



BACKGROUND

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Strategic Generosity: How American Aid Wins Hearts and Minds

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This week, sixty years ago, George Marshall announced a dramatic program of aid to Europe, saying: "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist."

The Marshall Plan recognized that America served its strategic interest by helping to build a stable and prosperous Europe. Whereas the Communists claimed territory, America won friends and forged the Atlantic alliance that drove the global economy and won the Cold War in the second half of the 20th century. America now faces another battle for hearts and minds, this time with radical Islam. The American people will only be safer if we create more friends and isolate our enemies in the Islamic world. The Marshall Plan reminds us that foreign aid - which accounts for less than 1% of the federal budget - is a critical and cost-effective way to reach this goal.

Why Hearts and Minds Matter

The way America is viewed directly impacts the security of the American people. The 9/11 Commission defined the challenge this way: "Our enemy is twofold: al Qaeda, a stateless network of terrorists that struck us on 9/11; and a radical ideological movement in the Islamic world, inspired in part by al Qaeda, which has spawned terrorist groups and violence across the globe." This movement has made inroads from the streets of Europe, to the slums of Karachi, to the islands of Indonesia. For far too many Muslims, America is

defined by the messengers of radical Islam. Aid gives us an opportunity to define ourselves.

Security will not come simply from killing and capturing a number of terrorists; it must be joined with efforts

to defeat this diffuse ideological movement. Think of this challenge in terms of three layers of an onion. The core consists of terrorists working to kill Americans. These must be fought with force. The middle layer is the ideological infrastructure that allows violent jihadism to spread, providing everything from funding for radical madrasas, to virtual networks for terrorist recruitment. **The outer layer is the broader Islamic world that must reject calls to**

radicalism. The more that third group sympathizes with the terrorists and hates America, the more protected terrorists are, and the easier it is for terrorists to recruit, raise funds, and operate without fear that they will be turned against or turned in by their neighbors. The more they reject the terrorists and identify with America and its goals, the easier it is to isolate and defeat terrorism. Aid is a crucial tool in peeling back that outer layer.

The Strategic Necessity of Aid

Nearly six years after 9/11, America is not waging a strong and smart counter-offensive against radical Islam. That counter-offensive must integrate different tools of American power to root out terrorists, press for change in repressive states, and deploy effective diplomacy and policy diplomacy. **That counter-offensive must also deploy the power of American aid.** In a world where America cannot possibly solve every problem or address every grievance, aid sends a simple and powerful mes-

*"You need force to win wars,
but you need friends to avoid
them"*

-General Marshall



sage, the same message that the Marshall Plan sent to Europe: **America is on your side.**

Emergency Humanitarian Aid: Based on polling done by Terror Free Tomorrow, America has a dramatic opportunity to change public opinion through humanitarian aid. U.S. assistance after the December 2004 tsunami caused favorable views of America in Indonesia - the country with the world's largest Muslim population - to rise from 15 percent to 60 percent. Highlighting the fact that America is in a competition for hearts and minds, support for Osama bin Ladin fell from 58 percent to 23 percent. U.S. assistance after the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, a key country for terrorist recruitment and basing, caused favorable views of America to double from 23 percent to 46 percent, the highest level in Pakistan since 9/11. Follow-up polls showed that these upturns in support were largely sustained.

The lesson is that it is in America's strategic interest to be - and to be seen to be - responsive to people's pressing needs. The primary impulse behind humanitarian aid is to express our common humanity - and that's precisely why it is such a powerful tool in reversing opinion. When catastrophe strikes, America should be there and be there promptly. To that end, USAID, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and other U.S. agencies that fund humanitarian and development work overseas must receive adequate funding. After the tsunami, there were ravaged areas accessible only to the military, and the military's role in aid provision where civilian organizations cannot tread can be crucial. As Admiral Michael Mullin said: "Aside from the lives we... helped to save, we started changing hearts and minds."

The Broader Aid Agenda: Treating a sick child or helping a family rebuild a home can leave a community with a favorable impression of America - and lessen the impact of terrorist propaganda. Yet only a sustained agenda of opportunity can bring lasting stability to unstable corners of the world. To yield a strategic benefit, major aid programs must be seen as honestly helping the populations of other countries, rather than cynically shoring up our own interests. Our efforts to rebuild Europe were seen as honest and won us friends in Europe to this day, while our aid in Pakistan and Egypt is often viewed cynically by those who see us as supporting corrupt or dictatorial governments. The way aid is provided, and who it is provided to, matters.

We should set ambitious aid goals that draw wide support across populations, while also laying the groundwork for progress against terrorism. For example, the 9/11 Commission recommendation to generously support primary and secondary education in Muslim coun-

tries would serve a tangible humanitarian need. This would also allow us to fight extremists in the battle for the hearts and minds of the young, by providing educational alternatives in communities where a radical madrassa may be the only option, signaling our commitment to a better future for young Muslims, and bolstering the government. We cannot educate every child, but we can stake out alternatives. By advancing opportunity, we put radical ideologies on the retreat.

We should seek out and partner with governments, organizations and individuals committed to a better future. The future put forward by radical Islam is rigid, intolerant, and unresponsive to peoples' basic needs. America must stand with those governments, organizations and individuals who seek a better life, and put resources to match our rhetoric on the need for tolerance, reform, and development in the Islamic world. By showing the world the face of American generosity, we can help others while helping ourselves achieve lasting security. As Marshall - who was a General before he was a diplomat - understood: you need force to win wars, but you need friends to avoid them. Today, America must heed that lesson, and live up to that standard.

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