Soft Intervention in Africa
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TRANSFORMING SPOILERS INTO STAKEHOLDERS

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The only options besides coercion are bargaining and persuasion. Persuasion is often limited in its effectiveness. And those forms of persuasion that are effective are not always desirable. That means that some form of bargaining often will be the only effective method available—usually incentives.

—Ruth W. Grant, “Ethics and Incentives: A Political Approach,” 38

An incentives approach seeks to manage conflict and maintain peace by means of political bargaining. A third-party actor uses incentives and disincentives to influence the policy decisions of parties or movements, attempting to influence their choices in what the sending actor regards as a positive direction. Such an approach is broader in its implications than a realist focus might suggest. Scholars in the realist tradition of international relations, concentrating largely on the material capabilities of states and their power relationships, tend to be more concerned with the tangible dimensions of hard power (military intervention) than with the means of soft intervention (pressures and incentives) to change the behavior of target states and movements. Treating states and ethnic groups as unitary actors, realists downplay the fluidity and heterogeneity of these entities. This tendency often obscures possibilities for learning, change, and new alliance partners, as civil associations and ethnic factions respond to innovative ideas from external and internal sources. Power is much more complex than military muscle alone, for its relevance depends very much on the context in which it is employed.

In this chapter, we seek to shift the traditional perception of power rela-
tions in order to look at the ways great powers make use of incentives to encourage negotiation, ethnic reconciliation, and continued cooperation after the achievement of peace. The thrust of the analysis is how an external actor, primarily the United States, can use incentives and disincentives, broadly conceived, to promote change of behavior on the ground in an effort to facilitate the process of negotiating and implementing peace agreements, thereby reducing the possibility of continued intense internal conflict.

In international relations, pressures and incentives are a form of intervention whereby a sending country intrudes for constructive or destructive reasons into the internal affairs of a receiving country. The relationship is potentially risky, yet at times it may be justified when the intervening party meets the following conditions on when and whether to intercede and how to employ force. First, when invoking coercive incentive strategies, the intervening party should seek to promote legitimate purposes—those that encourage peaceful relations and the protection of vulnerable peoples. Second, the intervention, as far as practicable, should be internationally sanctioned and monitored. Unilateral action, particularly by neighboring states, risks the possibility of favoritism for coethnics and of self-aggrandizement. Hence, international-organization approval and oversight becomes a necessary means in certain circumstances to assure that the cause of intervention remains a just one. Third, the action should be multinational whenever feasible, thus facilitating international approval and oversight. Multilateral intervention may not be practical in all cases, but when it is possible, it avoids inevitable charges of favoritism between the adversaries. Fourth, international interveners should strive to react to the provocations of state or subnational actors in a proportional manner (ICISS 2001, 37). At times, interveners have made politically astute calculations to respond disproportionately to a violation of international norms, usually in an effort to deter further infringements. Although such a calculation may be logical, it is not necessarily justifiable. Fifth, interventions should be justified in terms of the expectations of interveners that they will achieve their objectives in a reasonable period of time. Sensible doubts arise, as in the intervention by the Economic Community of West African States Cease-Fire Monitoring Group forces in Liberia in the 1990s, when the costs in human life appear to approximate or exceed the number of lives saved. To promote benevolent outcomes, it is essential that these conditions serve as the general standards for appropriate action.

We focus on soft intervention generally and incentive strategies in particular, in an effort to link ideals related to facilitating an end to civil wars and continuing peace after conflict, as well as protecting vulnerable peoples, on
the one hand, with the pragmatism of a strategy that is risk- and cost-effective, on the other hand. Neither avoidance nor military intervention can be viewed as justified in most cases. Rather, a diplomatic approach seems a logical alternative, and it holds out the possibility of greater leverage than is often recognized. But such leverage must meet the tests of timing, legitimacy, and appropriateness. We consider in subsequent sections when and what type of incentive should be used at the lowest cost to the intervener, keeping in mind a consideration for the uniqueness of the conflict. Our hope is that this overall focus will provide us with a framework in which to think about what we can anticipate from an incentives approach to managing intrastate conflicts and maintaining stable post–civil war situations.

**Linking Mediation to Incentive Strategies**

An active third-party diplomatic effort is often an essential aspect of ending civil wars and ensuring the continued protection of vulnerable peoples after the termination of conflict. Such diplomacy involves various strategic choices, including negotiation, conciliation, mediation, displacement, partition, protection, redistribution, reconstruction, and transformation. The selection of which strategy to apply in a particular case is dependent upon a third party’s capacity, willingness to engage, and assessment of what will prove effective in advancing the objectives of peace and reconciliation at various stages of the conflict cycle. The choice is based on a statesman’s perception of his or her country’s interests and the ability of a strategic approach to achieve its desired purposes at a reasonable cost (Zartman 1995, 7).

An important option is mediation, which entails the intervention of an external third party or parties in the internal affairs of sovereign states. By intervening during and after conflict, the mediator exerts various levels of influence on state and substate (ethnoregional, religious, or other) elites in an attempt to get them to move toward a more cooperative relationship. Incentives represent a resource in the hands of mediators that increases their ability to influence the behavior of local actors in a desired direction. By interceding, the mediator invariably transforms the bargaining encounter from a dyadic to a triadic one, persuading or inducing the parties to alter their attitudes on the issues at hand.

A mediator’s influence comes from her or his ability to facilitate an outcome that is minimally acceptable to both parties or that threatens a worse outcome by allying the third party with one of the local rivals. Diplomats have used their influence to perform various roles at one time or another. In a large number of African conflicts, such as those in Mozambique,
Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, third parties have used a variety of noncoercive means to keep open the channels of communication and provide information on the intentions of rival parties. At the next level, as in the Ethiopian-Eritrean War of 1998–2000 and Sudan and Liberia in 2003, mediators have been more proactive, persuading and criticizing, giving advice, encouraging the parties to reconsider their options, formulating proposals, and persuading them to stick to such agreements once peace has been achieved. Finally, as seen in the Angolan-Namibian negotiations, high-level public officials have intervened energetically and influenced the strategies of local actors through direct mediation and the manipulation of various pressures and incentives (Cortright 1997; Rothchild 1997; Haass and O’Sullivan 2000).

Mediation requires the calibration of the necessary means for assuring equitable outcomes among group interests or determining policies that will allay the fears of weaker parties. It may also involve facilitating effective governance, something that calls for considerable skill and judgment and extensive knowledge of local cultures. Effective great-power mediation of intrastate conflicts encounters resistance as well as domestic constraints of commitment and political will (Pruitt 2004, 78). It is a difficult task, and the possibility of failure and a return to civil war, as in Angola and Liberia in the 1990s, can never be discounted. This uncertainty can at times discourage potential mediators from taking on a diplomatic initiative, for it affects future ties between the mediator and the local parties—and even the reputation of the mediator himself or herself.

Ultimately, what pushes a great power such as the United States to intervene during conflicts and to stay on the scene to assist in the maintenance of peace, whether in a hard or a soft manner, is a perception that its own interests are at stake. In this respect, the encouragement of local actors to commit to a lasting stable peace is in line with broader US status quo objectives (Morgenthau 1960, 39).

**Diplomacy and the Use of Incentive Strategies**

Incentives wielded by a great power, alone or in combination with other countries or international organizations, demonstrate the determination of the intervener to promote change and to help sustain it once achieved. Incentives are a type of intervention, often but not always soft, that involve a trade-off between interference and the advancement of peace and protection (Nye 2002, 8). What intervening powers seek to do is to reduce uncertainty over the process leading to a peaceful resolution of conflict, helping
to provide credibility for the negotiations to follow (Zartman 2001, 300). The effect, it is hoped, is to ease uncertainty about their future intergroup relations (North 1990).

Soft intervention consists of structural arrangements or distributive or symbolic rewards (incentives) or punishments (disincentives) used by third parties to encourage a target state or movement to shift its priorities in a desired direction and maintain them (Rothchild 1997, 19). Whether they are noncoercive or coercive, incentives attempt “to raise the opportunity cost of continuing on the previous course of action by changing the calculation of costs and benefits” (Cortright 1997, 273). If they are credible and sufficient to deal with the dispute at hand, they can help prevent the escalation of conflict and assist in keeping it abated once hostilities have ended. They make adversaries aware of the benefits of a negotiated outcome, while alerting them to the increasing costs of bargaining failure and to the possibility of a return to war. In real-world contexts, third parties sometimes apply packages of noncoercive and coercive incentives and disincentives, with coercive incentives becoming increasingly dominant as the costs of altering preferences and the intensity of conflict rises. Somewhat paradoxically, noncoercive incentives, when combined with a credible threat, are most likely to result in a durable peace, because rewards are viewed positively and they are less likely to cause resentment. Nevertheless, there may be no alternative at times to aid cutoffs, exclusion from international organizations, sanctions, or a threat or use of military force to deal with an immediate crisis. If coercive measures are applied, it is important to follow them up with “postconflict peacebuilding” incentives and activities (including generous programs of development aid and political reforms) in order to prevent a recurring cycle of conflict (Cousens 2001, 2). Incentives can involve rewards (purchase, security, recognition, development assistance) as well as disincentives or negative inducements—punishment, threats, or coercion. However, all in all, as Sudan’s North-South negotiations or Liberia and Ethiopia and Eritrea show, the combination of positive and negative incentives has produced significant agreements leading to a peaceful outcome; the absence of such a combination, as in Darfur, can sometimes prove counterproductive.

Noncoercive Incentive Strategies

Third parties or internal actors, or both, can use three main types of noncoercive incentives—purchase, insurance, and legitimation—to facilitate the negotiation, implementation, and maintenance of peace agreements,
while protecting the vulnerable (Rothchild 2009, 37–42). There are important differences between these incentive types: purchase and insurance are perceived in terms of benefits for the target as a whole or some of its constituent parts, while legitimation is perceived in terms of the credibility of the negotiating process and the eventual role of the third party (or third parties) in the postconflict phase. In addition, the list of noncoercive incentives could be expanded in certain cases: thus, even though diplomatic incentives have an important noncoercive dimension, we include them in the coercive category because of the extent of the pressures that are brought to bear on the target country or movement.

Purchase

During and after deeply conflictual encounters, purchase represents a relatively low-cost but sometimes quite effective means of facilitating cooperation both to help end hostilities and to maintain peace in the transition period immediately following the termination of the conflict. Third parties use purchase to reward actors, usually individuals but also groups, with personally targeted short-term fiscal or tangible rewards for acting positively to end conflict and to keep it from returning. By offering side-payments, the third party enlarges the pie in an effort to facilitate the possibility of reconciliation and peace after the conflict. It alters the payoff structure to transform a dispute from a constant-sum to a positive-sum game, thus enhancing the possibility of a compromise (Rubin 1981, 27; Touval 1982, 327). Third parties, particularly great powers that control substantial resources, have made extensive use of economic incentives during peace negotiations and after them once an agreement has been reached. Purchase is widely used, and despite its relatively low cost (in gaining RENAMO’s agreement to a cease-fire in Mozambique, foreign donors contributed only $19 million in order to transform the insurgent organization into a political party), it can contribute significantly to furthering conflict management objectives (Rothchild 1997, 257). By themselves, such incentives are not likely to overcome the credible-commitment problem in intense conflict situations, but even here, their contribution is not to be dismissed lightly (Lake and Rothchild 1998, 13–17). Such efforts to extend side-payments, while most frequently deployed to persuade specific members of the various warring factions to commit to a peace agreement during negotiations, can also be envisioned as a tool to facilitate the implementation process. In this way, reluctant actors may be convinced by a purchase approach that they should maintain commitment to a peace process once it is already under way.
Insurance

External third parties or the state can attempt to transform an intrastate dispute by promising, during the negotiations or the transition period that follows, to provide cultural protections for minorities and for the participation of weaker parties in the political institutions of governance once the peace agreement is implemented. By making an effort to understand and empathize with the profound insecurities of vulnerable peoples about the survival of their culture or the protection of their persons and property during and after civil wars, actors offering such promises of political inclusion may go far in allaying these minority fears. Constitutional and legal protections have been written about frequently, and where they exist, as in Nigeria after the Biafran war, they provide a broad assurance for vulnerable minority peoples.

However, another potentially important incentive encouraging elites and leaders to negotiate on peace or on their safe exit from the zone of fighting is the offer of amnesty. In both Liberia in 2003 and northern Uganda more recently, amnesty incentives contributed significantly to promoting negotiations on ending the warfare and encouraging lasting peace. However, a problem exists as to the credibility of these amnesty incentives. The troublesome cases of Charles Taylor and Joseph Kony clearly illustrate this point. Amnesty incentives were important, but in light of the risks they entailed, their utility proved limited.

The problem of ensuring the representation of minority interests in the new institutions of state received considerable attention in Sudan’s North-South and Darfur deliberations. Early on, former US senator John C. Danforth, President George W. Bush’s special envoy for peace in Sudan, noted that any peace negotiations must explore ways of “guaranteeing religious freedom” if South Sudan people are to have confidence in the peace accord (Danforth 2002, 28). In the end, Sudan’s 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement provided for a variety of institutional protections for non-Muslim interests, including the right of the South to self-determination, a referendum in the South on independence by the end of the sixth year, assurance that Sharia Law would not be implemented in the South during the transition, coexistence of the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army during the transition period, international monitoring of the cease-fire, formulas for wealth and power sharing, and specified representation of the South on the committee to draft the interim constitution and in the National Assembly.

Encouraging as such promised guarantees are for minority security and
well-being, there are nonetheless limits to their efficacy, for the majority party cannot credibly commit future leaders not to exploit smaller parties at a later date (Fearon 1998, 108). Moreover, third parties, under pressure from their domestic constituents to reduce overseas involvements, find it difficult in practice to honor fully the "guarantees" they give to uphold the agreement.

Incentives are sometimes difficult to arrive at through bargaining, because majorities are intent on centralized rule and minorities are determined to secure rigid constitutional constraints on this rule; even so, in some cases local bargaining parties can agree on incentives on their own (e.g., in Nigeria in 1979) or through mediation and bargaining after civil war (e.g., in Bosnia). In the best of circumstances, as in the Sudan, third parties and state leaders can reassure minority groups through promises of support for regular elections, political autonomy, inclusion of weaker interests on a proportional basis in the civil service and central government, the rule of law, judicial impartiality, rules on the proportional distribution of revenues, and protection of linguistic, religious, and ethnic rights.

Legitimation
Third parties can use legitimacy incentives to induce a target government or movement to cooperate in containing intense conflict and maintaining peace once it has been achieved. States and international organizations, in passing judgment on the validity or legitimacy of governments, can affect the reputation of ruling elites and their ability to enter into and to maintain beneficial relations with members of the international community. When used assertively to influence the behavior of local actors, as with apartheid South Africa on the Namibian question, legitimacy incentives can help to influence elite positions. However, when used weakly, without setting political conditions on acceptable standards of behavior toward new minorities in the successor states, as with the German recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, recognition can throw away the only influence that the international community can bring to bear on subsequent behavior.

US negotiators recognize the powerful attractiveness of legitimacy incentives in their call to governments to sign on to and abide by peace agreements. These incentives were a resource in the hands of US diplomats in the 1980s and 1990s as they sought to overcome South African resistance to Namibia’s independence, and they were also a resource for the United States in attempting to extract concessions from the government in the bargaining over Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.
Coercive Incentive Strategies

Beyond these noncoercive incentives, it is important to note three partially or fully coercive incentives that third parties can employ to attempt to alter behavior in a desired direction. Despite their coercive features, we treat them as incentives for cooperation since external actors use coercive measures to change the calculations of costs and benefits of local parties and encourage them to alter policies accordingly and to maintain them. This inclusion of coercive incentives among the corpus of incentive strategies is different from the narrower approach adopted by some scholars, but it seems justified in terms of the purposes of the sending actor or actors.

Both noncoercive and coercive incentives are important instruments of leverage and are often used together, reinforcing one another. By acting in such a manner, the mediator creates pressures by placing conditions on political and economic relations to overcome stalemates and to sustain positive interactions. The mediator can also use her or his diplomatic prowess to threaten sanctions and the ending of relations, to cut off economic and military aid, or to offer positive inducements (Shattuck, Simo, and Durch 2003, 3). The mediator employs the resources at his or her disposal to enlarge private opportunity or state capacity and in this way make a shift toward peace, as well as the maintenance of peace once it has been achieved, more acceptable to a rival or rivals. In doing so, the third-party actor increases the value of certain alternatives in an effort to make them more politically acceptable to leaders who otherwise face a situation of limited choice.

Diplomatic Pressures and Incentives

Diplomacy, which incorporates both pressures and incentives, embraces a variety of policy approaches: political, economic, strategic, and military. Diplomats can raise awareness on all sides regarding the future costs of escalating conflict and of the reemergence of civil war once peace has been achieved. They may seek to alter the adversaries’ perceptions and calculations and persuade them to make mutual accommodations in the present in order to avoid a costly conflict at a later date after peace has been achieved.

In order for a mediator to be in a position to exert pressure, provide incentives, or offer desirable alternatives, it is essential that he or she establish sufficient leverage (or influence) over the parties. When a mediator acts as a communicator or formulator, extensive leverage is not necessarily required
for the intervention to be effective. During the negotiations leading up to
the Oslo Accords, for example, the mediator helped to shape an agreement
based on what I. William Zartman calls a “mutually enticing opportunity”
(Zartman 1997, 197). It is when a conflict is intense and strong and third-
party influence is needed that a mediator requires the capacity to raise the
costs of proceeding on a given course of action (Cortright 1997, 273).

In the period between 2002 and 2004, the United States had leverage
with both parties in the Sudanese negotiations, enabling it to play a con-
structive role in influencing the priorities of these rivals. The International
Crisis Group deemed “sustained US pressure on the parties” to be “the
single most important factor needed” in the Sudanese negotiations in Au-
gust 2003 (International Crisis Group 2003, 1). In its relations with the
Sudanese government, the United States held out the prospect of benefits
in terms of trade and aid opportunities, while at the same time signaling
that it had no intention of bombing Sudanese targets again or acting harm-
fully toward Sudan in the United Nations. In its relations with the
Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), which had close ties with
members of the US Congress, the leverage of the United States came es-
sentially from the damage that a lack of cooperation on the peace process
would entail for the SPLM/A’s reputation (i.e., the SPLM/A could not af-
ford to be seen as opposed to negotiations on peace).

The prospect of inclusion in or exclusion from an international organi-
zation is an additional diplomatic tool that may be wielded during both
negotiations and the peace implementation phase. Weak states, and par-
ticularly those that have gained their sovereign independence only recently,
crave recognition and acceptance in a world of states. The denial of this
recognition or of acceptance by an international organization is a blow to
the legitimacy of such states and may induce their cooperation to ward off
an impending threat. In Africa, third parties made maximum use of lever-
age to isolate both the Ethiopian and the Eritrean governments during the
1998–2000 war, to some success. John Prendergast comments that “both
governments, like most, wanted full integration in the global community,
and wanted to participate in global decisions and issues; but Ethiopia and
Eritrea were pigeonholed by the UN Security Council and most key govern-
ments as countries in conflict, which greatly limited their ability to partici-
pate normally in global affairs for the entire time of the conflict” (Prender-
gast 2001, 7).

In 2002, US diplomats threatened aid cutoffs to ensure that Uganda and
Rwanda did not stoke the fires in the Democratic Republic of Congo. John
Shattuck, Paul Simo, and William J. Durch comment, “Recent experiences
show that when targeted conditionality is applied, Rwanda and Uganda are amenable to pressure.” They continue: “A clear link has been drawn between Rwanda’s agreeing to withdraw its troops from Congo and a US abstention from a vote at the IMF on an aid package to Rwanda in 2002.” Reportedly, when Ugandan officials encountered similar threats, they also adopted a cooperative stance regarding the reduction of tensions in the Democratic Republic of Congo after negotiations had begun (Shattuck, Simo, and Durch 2003, 27). But cooperation does not follow automatically. The threat of an aid cutoff can lead to unintended consequences, as US leverage on a target state is reduced (for example, in Daniel arap Moi’s Kenya) and the targeted actor is left free to pursue his repressive actions (Brown 2003, 84–85).

Sanctions

Others have dealt elsewhere with the role that economic, political, and strategic sanctions play in punishing those perceived as violating the norms of the international community. Here we concentrate on the value of such measures in inducing a targeted actor to change its behavior in a desired direction. If one views the impact of sanctions broadly, and includes the psychological and symbolic effects they have on the political environment in which bargaining takes place, it is clear they have the potential to reach beyond punishment and foster support for peace.

The dual function of sanctions in punishing defections and providing incentives for more constructive behavior is exemplified by the role of incentives built into the US Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. The act made manifest at its outset the link between US sanctions and a change of policies on apartheid in South Africa. US policies were “designed to bring about reforms in that system of government that will lead to the establishment of a nonracial democracy.” The US government proposed working toward that goal by encouraging South African authorities to repeal the state of emergency, release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, permit members of all races to form political parties and to participate in the political process, establish a timetable to eliminate the apartheid laws, and negotiate with the representatives of all racial groups over the country’s future political system. The act left open-ended the phases that would follow, stating that “the United States will adjust its actions toward the Government of South Africa to reflect the progress or lack of progress made by the Government of South Africa in meeting the goal set forth in [Section 101].” Thus, the act made conscious use of various incentives and disincentives to advance both the rights of vulnerable people and the negotiating process.
The same was true in other high-profile US- and UN-sponsored interventions in Africa as well. The United Nations, seeking to prevent a widening war in Sierra Leone, imposed sanctions in 2001 affecting travel and the sale of conflict diamonds on the regime of President Charles Taylor in Liberia, which was providing support to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) insurgents in neighboring Sierra Leone (Hirsch 2001, 25–28). Had Taylor remained in power for an extended period, his failure to take effective action against smuggling might well have led to further efforts to tighten these sanctions. Sanctions were also put into effect on the movement of money and timber exports and on suppliers doing business with the RUF in Sierra Leone. Such sanctions had an important symbolic dimension, signaling to the target movement the international community's displeasure with its brutal practices and threatening to take action to induce a change of conduct. In Zimbabwe, the United States put sanctions into effect against the ruling elite in February 2002, placing a ban on their travel in an effort to protest an election campaign that was marked, according to the Bush administration, by political violence and intimidation. On October 7, 2002, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution threatening sanctions unless the Sudanese government negotiated with the South in good faith. These actions indicate a cautiously positive view in US official circles of using sanctions to protect human rights and advance negotiations on the ending of civil wars.

But clearly the threat or imposition of sanctions must be credible if target states or movements are to take them seriously. International sanctions are likely to prove most meaningful when the demands for change are limited in scope and the sanctions are put in place by a strong state or coalition of states. Powerful states, as Saadia Touval notes, are in an advantageous position “to exert influence to persuade the disputants to change their stance and agree to terms they are reluctant to accept” (Touval 2002, 173). Their leverage gives them the ability to persuade the adversaries to adopt more cooperative positions on the issues that divide them. As a consequence, the United States was able to use the enormous global influence at its disposal to influence the preferences of negotiators in Angola, Liberia, and Sudan, but the weaker state of Norway proved much less capable of influencing Sri Lankan peace talks.

Moreover, in the African context, sanctions seem most likely to gain credibility and to alter the behavior of target governments when the state is closely linked to the global economy. Thus, the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which had considerable support in principle from the international community, did raise economic and political costs on the sta-
tus quo in relatively industrialized South Africa and appears to have contributed to the government’s reevaluation of its priorities (Rothchild and Ravenhill 1992, 399). This experience was directly contrary to the warnings of Central Intelligence Agency director Richard M. Helms, who argued that South Africa, because of its reliance on gold production, was “one of the least vulnerable countries in the world to economic sanctions” (National Security Council 1966, 1053). Such predictions proved widely off the mark, failing to take account of possible restrictions on the importation of Krugerrands and other export products. As a basis for policy, such predictions contributed to US inaction at a critical juncture in history.

In addition to the actual use of sanctions, a credible third party, particularly a strong one such as the United States, can attempt to influence the priorities of the adversaries by threatening sanctions against a target state. In April 2004, the US State Department expressed frustration over the slow progress in the Sudanese North-South peace talks and warned of possible US sanctions under the 2002 Sudan Peace Act if the parties failed to reach an agreement soon (Gollust 2004). But the threat, while powerful, had limited impact. Sanctions have not proved to be relevant instruments against many authoritarian regimes or against weak states that have considerable autonomy from international influences. They can be difficult to apply where there is a lack of consensus on the part of the interveners. Sanctions, then, require careful application if they are to provide an incentive for sustainable change.

Military Enforcement

When noncoercive and minimally coercive incentives do not prove sufficient to prevent conflict from emerging or escalating, third parties may have little option but to raise the costs by making threats or using military means. In these circumstances, third parties intervene with military might to enforce the peace and protect the vulnerable. Provided the third parties’ troops are sufficient in number to achieve their purposes and are well trained and armed, such military actions or the threat of military actions may be indispensable in strengthening a political initiative (Craig and George 1995, 258; Jentleson 2002, 274). When the United States refused to threaten or use force in a highly menacing situation such as Rwanda, the consequences proved disastrous. The main US representative to Rwanda at the time of the 1994 genocide, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Prudence Bushnell, did contact Colonel Théoneste Bagasora and other high officials about stopping the genocide and holding people accountable for violations of international law. However, her efforts had
little or no effect. With the United States unprepared to commit its troops to halt the violence and pushing to withdraw UN troops on the scene, Bushnell’s appeals lacked the quality of a credible deterrent needed in this situation. By contrast, the British used force effectively to protect a UN peacekeeping operation in Sierra Leone in 2000. Force may be a last resort, yet its threat or use may at times prove indispensable to further legitimate diplomatic objectives.

In buttressing peace agreements, military enforcement measures can play an important role in overcoming the credible-commitment and information problems that complicate the process of consolidating peace agreements (Lake and Rothchild 1998). By sharing knowledge about the intentions of rival actors and by monitoring the actions of adversaries to maintain the terms of a cease-fire and to disarm and demobilize their troops, a third party’s use of military enforcement measures encourages the acceptance of new rules during the difficult transition period and imposes costs on any element who might attempt to break the terms of the bargain. The importance of involving a third party in the peace implementation process is underlined by Barbara Walter, who finds that the parties to an agreement are 20 percent more likely to follow through on the arrangement if a third party acts as a protector of the agreement (2002, 83). Thus, third parties are likely to play a critically important role in overcoming the uncertainties surrounding the political consolidation process, providing much-needed support to the state and raising costs for potential challengers (Hartzell, Hoddie, and Rothchild 2001, 203).

Military force can prove indispensable in protecting vulnerable peoples from illegitimate state and opposition leaders who attempt to seize, or succeed in seizing, state power. In principle, it can enforce a cold peace and provide the basis for “coercive diplomacy,” enabling external diplomats to intercede and use their influence to “induce the opponent to revise his calculations and agree to a mutually acceptable termination of the conflict” (George 1971, 18). Hence, military enforcement can be coextensive with diplomatic pressures and incentives. When, in the Congo, the Adoula-Tshombe talks of 1962 and diplomatic and economic pressures failed to achieve a change of preferences regarding the reintegration of Katanga into the country, international actors used force to persuade Katangese leader Moise Tshombe to back down from his claim to sovereignty. The UN intervention threatened to bring increasing force to bear over time, and it succeeded, after several sharp clashes, in altering the target leader’s preferences for a separatist course. US officials strongly backed the Congolese government during the Adoula-Tshombe negotiations, and the United
States exerted both political and economic pressures on Tshombe to act in a reconciliatory manner, including efforts to get the large mining company Union Minière du Haut Katanga to withhold income from Katanga. US diplomats recommended various constitutional measures that would consolidate central control and specifically offered what they termed “incentives,” such as an offer to assist in reequipping the armed forces as soon as an agreement was reached with Katanga. With so much at stake, it is not surprising that diplomatic incentives were not sufficient to bring about Katanga’s reintegration and that the critical factor in impelling change became the UN military initiative. In such circumstances military force may be viewed as “essential to rescue a challenged peace” (Doyle 2001, 546).

Military enforcement also provided US diplomats with a fleeting opportunity to use incentives to promote Somalia’s reconciliation. Given the brutal circumstances that gripped Somalia in 1992, President George Bush decided on a humanitarian military intervention, with UN endorsement, to ensure a stable and safe environment for the delivery of relief supplies to the starving people of the country. US policymakers sought to provide an overwhelming military presence to ensure cooperation among Somali factional leaders on the ground. They therefore dispatched a twenty-five-thousand-person US military force to the country in December 1992 (Coppson and Dagne 1993, 1). Operation Restore Hope had limited objectives, such as to enable the relief agencies and local authorities to distribute food and supplies, reopen the schools, reactivate the hospitals, and undertake economic rehabilitation. US authorities resisted appeals from the UN secretary-general to undertake the risky assignment of disarming the rival militias. Walter Clarke, the former deputy chief of mission at the US embassy in Mogadishu, Somalia, stressed that “to appreciate the special shape of the US intervention in Somalia, one must realize the extent to which the Somalia humanitarian enterprise was developed as a purely military operation” (1997, 9).

However, under circumstances in which a state has failed, it has proved nearly impossible to divorce a military undertaking from an effort to rebuild the state. This was the case in Somalia. The risks and cost of using military enforcement to rebuild the Somali state through a limited diplomatic initiative seemed lower than letting the opportunity go by default. Hence, US officials used the military-enforced peace to broach incentives that offered economic aid to rehabilitate the country in exchange for constitutional provisions furthering reconciliatory behavior. During a conference in 2000, US ambassador Robert B. Oakley commented on a December 1992 meeting during which he brought together Ali Mahdi and Aideed for
the first time; he spoke about US pressure in Somalia to agree to a seven-point communiqué leading to a cease-fire in Mogadishu “and several other things that we, with a combination of persuasion and pressure, were actually able to get them to do in about 10 days” (Oakley 2000). On January 17, 1993, it was reported that Oakley met with factional leader Ali Mahdi at the US embassy, where they discussed negotiations on an agreement among warlords. At this meeting, Oakley, referring to the country’s rehabilitation after civil war, offered support, saying that the United States would help Somalia stand on its feet (FBIS 1993c). Subsequently, Ali Mahdi urged the United States to play a more active role in the constitutional conference to ensure its success, and five days later, Ali Mahdi hosted a luncheon for Oakley where they discussed bilateral relations (FBIS 1993a). Oakley promised that during and after his stay in Somalia he would get actively involved in the rehabilitation effort (FBIS 1993b). The links here between promises of economic support and agreement on constitutional accommodation (i.e., insurance) and reconciliation are all too apparent.

Military force, then, creates some scope for coercive diplomacy, but only when favorable circumstances prevail and the threat is a credible one. It is often very hard for interveners to mobilize overwhelming force, raising doubts about the credibility of their threats. Wars appear to be changing in the twenty-first century, as militias replace armies and mix modern technology with guerrilla tactics to impose substantial costs on conventional armies (Hoffman 2006). In such situations, the notion of victory may be losing some of its meaning, because irregular forces will avoid surrender and melt into their communities until another opportunity presents itself. Moreover, external military force may prove counterproductive, bringing about a nationalist rally-round-the-flag effect where none existed previously. However, if the right conditions are present and a relatively benign third party uses its military capabilities to protect a peace agreement or to preserve the safety of vulnerable peoples, then military enforcement can play a constructive role and can provide pressures and incentives for intra-state political exchange (Jentleson and Whytock 2005–6, 52). But doing so inevitably involves a delicate task of facilitation. Should the third party be perceived as imposing the terms of agreement or favoring one of the parties, then the agreement is not likely to prove durable for the long term and may have to be renegotiated, possibly under less favorable circumstances.

The record described above shows a broad use of strategic incentives by US policymakers and others to facilitate negotiations on ending civil wars
and to maintain peaceful relations after conflict, while achieving the objective of protecting vulnerable peoples. Drawing from experiences in Liberia, Sudan, South Africa, Somalia, Angola, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and elsewhere, we provide data indicating that while the United States has leverage in intrastate conflicts, it does not always make full use of it. This leverage is primarily diplomatic, not military, and it provides an advantageous basis for US soft intervention, especially when strategies of withdrawal and muscular intervention are inappropriate. The utility of a soft intervention strategy lies in its ability to enable US decision makers to exert a limited influence on political elites at a cost acceptable to American and world public opinion. These elites, as well as scholars, the general public, and policymakers generally prefer noncoercive to coercive incentives, because the sting of external imposition is less apparent and because the resulting bargain has a voluntary quality about it (Rothchild and Emmanuel, 2006). Whereas noncoercive incentives are less costly to apply and more likely to attract support from local citizens who seek acceptance from the international community, their coercive counterparts are more likely to produce stiff resistance, even a rally-round-the-flag effect (Nincic 2005). The problem is that noncoercive incentives may not raise the costs of noncompliance sufficiently. Hence, as the previous discussions of economic sanctions and military enforcement suggest, it is necessary at times to link diplomacy with the threat or use of force to achieve negotiating breakthroughs and to help sustain peace into the postwar period once it has been achieved.

But how might issues of legitimacy and appropriateness raise possible questions about the efficacy of an incentives strategy? Certainly, a great-power intervener can only be justified in intervening during and after an intrastate conflict if the third party meets the standards set out above on right intent, international sanctioning and monitoring, multinational action, proportionality, and the expectation of achieving the favored outcome (ICISS 2001, 32). To be effective in achieving their objectives, incentives have to be calibrated with the intensity of conflict in each context. In meeting the standard of legitimacy, we regard right intent to be the critical justification for external intervention, although other standards—such as international sanctioning, multinational action, and proportionality—can increase the likelihood that an intervener’s right intent will gain international approval. Yet a caution here seems appropriate: even in the best of circumstances, foreign elites and publics may interpret incentives wielded by a great power to be bullying tactics, imposing liberal values in nonliberal contexts. The populations of states experiencing intrastate conflict do not always view the United States and its “benevolent hegemony” as being moral in its in-
entions (Fukuyama 2006, 66). Consequently, unless the use of incentives is justified by local support, the effect can be to build sympathy toward the target. Thus, despite the suspension of Robert Mugabe’s government from full membership in the commonwealth in 2002 in an effort to push him toward more liberal policies, it is notable that some eleven months later, various African leaders, including the presidents of Nigeria and South Africa, urged its full reinstatement.

Some of the cases discussed above illustrate the presence of right intent on the part of US diplomats regarding the facilitation of peace processes and the protection of vulnerable peoples. Certainly, US policymakers have interests of their own, such as promoting regional stability, gaining access to valuable resources, and increasing bilateral trade and investment. Even so, these interests did not prevent them from acting at times in a progressive way. For example, in pressuring South African authorities to end apartheid practices and to negotiate with the African National Congress, in pushing negotiations in Sudan, and in providing incentives for regime change in Liberia (with strong local support), US diplomats were acting true to the guiding standards noted above. But the US involvement is not always so purposeful or well thought out. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, and Somalia, US incentives and pressures were in evidence, but the results envisaged—a frail power-sharing arrangement that valued the inclusion of potential spoilers or dissidents over a sustainable peace—raise questions about the soundness of the intentions at play (Rothchild 2005). Nevertheless, looking at the matter broadly, one can conclude that in cases where internal state pressures do not prove sufficient, an external intervener with the right motivations can seize the momentary opportunity and make a critical difference in a conflict situation through the use of diplomatic influences. As the positive cases examined here suggest, it seems important not to underestimate the benefits of appropriate intervention (Ferguson 2006, 71).

References


Notes

1. Francis M. Deng, interview by Donald Rothchild, November 17, 2003, Washington, DC.

2. For a dissenting view of the value of sanctions, see Bienen 1995.


