Third-Party Incentive Strategies and Conflict Management in Africa

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There is much to learn about the role of external actors in preventing violent conflict and managing it when it occurs. Consequently, this article focuses on the possible range of third-party conflict-management tools, primarily through the lens of an incentives approach. Third-party incentives seek to manage conflict by facilitating bargaining between the parties involved. Such an approach tries to go beyond the purview of realist international relations scholars, who concentrate predominantly on hard power, by considering soft intervention options to alter the behavior of conflicting parties.[1] Clearly, military intervention on the one hand or avoidance on the other hand cannot be justified in most cases. In between these extremes, a wide variety of alternatives exists. These options are referred to here as incentive strategies, which offer the possibility for much greater leverage than is often recognized.

Outside third parties (primarily states and international organizations but also individuals and nongovernmental entities) make use of different types of incentives to manage conflict. This article takes a look at their application generally but in particular regard to African cases. It examines how external actors use incentive strategies to promote changes in behavior by helping to bring about negotiations and de-escalating intense internal conflict. The article argues that incentives are critical in conflict management. It advances the point that noncoercive incentive strategies have a great deal of potential in relation to more aggressive actions because softer approaches frequently offer rewards without the resentment and resistance that may come with more coercive efforts to alter behavior and manage conflict. To look more deeply into these issues, the article asks the following questions: What is an incentives approach to conflict management?

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What types of third-party incentive strategies are available? Can we draw any overarching generalizations about their utilization? By addressing these questions, the study seeks three practical goals: (1) to fill a gap in the relevant literature by exploring the theoretical basis for a use of incentives in conflict management, (2) to develop a typology of incentive strategies frequently used by external third-party actors, and (3) to further the discussion about the advantages of noncoercive approaches vis-à-vis their coercive counterparts.

Incentive Strategies

An incentives approach consists of a variety of strategies or policy options that a third-party actor may use to encourage conflicting parties to adopt a peaceful solution by easing the process of bargaining and compromise. One should note that encouraging this shift in behavior away from violent conflict towards political bargaining cannot occur only with hard power but must include soft power alternatives.[2] That is, the rewards related to such soft intervention / noncoercive incentive strategies (compared with more coercive ones, such as diplomatic pressures, sanctions, or military intervention) are generally viewed more favorably by the targeted actor(s) than are punishments. That is to say, "Conciliatory gestures frequently lead to cooperative responses, while threats often initiate spirals of hostility and defiance."[3] Incentives, especially noncoercive ones, lead to less local and international resentment than do more aggressive, coercive actions. Power is clearly much more complex than just military force. The manner and context in which it is employed matter immensely. Consequently, noncoercive incentive strategies have an underestimated potential to result in peace when compared with coercion and force.[4]

It may be obvious that to reach a peaceful outcome, the conflicting parties themselves must learn to resolve their differences. Nonetheless, outside third parties can help push (or pull) them in the direction of peace. External actors can do so by using some of the incentives available to them. For all of their obvious potential, incentives have received little attention from scholars and the policymaking community. Instead, most of the reflection appears to concentrate on military intervention as the primary way to deal with civil conflict.

Additionally, one must emphasize that certain post–Cold War trends underscore the importance of exploring third-party conflict-management options. Over the past quarter century, two important trends have emerged in regards to intrastate war. First, such civil wars vastly outnumber interstate wars, and these internal conflicts tend to last longer.[5] Second, although turned to frequently as a means of ending conflict, negotiated peace settlements appear to be more fragile in the post–Cold War era than they were before this period.[6] These facts concerning civil war in the recent past make it even more important to assess the role of third parties and their efforts to help bring an end to such conflicts. Incentive strategies hold out some hope or at least provide us with some options, but what is meant by "incentives" or "incentive strategies" or an "incentives approach" to conflict management?

Incentives consist of a variety of "structural arrangements, distributive or symbolic rewards or punishments (e.g. disincentives) aimed to encourage a target state or movement in a given conflict to shift their priorities and agree to compromise on the major issues in contention."[7] Whether they are noncoercive or coercive, related to soft or hard power, incentives attempt "to raise the opportunity cost of continuing on the previous course of action by changing the calculation of costs and benefits."[8] Put differently, according to Aaron Griffiths and Catherine Barnes, incentives are measures that "can be applied to encourage or persuade one or all of the parties to a conflict to cooperate by introducing rewards for compliance."[9] Therefore, incentives are rewards or the offer of a reward. Yet, it would not have been offered had the "sender" not expected something from the "recipient"—for instance, a particular kind of behavior.[10] In line with this logic, David Cortright, who analyzes how states use incentives towards other states, defines an incentive as "the granting of a political or economic benefit in exchange for a specified policy adjustment by the recipient nation."[11] Here, an incentive is the act of granting a benefit with a clear expectation of receiving something in return. For example, aid conditionality is one type of incentive.[12] The overall objective of the incentives examined in this article has to do with managing conflict by facilitating bargaining relationships. These strategies can be used throughout the conflict cycle. From the potential conflict stage through postconflict peace building, the goal remains the same—to encourage peaceful relations by making political bargaining possible. Under such an approach, outside third parties offer some sort of benefit (or inflict some sort of punishment) to draw conflicting parties that are "sufficiently dissatisfied with their present costs . . . or future prospects" of warfare into a bargaining process.[13] The goal of using incentives is to raise the costs of continuing down a path towards increasingly violent conflict.[14] Third parties do so by expanding the benefits of abiding by the new rules of a more peaceful relationship. However, one must remember that incentives can involve positive actions such as rewards (legitimation, aid, etc.) as well as disincentives or negative inducements (punishment, threats, or coercion).

Situated between the options of doing nothing and taking military action is the choice of mediation, entailing the intervention of an outside third party (or parties) with the objective of assisting with bargaining between actors involved in the conflict. In such action, incentives are important resources available to mediators in their efforts to move the behavior of the conflicting parties in a desired direction, providing the mediators with leverage over the parties. A mediator's influence comes from his or her ability to facilitate an outcome that is minimally acceptable to both sides or that threatens a worse outcome.[15] By using incentives, external mediators 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.[16]

Different levels of involvement and use of incentive strategies emerge, depending on the nature of the conflict and the third parties' level of perceived interest. Certainly, 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 supply 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 led by the United States have been more proactive, persuading and criticizing, giving advice, encouraging the parties to reconsider their options, and formulating proposals. Finally, in Somalia and briefly in Liberia in 2003, the United States combined diplomacy with (humanitarian) military intervention in an effort to promote a dialogue leading to conflict resolution.

Incentives involve a trade-off between interference and the advancement of peace and protection.[17] These types of policy instruments are used to influence other people's behavior. They do so by reducing uncertainty over the process leading to a peaceful resolution of conflict, helping to give credibility to the negotiations that follow and easing uncertainty about their future intergroup relations.[18] Most importantly, outside third parties can use incentives that encourage certain outcomes over others. As Donald Rothchild indicates, "determined mediators need not passively wait for a ripe moment to emerge."[19] Incentives by external actors can advance "ripeness" for conflict resolution.[20] For example, in the case of Sudan's North-South conflict, US secretary of state Colin Powell repeatedly emphasized the applicability of the "mutually hurting stalemate" concept in his interactions with the conflicting parties leading up to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005.[21] Through the application of incentives and the firm use of diplomatic pressure, mediators clearly can help advance the ripening process in some instances. In other cases, however, they can force too rapid a pace and watch ripeness turn rotten, agreements fall apart, and conflicts reignite into violence—results that occur all too frequently.

A Typology of Incentive Strategies

External third-party actors can help manage conflict in a variety of ways. They can use a wide spectrum of diplomatic, economic, and security options to de-escalate conflict once the spiral begins. This section highlights the main categories of an incentives approach, addressing their contributions to conflict management and resolution. These different incentive strategies can be arranged along a continuum from least to most coercive; however, the boundaries between different modes of third-party involvement are not always distinct. Certain policy instruments overlap different modes of influence in the typology.

As depicted in the table and figure below, at one end of the spectrum are the least coercive (i.e., noncoercive) measures that can be implemented to shift the conflicting parties' relationships towards more peaceful bargaining.[22] These include purchase, insurance, legitimation, and economic support. At the other end of the force continuum, the most coercive measures include diplomatic pressure, a wide variety of sanctions, and different types of military intervention. Although these coercive features are present in these options, they should be considered incentives that attempt to bring about cooperation. That is to say, external actors using these policies are attempting to encourage the combatting factions to alter their calculations (costs and benefits) of continuing to escalate already tense relations. The overall goal involves making the adoption of more peaceful behavior favorable to participants in a given conflict.

Table. Summary of noncoercive and coercive incentive strategies

Noncoercive Incentive Strategies

Purchase	Short-term fiscal rewards / side payments to shift behavior
Insurance	Promises or guarantees to build politico-institutional protections for disenfranchised groups
Legitimation	Offer to be a regular participant in the international community
Economic Support	Provision of developmental aid to alleviate group grievances

Coercive Incentive Strategies

Diplomatic pressure	Partially coercive strategy; expressing concern about behavior
Sanctions	Punitive strategy designed to alter behavior; symbolic dimension
Military Intervention	Strategy used by a third party especially to strengthen political initiative; can decisively alter the balance of forces

Source: Donald Rothchild and Edmond J. Keller, *Africa-US Relations: Strategic Encounters* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

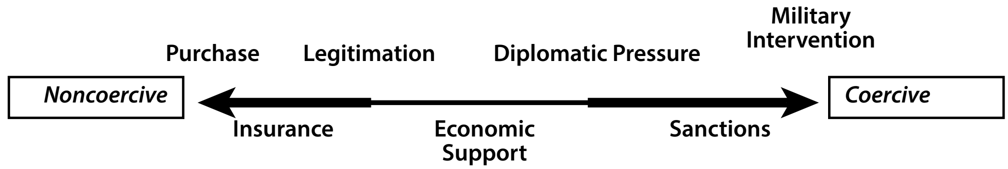

Figure. Principal incentive strategies. (Based upon Donald Rothchild and Nikolas Emmanuel, "Soft intervention in Africa: US Efforts to Generate Support for Peace," in *Strengthening Peace in Post–Civil War States: Transforming Spoilers into Stakeholders*, ed. Matthew Hoddie and Caroline A. Hartzell [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010], 123–43.)

It is important to indicate at this point that incentive options are frequently applied together in packages. For example, in the case of the Machakos talks on the North-South civil war in Sudan, diplomatic pressure was combined with threats of deepening the sanctions regime on Khartoum to increase the costs of the target if it did not alter its preferences and continue the conflict. However, the choice of which incentive strategy to apply in any given case depends on a third party's capacity, willingness to engage, and assessment of what will prove effective in de-escalating the conflict and advancing peace. Future research needs to examine this topic more closely.

Noncoercive Incentive Strategies

As Donald Rothchild and Nikolas Emmanuel indicate, noncoercive incentives are more likely to result in a durable peace; furthermore, if coercive methods are applied, one should follow up with foreign aid and encourage important political reforms like minority protections as a means of preventing a relapse of violence.[23] Note that, overall, the choice of incentive(s) is based on a diplomat's perception of his or her country's interests and the ability of his or her strategic approach to realize its desired purposes of conflict termination at a reasonable cost.[24]

Importantly, making overarching generalizations about the use of different foreign policy approaches—in this case, the use of incentives—is rather difficult. Each conflict has its own dynamics and specificities. That said, it is possible to put together a general road map that gleans vital information from previous uses of incentive strategies in conflict management. It is valuable to consider past experiences to better inform possible incentive choices that may be relevant in each future context. To explore these experiences and any potential generalizations, the remainder of this article examines each of the seven incentive strategies in more detail and then offers some general conclusions.

Purchase. A number of relatively low cost but sometimes quite effective means of facilitating cooperation are available. The noncoercive incentive strategy of purchase represents one of these options. Purchase refers to short-term, tangible fiscal rewards or side payments that can alter payoff structures and behavior to help end conflict. Purchase differs from economic aid, which is much larger in terms of amount and scope. By offering such an option, the third party enlarges the pie in an effort to facilitate the possibility of reconciliation. 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.[25] More concretely, purchase can be used to make special arrangements with individuals or groups of individuals to encourage exit (i.e., leave the conflict). The hope is to eliminate the potential for spoilers that may undermine the move away from violent conflict.[26]

Such side payments or special deals to encourage an exit can be seen in the successful international effort to persuade former Ethiopian leader Mengistu Haile Mariam to leave Addis Ababa and depart for Zimbabwe in May 1991. Furthermore, this technique can provide short-term financing to rebel movements to ease their transformation into legitimate political parties, in hopes that they will become stakeholders in the political system. At the end of Mozambique's civil war, the rebel group Renamo received $19 million from key donors to help convert the insurgent organization into a political party. Clearly, the international community can contribute significantly to furthering conflict-management objectives.[27]

Purchase is widely used and, despite its relatively low cost, can contribute significantly to furthering conflict-prevention goals. By themselves, these types of incentives are not likely to overcome the commitment problem in intense conflict situations, but even here their contribution to conflict management should not be dismissed lightly.

Insurance. Outside actors can play important roles by encouraging conflicting parties to adopt and respect inclusive political institutions and minority protections, as well as to uphold negotiated settlements. As such, insurance incentives can help manage conflict by trying to alleviate the fears of disenfranchised groups. These measures are frequently offered during the peace-implementation phase in an effort to make possible more pacific interactions in the future. External third parties can attempt to transform an intrastate dispute by promising protections for minorities and safeguarding their participation in the political institutions once the peace agreement is implemented. That is to say, third parties from the international community may have considerable capacity to 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 the protection of linguistic, religious, and ethnic rights.[28] Constitutional and legal protections can offer broad assurance for vulnerable minority peoples, encouraging their participation in the peace process.

The problem of insuring the representation of minority interests in new postconflict state institutions received considerable attention in Sudan's North-South and Darfur peace processes. Sudan's 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement represents such an effort. Outside actors helped with a number of protections in this negotiated settlement, including temporary power-sharing mechanisms in Khartoum, English and local language usage in the South, and the referendum for the independence of the South in 2011, leading to an autonomous South Sudan.

Encouraging as such promised guarantees are for minority security and well-being, there are limits to their efficacy, nonetheless, and the majority party cannot credibly commit future leaders to refrain from exploiting smaller parties at a later date.[29] Additionally, considerable constraints on external actors may exist and undermine such incentives. Under pressure from their own domestic constituents to reduce overseas involvements (especially ones that they believe might not fit in their perceived "national interests"), third parties find it difficult in practice to honor fully the "guarantees" they give in order to uphold the agreement.

Legitimation. Perhaps one of the most powerful inducements for peaceful relations is the inclusion of a given actor as a part of the international community. Acceptance (or nonacceptance in some cases) by other states is a form of soft intervention that affects the credibility of the underlying negotiating process.[30] Third parties can use such legitimacy incentives to induce a target state's or movement's cooperation in preventing intense conflict or helping to de-escalate it once it has emerged. States and international organizations, in passing judgment on other actors' legitimacy, can affect the reputation of elites and their ability to enter into beneficial relations with other members of the international community and all of the benefits it entails. This option is a form of what Joseph Nye calls "soft power."[31] At its core, legitimation offers the incentive of the inclusion of actors in the international community. Furthermore, excluding states or other actors from participation or membership in an international organization involves elements of delegitimation that can be costly. They are thus willing to take serious steps to avoid it.

Legitimacy incentives are also a resource for stabilizing the commitment to democratization in the postconflict phase. Reacting to a series of military coups in Niger, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea-Bissau, the Organization of African Unity at its Algiers summit in 1999 decided that governments that mounted coups against constitutionally established regimes after 1997 would be suspended from future summits. The organization subsequently prevented the postcoup military governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Comoros from attending the Lomé summit in 2000.[32] Similarly, the Economic Community of West African States demanded that Togo return to constitutionality following the attempted transfer of power from the late president, Gnassingbé Eyadéma, to his son in February 2005.

Given such possibilities for international action, on the one hand it seems clear that legitimacy incentives represent a noncoercive means of considerable potential importance in various contexts, such as in the area of conflict prevention and de-escalation. On the other hand, the exclusion of a state from full participation or membership in an international organization involves elements of delegitimation that can be costly in terms of access and support from donors and potential investors. As a consequence, states are willing to take serious measures to avoid a loss of international standing. The readiness of international organizations to hold out the prospect of inclusion or exclusion is clearly a powerful tool at their disposal.

Economic support. For more than a decade now, a growing body of scholarship has offered empirical support for the conclusion that the occurrence of civil war is closely related to unequal incomes and low average income in a given country.[33] In agreement with this finding, James Fearon and David Laitin's data indicate that countries with lower per capita incomes tend to be strongly related to a higher propensity for civil war in the period following 1945.[34] Not surprisingly, therefore, the prospect of donor economic support seems likely to increase the size of the available pie, holding out the likelihood that increased economic opportunity for all will enhance mutual cooperation and lower the probability of future warfare. It seems clear that when a society and its elites anticipate gains from cooperation and bargaining, they should be more readily prepared to work through potential crises and try to build a more prosperous future. Using aid as incentive, therefore, can hold promise for peace.[35]

Development aid can be especially useful in the early stages of conflict before widespread violence takes hold. Donor funds can help overcome societal stresses and group grievances that may lead to war by reconstructing the economy and redistributing the benefits of economic growth. Additionally, economic assistance can be critical in the postconflict phase, helping ease tensions and avoid a recurrence of violence.[36] Further, recent research does in fact indicate that in the sample of African cases in which international donors gave sustained developmental assistance after the signing of a peace agreement, the majority did not return to war within five years.[37] However, when assistance was not sustained or decreased, the chances of a return to civil war increased noticeably. Given this empirical reality, it is not surprising that promises of economic assistance can be perceived as a chance for increased economic opportunities for all communities in a given conflict. Note that such economic support packages are not personalistic, like the purchase option; instead, donor economic aid is offered to assist the wider national community with the hope of reconciliation and development. The promise of aid (which includes bilateral, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund economic assistance; expenditures on infrastructure; debt restructuring and forgiveness; etc.) represents a future peace dividend offered to parties to induce them to overcome their differences and agree on joint problem-solving approaches. The adversaries have an incentive to agree to peace and thus gain the benefits that follow from ending the uncertainty of protracted war and creating new possibilities for economic development.[38]

The 1979 Lancaster House conference on Zimbabwean Independence stands as a striking example of the impact that donor economic assistance can have on a peace process. Key donors, mainly the United Kingdom and the United States, both coordinated their efforts and made important financial pledges to induce the parties to reach an accommodation. Here, incentives in the form of developmental assistance proved critical in the negotiations, which sought to cultivate the ripening process and an eventual negotiated settlement.

Coercive Incentive Strategies

In addition to the above-mentioned noncoercive incentives, it is important to note that three partially or fully coercive incentives are available for employment by third parties for the purposes of conflict management. Despite their coercive features, one should 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.[39] This inclusion of primarily coercive actions among the corpus of incentive strategies is different from the narrower approach adopted by some scholars but seems justified in terms of the purposes of the sending actor(s) and how they go about achieving them. These approaches include diplomatic pressure, sanctions, and military intervention.

Diplomatic pressure. Diplomats frequently act in a preventive manner by raising awareness of the potential future costs of escalating conflict. They attempt to alter the perceptions of the warring parties, shifting them to more accommodating positions. Effective communication of the possibly negative impact of continuing conflict-prone behavior is crucial to the success of this strategy. However, diplomats need leverage on the parties and the interests involved to be able to press for a more peaceful situation. Stern warnings alone are frequently not enough to facilitate bargaining and an end to violent conflict. To build this leverage, diplomatic efforts are often combined with other incentives. Some of the most effective courses of action include offering economic assistance or warning about an imminent cutoff of aid, as well as threatening to invoke or offering to remove sanctions, and deciding on the inclusion or exclusion of a target state from an international organization. US leverage in the negotiations to end the Sudanese North-South conflict concentrated mostly on diplomatic incentives, combined with pressure to increase the sanctions regime if Khartoum did not comply and the promise to reduce sanctions if it did. Overall, the mediators frequently use this leverage to ripen the situation, convincing the warring parties that they had indeed reached a mutually hurting stalemate and needed to find a negotiated settlement.

In the 2003 Machakos negotiations concerning the lengthy and brutal Sudan North/South conflict, US secretary of state Powell referred to the mutual exhaustion of all parts in the war.[40] He explained that two decades of war could be ended and that a third party like the United States and others in the international community could help them push towards peace. By that time, mediators perceived and pushed the concept of the presence of a mutual hurting stalemate in Sudan. After decades of fighting, the North was thought to have become war weary and was not able to obtain and keep the upper hand in the conflict. Khartoum could control the vital oil fields in the South in the dry season, but when the rains of the wet season arrived, it had great difficulty doing so. Southern forces, though, appeared less fatigued by the conflict, but they too did not know how to escape the back-and-forth fighting that was so closely influenced by the weather and seasons. Mediators used this reality to push the idea of a hurting stalemate to move the negotiations forward. Once the mediators realized that a ripe moment was at hand in Sudan, US diplomats acted to further the mediation process by attempting to use its leverage on the regime of Omar al-Bashir in Khartoum. In doing so, the Bush administration removed Sudan from its list of countries considered uncooperative in the fight against terrorism and held out the possibility of lifting the broad-based US economic sanctions. It felt that these issues would prove helpful in building sufficient leverage on the Sudanese leaders to push them towards a negotiated peace settlement with the South.[41]

In this period, the United States had leverage with the parties in the Sudanese negotiations, enabling it to play a constructive role in influencing the priorities of these rivals. The International Crisis Group deemed that "sustained U.S. pressure on the parties is the single most important factor needed" in the Sudanese negotiations during the Machakos talks.[42] Clearly, so that diplomatic pressures can work, mediators use their leverage over the parties involved in the conflict. In the above-mentioned case of Sudan, the mediator helped bring the parties into an agreement based on what I. William Zartman calls a "mutually enticing opportunity."[43] When such a violent conflict is intense and third-party influence is needed, a mediator requires the capacity to raise the costs of proceeding with a given course of action.[44]

Sanctions. Sanctions (such as aid conditionality, targeted individual sanctions, economic sanctions, etc.) are certainly an important resource for conflict management, but they call for careful application if they are to have the desired effect. The threat or actual imposition of a wide variety of sanctions on a target state or movement represents an important coercive incentive strategy. Sanctions are designed to alter the behavior of combatants in a desired direction, in this case towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. These actions seek to punish those who violate widely held international norms and to provide incentives for cooperation if behavior changes. Additionally, sanctions have an important symbolic dimension, for they indicate the international community's displeasure with the target's present behavior. This second aspect of sanctions is frequently underestimated. That is to say, if one views the impact of sanctions broadly and includes the psychological and symbolic effects they have on the bargaining environment, then it is critical to stress their potential contribution on peace negotiations as well—take for example the US Congress's enactment of the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act. Incentives with South Africa advanced the interests of the sender—here the United States—without immersing it in a military intervention. In the case of South Africa, Washington proved that a realistic and relatively low-cost means of exerting influence could encourage the principal actors in the targeted country to alter their behavior and agree to new common institutions and norms.

Yet, it is important to note that sanctions are widely viewed by many people as rather ineffective tools. Frequently, broad-based economic sanctions have a problem targeting the precise groups deemed responsible for the offensive behavior.[45] Sanctions also have not historically proven to be relevant coercive instruments with authoritarian regimes or weak states, or those with a certain level of autonomy from the sender's, or more generally the international community's influence. Sanctions, then, require careful application if they are to provide an incentive for change.

Nonetheless, sanctions can be considerably strengthened when applied in a multilateral manner with demands for change that are limited in scope and with targeted states that have clear links to the global economy. Sanctions represent an important coercive incentive strategy for conflict management, but they demand careful application if they are to have the desired effect. Powerful states 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."[46] Their leverage allows them to persuade and pressure the adversaries to adopt more cooperative positions on the issues that divide them.[47]

Military intervention. When noncoercive and minimally coercive incentives fail to prevent conflict from emerging or escalating, third parties may have little option other than raising the costs and threatening or using military force. Such actions should be viewed as a last resort to enforce peace and protect vulnerable populations. Yet, the threat or actual deployment of military power may at times prove indispensable to de-escalate a dangerous situation and to further legitimate objectives. Under the proper conditions, military intervention by a relatively benign third party can play a constructive role and can supply pressures and incentives to alter the conflict trajectory, facilitate bargaining, and protect the safety of vulnerable peoples.[48] Provided their troops are sufficient in number to achieve their purposes and are well trained and armed, third-party military actions or the threat of such actions may be indispensable in strengthening a political initiative.[49] When the key international actors or the international community as a whole is either unable or unwilling to use force to help stop such horrific situations as the Rwandan genocide, the consequences can be disastrous. Remarkably, these military interventions do not need to be large. The relatively small British force that deployed in Sierra Leone in 2000 was sufficient to rescue United Nations peacekeepers taken hostage and put the peace process back on track. As with this case and the example of the French military intervention in Cote d'Ivoire in 2002, although military force may be the last resort, its threat or actual use can prove crucial to further legitimate diplomatic objectives.

Beyond protecting vulnerable populations, military enforcement can be an important element in overcoming the credible-commitment problem and information issues that frequently undermine peace processes.[50] In addition to monitoring the actions of adversaries and providing information, the third party's use of military enforcement can actually further buttress a peace process by raising the costs of attempting to break the new bargain. Supporting this conclusion, Barbara Walter finds that parties in a peace process are 20 percent more likely to follow through on an agreement if a third party intervenes as a protector of the agreement.[51] Thus, third parties are likely to play a critically important role in overcoming uncertainties surrounding the consolidation process, providing much-needed support to the state, and raising the costs for potential challengers.[52]

Obviously, military force can at times be helpful in third-party attempts to manage conflict. It may be able to protect at-risk populations from massive human rights abuses or genocide, as in the case of Rwanda or Darfur. However, war appears to be changing in the twenty-first century, in Africa and elsewhere, as militia groups replace regular armies on the battlefield. Readily available modern technology and guerilla tactics combine, making military intervention and peace enforcement and peacekeeping difficult for conventional armed forces.[53] The conflicts in Somalia and Mali underscore this concept. In such situations, the very notion of victory may have lost some of its meaning, as irregular forces simply avoid surrender and melt into their communities until another opportunity presents itself. Moreover, external military force may even prove counterproductive and bring about a nationalist rally-around-the-flag effect, undermining the third parties' efforts. Clearly, military intervention in many of today's conflicts is a delicate task, especially while trying to protect at-risk peoples, remaining unbiased, and either helping the parties involved reach an agreement or assisting them in the implementation of one.

Conclusion

A wide variety of incentive strategies is available for third parties to use in an attempt to manage conflict in Africa and beyond. Nonetheless, external actors do not always consider the full range of options. The above-mentioned incentive strategies can give interveners leverage and aid them in efforts to mediate and hopefully manage deadly conflict. This leverage is frequently diplomatic in nature, not simply military, providing an advantageous basis for soft intervention in conflicts, especially when the extremes of withdrawal and military intervention are inappropriate and may even be counterproductive. The problem is that these 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 produce breakthroughs in the negotiation process. Regardless, evidence points to the fact that African elites as well as scholars, policy makers, and the public in the sender and target countries generally prefer noncoercive incentives to their coercive counterparts because the sting of external imposition is less apparent and because the resulting bargain has a voluntary quality about it. Following on these realities, future research on this topic should examine the critical issues of (1) the proper timing of the deployment of various incentives and (2) the packages of incentives that have been used successfully to encourage bargaining and resolve conflict.

Notes

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7. Donald Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1997), 19.

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