

Calculating costs

When the adversaries are unequal, the great power may suppose that its greater capabilities insure that its marginal costs of increased violence are bound to be lower than those of its opponent, even as the conflict escalates. It may feel that its society can be insulated from the effects of retaliation by its superior technical capabilities and greater resources. It may suppose that its adversary will recognize that it cannot reply in kind to a particular form of compelling coercion and so will be ready to negotiate or simply change its ways. Its leaders may believe that its allies can be importuned to mediate should escalation reach undesirable levels or that it can link resolution of the conflict it has engendered to other issues to form a coalition to act on its behalf.

Compellence is, after all, the manipulation of risk. Great powers, having chosen a strategy of compellence to impose the burdens of risk on smaller adversaries and so control them, may, when this initial strategy fails, seek to transfer some of the risk into their allies by enlisting them in the conflict.

Compellence in US policy

As state sponsored terrorism has grown more attractive to opponents of the United States, the Reagan administration has ever more clearly adopted compellence as a major component of its strategy against it. The United States has employed a variety of means to respond to terrorism. These include exchanges of security information with its allies, diplomatic efforts to develop a common strategy against sponsors of terrorism, bribes and covert coercion. The US has come to recognize that terrorist bombings and kidnappings constitute a means adopted by states to coerce it into changing some specific policies rather than being simply a method adopted by political organizations to express their anger. It has accordingly publicly identified state sponsors of terrorism, and has used force or the threat of force to attempt to end that sponsorship. The clearest example of this was the April 14, 1986, bombing of Libya, which was intended to coerce that country into ending its supposed support for attacks on US citizens and military personnel in Europe and elsewhere.

Having on previous occasions attacked a Libyan anti-aircraft missile base and two Libyan naval vessels, the US attack on Libyan air fields and on the living quarters of Gadhafi in Tripoli represented a clear escalation of force to the highest level possible short of a sustained and massive attack on the country. By taking Gadhafi as the primary target, the US presumably signaled its resolve to other less vulnerable leaders, as well as to Gadhafi himself, that support for violence directed at US interests would be made personally costly to decision-makers.

Some additional features of the Libyan affair should be noted. The United States requested aid from several of its NATO allies and received aid from one of them. What is as important as this move to involve its allies in so high a stage of conflict, is the fact that the requests were openly made and openly rejected.

Politically popular

The US bombing was very favorably received by the American public, as was undoubtedly expected within the administration. Television coverage of the event stressed the technological proficiency of US forces and the drama of the

event. The "collateral damage" to residential areas, and the death and injury to Gadhafi's children were also depicted. These effects were explained by the Defense Department as being the result of unavoidable circumstances rather than as the intentional and expected effects of the attack on the Gadhafi compound. The event was clearly intended to be a media event, and the administration did what it could to contribute to making it one, to the point of supplying gun-camera films of the attack to the media.

As was the case with the invasion of Grenada, the effects of this example of compellence on US public opinion, and on the opinion of members of the US Congress, must be seen as weighing at least as heavily as the effects on foreign decision-makers in the calculus of benefits and costs driving the policy. Because the attack sought no definite military objective, and because the goal of killing Gadhafi could not be admitted, the only immediate possibility of failure from the standpoint of domestic opinion would be very severe losses in the attack force. Given the advantages of the attacking force the risks could not have appeared to be very high.

Avoiding Congress

And because of the nature of the attack, the policy issues inherent in it could be decided entirely within the executive branch. We have recently learned that the raid was another one of those "neat ideas" favored by those members of the National Security Council staff who were responsible for the Iran/Contra scandal. Compellence is apt to be especially attractive to a President and his political advisers, rather than to those of the foreign and security policy bureaucracy, particularly when a bureaucratic consensus cannot be reached. For these reasons US Presidents may well see compellence as an increasingly attractive choice, when faced with the prospect of sharp domestic criticism if an administration fails to respond to terrorism.

The War Powers Act of 1973 which requires timely notice and consultation with Congress was not triggered by the Libyan attack, and as a consequence, congressional leaders could be informed at the last minute of the impending attack and pledged to secrecy. Congress was thus presented with a *fait accompli*, aimed at one of the administration's favorite symbolic enemies (the President called him a "mad dog"), and justified in the highest register of moral rhetoric, as a righteous response to terrorism. The example of this attack could then serve as a favorite administration reply to Congressional criticisms of its penchant for the use of force, and particularly force not authorized by Congress. The use of compellence against Libya can be seen as a step in the administration's attempt to enlarge its freedom of action in foreign policy. Thus, the growing use of compellence is not only a product of the international environment and the imbalance between power and commitment, it is also a reflection of the contest for power within the executive branch and between Congress and the President.

Consequences of compellence

If compellence is likely to be a favorite US response to state sponsored terrorism, what consequences are to be expected? State sponsors of terror may be less likely to use terror, as is expected by those who favor compellence. But they have a wide variety of alternatives to simply ending their support for terrorism. Because their support is covert, they