

WESTERN USE OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY AFTER THE COLD WAR

Western Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War

A Challenge for Theory and Practice

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Preface

Can the Western powers stop and undo post-Cold War acts of aggression without going to war? This is the principal question addressed in this book. The first seed for this work was sown in 1992 when Barry Posen encouraged me to use Thomas C. Schelling's theory of compellence to explain why the European Community failed to stop the fighting in Croatia in 1991. Before signing up for Posen's fine seminar *Foundations of Security Studies*, I had never heard about the strategy of compellence. While I did research for my paper I discovered that my ignorance could largely be excused since very little work had been done on the topic. Only two theoretical studies existed: Schelling's *Arms and Influence* from 1966 and Alexander L. George et al.'s *Limits to Coercive Diplomacy: Laos, Cuba, Vietnam* from 1971. Little has been done to change this state of affairs even though compellence/coercive diplomacy has played a central role in Western crisis management in the 1990s. The Western powers used threats of punishment and limited force to coerce Saddam Hussein to withdraw his force from Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, and to coerce the Serbs to stop their use of force in Croatia and Bosnia from 1991 to 1995. Finally, they employed economic sanctions and threats of force to coerce the military regime in Haiti to give up power between 1991 and 1994.

This work undertakes a systematic analysis of the Western use of coercive diplomacy in these conflicts to address the three puzzles it has created:

1. Why are the results obtained to date so poor?
2. Can the Western powers improve their record in the future?
3. Does the need for collective action hinder or facilitate the effective use of coercive diplomacy?

To this end I construct a theoretical framework that (1) explains why coercive diplomacy succeeds or fails when it is employed against aggressors, (2) identifies the conditions under which coercive diplomacy is most likely to be employed effectively and (3) determines how the need for collective action affects the prospects for success.

To address the question of success and failure, I derive an *ideal policy*, the policy required for success in most cases, from the existing theories. Patterns most likely to generate a will to threaten and use force are then derived to identify the conditions under which the strategy is likely to be used successfully, because this requirement poses the greatest obstacle

to the implementation of the *ideal policy*. Finally, hypotheses addressing the collective action puzzle are derived from realist and institutionalist theories.

My theoretical framework fills a gap in the literature on coercive diplomacy, representing a significant improvement in terms of both explanatory power and policy relevance when compared to the existing theories. As for explanatory power, the framework is leaner and meaner, having the ability to explain coercive diplomacy outcomes just as accurately but with fewer variables. Another advantage stems from the fact that all its variables are operationalized so that a user can decide whether they are present or not in a given crisis. This makes it possible to test the framework empirically. The framework is constructed to reduce the scope for misperception and miscalculation, and it requires only a little information about the opponent that is being coerced.

Policy relevance is high because the framework identifies the minimum conditions for success. Further enhancing policy relevance is the construction of the framework around the three above-mentioned puzzles created by the Western use of coercive diplomacy after the Cold War. This construction makes it ideally suited for analysing the specific problems created by the new era. It explains why coercive diplomacy succeeds or fails, identifies the conditions under which the Western powers can use the strategy successfully and analyses the problems associated with coalitional use. None of the existing theories addresses the latter two questions.

As a final contribution this work offers the first systematic analysis of the Western use of the strategy in the post-Cold War era. Reliance on the method of structured, focused comparison in the analysis of the Gulf crisis, the wars in the former Yugoslavia and the crisis in Haiti permits this work to draw more definite conclusions about the prospects of using coercive diplomacy successfully in the future. It provides the first in-depth analysis from a coercive diplomacy perspective of the crises in the former Yugoslavia and in Haiti. The analysis of the Yugoslav wars challenges conventional wisdom on several counts.

Methodologically, the study is on a sound footing despite the low number of conflicts studied. The number of cases from which generalizations are made has been increased by subdividing the three conflicts studied into 13 separate coercive diplomacy exchanges. This maximizes the reliability of the conclusions drawn.

I conclude that the Western powers could improve their coercive diplomacy record significantly by adhering to the principles of the *ideal policy*. Unfortunately, the Western powers are unlikely to do this very

often. The case studies underline that the Western governments as a rule lack the will to issue credible threats of force, the principal condition for success, unless the interest perceived to be at stake and/or the prospects of military success are high. Few post-Cold War crises fall into this category. Lack of will is an obstacle not easily overcome but this study nevertheless identifies two factors that are likely to change things for the better. One is the current effort undertaken to adapt Western military forces and the UN to the challenges posed by the post-Cold War era. The other is the fact that the Western aversion to casualties is being exaggerated at the moment. These factors give some basis for optimism with respect to the future, but there is no escaping the conclusion that the effective use of coercive diplomacy to stop and reverse military aggression will be the exception rather than the rule in the foreseeable future.

Many people helped me to complete this work and I would like to thank them here. Staff and PhD candidates in the Department of Political Science at the University of Aarhus made helpful comments during two presentations of the project. Nikolaj Petersen offered valuable comments on the three draft chapters he read. Georg Sørensen forced me to undertake a fruitful rethink of the whole project by suggesting that I drop the focus on coercion and concentrate on the use of force instead. I hope this study proves me right in sticking to my guns.

Special thanks are due to Lawrence Freedman for useful comments on two chapters, for inviting me to participate in his project on *Strategic Coercion* and, finally, for inviting me to spend six months at the Centre for Defence Studies at King's College in London to finish the manuscript during the spring of 1996. The centre provided a stimulating environment for this task, and the staff made a period of extremely hard work a lot more enjoyable than it would otherwise have been. Without Karin von Hippel's help I would never have been able to finish the manuscript in London. She helped me in every possible way during my stay at King's and generously let me use all her material on the Haiti crisis.

I would also like to thank Knud Erik Jørgensen for encouragement and helpful comments from day one. He gave me a welcome opportunity to present an early version of my theoretical framework at a seminar at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Research in Copenhagen, and kindly lent me his office in July of 1996. The greatest thanks go to Ole Bay, Tony Brems Knudsen and Gary Schaub, Jr for reading various early drafts and commenting on the entire manuscript. I would like to thank the Danish Institute of International Affairs (DUPI) for providing financial support to facilitate my stay at Kings. Finally, thanks are also due to Karen Prehn for her extraordinary ability always to find the material I

needed in various databases. I am eternally indebted to family, friends and Pia for providing unremitting support and understanding, especially during the last hectic six months when I was running desperately behind schedule as usual.

List of Acronyms

ABH	Army of Bosnia-Hercegovina
BSA	Bosnian Serb Army
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSCE/OSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe; now the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe
EC/EU	European Community; European Union from 1 November 1993
JNA	Jugoslav National Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
SHIRBRIG	UN Stand-by Forces High Readiness Brigade
UN	United Nations
UNMIH	United Nations Mission in Haiti
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force (in Yugoslavia)
US	United States
WEU	West European Union