# Coercion

## *The Power to Hurt in International Politics*

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

KELLY M. GREENHILL AND PETER KRAUSE

From the rising significance of nonstate actors to the increasing influence of regional powers, the nature and conduct of international politics has arguably changed dramatically since the height of the Cold War. Yet much of the existing literature on deterrence and compellence continues to draw, whether implicitly or explicitly, upon assumptions and precepts formulated in a state-centric, bipolar world. Although contemporary coercion frequently features multiple coercers targeting state and nonstate adversaries with nonmilitary instruments of persuasion, most literature on coercion focuses primarily on cases wherein a single state is trying to coerce another single state via traditional military means.

This volume moves beyond these traditional premises and examines the critical issue of coercion in the twenty-first century, capturing fresh theoretical and policy-relevant developments and drawing upon data and cases from across time and around the globe. The contributions examine intrastate, interstate, and transnational deterrence and compellence, as well as both military and nonmilitary instruments of persuasion. Specifically, chapters focus on *tools* (e.g., terrorism, sanctions, drones, cyber warfare, intelligence, and forced migration), *actors* (e.g., insurgents, social movements, and nongovernmental organizations), and *mechanisms* (e.g., triadic coercion, diplomatic and economic isolation, foreign-imposed regime change, coercion of nuclear proliferators, and two-level games) that have become more prominent in recent years but have yet to be extensively or systematically addressed in either academic or policy literature.

At the same time, there is also significant continuity in how states wield power and exercise influence. Strategic and crisis deterrence, threats backed with military force, and exercises of state-on-state coercive diplomacy are enduring features of international politics. Consequently, there remains a great deal of relevant wisdom in existing scholarship on coercion. Therefore, this volume also features

CHAPTER 1

# Coercion

## *An Analytical Overview*

ROBERT J. ART AND KELLY M. GREENHILL

JUST AS THE COLD WAR spawned a great deal of scholarly study about deterrence, so too has the unipolar era spawned a great deal of study of compellence.[1] The Cold War featured a nuclear standoff between two superpowers, one in which the survival of both countries was thought to be at stake. It is not surprising that deterrence of war, the avoidance of escalatory crises, and the control of escalation were paramount in the minds of academic strategists and political-military practitioners during this period. The bulk of the innovative theoretical work on deterrence, especially nuclear deterrence, was produced from the late 1940s through the mid-1960s. Most of the creative works during the subsequent years were, and continue to be, refinements of and elaborations on those foundations.[2]

With the advent of the unipolar era, the United States found itself freed from the restraints on action imposed by another superpower and began more than two decades of issuing military threats against or launching conventional military interventions into smaller countries, or both: Iraq (1990–91), Somalia (1992–93), Haiti (1994), North Korea (1994), Bosnia (1995), Kosovo and Serbia (1998–99), Afghanistan (2001), Iraq again (2003–11), Libya (2011), Syria (2014–), and Iraq yet again (2015–). Unsurprisingly, strategists and practitioners during the unipolar era became focused on various forms of compellence—compellent threats, coercive diplomacy, and the limited and demonstrative uses of force—and especially on the reasons those forms of compellence, when employed by the United States, more often than not failed and subsequently

[1] We thank Victoria McGroary for invaluable research assistance.

[2] For an excellent overview of the state of knowledge about deterrence through the 1970s, see Robert Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics* 31 (1979): 289–324. For a representative view of the nature of deterrence today, see Patrick M. Morgan, "The State of Deterrence in International Politics Today," *Contemporary Security Policy* 33 (2012): 85–107.

CHAPTER 7

# Coercion by Movement

## *How Power Drove the Success of the Eritrean Insurgency, 1960–1993*

PETER KRAUSE

When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you.

—AFRICAN PROVERB

WHEN AND WHY DO insurgencies and national movements succeed or fail?[1] Why, for instance, have the Algerians and Zionists achieved a state, but the Palestinians and Kurds have not? Why did the Eritrean insurgency fail for three decades, only to become Africa's first successful postcolonial national movement?

Each of these movements initiated numerous campaigns of coercion against its enemies, and yet we lack parsimonious and powerful theories to explain variation in their outcomes. As the other chapters in this volume demonstrate, studies of state coercion provide many of the building blocks—power, collective action, credibility, signaling. However, new theories of coercion are needed to explain the behavior and effectiveness of nonstate actors, whether as coercers or targets, as Fraiman's and Walsh's chapters in this volume analyze. Many studies treat insurgencies as unitary actors or narrowly focus on single groups, but the most powerful assessments of nonstate coercion are based on two-level models of groups that share a common strategic goal but are driven by their own selfish organizational interests.[2] Although these actors

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[1] I would like to thank Eleanor Hildebrandt and the Project on National Movements and Political Violence for their research assistance, and Kelly M. Greenhill, Costantino Pischedda, and Michael Woldemariam for their excellent comments and suggestions.

[2] For studies that treat insurgencies as unitary actors, see Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson, "Rage against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars," *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (January 2009): 67–106; Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). For studies that focus on groups, see Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 42–78; Seth G. Jones and Martin Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*

# CHAPTER 11 | The Strategy of Coercive Isolation

TIMOTHY W. CRAWFORD

IF, AS FREDRICK THE GREAT said, "Diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments," arms without diplomacy is apolitical force: the anathema of strategy. The strategy of coercive isolation plays out through diplomacy; it may therefore be deemed an "other than force" kind of coercion, as it has been in this volume's scheme. But in such diplomacy's logic resides a pure expression of coercion: the attempt to use fear of force to control political outcomes. To isolate an adversary when threats of violence are salient *is* a military threat.[1] A foundational understanding of force's role in international politics underpins this argument: states "conduct [their] affairs in the brooding shadow of violence"; any policy to make a state more vulnerable to violence is a kind of "armed coercion."[2]

In the study of coercion there has been a curious disinterest in that diplomacy which seeks to cause or reinforce the adversary's isolation. So intuitive is it that such diplomacy matters that the way it does has eluded careful thought. The essential idea—that such diplomacy can coerce by increasing expectations of escalating costs—has not been clearly framed. Leading coercion studies recognize that isolating a target is important but conceive it as a background condition for success. Thus, for Alexander George and William Simons the extent to which the adversary "is supported diplomatically and militarily by allies" is a "contextual variable": coercing a target backed by allies is "more complex and sometimes more difficult" than coercing an isolated target.[3]

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[1] I thank the Princeton Research Program in International Security for the opportunity to present my first attempt to develop these ideas and the S. Rajanatnam School of International Studies' Working Paper series for helping me to advance them in an earlier version of this paper.

[2] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), 103; Robert Osgood and Robert Tucker, *Force, Order and Justice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), 3.

[3] Alexander George and William Simons, ed., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1994), 273.

# CONCLUSION

KELLY M. GREENHILL AND PETER KRAUSE

Coercion is not new. Indeed, the ancient military historian Thucydides included detailed descriptions of nearly a dozen incidents of deterrence and compellence in his *History of the Peloponnesian War.*[1] However, 2,500 years on, is it still the case that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must," as the powerful Athenians say to their weaker Melian counterparts in the text's most widely recognized passage? Was it in fact ever truly thus?[2] What features of coercive bargaining are enduring, and in what ways, if any, is coercion in the twenty-first century different or even unique? Having analyzed modern coercion in nearly all its forms—intrastate, interstate, nonstate, and transnational; dyadic and triadic; military and nonmilitary—the contributions to this volume provide some definitive, some tentative, and some surprising answers to these questions.

This chapter highlights the key findings of this volume, focusing on the major lessons learned, providing a synthetic analysis of the chapters as a whole, and identifying what there is yet to learn about the causes, dynamics, effects, and outcomes of coercion. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first is devoted to a discussion of perennial concepts and theories of coercion, classics that remain relevant and valuable in the contemporary era. The second section focuses on evolutionary and revolutionary shifts in our understanding of coercion theory, which grow out of the contributions to this volume and related developments in the literature that focus on previously understudied actors, tools and mechanisms. The third section probes some of the policy implications of the volume's findings, and the final section tackles unanswered questions and future avenues for research on the power to hurt.

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[1] Richard Ned Lebow, "Thucydides and Deterrence," *Security Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 163–88.

[2] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley, *Internet Classics Archive*, 5.84–116, http://classics.mit.edu/Thucydides/pelopwar.html.