3-D strategy" which had three goals: to defeat, deter, and diminish the enemy.[3] However, by the time the strategy was adopted, the word "deter" was replaced by "deny" and "defend." As such, the final strategy issued in February 2003 called for a "4-D strategy" with the goals ~~of~~ to defeat, deny, diminish and defend against the adversary.[4] ~~Although many may view this as~~ This may appear an insignificant substitution of words, this particular diction signifies the interaction deterrence plays ~~(or could play) on~~ against terrorism. ~~It is imperative this interaction is examined~~

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[1] Colin S. Gray, Maintaining Effective Deterrence, (Washington D.C.: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), v.

[2] Robert F. Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done," in International Security, Vol. 30, No. 3, (Winter 2005/06), 89.

[3] Doron Almog, "Cumulative Deterrence and the War on Terrorism" in Parameters, Winter 2004, p., 14.

[4] George W. Bush, National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (Washington: The White House, February 2003), p. 15.

in depth as there are many schools of thought regarding the applicability of deterrence to counterterrorism efforts.

Against Deterrence

In the aftermath of September 11th, many dismissed the applicability of deterrence in ~~countering~~ combating terrorism. The apparent inapplicability of deterrence has resonated throughout the Bush administration as well the U.S. national security strategy which states, "[t]~~T~~raditional concepts of deterrence will not work against a terrorist enemy."[5] As a result, there has been a shift from deterrent strategies of the Cold War to preemptive counterterrorism strategies of today.[6] There are several explanations for this shift away from deterrence. In a 2002 RAND report, Paul Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins write that "the concept of deterrence is both too limiting and too naïve to be applicable to the war on terrorism."[7] Likewise, Richard Betts argues that deterrence has "limited efficacy…for modern counterterrorism."[8] There are several explanations ~~to~~ why deterrence may be inapplicable or difficult in ~~countering~~ combating terrorism.

First, terrorist motivations are too strong. Arguably, the issue of terrorist motivation poses the greatest problem in implementing deterrence strategies.[9] Robert Pape argues that terrorists are extremely motivated as they are willing to die~~;~~ and so not deterred by fear of punishment or of anything else."[10] Terrorism is difficult to combat, because individuals are

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[5] George W. Bush, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002), 15.

[6] Uri Fisher, "Deterrence, Terrorism, and American Values," in Homeland Security Affairs, Vol. 3, No. 1, (February 2007), 1.

[7] Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on al-Qaeda, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2002),

xviii.

[8] Richard K. Betts, "The Soft Underbelly of American Primacy: Tactical Advantages of Terror" in September 11, Terrorist Attacks, and U.S. Foreign Policy, ed. Demetrios James Caraley, (New York: Academy of Political Science, 2002), 46.

[9] Trager and Zagorcheva, 94.

[10] Robert A. Pape, Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism, (New York: Random House, 2005), 5.

motivated by religious and ideological beliefs. When highly motivated, terrorists are more willing to risk anything to accomplish their goal. As such, suicide terrorism and martyrdom play an important role. For example, Bin Laden and members of al-Qaeda may see themselves as prophets or at least as instruments of God's will. They are no longer motivated by the preservation of life, but rather are motivated in pursuit of a particular image of Islam and "its crusade against the infidels."[11] This intense motivation creates another problematic condition for deterrence strategies. The political goals of terrorist groups are ambiguous, broad, and unclear mainly due to their idealistic beliefs.[12] Given the motivation of terrorist operators, many analysts dismiss the concept of deterrence.

Second, terrorists are often labeled as being "irrational." Therefore, terrorists do not value the cost-benefit analysis that is the foundation of deterrence. Some argue that this irrational behavior is exemplified by having no other purposes other than causing death and destruction.[13] This creates a ~~problematic~~ scenario ~~as~~ in which terrorists may not be concerned with the political advantages or further benefits that may result from their actions. Given the irrationality of terrorists, it is difficult to develop effective responses or deterrent strategies as they may be useless due to the nature of the adversary. Additionally, it is extremely difficult to deter an adversary that prefers escalation regardless of the consequences.[14] Thus, the combination of extreme religious ideology coupled with ~~extra-terrestrial~~ potential rewards for martyrdom creates a sort of irrationality which renders deterrence ineffective and irrelevant.

Third, a practical problem for deterrence exists. Terrorists lack a return address and are usually difficult to find making retaliation ~~difficult~~ burdensome to execute.[15] This "return

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[11] Davis and Jenkins, 4.

[12] Fisher, 1.

[13] Lawrence Freedman, Deterrence, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 123.

[14] Daniel Whiteneck, "Deterring Terrorists: Thoughts on a Framework," in The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. 3, (Summer 2005), 187.

[15] Betts, 45.

address problem" mitigates effective deterrence as it reduces the degree of leverage of certain types of threats.[16] Terrorist networks usually operate on a trans-national basis. As such, this problem crosses multiple borders which make reprisals difficult to "return to sender".[17] A terrorist organization may ~~-~~lack~~s~~ specific territory, population~~,~~ and infrastructure. The invisibility of terrorist networks makes deterrent strategies such as retaliation or punishment less credible. Given the difficulty of locating terrorists and the lack of a singular adversary, deterrence seems less likely to work against terrorism.

For Deterrence

The claim that deterrence is ineffective and useless against terrorists is not a universal ~~to say the least~~consensus. While many scholars and analysts conclude that deterrence is of little use against terrorists, some hold that the "death of deterrence" has been exaggerated and can remain a key tool in the war on terror.[18] ~~The continual applicability of deterrence is exemplified in T~~the Quadrennial Defense Review, the four year US defense planning document released in early 2006, which uses the word "deter" over fifty times referring to "tailored deterrence for rogue powers, terrorist networks and near-term competitors."[19] It is clear, however, that an appreciation for the value of deterrence is growing with time. ~~Therefore, it is imperative that a thorough examination of the applicability of deterrence logic as related to terrorism is conducted.~~

First, some argue that September 11 was not the event that triggered the ineffectiveness of deterrence; rather, the U.S. foreign policy throughout the 1980s and 1990s "failed to communicate to al-Qaeda that the U.S. was willing and able to inflict significant suffering on

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[16] Trager and Zagorcheva, 108.
[17] Fisher, 1.
[18] Fisher, 1.
[19] James H. Lebovic, Deterring International Terrorism and Rogue States: US National Security Policy After 9/11, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 8.

terrorist transgressors.[20] As such, deterrence did not fail, but rather the United States failed to

establish a credible and effective mechanism to deter al-Qaeda. This is also evident when

President Bush noted in 2001 in an interview with the Washington Post that, "It was clear that

bin Laden felt emboldened, and didn't feel threatened by the United States."[21] ~~There are several examples of when the United States failed to retaliate against terrorists.~~ Well known attacks

such as, the 1993 World Trade Center bombings, the embassy bombings of 1998, and the

bombing of the USS Cole in 2000 all went without retaliation and thus, lacked an effective

deterrent mechanism. Unfortunately, the lack of retaliation did not go unnoticed by Osama bin

Laden as he repeatedly labeled the United States as a "paper tiger", a country more prone to

growl then to bite.[22] Thus, it was not that deterrence was ineffective, but rather a credible

deterrent response was not established in the first place.

     Second, many analysts argue that terrorists can be deterred since most terrorist networks

are hierarchical organizational structures. This structure allows terrorist organizations to have

specific goals and strategies which best advance them and their ideology.[23] There are many

actors of a terrorist group to include: leaders, religious figures, financiers, recruiters; and various

state supporters. Deterrence may be possible against such entities that compromise and support

the terrorist network.[24] Several responsibilities within an organization allow for different

deterrent mechanisms to apply. Many in a terrorist network have the cost-benefit calculation

necessary for the adversary to be deterred. Opponents of deterrence argue that terrorists who are

willing to conduct a suicide attack are undeterrable due to the irrational nature of the adversary

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[20] Fisher, 1.
[21] Ibid, 2.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," in International Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls, ed. Charles W. Kegley, (New York: St. Martins, 1990), 117.
[24] Fisher, 2.

and despite the hierarchical structure of the organization. However, others argue that this irrational behavior proves deterrence applicable.

Third, many hold that terrorists are not completely irrational. Although terrorist organizations are likely to have both rational and irrational actors, deterrence can still be applicable. Deterrence only requires a sufficient influence of a cost-benefit framework. Robert Jervis argues that "Much less then a full rationality is needed for the main lines of [deterrence] theory to be valid."[25] Since most terrorist organizations are hierarchical in nature, terrorists most likely have ordered goals and strategies. Richard Betts argues that terrorists resort to their "irrational" tactics as a strategic choice with no other means of advancing their cause.[26] Robert Pape furthers this argument through his study of suicide terrorism. He argues that suicide terrorism is an effective coercive tool and strategic tactic used against liberal democracies, as it was seen as the most effective coercive tool.[27] This recurring theme of rationality is sometimes confused with reasonability.

Thus, the notion of irrational enemies is not the problem of U.S. deterrence logic. Rather, it is the completely rational adversary who connects tools which contradict that of U.S. values and western norms, making their instruments unreasonable to the other party.[28] The strategic logic of the adversary coupled with the confusion between reasonability and rationality allows deterrence to be a potential tool against terrorism.

Implications of Deterrence

There are several significant implications of using a strategy of deterrence to counter combating terrorism. It is important to examine these implications as they may have an

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[25] Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," 299.
[26] Betts, 45.
[27] Pape, 44-45.
[28] Keith B. Payne, The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 10.

~~extraordinary impact on a nation's practices, ideals, and beliefs.~~ Many scholars argue that deterrence may be applicable to ~~counter~~ combating terrorism, but the implications of using such strategies would have an adverse impact on current norms. One such scholar, Uri Fisher, writes that "deterrence, as a strategic concept, is not inapplicable to defending against terrorism; however, the U.S. would face considerable legal and moral quandaries if it were to carry out the necessary policies to deter terrorists and their supporters."[29] As such, it is important that these legal and moral quandaries are discussed. The levels of harshness and brutality that simple deterrent strategies require make it difficult for the United States to use as it would create incredible controversy over the morality and civility of such actions. ~~U.S. foreign policy is well known to be a reflection of the nation's core values and beliefs. However, I~~In order to deter terrorism, the U.S. would have ~~to~~ find it necessary to compromise certain values such as democracy that have guided foreign policy for many years. The inability to use deterrent strategies due to ~~the~~ moral implications also establishes a less credible authority to the adversary. If credibility is mitigated, then the U.S. will have a difficult time communicating a clear message against terrorist elements.[30] If the U.S. cannot establish a clear and credible message, it increases the difficulty of changing the decision-calculus of the terrorist adversary. Many argue that deterrence is still applicable against the current threat of terrorism without examining the actual polices the U.S. would have to adopt and pursue in order to deter the adversary. However, the implications of these deterrent policies would be great. Not only would these policies degrade the moral authority the U.S. currently holds, but also these policies would be viewed as hypocritical and discreditable in the international arena. Thus, it is not a dilemma of inapplicability, but rather a dilemma of use versus non-use.

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[29] Fisher, 1.
[30] Ibid, 2.

Most agree~~Many argue~~ that terrorist networks involve civilian targets, illegitimate targets~~,~~ and unprepared targets. When terrorists can be labeled as unlawful combatants and outside the protection of just war doctrine of *jus in bello*, many questions arise. For instance, what actions and degree of lethality can be used against terrorists? Are there appropriate moral, ethical~~,~~ and legal constraints that should be applied to a deterrence strategy?[31] ~~These are critical questions which many argue have severe implications to the strategy when applied to terrorism.~~

Policy Recommendations and M~~ilitary~~ I~~ntelligence~~ Application

~~It is a fact that~~ T~~t~~here is no single solution or quick fixes to successfully ~~counter~~ combating terrorism. However, it is possible to specify more effective and less effective deterrent strategies at various levels and under different conditions that Military Intelligence professionals can use. The general policy must be adaptive, opportunistic~~,~~ and ~~multisided~~ multidisciplinary for it to be effective. ~~It is also important that I~~intelligence and targeting ~~no~~ should no longer take the conventional approach of "search and destroy" methods in an attempt to deter terrorists.[32] The likely long-term consequences of such actions will result in ~~a~~ ~~degradation of the American image~~damage to American credibility abroad, a spur to expand terrorist networks~~,~~ and continued loss of life. Although conventional methods of deterrence may not be the most effective, deterrence strategies can still be highly effective to critical elements of terrorist networks. As such, the analysis above ~~lends~~ suggests several conclusions for U.S. counterterrorism policy.

First, traditional targeting of nonpolitical means can deter various elements of terrorist networks. For this to be effective, it is imperative that adequate resources are devoted to

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[31] Harvey Rishikof, "Morality, Ethics, and Law in the Global War on Terrorism (The Long War)", in Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21st Century: International Perspectives, ed. James J.F. Forest, (West Port: Praeger Security International, 2007), p. 107.

[32] Niel J. Smelser and Faith Mitchell, Discouraging Terrorism: Some Implications of 9/11, (Washington D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2002), p. 31.

deterrence. ~~Resource allocation is important for these methods to deter terrorism because I~~it is essential that the capability and will <u>to</u>~~do~~ use these resources is both credible and clearly communicated.[33] The continued pursuit of specific terrorists who conducted attacks will demonstrate the will to use force which will likely increase future deterrence success. Intelligence analysts should place a greater emphasis on terrorist financiers as they have targetable assets which are nonpolitical in nature<u>.</u>~~which increases the chances of being found~~.[34] Thus, a higher level of resource allocation devoted to deterrence will increase the likelihood of future success of deterrent strategies.

Second, intelligence professionals should apply deterrent strategies to specific courses of action, rather than on individuals alone. Deterring certain courses of action will send a credible message to terrorist groups not to partake in the certain action. This strategy will also prevent terrorists from cooperating with each other in order to achieve synergy.[35] Empirically, it is proven that terrorists "feel constraints, that they argue and plot among themselves, review and adapt strategies, worry about their perceived constituencies, and sometimes back away from tactics that seem to have gone too far."[36] The operational risks that terrorists may consider can easily be influenced by applying strategies to specific courses of action as opposed to individual terrorists. Since terrorism is a networked operation, deterring courses of action will most likely discourage that action all-together, while deterring individuals might only spur more extremists. As Paul Davis and Brian Jenkins write, "Committed terrorists do not reform, but they do change actions<u>,</u> and that can be important."[37] Military action and threats may deter other organizations than the primary target, making deterrence a feasible option.

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[33] Trager and Zagorcheva, 120.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Davis and Jenkins, 59.
[37] Ibid, 60.

Third, the intelligence community can focus more on deterrence by denial strategies which can be used to decrease the coercive nature of terrorist attacks and the motivation to conduct these attacks. Both an offensive and denial strategy can be applied in conjunction with each other. For example, the United States acted on denial principles with large-scale, offensive efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Additionally, the United States has actively pursued rogue-state arsenals in an attempt to deny them access and capability.[38] As such, a defensive and denial strategy should be applied. The offensive strategy should never impend upon a defensive strategy nor should it draw resources from the defensive posture of the U.S.[39]

Fourth, military intelligence professionals on the ground should adopt and direct a strategy toward distancing and alienating specific audiences from terrorist organizations and activities. Influence tactics can be used to ~~counter~~ combating the terrorist message or technique just as much as it influences the local population. Additionally, direct efforts should be made to work through all available third parties to include the following: societies hosing terrorist organizations, countries trusted by these host societies, and the United States' own allies.[40] This allows for a clearer message to be sent to terrorist organizations that many disapprove of their actions and are willing to apply deterrent strategies to minimize threats and attacks. Additionally, the message is more credible when several parties demonstrate the willingness to utilize their capabilities to combat terrorism. The incorporation of extremist groups into society is another goal that should be pursued as this will decrease the motivation of a terrorist's cause.

Fifth, the extension of ideological influence must be continued to combat extremists who aspire to conduct such attacks. ~~However, this ideological influence does not and should never depend on armed forces.~~ It can ~~result from several other factors to include~~ include the ~~: the~~

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[38] Lebovic, 179.
[39] Ibid, 180.
[40] Smelser and Mitchell, 31.

activities of multinational corporations, the influence of global media, international bodies and projects, and extraterritorial legislation.[41] A key to effective deterrence is extending the deterrent strategy and influence tactics to the society that supports the particular terrorist organization.

It is clear that there is not a single solution to the problem, but rather a multifaceted approach that is both adaptive and flexible by nature is necessary to combat terrorism. Deterrent strategies are still necessary in the fight to say the least. Thus, ~~our~~ the approach must be composed of three essential components. ~~F~~First, the capability to achieve the desired effect must be attained. This can include ~~anything to include~~: the use of force, denial strategies, defensive posture, influence tactics and cooperation efforts. Whatever the policy or strategy is, it must have the required capabilities. Secondly, the strategy must be credible. Credibility issues are raised when exertions have to be made for third parties, costs to include enforcement appear too high, or when the threats are too difficult to restrain.[42] The strategy must be credible in the eyes of the adversary in order for deterrence to work. Lastly, communication is essential to the policy. The threat, action~~,~~ or strategy must be clearly and repeatedly communicated to the adversary. Communications may have to be constructed with several audiences in mind, and the possibility of misperceptions will need to be addressed.[43] Therefore, deterrence will remain effective given the right strategies and the incorporation of three main elements: capability, credibility, and communication.

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[41] Freedman, 127.
[42] Freedman, 130.
[43] Ibid.