

Strategic Coercion and International Mediation of Atrocity-related Conflict

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Abstract

This article explores outstanding questions about the roles, mechanisms, actors, and interpretation of successful coercion in the international mediation of atrocity-related conflict. Drawing primarily on coercion theory and the concepts of power mediation and the enticing opportunity model of ripeness, I develop the conceptual framework of atrocity mediation to answer these questions. My central thesis is based on what I read as the *agent-coercion problem* in the international system: conflict parties are legitimate, rational, voluntary agents who retain choice when considering the cost/benefit implications of the mediator's peace proposals despite being coerced by power mediators. The solution is that mediators must embrace "strategic coercion," involving creating ripeness using enticing peace offers and applying coercive measures to influence the reluctant parties' choice. Strategic coercion must comprise sanction, judicial, and military mechanisms and perform the following roles, obtaining consent, breaking stalemate, or consensus-building. The purpose must be to stimulate a sense of urgency and accelerate decision-making on resolving the proximate causes of violence that triggered atrocities. Strategic coercion operations are deliberate overt actions, and so can be executed by any powerful actors. I analyze the African Union-led international mediation in Kenya to establish the framework as the model for future studies.

Introduction

This article examines the conceptual issues in the international mediation of *atrocities-related conflict* – that is, conflicts involving civilians as the primary targets of violence and resulting in genocide or atrocities, such as ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, or war crimes. Mediation objectives include resolving the proximate causes of violence and preventing genocide or the escalation of atrocities. Existing studies have indicated that coercion is a significant factor for effectiveness (Zartman and Anstey 2012; Greig and Diehl 2012; Zwier 2013; Babbitt 2014; Hultman 2019). However, coercive approaches are often ineffective or counterproductive, as various cases, including Syria, Côte d'Ivoire, Myanmar, South Sudan, Yemen, and Ethiopia, illustrate. As such, there are three outstanding questions about a) the roles of coercion, especially in the context of stimulating a hurting stalemate (Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2009; Greig and Diehl 2012; Babbitt 2014); b) the mechanisms of coercion, as to the appropriateness of sanction, judicial, or military tools (Zartman and Anstey 2012; Greig and Diehl 2012); c) the actors of coercion, as to whether a mediator should concurrently adopt coercive measures (Greig and Diehl 2012; Zwier 2013). Equally important, is the issue of understanding effective coercion, as there are conflicting interpretations of the successful African Union-led international mediation of Kenya's post-election dispute that triggered violence and atrocities (Lindenmayer and Kaye 2009; Babbitt 2014; Welsh 2015). All this underscores the current gaps in knowledge.

I underline that these remaining questions about the roles, mechanisms, actors, and interpretation of successful coercion are a consequence of the lack of a suitable theoretical framework for studying coercion operations and the incomplete understanding of the theory and purpose of coercion in international politics. Thus, I develop the *conceptual framework of atrocity mediation*¹ (hereinafter referred to as *the atrocity mediation framework* or *model*) to bridge these gaps in knowledge. My objectives are two-fold: 1) to advance a broader and deeper understanding of the roles, mechanisms, and actors of coercion; 2) to establish the atrocity mediation framework as the model for interpreting and studying coercion in international mediation, especially in the context of atrocity-related conflict. Such future research would encompass comparative case studies to identify the conditions and determinants of successful coercion campaigns.

¹ The term *atrocity mediation* conceptualizes the prevalent and growing phenomenon of international mediation in atrocity-related conflict, as opposed to “conflict mediation,” see Ifediora (2021).

The central thesis of the atrocity mediation framework is that coercion operations are often ineffective or counterproductive because of what I read as the *agent-coercion problem* in the international system – that is, state and non-state actors are legitimate, free agents who retain choice despite being coerced by more powerful players. The significance is that the study of coercion must be undertaken from the conflict parties’ perspective, as opposed to the mediator’s viewpoint. Thus, I argue that conflict parties are legitimate, rational, voluntary agents who maintain choice when considering the cost/benefit implications of the mediator’s peace proposals, so they can reject or accept settlement offers, despite being coerced by power mediators, like the UN Security Council. The solution is that power mediators must embrace “strategic coercion,” involving 1) creating ripeness using enticing peace proposals, which must accommodate the conflict parties’ core interests in the disputed subject, and 2) applying coercive measures to influence the reluctant parties’ choice, emphasizing that the benefits of acceptance far outweigh the costs of rejection and that the proposed compromise is a better choice than any other alternatives. Strategic coercion operations must involve multiple forms, comprising sanction, judicial, and military mechanisms, and must perform the following three roles, 1) obtaining consent, 2) breaking stalemate, or 3) consensus-building, depending on the stage of the conflict when power mediators acted. The purposes of strategic coercion maneuvers must be to a) stimulate a sense of urgency, as the parties contemplate the cost/benefit consequences of the mediator’s offer, and b) accelerate decision-making on resolving the proximate causes of the dispute that triggered violence and atrocities. A strategic coercion campaign must anticipate future costs, targeting what the principal parties value and would likely lose. Once implemented, strategic coercion activities must be sustained and may be expanded as the mediation progresses until the parties accept (success) or reject (failure) the peace plan. Strategic coercion operations are deliberate overt actions, and so can be executed by any powerful and interested actors. This means that the Security Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC), for example, can adopt coercion projects in mediation undertaken by the UN peacemakers. Broadly, the atrocity mediation framework contributes to solving the agent-coercion problem in power mediation in international relations.

I adopt a multidisciplinary approach, involving theoretical and conceptual methodologies to develop the atrocity mediation framework. It involves a combination of coercion theories (Schelling 1966; George 1994; Freedman 1998) and the mediation concepts of power mediation in international relations (Touval 1992; Kleiboer 2002; Favretto 2009), the enticing opportunity model of the ripeness theory (Crocker 1992; Mitchell 1995), multiparty

mediation (Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 1999), and BATNA (Fisher, Ury, and Patton 2011), as well as studies on the operational prevention of deadly conflict (Carnegie Commission 1997, chapter 3), proximate prevention of genocide or atrocities (Harff 2003; Waller 2016, chapter 5; Gurr 2018), and tactical violence against civilians (Hultman 2007; Wood 2010; Valentino 2014).

Also, I employ the qualitative and content analysis methods in international relations (Hermann 2008) to study the case of Kenya. My core aims are to 1) illustrate the explanatory power of the atrocity mediation framework by interpreting the successful strategic coercion operation deployed by power mediators, and 2) establish the atrocity mediation framework as the comprehensive model for future comparative case studies. I rely mainly on textual data based on primary sources for the examination. Specifically, Kofi Annan's memoir, *Interventions*, is the definitive account of Annan's interactions with the President of Kenya, Mwai Kibaki, and the leader of the opposition, Raila Odinga. Annan was the African Union's chief mediator under the auspices of the Panel of Eminent African Personalities (the Panel) that mediated the conflict and atrocities. Likewise, the aptly titled book, *Back from the Brink*, is the most detailed and insightful narrative of the Panel's mediation efforts. The authors included members of the Coordination and Liaison Office of the Panel who witnessed the mediation process and had access to the Panel's confidential reports. The *Kenya in Crisis* report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) is the definitive account of the failed World Bank-facilitated agreement that preceded the African Union mediation. The report was prepared by the ICG analysts who observed the World Bank-led track-two mediation procedure. I also collected data from other primary sources, including resolutions, decisions, and press statements of the UN Security Council, the EU Parliament, the US Senate, and the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC. Finally, I draw on open sources, such as reputable media reports to supplement the data.

This article comprises four main sections, including the literature review, the coercion theory, the framework of atrocity mediation, and the case study components, and progresses in that order.

Literature Review

This section evaluates the literature and shows that the questions about the roles, mechanisms, actors, and interpretation of successful coercion are a consequence of the absence of a suitable theoretical framework for studying coercion and the partial understanding of the theory and purpose of coercion in global affairs.

International mediation of atrocity-related conflict or atrocity mediation refers to the global community's dual policy interests in resolving the proximate causes of violent conflicts and preventing or stopping the escalation of targeted attacks against civilians to avert genocide or atrocities (Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2009; Zartman and Anstey 2012; Greig and Diehl 2012; Zwier 2013; Babbitt 2014; Hultman 2019). In essence, atrocity mediation conceptualizes the prevalent practice that combines two theoretically inconsistent approaches and objectives. First, mediation is about assisting conflict parties to resolve their dispute, and so effectiveness depends on the disputants' consent. Second, atrocity prevention is about the enforcement of international human rights norms. As such, the research effort has been to understand how both methods work together or how best to integrate them. Crocker, Hampson, and Aall (2009, 499) have suggested a sequenced technique that prioritizes the atrocity prevention approach to avert genocide or atrocities before initiating a formal mediation process. Other scholars have sought to unify both methods. In their diagnoses of the problem of preventing genocide and mass murder and the relevant conflict prevention tools, Zartman and Anstey (2012, 19-24) saw advantages in combining both procedures. Likewise, Greig and Diehl (2012, 179-184) have noted the opportunities and challenges of mediating atrocity-related conflict. Zwier (2013, 5) grasped the benefits but suggested that civil society groups are best suited for such endeavors. Babbitt (2014) and Hultman (2019) have underscored the importance of mediation vis-à-vis the notion of the Responsibility to Protect. Goertz, Diehl, and Balas (2016, 156) have described such peace processes as a "gray form of mediation" where the mediator intervenes on behalf of one party or the civilians. In all this, a consensus has emerged that coercion is an essential element of mediation effectiveness. But the puzzles are about the roles, mechanisms, actors, and interpretation of successful coercion.

The conversation about the roles of coercion revolves around William Zartman's concept of ripening (Zartman 1986) and theory of ripeness (Zartman 1985, 2001). Ripening involves any maneuvers, such as shuttle diplomacy and offers of incentives or pressures, implemented by the mediator to convince the conflict parties to accept mediation. The concept

is like what Greig and Diehl (2006) called “softening up,” which is about making conflicts and parties amenable to mediation and negotiation. Several studies have operationalized the concept of ripening in atrocity-related conflict (Zartman and Anstey 2012, 23-4; Babbitt 2014, 31-2; Ifediora 2021, 305-6). Particularly, Babbitt (2014, 31-2) has utilized the idea to explain how the international community used diplomatic and sanctions campaigns to persuade the Kenyan parties to accept the African Union mediation. Given that a ripening measure is before mediation, it can be linked to consent. Yet, the disputants “retain ... the freedom to accept or reject mediation or mediators’ proposals” (Bercovitch and Jackson 2009, 35), which underscores the question about the role of coercion in influencing the belligerents’ choice of mediation.

The theory of ripeness also relates to the parties’ choice of mediation but specifically refers to the moment in a conflict when the parties decide that a negotiated agreement is the only viable option for settlement (Zartman 1985; Kleiboer 1994). Zartman describes this moment as the time when the disputants are in a mutually hurting stalemate with a single way out and a spokesperson, which typically occurs after prolonged fighting, so the motivation would be to avoid further loss of resources and lives (Zartman 2001). The proposition is that coercion should focus on stimulating a hurting stalemate (Touval and Zartman 2001, 435; Zartman and De Soto 2010, 38-9). The strategy is that the coercing power should strengthen the weaker party by providing military, economic, and diplomatic support to create a *power symmetry*, which would induce a hurting stalemate and a perception of the futility of military victory, making a mediated outcome more attractive. Greig and Diehl (2012, 181-2) have considered the role of coercion in stimulating a hurting stalemate in atrocity-related conflict. They explained that “mediation is often paired with coercive intervention strategies,” and “To the extent that [military interventions and sanctions] facilitate mutually hurting stalemates, such actions might complement mediation efforts.” But they also cautioned that “coercive measures that tip the fighting in favor of one side ... might encourage that actor to continue fighting rather than settle.” This unintended outcome of creating a power symmetry can be described as the *coercion paradox*, that is, it can prolong the conflict, thereby exacerbating violence and atrocities.

As Crocker, Hampson, and Aall (2009, 495) have argued, power symmetry can trigger “a stable and tolerable stalemate” which “makes it easy for sides to settle into comfortable accommodation with persistent warfare that sustains power bases.” A study of the UN mediation in Myanmar reported how the US-led Contact Group bolstered the “hand of [the]

opposition” through the “gradual ratcheting up of punitive sanctions” against “the evil regime,” resulting in neither party’s ability to “impose its agenda” and the “deadlock” (Magnussen and Pedersen 2012, 2-4, 91). There is also the problem of what US officials have recently defined as an “eroding stalemate” (Washington Post 2016; Cooper 2017; McKinley 2021) – a situation where the hitherto stronger party regains power asymmetry and begins to win back lost territories or the populations’ acceptance. The idea depicted NATO intervention in Afghanistan and the Taliban’s resurgence. (The UN mediation in Syria and the external support to the rebels seem pertinent.) The point is that, instead of creating ripeness by spurring a hurting stalemate, coercion campaigns can cause a deadlock, and some studies have argued that coercion maneuvers are relevant for breaking stalemates (Kaufman and Duncan 1989, 191-211; Downie 1991, 184; Touval and Zartman 2001, 438). So, the puzzle is how to avoid the coercion paradox and understand the role of coercion in breaking stalemates that ordinarily occur during negotiation, which brings us back to the question of the role of coercion in creating ripeness.

Two important case studies have illustrated the problem of interpreting successful coercion beyond stimulating a hurting stalemate to create ripeness. Saadia Touval’s idea of “coercive mediation” is closer to translating the nexus between coercion and ripeness, but he left a conceptualization gap. His insightful examination of the US mediation of what he described as “the [Bosnia’s civil] war and accompanying atrocities” noted that “coercion did not create a mutually hurting stalemate,” but rather the US used its “economic and military” resources “to coerce the disputants, to entice them, to bargain with them, and ultimately to persuade them to sign the documents” (Touval 1996, 558-9). His explanation raises some pertinent questions: if coercion did not create ripeness by stimulating a hurting stalemate, then what inspired ripeness, and how should we understand the role of coercion? Likewise, Eileen Babbitt’s study of the cases of Kenya and Côte d’Ivoire began with the following questions, “Was there a hurting stalemate at the start of mediation? If not, did the mediator attempt to create one?” But her interpretation of “ripeness” as “including all major parties” (Babbitt 2014, 32) suggested that mediation and coercion produced ripeness, but not by inspiring a hurting stalemate (see the case study below). Here, the puzzle is how to explain what generated ripeness and interpret the role of coercion. The problem is that we currently lack a suitable conceptual framework that could translate these findings.

The second question is about the mechanisms of coercion. There is a wide range of tools at the disposal of the international community or power mediators, which they can deploy in mediation processes to sway the parties’ behavior and shape the outcomes to the preferred

foreign policy and security interests. The available mechanisms include sanction, judicial, and military tools. The conversation has centered on the assumption that some devices are inconsistent with mediation and so can undermine peace processes and therefore should not be implemented simultaneously. As such, some studies have emphasized military and sanction measures (Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2009, 499; Greig and Diehl 2012, 181). Others have underlined sanctions and economic devices (Zartman and Anstey 2012, 19-21; Babbitt 2014, 43-4; Goertz, Diehl, and Balas 2016, 157). There is a broad disinclination toward judicial mechanisms because indictment and prosecution, for example, signal accountability and punishment, which can disincentivize conflict parties to negotiate (Zartman and Anstey 2012, 23; Greig and Diehl 2012, 182-3; Goertz, Diehl, and Balas 2016, 156). There are a few exceptions, though. Zwier (2013, 4) has indicated that involving the ICC can complicate mediation but explored strategies for combining judicial tools and mediation. Hultman (2019, 307-8) has stressed that “mediation has to offer the perpetrators a way out,” but left the question about the role of judicial devices open. The dialogue has focused on the mechanisms, not the objectives, of coercion, which underscores the incomplete understanding of the theory and purpose of coercion in international affairs, as well as the importance of incorporating the theory in international mediation studies.

The third question is about the actors of coercion, and the issue is whether the same mediator should adopt coercion campaigns. The problem is often illustrated by a more common conception of coercion operations as a form of punishment against “evil” or “bad” actors. According to this view, coercive actions are a form of retribution against the coercer’s “enemies” or those actors the coercing power disfavors. For such reasons, Greig and Diehl (2012, 82) have concluded that “coercive measures and mediation carried out by the same actor might complicate the success of the latter.” In “talking with evil,” Zwier (2013, 2, 24) explored the notion that the “US representatives may not ever appear to be appeasing bad actors or rewarding their bad behavior.” So, the alternative is to either disengage from peace processes or use force to accomplish America’s security interests. So, Zwier surmised that the “only viable option [to the US] for resolving conflict is to call in an NGO mediator to find a negotiated solution.” While these are legitimate concerns, the US mediation in Bosnia and the recent negotiation with the Taliban underline a trend in practice. More importantly, the dialogue has centered on the actors, not the goals, of coercion, which underlines the incomplete understanding of the theory and purpose of coercion in international politics, and so the significance of introducing the theory in international mediation studies.

In sum, I have shown in this section that the outstanding questions about the roles, mechanisms, actors, and interpretation of successful coercion are a consequence of the lack of an adequate conceptual framework for studying coercion and the partial understanding of the theory and purpose of coercion in international relations. Thus, the starting point of closing these gaps in knowledge must be to gain a firm grasp of the coercion theory.

The Theory of Coercion

In this section, I have three main objectives: 1) to stimulate a better and deeper understanding of the theory of coercion; 2) to underscore that the coercion theory is about solving what I read as the *agent-coercion problem* in the international system – that is, the idea that state and non-state actors are legitimate, voluntary, rational agents who retain choice despite being coerced by more powerful players; 3) to establish that the purpose of coercion is effective bargaining, and therefore the mechanisms and actors of coercion are less important. I must underline that there are disagreements among theorists over the definition, scope, mechanisms, and determinants of successful coercion.² So, by *coercion theory*, I mean the common theme about solving the agent-coercion problem and the objective of coercion. Touval (1996) has touched on a concept of the theory – that is, “coercive diplomacy” – in his analysis of US mediation in Bosnia. Here, I justify the introduction of the theory to international mediation studies.

The study of coercion had been within the exclusive fields of military and strategic studies, and unlike “brute force,” coercion reflects the primacy of diplomacy, what Thomas Schelling conceived as “the diplomacy of violence” (Schelling 1966, 2) in pursuing foreign policy and security interests. However, David Baldwin first advanced and explained the theory’s broader relevance in international politics, stressing nonmilitary mechanisms, like sanction tools (Baldwin 1971a, b). In “strategic coercion,” Lawrence Freedman explored the theory’s application in the post-Cold War global affairs and argued that:

By this time the prototypical conflict no longer appeared as one between great powers for global mastery, but rather the enforcement of policies agreed in multilateral bodies designed to enforce basic norms and principles (Freedman 1998, 2).

² For a very helpful review of the literature on coercion, see Bratton (2005).

This formulation is the basis of my justification for introducing the theory to international mediation studies. Indeed, the phrase “multilateral bodies” relates to actions undertaken through the UN Security Council to implement “basic norms and principles,” such as the prevention of “ethnic cleansing” of the Serbs in Bosnia and the Kurds in Iraq. Today, the equivalents would be the Rohingyas in Myanmar, the Yazidis in Iraq and Syria, and the Tigrayans in Ethiopia. The relevant policies include those enshrined in the Genocide Convention, the Geneva Conventions, and the Rome Statute, which established the ICC. These laws created the norms for the prevention and punishment of genocide and atrocities and fall squarely within the concept of atrocity mediation. Freedman’s concluding argument is even more pertinent: “theory must embrace the employment of strategic threats by any politically conscious collectivity for a great variety of potential purposes,” including in “peace process” (Freedman 1998, 3, 35). It is within this wider conceptualization that I read the following primary texts to gain a better and deeper understanding of the theory’s purpose.

Coercion theorists agree that the goal of any actor undertaking coercion operations must be to manipulate the target’s choice. Schelling’s (1966, 2-5) concept of the “diplomacy of violence” stressed that “the power to hurt [i.e., military capability] is a bargaining power,” so “the only purpose must be to influence somebody’s behavior, to coerce his decision or choices.” He emphasized that “coercion requires finding a bargain,” what mediation scholars call “making a deal,” by exploiting the target’s “wants and fears.” As Alexander George put it, there must be an opportunity for “concessions on behalf of a compromise settlement,” so that “the coercing power may couple its threats of punishment for noncompliance with positive inducements to encourage the adversary to comply with the demand” (George 1994, 16-17). At first glance, the act of combining threats of penalty and compromise appear contradictory but, as I read it, both actions explain the theory’s recognition that the target is a voluntary agent and retain choice, i.e., the agent-coercion problem. So, compromise and concession are vital elements of the solution.

Freedman’s (1998, 16, 22-23, 35) formulation of control versus coercion best illustrates the agent-coercion problem. He explained that control relates to military victory through brute force, resulting in the seizure of the disputed subject, so the target is denied choice. In contrast, coercion embodies compromise because control may not be an “option” where the target “cannot [or], should not be defeated because it is a legitimate political entity,” whose “residual power must be respected and accommodated in an agreement.” He stressed that the target of coercion “retains choice” because “voluntary agent has an option to ignore, deflect, or modify

the demands of the coercer.” His clarification has a philosophical underpinning (Greenspan 1978; Carr 1988; Anderson 2017). As Carr (1988, 60) has elaborated, “coercion is something different from the kind of compulsion that is sufficient to determine events,” given that “somebody who is coerced into doing something is in charge, in some sense, of what he does or how he acts.” In essence, these problems of choice and agency are precisely what coercion theory seeks to solve by incorporating the elements of compromise and concession.

In many ways, the agent-coercion problem stacks the odds of success against the coercing power. Therefore, in addition to making concessions and seeking compromises, the strategy must involve inducing a 1) perception of urgency and 2) logic of rationality. George (1994, 17) explains that stimulating a sense of urgency encompasses deploying military, political, and diplomatic actions and issuing a deadline, so the agent assesses the consequences of resistance and the benefits of compliance. The aim is to accelerate decision-making on resolving the proximate cause of the crisis. Inspiring a logic of rationality, on the other hand, assumes that the opponent is a rational actor, capable of making rational choices (Arrow 1951, 1959) about the coercer’s demands and consequences. However, not all actors are reasonable. Thus, George (1994, 13, 15) has proposed a behavioral model that accounts for culture, politics, and psychology, like what Schelling (1966, 175) described as generating enough “intelligence” on “who is in charge on the other side,” or as Brooks (2002) put it, understanding the type of regime or group. In short, the coercer must *know* the target.

The requirement that the coercer must know the target is important for the difficult task of influencing the agent’s “calculations” of the cost-benefit implications of compliance or resistance (Freedman 2015, 13). Noncompliance has been linked to motivation, which helps to assess how much cost the target is willing to tolerate. One challenge facing the coercing power concerns the value the target attaches to the disputed subject. The higher the value, the greater the motivation to resist, making coercion operations harder. In this context, Robert Pape’s study of the cost-benefit nexus is relevant. He emphasized that threats should be directed at the target’s benefit side to neutralize expected gains from embarking on or continuing the undesirable action. So, the coercer must increase the benefits of compliance, as well as the costs of resistance (Pape 1992, 437-8).³ However, the agent-coercion problem complicates

³ Pape’s finding that threats against “civilian vulnerabilities” do not work underscores his focus on military strategy. Indeed, Schelling (1966, 232) had observed that, “The preoccupation with vulnerability that began in 1957 or so was not with vulnerability of women and children and their means of livelihood.” Today, however, belligerents’ manipulation of civilian weaknesses is a motivation for the prevalent practice of coercion and mediation.

Pape's solution if the target undertakes a "counter-coercion," involving measures to deflect the impact of coercion or to raise the coercer's enforcement costs. Enforcement costs relate to losses arising from implementing coercion projects, such as damages to the coercer's reputation and credibility due to failure. So, counter-coercion may influence the coercer to amend demands and seek compromises. As Freedman (1998, 30-5) noted, in counter-coercion "a form of 'hurting stalemate' is produced," so the parties must "seek a lasting settlement." The pertinent implication of enforcement costs is that they tend to influence coercing powers to make realistic and clear demands (Thiess 1980, 386-399).

Schelling (1966, 175) has provided one important exception to the requirement of clarity of demands, what he characterized as the "hard choice between being clear so that [the target] knows what we want or vague so that he does not seem too submissive when he complies." The relevance of this exemption would be to address the problem of irrational agents who are more concerned with appearance than substance. Strategic imprecision demonstrates the agent-coercion problem, as well as the coercer's desire to "preserve [own] options" (Baldwin 1971a, 76). Schelling's (1966, 172) most salient solution is that the success of "coercion depends on the threat of what is yet to come than the damage already done," so strategic vagueness must point to past actions as indications of what lies ahead without being explicit. The implication is that coercion may focus on maintaining the status quo. In atrocity mediation, for instance, the aim must be to prevent or stop escalating violence and atrocities and may involve making a deal with the perpetrators because they are in positions of power, as opposed to demanding punishment and accountability, which are forms of restitution for victims' families.

Finally, a crucial aspect of the coercion theory concerns the concepts of deterrence and compellence. Schelling (1966, 3-5, 71-5) described deterrence as the "*latent* violence that can influence someone's choices."⁴ He explained that deterrent threats are like "statics" or structures established to dissuade the target from initiating the offending action and "involves setting the stage" that may be "nonintrusive, nonhostile, nonprovocative" and then waiting for the target's response. A no-fly zone is a good example, and so the outcome depends on whether the coerced flies within the prohibited airspace. If the target makes no move, then no further action is required, and the coercer may wait indefinitely. On the other hand, he portrayed compellent threats as "dynamics" or measures undertaken to persuade the target to stop the

⁴ The emphasis is in the original text.

offending action. An apt illustration is a precision airstrike if the target violated the no-fly zone. Freedman (1998, 19-20) has stressed that both concepts are forms of strategic coercion, and his broader definition of mechanisms includes sanctions and military tools. Either way, the threat that induces compliance must be credible but need not be implemented.

The Conceptual Framework of Atrocity Mediation

In this section, I combine the coercion theory and the mediation concepts of power mediation, the enticing opportunity model of the ripeness theory, multiparty mediation, and BATNA, as well as studies on the operational prevention of deadly conflicts, genocide or atrocities, and tactical violence against civilians to develop the conceptual framework of atrocity mediation. My objectives are to 1) solve the agent-coercion problem in international mediation, focusing on atrocity mediation, and 2) answer the questions about the roles, mechanisms, actors, and interpretation of successful coercion. I will start with a brief discussion of the relevance of these concepts, approaches, and studies to my conceptualization of the atrocity mediation model.

The concept of power mediation in international relations (Touval 1992; Kleiboer 2002) defines mediation by states possessing military and economic capabilities who utilize such material resources for coercion, or as leverage.⁵ The US and Russia are the traditional power mediators. There is an assumption of effectiveness based on power mediators' resources and bias (Favretto 2009). Studies on mediator bias – defined as a mediator's preference for a party, a disputed subject, or an issue – argue that biased mediators inspire confidence, so the favored party perceives that their interest would be protected in an agreement, which induces compliance (Kydd 2003; Savun 2008). The concept underpins my broader conceptualization of power mediators as including the Security Council, the US-led Group of Friends or Contact Groups, and the EU. These actors often use their material assets to conduct coercion operations and are generally biased in favor of protecting and enforcing human rights norms.

The concept of multiparty mediation explains the mediation practice where several actors, such as the UN, the EU, the African Union, and state or nonstate actors like civil society

⁵ Leverage is a broad concept and encompasses intangible elements like knowledge and technical skill. As Zartman (2008, 305) has clarified, leverage can take “the form of effective persuasion rather than material inducements and punishments [i.e., coercion].” Also, Touval and Zartman (2001, 438-9) have stressed that leverage is derived from “the mediator's ability to tilt toward (gratification) or away from (deprivation) a party.” For a fuller examination of the sources of mediators' leverage and their potential impact on conflict resolution outcomes, see Reid (2017).

groups, participate in a peace process and contribute unique resources to enhance mediation (Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 1999). The concept facilitates my understanding of the involvement of traditional and nontraditional power mediators in atrocity mediation and their employment of coercive measures to cultivate a perception of urgency and accelerate decision-making on resolving the proximate causes of the dispute that prompted violence and atrocities.

The “enticing opportunity” model of the ripeness theory states that mediators *must* create ripeness using peace offers. Mitchell (1995, 44-6) developed the concept based on Chester Crocker’s “grand strategy of peacemaking,” which says that “peacemaking [requires] skills and military power” and peace proposals with “sound basic principles,” so that ‘the parties will find them hard to ignore and yet difficult to respond to with a simple “yes” or “no”.’ Then “the mediator’s objective is to obtain forward movement by both sides on the settlement track” (Crocker 1992, 465-74). Embracing this concept, I conceive the cause of ripeness as being inherent in the mediator’s peace offer, rather than being in a hurting stalemate.

The concept of BATNA describes a party’s options before negotiation. The idea is that if the party’s alternative is better than the settlement created through negotiation, then the disputant would likely refuse to take the deal (Fisher, Ury, Patton 2011, 99-108). However, Fisher and Brown (1988, 146-7) have explained that “coercion” can worsen the party’s “walk-away alternative,” which, according to McKibben and Skoll (2021), makes a compromise more attractive. Based on this concept, I formulate the role of coercion vis-à-vis the parties’ choices. Although BATNA is generally unrelated to mediators, it is significant for my understanding of the mediator’s difficult task of representing civilians, which requires recommending ripeness-creating deals. My premise is that violence and atrocities must have worsened the mediator’s BATNA, in the sense that failure to create ripeness would result in rejection and escalation. So, the mediator faces an ethical dilemma, as compromise offers must accommodate the core interests of parties who might have committed atrocities, yet failure to offer a bargain will exacerbate atrocities with the potential of the situation sliding toward genocide.

Studies on the operational prevention of genocide or atrocities have underscored the challenge of coercing conflict parties (Harff 2003; Waller 2016, chapter 5; Gurr 2018). Particularly, in his analysis of violent conflict settings, Gurr (2018, 68) pointed to the agent-coercion problem where he noted that while “Incentives and pressures should focus intensively on conflict situations,” ultimately “Only force will work.” However, the Carnegie Commission’s study on “preventing deadly conflict” has underlined that multilateral

diplomacy must focus on “responsible leaders” (Carnegie Commission 1997, chapter 3) or rational agents. The insight is that “coercion cannot be applied in any value-free manner” (Airaksinen 1988, 213), hence my emphasis on enticing proposals and coercion. Indeed, studies on tactical violence against civilians have shown that conflict parties always have broader political or economic goals (Hultman 2007; Wood 2010; Valentino 2014), so the mediator’s compromise offer must address such concerns, while coercion must push the reluctant party toward accepting the deal.

Accordingly, the central thesis of *the atrocity mediation framework* is that coercion operations are often ineffective or counterproductive because of the agent-coercion problem in international mediation – that is, conflict parties are legitimate, rational, voluntary agents who retain choice, despite being coerced by power mediators. By *legitimate agents*, I mean conflict parties as recognized by the international community, including state and non-state actors, like political parties or rebel groups, such as those in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, and Ethiopia. (I exclude extremist non-state actors, such as the Islamic State or ISIS and the Lord’s Resistance Army in Northern Uganda.) As such, power mediators cannot take control of the disputed subject, often state power, as they belong to the disputants. So, their claims, status, and power must be respected and accommodated. Committing atrocities does not delegitimize their political positions, which explains their representation and recognition at peace talks (see Coggins 2011; Huang 2016). Likewise, by *voluntary agents*, I imply that conflict parties will always maintain the choice to either accept peace initiatives or pursue their alternatives to victory. Thus, I assume that because disputants are free agents, they would have good BATNAs, at least from their perspectives, and so can afford to reject the mediator’s peace offer to pursue their options. Finally, by *rational agents*, I mean that conflict parties commit tactical violence against civilians and commit atrocities as a component of their broader strategy of gaining or acquiring power or recognition. Therefore, perpetrating atrocities is a deliberate rational choice – a means to security, political, or economic objectives – despite being subjected to coercive actions. The conceptual implication of my argument is that coercion must be studied from the belligerents’ viewpoint, as opposed to the mediators’ perception. As Freedman (1998, 15) put it, “The study of strategy requires examining political affairs from the perspective of those involved without necessarily identifying with their goals,” or tactics.

The solution to the agent-coercion problem in international mediation is that the mediator must embrace strategic coercion, involving creating ripeness by offering a peace plan that includes enticing opportunities and applying credible threats to influence the reluctant

party's choice. The solution is based on my assumptions that conflict parties are rational actors who carry out tactical violence against civilians and commit atrocities after considering the cost/benefit consequences and that they have broader goals of either retaining or acquiring power. States or rebel groups' leadership make such calculations as a means of advancing their strategic goals. Moreover, the belligerents' use of purposeful violence demonstrates the high value they attach to the subject matter, as well as their motivation and self-interest, which should make coercion campaigns a more challenging endeavor. But the inherent rationality of their aspirations is an opportunity for enticement and should increase the chances of successful coercion operations. Yet, as free agents, the parties retain the choice of assessing the cost-benefit implications of making three relevant decisions about a) consenting to mediation, b) breaking a deadlock or c) reaching a compromise. So, the role of strategic coercion maneuvers must be to worsen the parties' BATNAs and influence their choices. By committing atrocities, the parties might have created a condition that weakens their political status, and so it becomes one of the mediator's leverages. The purpose of coercion campaigns must be to induce a sense of urgency and accelerate decision-making on each choice.

Strategic Coercion and Consent

The agent-coercion problem makes securing the disputants' consent to mediation a difficult endeavor. As Bercovitch and Jackson (2009, 35) have noted, "actors retain ... the freedom to accept or reject mediation or mediators' proposals." One major issue is that state parties often reject mediation or negotiation with rebel groups to avoid legitimizing their claim and status. Likewise, external support to rebel groups may encourage them to pursue their demands uncompromisingly. In such a scenario, mediators must conduct ripening activities, which may involve sanctions tools (Zartman and Anstey 2012; Babbitt 2014). Some studies have underlined that the parties would only accept mediation when they see benefits (Beardsley 2011, 44-71; Greig and Diehl 2012, 57). Hence, the atrocity mediation framework focuses on such cost-benefit considerations, stressing that to solve the agent-coercion problem relating to consent, strategic coercion campaigns must comprise enticing peace offers and credible threats, focusing on convincing the parties that the benefit of accepting mediation is a better choice than the cost of refusal. Otherwise, mediators must worsen the parties' BATNAs to make a mediated solution more appealing.

Strategic Coercion and Stalemate

Studies on stalemate (Pruitt and Rubin 1986; Downie 1991; Mooradian and Druckman 1999; Ghosn 2010) encompass the mediator's efforts to influence the disputants' choice of resuming negotiation after a deadlock, so it involves the question of creating ripeness. Instead of producing ripeness by using coercion activities to inspire a hurting stalemate, Crocker (1992, 471-2) stressed proposing "fresh ideas to shake [the parties] up," which is the basis of the enticing opportunity paradigm of the ripeness theory. As Zartman (1997, 196) explained, "Optimists hope for a more positive equivalent to the highly negative or conflict driven MHS [mutually hurting stalemate], something like a mutually enticing opportunity (MEO)." Understandably, the enticing opportunity model conjures an image of a rosy peace process and outcome, and a preference for positive coercion (Baldwin 1971b; Drezner 1999). However, the atrocity mediation framework underscores paring enticing offers with both positive and negative threats. Thus, to solve the agent-coercion problem concerning stalemate, strategic coercion campaigns must consist of new peace proposals that include enticing opportunities and threats of consequences, so that the focus must be on avoiding the coercion paradox and breaking stalemates that normally arise from negotiation.

Strategic Coercion and Compromise

The parties' choice of accepting a compromise to settle the immediate causes of the conflict that triggered violence and atrocities is consequential because the guiding principle of mediation is to find solutions that the parties can accept (Bercovitch 1986; Conlon, Carnevale, and Ross 1994). The issue here is that peace recommendations, even the enticing suggestions, are hardly perfect, and so typically require several rounds of negotiation, as the parties seek a more favorable bargain. Jacob Bercovitch has provided a clear description of this process and the disputants' options. He noted that the "Outcome is based on the parties' assessment of costs and benefits associated with their choice of (1) reaching an agreement, (2) continuing negotiation, or (3) abandoning negotiation." The first option implies that instead of ordering the outcome "differently on the preference scale of each party, we should look at it as a common denominator [i.e., compromise] which can create an optimistic attitude and encourage the parties to continue their efforts to reach better agreements" (Bercovitch 1986, 60-1).

The importance of a "common denominator" is that mediators must ensure that the parties choose a compromise because the objective is to prevent the escalation of atrocities by

resolving the proximate cause of the conflict. Thus, the atrocity mediation model stresses that to solve the agent-coercion problem relating to parties' choice of making a deal, the proposed compromise must create ripeness using enticing offers, which must accommodate the parties' core interests in the disputed subject. To convince any reluctant parties and avoid the choice of continuing negotiation, the mediator may need to modify the proposed agreements to adapt to the parties' concerns, or as Crocker (1992, 474) put it, "the mediator's objective is to obtain forward movement by both sides on the settlement track." Then, the role of coercion maneuvers must be to raise a sense of urgency and accelerate the parties' cost/benefit considerations. Coercion campaigns must persuade the unwilling party that the compromise is a better choice than the consequences of either continuing or abandoning negotiation by worsening their BATNA. This influence campaign process is what I refer to as *consensus-building*.

Therefore, the answer to the question about the roles of coercion in international mediation of atrocity-related conflict is that strategic coercion operations must perform the following three roles, 1) obtaining consent, 2) breaking stalemate, or 3) consensus-building (see Figure I).

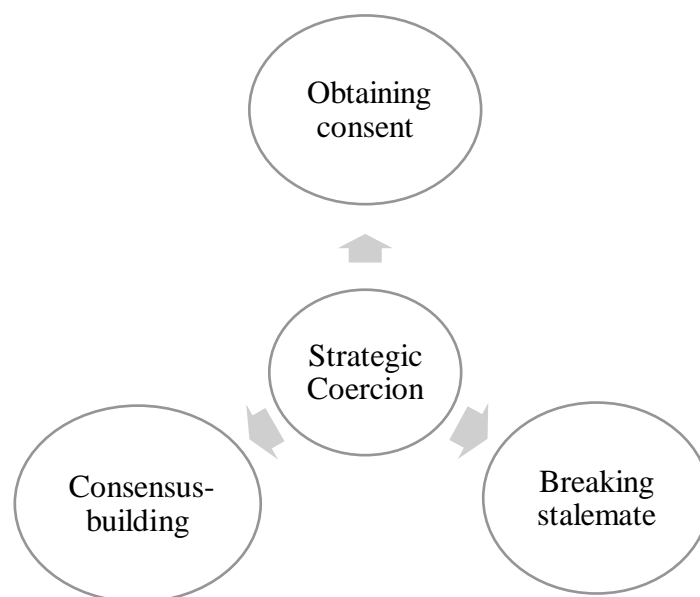


Figure I. The Roles of Strategic Coercion

Importantly, these three roles would not occur sequentially in every situation, because initiating a strategic coercion campaign will ultimately depend on the stage of the conflict that atrocities occurred and when power mediators acted. Nevertheless, there are three possible sequences for implementing a strategic coercion operation, namely, 1) obtaining consent and consensus-

building, 2) breaking stalemate and consensus-building, 3) and consensus-building, as shown in Figure II.

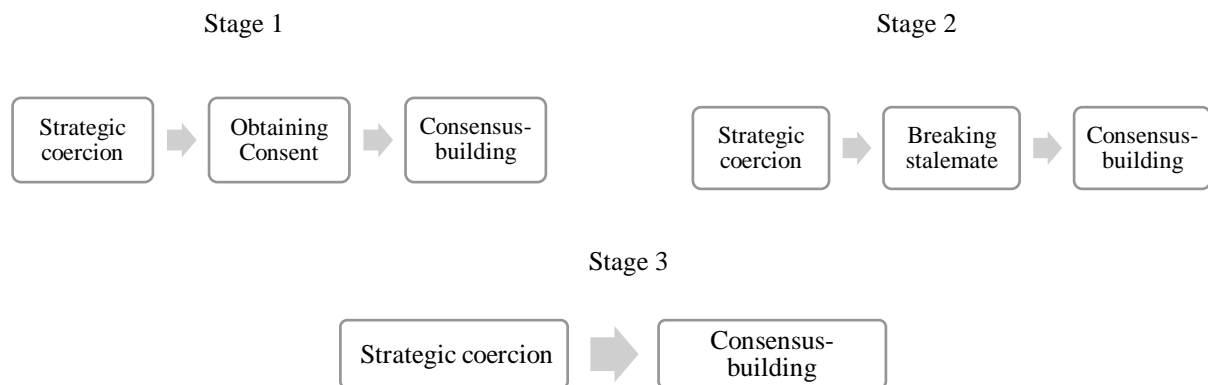


Figure II. Stages of Implementing Strategic Coercion

Each sequence requires that once power mediators initiate a strategic coercion project, they must sustain it and should be prepared to expand the scope and mechanisms until the parties' compliance (success) or rejection (failure). The logic of sustaining strategic coercion operations once implemented is to either maintain or elevate the perception of urgency and accelerate decision-making on the cost-benefit calculation of resolving the proximate cause of the conflict. These three stages are the criteria for measuring the success of strategic coercion campaigns.

The Mechanisms of Strategic Coercion

To answer the question about the mechanisms of coercion, the atrocity mediation framework focuses on the roles of strategic coercion campaigns. As Schelling (1966, 5) noted, the “difference between coercion and brute force is as often in the intent as in the instrument.” In essence, the goal of coercion matters more than the mechanisms. Thus, for the purposes of obtaining consent, breaking stalemate, or consensus-building, and raising the perception of urgency and expediting decision-making on the cost-benefit calculations of these choices by the parties to resolve the proximate cause of the dispute that triggered atrocities, sanction, judicial, and military tools are essential forms of strategic coercion.⁶ These forms of strategic coercion must perform deterrence and compellence functions. So, the mechanisms of strategic coercion involve the tools for conducting coercion operations. Table I below outlines the forms

⁶ For a helpful evaluation of the mechanisms for strategic coercion in military studies, see Sullivan (1995).

and mechanisms of strategic coercion, although the list of tools is not exhaustive. In any event, power mediators must adopt diverse devices and implement them concurrently for maximum effect. For emphasis, the use of these instruments must not alter the roles and purposes of coercion maneuvers.

Table I. Forms and Mechanisms of Strategic Coercion

Forms of Strategic Coercion	Mechanisms of Strategic Coercion
Sanction	<p>Negative tools: withdrawing diplomatic, economic, financial, trade, and development assistance</p> <p>Positive tools: providing diplomatic, economic, financial, trade, and development assistance</p> <p>Targeted tools: travel bans, asset freezes</p>
Judicial	Investigation, indictment, arrest warrants, prosecution
Military	No-fly zones, precision missile strikes, an arms embargo

The Actors of Strategic Coercion

To answer the question about the actors of coercion, the atrocity mediation model concentrates on the roles and purposes of strategic coercion. Hence, for the purposes of obtaining consent, breaking stalemate, or consensus-building, and raising the sense of urgency and expediting decision-making on the cost-benefit analysis of these choices by the parties to settle the proximate cause of the dispute that triggered violence and atrocities, the identity of the actor is irrelevant. This is because strategic coercion is a deliberate overt operation, although power mediators can adopt strategic imprecision. So, I conceptualize the ICC and the Security Council as the international community's central actors of strategic coercion. Both actors perform deterrence and compellence functions. From a deterrence perspective, they are "statics" or structures set up by the international community to deter legitimate, voluntary, rational agents from committing genocide or atrocities. They are dormant strategic deterrence formations whose success means they would remain inactive indefinitely. But deterrence fails when legitimate, voluntary, rational agents engage in tactical violence against civilians and commit atrocities. By conducting tactical violence against civilians, conflict parties are performing an uncommon, indirect type of counter-coercion against the ICC and the Security Council. From a compellence viewpoint, the ICC and the Security Council are "dynamics" or

mechanisms for strategic coercion, as they enforce compliance using investigation, indictment, prosecution, sanction, precision missile strikes, arms embargoes, or no-fly zones.⁷

Although the distinction between deterrence and compellence is sometimes unclear in theory and practice (Freedman 1998, 19-20; Byman and Waxman 2002, 7-9), I underline the occurrence of genocide or atrocities as significant. As Kofi Annan put it,

As important as the council's enforcement [compellent] power is its deterrent power. If states bent on criminal behaviour know that frontiers are not an absolute defence—that the council will take action to halt the gravest crimes against humanity—then they will not embark on such a course assuming they can get away with it (Annan 1999, 98).

The significance of Annan's argument relates to the question of why deterrence fails, which some studies have attributed to the Security Council's lack of credibility (Glennon 2003; Weiss and Young 2005). The atrocity mediation model emphasizes the agent-coercion problem, stressing that the Security Council and the ICC are "*latent*" strategic coercion structures for influencing the choice of free, rational, voluntary agents. The occurrence of atrocities is a failure of deterrence because conflict parties retain choice, despite strategic deterrence by the Security Council and the ICC. Therefore, deterrence will almost always fail, but compellence will almost always succeed, because, as Schelling (1966, 172) observed, "coercion depends more on the threat of what is yet to come than on damage already done." For instance, threats of prosecution, travel ban, and an airstrike should focus on influencing the belligerents' choice of the peace offer and stopping them from continuing attacks on civilians, not accountability or punishment for crimes already committed. Otherwise, there would be no basis for a bargain, which is the core purpose of strategic coercion.

Finally, the actors of strategic coercion encompass any state or a group of states with power and interest to embark on such a challenging operation. These would include traditional power mediators like the US, Russia, as well as China, and the often US-led Group of Friends or Contact Groups, regional organizations like the EU, and Commissions of Inquiry established to investigate acts of genocide or atrocities.

⁷ Much of the literature on deterrence have focused on the impact of the ICC on deterring future outbreaks of atrocities, see Kim and Sikkink (2010), Jo and Simmons (2016). On the compellence effect of the ICC, see Mendeloff (2018).

Case Study

In this section, I operationalize the atrocity mediation framework to answer the question about the interpretation of successful coercion, focusing on the controversial case of Kenya.

In January 2008, the African Union (AU) spearheaded an international mediation of the post-election dispute in Kenya that triggered violence and atrocities. The international community responded timely and robustly to the outbreak of violence on December 31, 2007, due to fears that the escalating atrocities might result in genocide like in Rwanda. The conflict also threatened regional and international security. Kenya had been a major partner to the US-led global war on terror in East Africa, so preventing a potential collapse of the country's governance institutions became a priority. These were some of the factors that galvanized international support to the AU mediation.⁸

The proximate cause of the violence and atrocities was a dispute over the December 27, 2007, presidential election result between the Party of National Unity (PNU) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). The Electoral Commission had declared the incumbent president and leader of the PNU, Mwai Kibaki, the winner. Raila Odinga, ODM's flagbearer, accused Kibaki of electoral fraud and his party ODM mobilized supporters to protest the disputed outcome. The demonstration led to a violent confrontation with security services and Kibaki's followers. Ethnic militias aligned to ODM and PNU attacked civilians based mainly on their ethnic identity and voting preference, resulting in the mass murder of over 1,200 people. The ICC later confirmed that crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing had been committed and indicted two senior state officials as the masterminds.

Before the AU mediation, Kibaki had rejected mediation offers from several eminent Africans, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, although a track-two mediation, led by the World Bank, was underway. Kibaki eventually accepted AU mediation and a compromise amidst intense diplomatic and coercion by power mediators, including the US, the UK, Rwanda, the EU, the ICC, the UN Security Council, and numerous other state actors. The coercive tools implemented included sanctions, investigation, threats of prosecution, and military force. These coercive activities facilitated effective mediation, but opinion is divided over whether or how coercion contributed to the success. The division can be grouped into three contrasting interpretations. The first group has suggested that coercion did not influence

⁸ For insightful discussions of the background to the crisis, see Cheeseman (2008), Chege (2008).

the Kibaki's choices. In their report, Lindenmayer and Kaye (2009, 22) concluded, "that the agreement was [not] the result of coercion from outside forces." The second group has emphasized coercion and diplomacy and indicated that the parties' lacked choice and agency. For instance, Welsh (2015, 111-2) surmised that the peace deal "was predetermined by the external actors in advance, rather than voluntarily agreed by the parties." The third group brings some nuance to the dialogue. For example, Babbitt (2014, 43) has highlighted sanctions and "mutual gains."

My analysis is based on Stage 1 of Implementing Strategic Coercion, involving obtaining consent and consensus-building. It shows that the AU mediators created ripeness by 1) modifying the mediation proposal to include an enticing opportunity and address Kibaki's concerns over the World Bank-proposed inquiry peace process, and 2) recommending an enticing settlement that accommodated Kibaki's and Odinga's core interests. And then power mediators deployed, sustained, and expanded mechanisms for coercion operations to raise the sense of urgency and accelerate decision-making on Kibaki's cost-benefit assessment of consenting to mediation and reaching an agreement. Kofi Annan, the AU chief mediator, directly threatened Kibaki – "the person in charge" – in vague terms and worsened his BATNA. Annan focused on the future consequences and acknowledged that Kibaki had retained choice. Importantly, Annan's succeeded in stimulating the perception of urgency and accelerating decision-making on resolving the electoral dispute that triggered violence and atrocities.

Strategic Coercion and Obtaining Consent

Although unsuccessful, the World Bank-led peace process was the basis of the successful AU mediation, and consent was obtained after power mediators implemented ripening measures comprising an enticing peace offer and coercion campaign. The ICG report noted that while Kibaki publicly resisted external intervention, the World Bank Country Director, Colin Bruce, had facilitated more than "ten rounds of negotiations" between ODM and PNU senior officials, and business leaders, which resulted in a peace plan called the Principles of Agreement. The blueprint suggested 'a "credible, impartial [process] ... whose findings and recommendations [the parties] agree to be bound by"'. The neutral process would be undertaken under the auspices of "a panel of eminent Africans" that would oversee "a 30-day" procedure "to make recommendations on the government structure pending a new election." Crucially, the agreement proposed that the parties should establish "a coalition government" as a solution to the proximate cause of the electoral dispute that triggered violence

and atrocities (ICG 2008, 21-22). The guarantors would have included the US, the EU, and the AU. The point is that the parties had discussed and agreed, albeit in principle, that a power-sharing arrangement was a viable solution to the crisis.

Pertinently, the peace plan contained an enticing opportunity: the idea of power-sharing appealed to Kibaki's and Odinga's core interests in power. However, the ICG report observed that the deal failed because PNU "hardliners" persuaded Kibaki to disclaim it. Their concern was that the proposed inquiry by "a panel of eminent Africans" would likely lead to an adverse outcome – the invalidation of Kibaki's election (ICG 2008, 22-23). Thus, while an enticing opportunity existed, the cost-benefit analysis of an inquiry resulted in Kibaki's choice to reject the compromise. The AU Chairperson, President John Kufuor, who presented the deal, failed but succeeded in facilitating the Panel's mediation by modifying the problematic provision to address Kibaki's fears.

Under intense diplomatic pressure, reflected in visits by African leaders and telephone calls by the US president, George Bush, and the British prime minister, Gordon Brown, Kibaki invited Kufuor to Nairobi for consultation, in line with article 4(j) of the Constitutive Act of the AU. Kufuor recommended the Principles of Agreement to Kibaki, who dismissed it. However, Kibaki considered Kufuor's suggestion that instead of conducting an inquiry, the "eminent Africans" or the Panel could mediate the electoral dispute (Jepson et al. 2014, 21-22).⁹ Kibaki's resistance was based on the cost of accepting a process that would have invalidated his election. But, by adjusting the problematic clause, Kufour created an enticing opportunity. Yet, Kibaki's ambivalence to Kufuor's mediation proposal prompted coercion operations to obtain his consent.

Kibaki and the PNU initially saw an advantage in mediation only as a delay tactic to consolidate power. Kibaki's announcement of a coalition cabinet – consistent with the part of the Principles of Agreement he liked – on January 11, where he appointed an ODM-allied candidate as the vice president, demonstrated the PNU's inclination to strengthen their hold on the executive. Also, the PNU used tactical violence to intimidate and repress ODM politicians and supporters. At the same time, Odinga and ODM intensified calls for protests, as a strategy for exacerbating and sustaining the pressure on Kibaki to concede or accept to share power, while both parties' militias targeted civilians based on their ethnic identity and party affiliation

⁹ Voice of America. 2009. "AU mediation effort in Kenya ends in failure." *Archived*, October 27. Accessed April 18, 2021, <<https://www.voanews.com/archive/au-mediation-effort-kenya-ends-failure>>

(ICG 2008, 23-24). Effectively, the parties and their agents perceived tactical violence against civilians as a necessary element of their broader strategy of winning the power struggle, making strategic coercion an essential component of the power mediator's support to the anticipated AU mediation.

In addition to the diplomatic pressure mounted by African leaders, the US, and the UK, the EU implemented sanctions and demanded a negotiated settlement before the Panel arrived in Nairobi on January 22. On January 17, the European Parliament voted for "all further budgetary support to the government of Kenya to be frozen until a political solution to the present crisis has been achieved" (European Parliament 2008, 18). The vote was a comprehensive state sanction. Two days after, on January 19, the EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Mitchel, visited Nairobi to restate the rationale for EU sanctions and demands. The apparent and realistic demand was that the parties must resolve the proximate cause of the violence and atrocities through a negotiated settlement. This recognized and appealed to the disputants' agency and choice of consenting to mediation. The magnitude of the EU sanction coupled with a pragmatic demand was persuasive. The benefit of mediation is that Kibaki can reasonably control the process, unlike an inquiry. So, he now had more to lose by resisting mediation. Consequently, Kibaki and Odinga consented to AU mediation through the famous "handshake" on January 26. Overall, the enticing opportunity and coercion maneuver accomplished ripening.

With consent obtained using an enticing offer and coercion, the Panel must now persuade Kibaki to accept a compromise based on a power-sharing formula. As negotiations between the PNU and ODM teams slowly progressed, violence and atrocities continued, so power mediators sustained and improved on the coercion campaign.

Strategic Coercion and Consensus-building

During the Panel's parliamentary briefing on the progress of negotiations on February 12, Annan proposed a "grand coalition government" (Lindenmayer and Kaye 2009, 15), echoing the exact provision of the failed World Bank-brokered deal. Like Kufuor, who first recommended the power-sharing deal, Annan was briefed by AU officials. So, Annan had good "intelligence." Pertinently, a coalition government was an enticing opportunity to both sides and so created ripeness. The problem was that Kibaki and the PNU were unwilling to share executive power with Odinga and the ODM, arguing that the constitution had no provision for

an executive prime minister. Odinga and the ODM were open to the compromise but dismissed the non-executive prime minister (Jepson et al. 2014, 17, 22, chapter 2). So, the deal's principle was sound, and mediators must now "obtain forward movement by [Kibaki] on the settlement track" (Crocker 1992, 474). That is, consensus-building, which depended more on strategy. The Panel's strategy for preventing the escalation of atrocities had centered on "Agenda 3" of the four "Suggested Agenda" items for dealing comprehensively with the crisis. Agenda 3 was about resolving the political aspect of the conflict – that is, the proximate cause of the violence and atrocities. Notably, the plan excluded "Agenda 4" relating to accountability (Jepson et al. 2014, 253-55). Instead, the plan involved 1) creating ripeness by re-offering the coalition government deal, and 2) threatening further sanction, prosecution, and military measures to persuade Kibaki, the reluctant party, that the compromise was a better choice – it worked.

Power mediators expanded the scope of the coercion campaign to influence Kibaki's choice and prevent further escalation of violence and atrocities. The US, with the most leverage and resources, implemented additional measures by threatening to terminate bilateral cooperation on the war on terror and prosecution of perpetrators. In a statement to the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer, the Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of African Affairs, noted that the State Department had 'made it clear that there will be "no business as usual" with Kenya until there is a real, concerted effort by both the Kenyan Government and its opposition to resolve the issues which generated this tragedy.' Remarkably, the threat was clear and credible considering US-Kenya relations and America's power, and the demand was realistic as it focused on parties' choice of settling the dispute. She also stated that "a strong message of accountability" will help prevent the escalation of atrocities (US Senate 2008) – this was a threat of prosecution.

The threat of prosecution by the US overlapped with multilateral efforts already underway through the ICC and the Security Council. Earlier on February 6, the Security Council had adopted a presidential statement expressing deep concern about the crisis and its regional impact on peace and security, stressing "the need to avoid impunity ... and [called] for those responsible for violence to be brought to justice" (United Nations 2008, 1). Equally, the ICC had announced a preliminary investigation into the events (ICC 2008). Moreover, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda had requested Kenya's military to intervene,¹⁰ consistent with article 4(j) of the Constitutive Act of the AU, relating to the right of a member state to

¹⁰ Financial Times. 2008. "Kagame urges Kenyan army to act." January 31, <<https://www.ft.com/content/dac796b8-cf7c-11dc-854a-0000779fd2ac>>

request intervention. Kagame's appeal reflected his own experience in stopping the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and his concern that the mediation and coercion operations had not been effective thus far.

The negotiation on a coalition government continued, despite these coercion activities, which illustrated the parties' agency and choice as they considered the cost/benefit consequences of power distribution. What was happening at this stage is power mediators using strategic threats to build consensus on the proposed coalition government. The focus was on influencing Kibaki's choice. For Kibaki, the cost of a coalition government was surrendering a part of the executive authority to the opposition, to which he saw no apparent equivalent benefit. In other words, Kibaki's walkway alternative was better than the deal. Meanwhile, Odinga perceived cost as being shut out of power, even though he believed in his electoral victory. Thus, the coercion operation must demonstrate to Kibaki that there was a benefit in making a deal. Power mediators would achieve this by using strategic threats to worsen Kibaki's BATNA, making the proposed coalition government more attractive.

The threats of sanctions had targeted the government, not specific individuals. Also, the threat of prosecution was general. But strategic coercion would become focused. The ICG report noted the US State Department sent letters to thirteen individuals threatening prosecution, as Jendayi Frazer had recommended. Also, the EU, Canada, Australia, and Switzerland threatened targeted sanctions, involving travel bans and asset freezes, against specified government and opposition officials and their family members (ICG 2008, 28; see also Jepson et al. 2014, 31-32). Still, Kibaki refused to compromise, demonstrating the agent-coercion problem. Kibaki and the PNU retained choice and refused to comply while being coerced by power mediators. Although the parties acknowledged the pressure, describing Annan as "the dictator" (Griffiths 2008, 11), they maintained freedom, leading frustrated Annan to suspend the negotiation between ODM and PNU teams and turned to Kibaki, the man in charge, to seek consensus on sharing power with Odinga.

Annan recorded and reproduced the pivotal threat to Kibaki in his memoir. The conversation is significant for understanding the role of strategic coercion in consensus-building. It shows 1) how Annan focused on subsequent consequences in articulating benefits of compliance and costs of resistance, and 2) the importance of threatening the person "in charge on the other side" and sometimes being "vague" (Schelling 1966, 175). Annan recalled the interaction, thus:

In my meeting with Kibaki, I pressed him, explaining I was in regular contact with key members of the international community. “The international community is picking up that this failure to make a deal is because of the PNU’s unwillingness to move. There will be consequences from them if this fails. You’re the one in charge here. Save your country. Otherwise you are going to have a lot falling on your head. Mr. President, over one thousand people are dead. It’s time to make a deal” (Annan 2012, 200).¹¹

This passage reflects Annan’s use of strategic threats to bargain and worsen Kibaki’s BATNA. Annan’s strategic imprecision pointed to personal “consequences” to Kibaki, if the deal failed, and must be understood in the context of the mechanisms already deployed by the Security Council, the ICC, the EU, the US, Rwanda, and other state actors, involving sanctions, investigation, threats of prosecution, and military intervention. Importantly, Annan was referring to future penalties to build consensus on the proposed coalition government. Indeed, the threat and demand underline Kibaki’s responsibility in the event of failure, not for past resistance and failures. The decisive request was that Kibaki must “make a deal,” but as a voluntary agent, Kibaki had a choice between a compromise and the “consequences” of failure. As Annan put it, Kibaki’s “choice was now either to shift or walk out alone [and] face ... the most powerful actors in the international community” (Annan 2012, 201). Here, strategic coercion focused on influencing Kibaki’s calculation of costs and benefits of either option.

Importantly, Annan alluded to the doctrine of “command responsibility,” like the legal concept of the “indirect perpetrator,” which states that those in positions of authority are equally liable to crimes committed by their subordinates if they failed to take reasonable steps to prevent atrocities. As the Head of State and Government, Kibaki was “in charge” as violence and atrocities unfolded, effectively overseeing ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The “PNU unwillingness to move” created conditions for escalation, but Kibaki would be liable for the crimes because of his position.¹² The benefit was that if Kibaki compromised, then the command responsibility would not apply, that is, “Save your country. Otherwise a lot [would

¹¹ Quotation marks are in the original text, but I have modified the text sequence to improve readability.

¹² The ICC Prosecutor used the doctrine to obtain the arrest warrant against the former president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir. The Pre-Trial Chamber found “reasonable grounds to believe that” al-Bashir, ‘as the de jure and de facto President of the State of Sudan and Commander-in-Chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces ... was in full control of all branches of the “apparatus” of the State of Sudan, including the Sudanese Armed Forces and their allied Janjaweed militia,’ and used such control to ‘secure the implementation of the said [Government of Sudan] counter-insurgency campaign’ (ICC 2009, 222).

be] falling on your head.” Here, the costs of sanctions, prosecution, and military intervention have worsened Kibaki’s BATNA.

Finally, by suspending the negotiation and turning to Kibaki, Annan used strategic coercion maneuvers to accelerate Kibaki’s decision-making on the proposed compromise. The strategic threat raised a sense of urgency by stressing that over 1000 people are already dead, so it was time the immediate cause of the violence was resolved to halt further escalation. The purpose of strategic coercion was to persuade reluctant Kibaki that reaching a deal was a better option than noncompliance, that is, consensus-building. Again, the strategic coercion operation had worsened Kibaki’s BATNA. Eventually, Kibaki chose to compromise and directed his legal advisers to draft the agreement (Lindenmayer and Kaye 2009, 21; Jepson et al. 2014, 42). The draft was the Agreement on the Principles of Partnership of the Coalition Government, which Kibaki and Odinga signed on February 28, 2008, the same day Annan made the threat and demand.

Conclusion

This article has explored the outstanding questions about the roles, mechanisms, actors, and interpretation of successful coercion in the international mediation of atrocity-related conflict. I noted that these issues are a consequence of the lack of an adequate theoretical framework and incomplete understanding of the theory and purpose of coercion in international affairs. So, I developed the conceptual framework of atrocity mediation to answer these questions. My central thesis is based on what I read as the agent-coercion problem in the international system – that is, conflict parties are legitimate, rational, voluntary agents who retain choice despite being coerced by power mediators. So, coercion must be studied from the conflict parties’ perspective. I stressed that the solution is, power mediators must embrace strategic coercion, involving creating ripeness using enticing peace offers and deploying coercive mechanisms to influence the reluctant party’s choice. Strategic coercion must encompass multiple forms, involving sanction, judicial, and military tools, and can be executed by any powerful and interested actors because strategic coercion is an overt action. And the roles are for obtaining consent, breaking stalemate, or consensus-building. I illustrated the explanatory power of the atrocity mediation framework with the important case of Kenya.

Every conflict situation is unique, so the atrocity mediation framework is a conceptual model for conducting future comparative case studies on the international mediation of

atrocity-related conflict. As George (1994, 16, 20) aptly put it, coercion “is a highly context-dependent strategy,” so any “abstract model” should be “a starting point for designing a particular strategy ... for a specific situation.” For emphasis, the atrocity mediation model is a guide for subsequent case studies and may well contribute to the construction of mediation strategy in particular instances. Indeed, the growing influence of mediation in crisis responses in the global system and the enduring atrocity character of modern conflicts underscore the significance of the atrocity mediation model as a valuable hybrid theoretical framework. The framework of atrocity mediation embraces the diversity of actors with different forms of resources in the international system willing to undertake the ambitious and sophisticated task of strategic coercion operations to prevent genocide or atrocities in conflict settings. *It recognizes the evolution of what may be called the concept of multiparty power mediation in international relations.*

Finally, my reading of the agent-coercion problem encapsulates a predominant feature of international affairs: the idea that conflict parties, as actors in the international system, are legitimate, rational, voluntary agents. The significance is that the belligerents’ choice of tactical violence against civilians is an indirect counter-coercion against power mediators and underscores the failure of deterrence. So, the grand purposes of compellent threats must be to generate a sense of urgency and accelerate decision-making on enticing peace proposals. The coercive value of sanction, judicial, or military mechanisms is to find a bargain that prevents the escalation of violence and atrocities. There is an inherent ethical dilemma in bargaining with potential perpetrators of atrocities, but we must remember that one implication of the conflict parties’ indirect counter-coercion is to worsen the mediator’s BATNA. Here, we have biased mediators who intervene on behalf of civilians to protect human rights and prevent genocide or the escalation of atrocities. So, the failure to find a bargain will inevitably lead to more violations while perpetrators remain comfortably in power (of course, power mediators retain the choice of force but may prefer diplomacy). Thus, I have proposed the atrocity mediation framework as a model for studying grand bargains that prevent genocide or the escalation of atrocities. Such future studies must examine and establish the determinants of successful strategic coercion campaigns.

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