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Agents of Change: Policy Entrepreneurs and Inducements in International Politics

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NATHAN OLSEN, MAR 4 2019

In the terminology of coercive diplomacy, inducements refer to policies that benefit a state rather than punish said state (Drezner, 1999). Within the international arena, inducements are said to be used infrequently, particularly in contrast to economic sanctions (Doxey, 2009; Cortright and Lopez, 2000; Gortzak, 2005). The infrequent use of inducements has meant that inducements themselves, and as part of engagement strategies, have often been overlooked within the literature on coercive diplomacy. This essay aims to contribute towards the growing literature concerning inducements. In doing so, it will closely examine an instance in which inducements have been implemented, and subsequently, how inducements can be brought back into the toolbox of coercive diplomacy. Rather than focus on the nature of inducements themselves as other scholarship has, this essay closely examines the factors preventing them from being used (Volpe, 2016; Le Thu, 2018). The essay will focus on domestic factors explaining the infrequency of inducements, as the role of domestic politics in coercive diplomacy is both understated and under-theorised in the existing literature (Schultz, 2001; McGillivray and Stam, 2004). The factors I am going to examine are party competition within democratic states and the importance of national culture to the making of foreign policy.

These issues will be analysed in the context of South Korea's 'Sunshine Policy' – a strategy of unconditional engagement towards North Korea. This is a rare case of inducements being used, and thus provides a crucial example of all the factors necessary for inducements to be used. I argue that to overcome the cultural barriers facing the implementation of inducements, we must look towards policy entrepreneurs^[1] who attempt to shift the foreign policy climate towards a norm of engagement (Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2012). The latter section of my essay will consider an instance where inducements were in viable as a policy option and a case where inducements were used; respectively, the ongoing relationship between America and North Korea and Germany's *Ostpolitik* from 1969 to 1974. After doing so, I will also consider what might have happened in terms of North-South relations in Korea had Kim Dae-Jung not won the 1997 South Korean presidential election. This will demonstrate the significance of individuals in the making of foreign policy and how the absence of dissenting voices leads to unchanging policy. This essay will conclude that to overcome the cultural barriers to inducements, it is necessary for influential individuals and organisations within foreign policy elites to break with existing cultural norms and push positive inducements to the top of the policy agenda.

Kim Dae-Jung and the Sunshine Policy: A Case Study

This essay considers Kim Dae-Jung's Sunshine Policy from a domestic policy perspective, as domestic politics is fundamental to understanding a state's foreign policy (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2012; Kaarbo, 2015). Scholars such as Nincic (2010) argue that this is particularly the case regarding the use of inducements within foreign policy. Therefore, I examine and evaluate the influence of party competition, national political culture and policy entrepreneurs on the use of inducements. I argue that party competition plays a less significant role than political culture on inducement usage but can still have some effect on foreign policy. More importantly, I argue that policy entrepreneurs can effect considerable change with regard to the national political culture and thus, determine which policy options are deemed viable in particular situations. The case of Kim Dae-Jung and the Sunshine Policy is a clear example of how policy entrepreneurs bring about change in the culture, and furthermore, of how national

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political cultures affect international relations.

Foreign policy in democracies is determined by leaders of political parties, who are held to account by party membership and more broadly speaking by the electorate. As Schultz (2005:3) writes, every “international interaction [occurs] in the view of an electorate that must try to decide which of two parties it wants to run the state’s foreign policy”. Thus, it is important to consider party competition when it comes to evaluating diplomatic action. In the case of the inter-Korea relationship, there was initial public support in South Korea for the ‘Sunshine Policy’ of engagement between the two states yet this “relatively high public support for engagement [...] was not accompanied by respective support in the National Assembly” (Kim, 2009:162). This division within Korea over policy is detailed by Levin and Han (2002), who depict the debate over inter-Korea relations as represented by a diversity of party policies: namely, the ‘benign neglect’ approach promoted by political right, the ‘tough love’ approach of the political centre and the ‘one people’ approach of the political left. Choi (2010) argues that the strongest opposition to the Sunshine Policy came from the Grand National Party (GNP), a strongly conservative party occupying the role of opposition at the time, who were proponents of the ‘benign neglect’ approach. The GNP provided the critical role expected of an opposition party in a democracy, and their different approach to inter-Korean relations ensured the Korean public had a distinct choice between positive engagement with or benign neglect of North Korea. Although the competition between political parties did little to change the actual policy, Kim and Kang (2009) argue that the stark divisions within South Korea’s domestic arena undermined the effectiveness of the Sunshine Policy as North Korea did not take the policy seriously. Kim Dae-Jung’s government was able to overcome this opposition primarily because of the national political culture of South Korea, which fostered a notion of fraternity with their neighbours in the North.

Party competition does not exist in a vacuum. Political attitudes towards coercion and inducement are grounded in national culture. It is because of South Korea’s distinct political culture that the Sunshine Policy was followed for ten years (1998-2008) and by two different Presidents (Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun). This was driven, as Hogarth (2012:110) describes, by the predominant idea that “it was only proper for the prosperous South, as ‘the elder brother’ to help the economically struggling North, ‘the younger brother’”. So, despite inter-party disagreement, South Korea’s political culture encouraged the continued use of inducements in the form of the Sunshine Policy. However, political culture is not a static entity. The possibility of inducement as a viable foreign policy option existed due to Kim Dae-Jung’s efforts in shifting the policy agenda towards a strategy of engagement with economic inducements at the centre. Son (2007) outlines Dae-Jung’s role as that of a policy entrepreneur, due to his establishment of the Kim Dae-Jung Peace Foundation for the Asia-Pacific Region in 1994 (when he was leader of the opposition in the National Assembly). This institution mirrored the role that the Institute of World Economy and International Relations played in the latter years of the Soviet Union, suggesting radically different foreign policy options compared to what was deemed viable at the time (Checkel, 1993). It was not until four years after the establishment of his Institute that Dae-Jung was elected President of South Korea, and that he was then able to implement the ideas he had fostered before taking on the role. Yet, in laying the ideological foundations of what is now known as the Sunshine Policy, Kim Dae-Jung played a significant role in altering the foreign policy agenda towards engagement, with economic inducements a crucial part of this wider strategy.

To observe the change Kim Dae-Jung and his Foundation brought about in their role as policy entrepreneurs, it is worth briefly considering North-South policy before and after his presidential term. Kim Young-Sam, Dae-Jung’s immediate predecessor, derided the unconditional engagement approach as ‘crypto-communist’ (Hoare, 2008:73) and thus, rejected inducements as a policy and engagement as a strategy. Kim Dae-Jung was not the first to suggest the strategy of unconditional engagement, as peace activists had argued for a similar policy as early as the 1970s (Levin and Han, 2002). However, Dae-Jung was remarkable in that he held both the position of power necessary to implement change and the desire to implement this change. Although the Sunshine Policy was continued by Dae-Jung’s like-minded successor Roh Moo-Hyun, North-South relations cooled progressively with the presidencies of Lee Myung-Bak and Park Geun-Hye (Kim, 2017). This again demonstrates that national political cultures are not static. Dae-Jung’s efforts to change South Korean foreign policy culture were a significant achievement in the short-term, but that inducements are not protected as a permanent policy towards the North.

An Exception to the Rule? USA – North Korea Relations and Brandt’s Ostpolitik

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The case study of South Korea and the Sunshine Policy has demonstrated how inducements can be implemented as a policy and embraced as part of the national political culture. However, it remains the case that this is the exception rather than the rule. The Sunshine Policy demonstrates that a national culture can be changed by an influential individual and that once shifted, this renders party competition less of an obstacle to the successful implementation of inducements. However, when a national culture is hostile to inducements, a combination of party competition and entrenched policy norms prevent a change in policy.

In other cases, such as America's relationship with North Korea, it has not been possible to place inducements at the top of the policy agenda because the national culture is not conducive to engagement (Jackson, 2018; Koch, 2009; Lewis, 2016). The case of the USA and its relationship with North Korea exemplifies the difficulty in overcoming party competition in the making of foreign policy, with policy options split along the lines of domestic political parties (Ahn, 2011; Kihl and Kim, 2006). Party competition is intrinsically linked with political culture, as I argue throughout this essay. A number of academics echo this argument, suggesting that the more exclusive or punitive a country is, the more likely it is to favour coercive diplomacy over inducements (Onderco and Wagner, 2017; Liberman, 2006 and 2007).

Despite the above evidence that inducements are not a viable option in certain cases, the Sunshine Policy is not alone as an instance of inducements being pushed onto the foreign policy agenda. Another case that shows the use of inducements, brought about by a policy entrepreneur effecting change in foreign policy culture, is the Ostpolitik of Willy Brandt in Germany. Kim Dae-Jung and Willy Brandt both expressed a determination to improve relations with their adversaries at the time, which were respectively North Korea and East Germany. Niedhart (2016) traces the origins of Brandt's Ostpolitik to a speech given in 1963 when Brandt was Mayor of Berlin, laying the foundations of what would become German foreign policy between 1969 and 1974. This policy heavily involved the use of inducements, just as the Sunshine Policy has (Newnham, 2007). Therefore, not only does Brandt's Ostpolitik provide another example of inducements being used, but also another instance of a policy entrepreneur introducing such a policy.

A Sunshine Policy Without Kim Dae-Jung?

It has been shown that policy entrepreneurs are not a new phenomenon in the making of foreign policy, but instead an established part of the process. To fully illustrate the importance of these individuals in the making of foreign policy, and to the viability of using inducements in said foreign policy, I consider an important counterfactual: if Kim Dae-Jung had failed to become President of South Korea would the Sunshine Policy have been implemented? My rationale behind using a counterfactual is to argue that, as Lebow (2010:9, emphasis mine) puts it, "important social outcomes could be the result of *agency*, chance or simply bad weather". As this essay has argued that the agency of policy entrepreneurs is a highly plausible solution to the issue of inducements not being used in foreign policy, it is therefore important to consider what might have happened had a different agent been elected President in 1997.

The 1997 South Korean presidential election was a turning point for Korean politics, and particularly for Korean foreign policy; Kim Dae-Jung's victory was not inevitable and thus, the implementation of the Sunshine Policy was never guaranteed. As Kang and Jaung (1999) detail, Dae-Jung's victory was the first time Korea had elected a leader who was not part of the conservative establishment. Kim Dae-Jung was able to win the 1997 election because the conservative vote was split between Grand National Party (GNP) candidate Lee Hoi-Chang and Lee In-Je, another conservative candidate who had failed to secure the GNP candidacy so launched his own. If Lee In-Je had not run for the presidency then it is unlikely that Dae-Jung would have won the election (Horowitz and Kim, 2004). Following this logic, Lee Hoi-Chang would have garnered his 38.7% of the vote alongside some of In-Je's 19.2% of the vote to defeat Dae-Jung's 40.3%. If Hoi-Chang had been elected president then there is a high probability that engagement with North Korea would have remained limited or potentially cooled further (The Economist, 1997). The idea of South Korea taking an alternative path under Hoi-Chang rests on the fact that, in the 2002 election campaign, he called for the end of inducements and had long been known by the nickname 'Bamboo' due to his refusal to compromise on policy (BBC, 2002). This counterfactual demonstrates that North-South relations could easily have remained in a situation of limited engagement. Despite the importance of attempting to change the political culture before achieving office, the counterfactual also shows that in order to implement such change as policy, political

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power is needed.

As many obituaries noted at the time of Dae-Jung's death in 2009, the architect of the Sunshine Policy almost single-handedly changed the policy climate from one of benign neglect to unconditional engagement (Wall Street Journal, 2009; The Guardian, 2009). As part of this change, Kim Dae-Jung also ushered in a period in which the use of inducements was viable. In 1961, when he began his political career as a Member of the National Assembly, Dae-Jung's ideas were at the margins of the debate on North-South relations. Yet, via the use of institutions and eventually political office, Dae-Jung showed exactly how policy entrepreneurs can effect change in foreign policy.

Conclusion

This essay has shown that the primary barrier to the use of inducements in foreign policy is a political culture which renders inviable both engagement as a strategy and inducements as a policy. Other factors such as party competition can impact upon the effectiveness of policy but do little to determine the direction of an administration's foreign policy if a political culture is conducive to inducements. The importance of political culture on foreign policy decisions should not be underestimated. As the case of Kim Dae-Jung and the Sunshine Policy demonstrates, changes in culture are the foundation on which changes in policy are based. Other instances of inducements being used, namely Brandt's Ostpolitik, also show the importance of changing the culture to change the policy. Dae-Jung and Brandt both outlined their new approaches to foreign policy before achieving executive political office, as well as promoting these approaches through political institutions. Both leaders, then, provide exemplary evidence of policy entrepreneurs in action. The counterfactual I considered, questioning the existence of the Sunshine Policy without Kim Dae-Jung as President of South Korea, demonstrated further that the use of inducements and the notion of engagement is dependent on the agency of policy entrepreneurs. Therefore, if we are to witness the increased use of inducements in the realm of international politics, it is to dissenting individuals and institutions that we must look.

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Footnote

[1] This essay uses the term 'policy entrepreneurs' rather than 'norm entrepreneurs'. The rationale behind this is that the phrase 'norm entrepreneurs' tends to refer to transnational actors rather than individuals and domestic institutions, who fall under the label of 'policy entrepreneurs' (Madoroko, 2018; Murithi, 2012).

*Written by: Nathan Olsen
Written at: University of Leeds
Written for: Dr Seiki Tanaka
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