OPPORTUNITIES MISSED,
OPPORTUNITIES SEIZED
Carnegie Corporation of New York established the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict in May 1994 to address the threats to world peace of intergroup violence and to advance new ideas for the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict. The Commission is examining the principal causes of deadly ethnic, nationalist, and religious conflicts within and between states and the circumstances that foster or deter their outbreak. Taking a long-term, worldwide view of violent conflicts that are likely to emerge, it seeks to determine the functional requirements of an effective system for preventing mass violence and to identify the ways in which such a system could be implemented. The Commission is also looking at the strengths and weaknesses of various international entities in conflict prevention and considering ways in which international organizations might contribute toward developing an effective international system of nonviolent problem solving. The series grew out of the research that the Commission has sponsored to answer the three fundamental questions that have guided its work: What are the problems posed by deadly conflict, and why is outside help often necessary to deal with these problems? What approaches, tasks, and strategies appear most promising for preventing deadly conflict? What are the responsibilities and capacities of states, international organizations, and private and nongovernmental organizations for undertaking preventive action? The Commission issued its final report in December 1997.

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CONTENTS

Foreword xi
Preface and Acknowledgments xv
Acronyms xix

Part One: Overview
1 Preventive Diplomacy: A Conceptual and Analytic Framework 3
   Bruce W. Jentleson
2 The Warning–Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy 21
   Alexander L. George and Jane E. Holl

Part Two: The Dissolution of the Soviet Union
3 The War in Chechnya: Opportunities Missed, Lessons to Be Learned 39
   Gail W. Lapidus
4 The International Community and the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh 68
   John J. Maresca
5 Preventive Diplomacy: Success in the Baltics 91
   Heather F. Hurlburt
6 Preventive Diplomacy for Nuclear Nonproliferation in the Former Soviet Union 108
   James E. Goodby

Part Three: The Breakup of Yugoslavia
7 Costly Disinterest: Missed Opportunities for Preventive Diplomacy in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1985–1991 133
   Susan L. Woodward
8 Preventive Diplomacy for Macedonia, 1992–1999: From Containment to Nation Building 173
   Michael S. Lund

— ix —
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part Four: Ethnic Conflicts in Africa</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 Somalia: Misread Crises and Missed Opportunities</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth Menkhaus and Louis Ortmayer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda: Failure to Act or Failure of Actions?</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Prevention Gained and Prevention Lost: Collapse, Competition, and Coup in Congo</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. William Zartman and Katharina R. Vogeli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part Five: Rogue State Aggression</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Opportunity Seized: Preventive Diplomacy in Korea</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael J. Mazarr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part Six: Conclusions</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Preventive Diplomacy: Analytical Conclusions and Policy Lessons</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce W. Jentleson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Notes | 349 |
| Index | 413 |
| About the Contributors | 427 |
The end of the Cold War raised hopes for a more peaceful international order. Many of us thought that much of the conflict in the world had its origins in the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, and with the end of that rivalry countries could be brought closer together. As the case studies in this book demonstrate, we were too optimistic. Since 1990 over two dozen deadly conflicts have produced more than nine million casualties and doubled the number of refugees around the globe from 12 million to 25 million.

No issue facing the world today deserves our attention more than conflict prevention. We need to foster a sense of urgency, a new way of thinking that gives precedence to the prevention and not simply the management of conflict, to avoid disaster rather than merely dealing with its consequences. The contributors to this volume provide illuminating descriptions of the actions that prevented some crises from becoming violent. They also provide agonizing details of violence that could have been prevented and carefully demonstrate what could have been done to prevent it.

Our task is to build on studies like this one and develop practical steps and a renewed commitment to preventive diplomacy and preventive defense. We need a strategy similar to the Marshall Plan after World War II, which successfully prevented the conditions that could have led to another war. A broad strategy using political, economic, and military tools can influence the world away from violence and deal with the parade of challenges that threaten our survival and cause great disruption, pain, and bloodshed.

During the Cold War we succeeded again, with policies of deterrence and containment, which must not be abandoned. After all, the North Koreans and the Iraqis—to mention two obvious examples—are not going to disappear. Russia is on the brink of chaos and could conceivably lose control of its nuclear arsenal. China could grow hostile and uncooperative. The planet is overrun with weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism is on the rise. We continue to need military forces able to deter aggressors and win wars quickly and decisively.

Early warning is essential to conflict prevention. Mass violence has well-
known causes and seldom occurs unexpectedly. Where there is no democracy, where there is alienation of major groups in society, gross economic imbalances, exclusion or discrimination of groups, or historical grievances, the risks of conflict are very high. Conflict occurs in states that are undergoing major transition. It springs from strong perceptions of inequity, uneven distribution of the good things in life, disputes over resources, repression, corruption, or a decline in the legitimacy of government. Then there is the human element. We must always expect that a Hitler, a Stalin, a Pol Pot, or some other charismatic, inflammatory leader lurks just offstage, eager to take advantage of the social stresses in society in ways that almost guarantee new conflict. Violence usually results from human decision, not blind fate. Recognizing this reality is a necessary precondition for preventing conflict.

Early warning must be followed by timely action. The international community needs a capability for preventive action, the ability to deploy civilian personnel to mediate problems and to provide emergency economic relief. Most fundamentally, the international community, through the United Nations and other multilateral institutions and nongovernmental organizations, must address the underlying political and economic causes of conflict. The world community must support political reform and the development of responsive and accountable government. Institutions of civil society such as political parties, trade unions, independent media, and the rule of law provide important safeguards for protecting human rights, fighting corruption, and fending off political demagoguery. At the heart of prevention must be a strong system of justice, legal systems available to all, that produce a sense that conflicts will be resolved fairly.

We know that conflict prevention requires the participation of the entire international community. No one leader, country, or institution can carry the load. Preventive action must be tailored to fit each situation, with a plan, close coordination of all the actors, internal and external, regional and international, civilian and military, public and private, official and nonofficial.

Having said this, it is necessary to stress that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention within countries lies with the government and the people of those countries. The next responsibility lies with the international community, with countries within the region assuming the greatest responsibility for maintaining or restoring peace.

Sovereignty always figures prominently here. Nations do not accept outside intervention lightly. But today the international community believes that with sovereignty comes responsibility. When nations cannot manage conflict, or do not show respect for international standards and commitments, the international community sometimes steps in— as has been the case in Iraq.

I have come to the view that the international community needs some means of responding militarily to deteriorating situations in order to prevent conflicts, some kind of multinational, multifunctional rapid reaction standby capability, probably within the United Nations. I do not underestimate the difficulties of creating such a capability, but I believe we must begin to explore ways and means
to achieve that capacity. There is no inherent contradiction between the prevention of violence and the use of military force. To the contrary, armed personnel have played a constructive role in Bosnia, Cyprus, Haiti, Macedonia, Western Sahara, and elsewhere. If we do not develop this rapid reaction force, the United States, as the power with the most developed intervention capabilities, will be called on again and again.

Americans often ask, why should we care? My answer is that we should care because sometimes our vital national interests are at stake, as in the Persian Gulf. We care about human values and human life, as in Somalia, where we could not tolerate the horrible pictures of starving children. We care because waiting will only make the costs go up—in deaths, the scale of relief efforts, and the damage to international standards.

A domestic challenge is illustrative. Today we spend one percent of the American health care budget on prevention. Yet experts are virtually unanimous in their judgment that we could save many lives and much money if we devoted a greater percentage of our total health care costs to prevention. The same is true of conflict prevention. Preventive action can save money and lives. It can also promote American political, diplomatic, and economic interests.

U.S. training and education programs for foreign military establishments (IMET) bring nations together to learn how military establishments function in a democracy. It is striking to see officers from the former Soviet Union or from Latin American countries learning about the primacy of civilian authority, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and the role of a popularly chosen legislature. This is conflict prevention in action.

We soon complete the twentieth century. It is a century of wars—the first in which world wars were fought. It is also a century in which men and women of good will, because of the devastation of the world wars, have wrestled with the idea of conflict prevention and world peace. We have glimpsed that peace is possible because it is necessary. We have not won the day, but we have begun to understand what peace and conflict prevention can mean—quite simply, it can change the course of history and the life of human beings more than anything else we know or can do. We may not be able to rid the world of conflict, but we can make the world more livable. What more important task do we have on our agenda? What more important legacy is there for our children and grandchildren than a less violent world, a world of concord, not conflict?

Lee H. Hamilton, Director
The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
There is no more important challenge facing the international community than preventive diplomacy. What this challenge entails is to be neither underestimated nor overestimated. This means on the one hand refraining from glib criticisms and rhetorical condemnations that do not give sufficient analytic weight to the very real difficulties of preventing ethnic wars and other deadly conflicts. It also means not subscribing to historically deterministic theories or accepting at face value claims by policymakers and others about failed attempts at prevention that nothing more or different could have been done.

It is along the lines of this analytic balance that this book has been written. Our primary goal has been to assess the feasibility of preventive diplomacy, case by case for the ten cases we study as well as more generally with regard to broader analytic patterns and policy lessons. The book includes not only cases in which preventive diplomacy failed, but also ones in which it largely succeeded—opportunities that were missed as well as ones that were seized. For the former our authors knew that they needed to make the argument that opportunities in fact were there, that something more or different could have been done which could have made a significant difference. As with any effort at counterfactual analysis that is to be more than speculation or ex post argumentation, this requires ample empirical substantiation, well-reasoned and realistic alternative policy proposals, and plausible delineation of alternative policy processes. For the latter the problem was akin to cases in which deterrence is said to have succeeded, yet we can’t know for sure that war otherwise would have resulted. Here the empirical evidence and analysis are geared to showing that these cases quite plausibly could have become deadly conflicts, and that preventive diplomacy was a key reason they did not. In every case the authors met these empirical and analytic standards, providing a sense of the problems of, but also the prospects for, preventive diplomacy.

Our book thus provides both original case studies that add to the respective case literatures and a comparative analysis that addresses core theoretical de-
bates about post–Cold War international conflict and security and provides the basis for broader policy lessons. It is by no means the last word or the definitive word on preventive diplomacy, but we do see it as a contribution to the broader effort to build the literature, establish the empirical basis, develop the core concepts, and delineate the key strategies.

Credit for the genesis of this project, as well as for so many others in this burgeoning field, rests with the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. Under the sagacious leadership of cochairmen David Hamburg and Cyrus Vance, and with enormous credit to Executive Director Jane Holl, the Carnegie Commission has done more than any other single organization to foster work on post–Cold War conflict prevention and resolution. Its special capacity as “bridger” and “convener” has brought together key groups and individuals from an impressively wide range of relevant communities—the academic community, government, multilateral organizations, NGOs, the press—and with a genuinely international scope. I have had the privilege of participating in a number of these meetings and projects, and I have found the exchanges of views and the opportunities for collaboration to be of immense value. And while other organizations and individuals also have made important contributions, a solid share of the credit for what is becoming a rich and extensive literature on post–Cold War conflict prevention and resolution goes to the Carnegie Commission.

I also would like to acknowledge Alexander George. Alex is a member of the Carnegie Commission and the person who in his own signature style of gentle firmness drew me into this project. Alex also has been the single most influential voice for building bridges between the academic and policy communities, an effort of which this project is a part. Thanks also to Esther Brimmer and Thomas J. Leney of the Carnegie Commission staff for their help in organizing and administering the project, to Bob Lande, who was a valued partner in editing and managing the manuscript, and to Anita Sharma, for editorial assistance and management of the page proofs. Valuable input, insights, and criticisms came along the way from participants in panels at conferences of the American Political Science Association and the International Studies Association, and at conferences at Ditchley House (Oxford) and the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. Comments and criticisms from Janice Gross Stein, Don Rothchild, and Fen Osler Hampson and three other outside reviewers also were very helpful. Laura E. Larson, our copy editor, helped smooth out and improve our text, and Jennifer Knerr of Rowman & Littlefield provided valuable guidance and valued support throughout the publishing process.

Special thanks and gratitude go to our authors. Too many edited volumes start out pledging internal coherence but end up as papers united by little more than being bound together under the same cover. Our goal was to establish and maintain an integrative framework that would provide the structure necessary to identify and substantiate patterns, but without becoming a straitjacket confining the unique aspects of individual cases. I appreciate the authors’ willingness to work with me in this process as we tried to strike an optimal balance.
also appreciate their forbearance with the much greater than anticipated time it took us to complete the project and publish the book.

As I was working in late 1998 on this book’s last chapter, I was feeling somewhat hopeful that for all the decade’s ethnic cleansing and genocide and other horrors, perhaps lessons had begun to be learned, and would be applied preventively to the next conflict or conflicts. I was seeing less writing about intractable problems and ghosts of the past, hearing less pontification of self-styled realism, and even witnessing former and even current government officials admitting that mistakes had been made. But then came Kosovo, yet another ethnic cleansing, yet another missed opportunity for preventive diplomacy—and in many respects, the peace agreement notwithstanding, even more discouraging since claims of having been surprised by and unfamiliar with the nature and dynamics of post–Cold War conflicts were even less credible at the end of the decade than earlier.

So where is the hope, one might reasonably ask, that the challenge of preventive diplomacy ever will be met? What will it take, and where, if not Kosovo, to motivate and mobilize the will and capacity? As discouraged as one can get, I also have not yet forgotten the lessons the students in my Contemporary American Foreign Policy class taught me circa the mid-1980s. In one of the last classes of the term I used to ask the students to think about what kinds of changes might be possible in international affairs. When one responded that he thought the Berlin Wall might come down, I tried to compliment him on his idealism while dutifully warning him about the delusions of youthful naïveté. I reacted similarly to the student who said she thought apartheid would end and Nelson Mandela would become president of South Africa, and to the one who speculated on a peace between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. But the ostensibly naïve proved quite realistic, the impossible became possible. There is no reason to think the same cannot prove true for preventive diplomacy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACABQ</td>
<td>Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions</td>
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<td>ACDA</td>
<td>Arms Control and Disarmament Agency</td>
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<td>ACRI</td>
<td>African Crisis Response Initiative</td>
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<td>AID</td>
<td>Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>ANCCP</td>
<td>All-National Congress of the Chechen People</td>
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<td>APC</td>
<td>armored personnel carrier</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBTG</td>
<td>Broad-based Transitional Government</td>
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<td>CCPDC</td>
<td>Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict</td>
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<td>CDR</td>
<td>Comité pour la Défense de la République (Rwanda)</td>
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<td>CFE</td>
<td>Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe</td>
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<td>CFSP</td>
<td>Common Foreign and Security Policy</td>
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<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>CIS</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
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<td>CMEA</td>
<td>Council for Mutual Economic Assistance</td>
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<td>CNS</td>
<td>Conférence Nationale Souveraine (Congo)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoE</td>
<td>Council of Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoM</td>
<td>Council of Ministers (CSCE/OSCE)</td>
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<td>COREU</td>
<td>confidential correspondence among EU foreign ministers</td>
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<td>CSC</td>
<td>Confédération des Syndicats Congolais</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCE</td>
<td>Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Committee of Senior Officials</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Conseil supérieur de la république (Congo)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAM</td>
<td>Department of Administration and Management (UN Secretariat)</td>
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<td>DCI</td>
<td>Director of Central Intelligence</td>
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<td>DHA</td>
<td>Department of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>DIA</td>
<td>Defense Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>Acronyms</td>
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<td>DoD</td>
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<td>DoS</td>
<td>Department of State</td>
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<td>DPA</td>
<td>Department of Political Affairs</td>
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<td>DPKO</td>
<td>Department of Peacekeeping Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>EBRD</td>
<td>European Bank for Reconstruction and Development</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
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<td>ECM M</td>
<td>European Community Monitor Mission</td>
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<td>ECOMOG</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group</td>
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<td>EFTA</td>
<td>European Free Trade Association</td>
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<td>EPC</td>
<td>European Political Cooperation</td>
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<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EXIMBANK</td>
<td>Export-Import Bank</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
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<td>FAR</td>
<td>Forces Armées de Rwanda</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBIS</td>
<td>Foreign Broadcast Information Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEWER</td>
<td>Forum for Early Warning and Early Response</td>
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<td>FLEC</td>
<td>Front for the Liberation of the Enclave Cabinda (Angola)</td>
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<td>FRY</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Yugoslavia</td>
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<td>FYROM</td>
<td>Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIEWS</td>
<td>Global Information and Early Warning System</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCNM</td>
<td>High Commissioner on National Minorities</td>
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<td>HDZ</td>
<td>Croatian Democratic Union</td>
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<td>HEU</td>
<td>highly enriched uranium</td>
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<td>IAEA</td>
<td>International Atomic Energy Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICBM</td>
<td>intercontinental ballistic missile</td>
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<td>IFOR</td>
<td>NATO Implementation Force (Bosnia)</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>IMRO</td>
<td>International Macedonian Revolutionary Organization</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>JNA</td>
<td>Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija (Yugoslav People's Army)</td>
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<td>KLA</td>
<td>Kosovo Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDK</td>
<td>Democratic League of Kosova</td>
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<td>MCDDI</td>
<td>Mouvement Congolais pour la Démocratie et le Développement Intégral</td>
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<td>MDR</td>
<td>Mouvement démocratique républicain (Rwanda)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MINATOM</td>
<td>Ministry of Atomic Energy (Russia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIRV</td>
<td>multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle</td>
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<td>MOD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defense</td>
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<td>MRND</td>
<td>Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (Rwanda)</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NDI</td>
<td>National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (Congo)</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>nongovernmental organization</td>
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<td>NIC</td>
<td>National Intelligence Council</td>
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<td>NIF</td>
<td>Neutral International Force</td>
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<td>NKVD</td>
<td>People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs</td>
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<td>NOREPS</td>
<td>Norwegian Emergency Preparedness System</td>
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<td>NPT</td>
<td>Non-Proliferation Treaty</td>
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<td>NRA</td>
<td>National Resistance Army (Uganda)</td>
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<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
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<td>NSS</td>
<td>National Secret Service (Somalia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODA</td>
<td>Overseas Development Assistance</td>
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<td>OFDA</td>
<td>Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
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<td>OPIC</td>
<td>Overseas Private Investment Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>PASOK</td>
<td>Panhellenic Social Movement</td>
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<td>PCT</td>
<td>Parti Congolais du Travail</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDD</td>
<td>Presidential Decision Directive</td>
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<td>PDP</td>
<td>Party for Democratic Prosperity</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDPS</td>
<td>Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (Congo)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFE/RL</td>
<td>Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty</td>
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<td>RMO</td>
<td>regional multilateral organization</td>
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<td>RPF</td>
<td>Rwandan Patriotic Front</td>
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<td>RSFSR</td>
<td>Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic</td>
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<td>RTLM</td>
<td>Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (Rwanda)</td>
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<td>SACEUR</td>
<td>Supreme Allied Commander, Europe</td>
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<td>SALT</td>
<td>Strategic Arms Limitation Talks</td>
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<td>SCM</td>
<td>Security Consultative Meeting</td>
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<td>Party of Democratic Action</td>
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<td>SDS</td>
<td>Serbian Democratic Party</td>
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<td>SDUM</td>
<td>Social Democratic Union of Macedonia</td>
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<td>SRF</td>
<td>Strategic Rocket Forces</td>
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<td>SRSG</td>
<td>special representative of the secretary-general</td>
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<td>SSD</td>
<td>safe and secure dismantlement</td>
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<td>SSDF</td>
<td>Somali Salvation Democratic Front</td>
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<td>START</td>
<td>Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty</td>
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<td>TCC</td>
<td>troop-contributing country</td>
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<td>United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda</td>
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<td>UNCIVPOL</td>
<td>United Nations Civilian Police</td>
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<td>UNFICYP</td>
<td>United Nations Forces in Cyprus</td>
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<td>UNITA</td>
<td>National Union for the Total Independence of Angola</td>
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<td>UNOMUR</td>
<td>United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNOSOM</td>
<td>United Nations Operation in Somalia</td>
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<td>UNPO</td>
<td>Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNPREDEP</td>
<td>United Nations Preventive Deployment Force</td>
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<td>UNPROFOR</td>
<td>United Nations Protection Force</td>
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<td>UNSG</td>
<td>United Nations secretary-general</td>
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<td>UNTAC</td>
<td>United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia</td>
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<td>UPADS</td>
<td>Union Panaficaine pour la Démocratie Sociale</td>
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<td>(Congo)</td>
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<td>URD</td>
<td>Union pour le Renouveau Démocratique (Congo)</td>
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<td>USC</td>
<td>United Somali Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>USFORSOM</td>
<td>U.S. Forces in Somalia</td>
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<td>USIS</td>
<td>U.S. Information Service</td>
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<td>VMRO-DP</td>
<td>Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party</td>
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<td>VMRO-DPMNU</td>
<td>Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity</td>
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<td>WEU</td>
<td>West European Union</td>
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<td>YPA</td>
<td>Yugoslav People's Army</td>
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Part One

Overview
Preventive Diplomacy: A Conceptual and Analytic Framework

Bruce W. Jentleson

The basic logic of preventive diplomacy seems unassailable. Act early to prevent disputes from escalating or problems from worsening. Reduce tensions that if intensified could lead to war. Deal with today’s conflicts before they become tomorrow’s crises. It is the same logic as preventive medicine: don’t wait until the cancer has spread or the arteries are fully clogged. Or, as the auto mechanic says in a television commercial as he holds an oil filter in one hand and points to a seized-up car engine with the other, “pay me now or pay me later.”

Indeed, over the course of the first years of the post–Cold War era, invocations of the need to expand and enhance the practice of preventive diplomacy were heard from virtually all quarters. They came from the United Nations, as with the communiqué issued in January 1992 at the first ever heads-of-state summit of the UN Security Council calling for “recommendations on ways of strengthening . . . the capacity of the United Nations for preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping;” and the ensuing report by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Peace, which devoted a full chapter to preventive diplomacy. They were sounded from the very outset of the Clinton administration, as in the emphasis by Secretary of State Warren Christopher in his confirmation hearings on the need for “a new diplomacy that can anticipate and prevent crises . . . rather than simply manage them”; the advocacy by National Security Adviser Anthony Lake for “greater emphasis on tools such as mediation and preventive diplomacy”; and the emphasis in the 1994 National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement on “preventive diplomacy . . .
order to help resolve problems, reduce tensions and defuse conflicts before they become crises.3

Similar statements and initiatives also marked post–Cold War shifts among major regional multilateral organizations. The Conference on (now Organization for) Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE/OSCE) committed in its 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe to “seek new forms of cooperation . . . [for] ways of preventing, through political means, conflicts which may emerge.” A number of new CSCE/OSCE structures were established, such as the High Commissioner on National Minorities and its “missions of long duration,” which took on preventive diplomacy responsibilities.4 So, too, in 1992–93 the Organization of African Unity (OAU) launched its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention and Resolution. While couched in qualifiers about “non-interference in the internal affairs of States” and functioning “on the basis of consent and cooperation of the parties to a conflict,” it still marked an important recognition of common regional interests in seeking to prevent conflicts that threaten regional security irrespective of their original venue.5

A broad range of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) also have made clarion calls and taken extensive preventive actions. Indeed, NGOs have become so significant to preventive diplomacy, both as key actors in their own right and—all too often—as those left to try to cope with the consequences of prevention failures, that a number of recent studies specifically focus on their role.6 Think tanks and elite associations also have been quite involved both in issuing studies and setting up unofficial “Track” action groups. The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, which commissioned this study, has been prominent among them.7

Yet for all these invocations and early initiatives, the record of these first years of the post–Cold War era has been mixed at best. On the one hand, the past decade has borne witness to some of the deadliest conflicts of an all too deadly century. The breakup of Yugoslavia added a new term, ethnic cleansing, to the lexicon of warfare, and left an estimated quarter million people dead, another two hundred thousand wounded, over one million displaced, and general devastation and destruction throughout Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the case of Rwanda, for all the semantics international leaders tried to play, there was no denying the genocide.8 In Somalia the political order already had largely collapsed and the killings and mass starvation had been taking their heavy tolls long before the international community finally started to pay attention. In Nagorno-Karabakh, in Chechnya and in numerous other cases, ethnic and other versions of internal war raged. Indeed, one authoritative estimate comes to thirty-seven major armed conflicts in the 1990s and casualties exceeding four million.9

On the other hand, albeit smaller in number, there have been cases in which prevention has succeeded in limiting if not precluding deadly conflict. Macedonia had its own significant ethnic tensions and vulnerabilities amid the breakup of Yugoslavia, but it did not fall into mass violence. Congo (Brazzaville) had its sharp tribal and regional divisions but managed to limit the political violence surrounding its 1993 elections, and it could well have done the same in 1997.
the preventive diplomacy strategy pursued earlier not been abandoned. The tensions in Russian–Baltic (Latvia, Estonia) relations surrounding the demands on the one side for the withdrawal of Russian troops and on the other for safeguarding the rights of Russian ethnic minorities could well have led down a more conflictual and dangerous path. The same was true in Russian-Ukrainian relations with their myriad of tensions and, particularly, the high-profile issue of nuclear weapons possession to resolve. Then there were other cases such as the 1994 nuclear proliferation crisis with North Korea, the peaceful resolution of which should not lead us to forget the ominous risks and severe potential consequences had preventive diplomacy failed.

The central objective of this study is to assess why some post–Cold War conflicts have been prevented from leading to war and other deadly conflict, but not others—why, in effect, some opportunities for preventive diplomacy have been missed, but others seized. In pursuit of that objective, we have brought together a group of distinguished scholars and diplomats as contributors to this book. The ten cases just mentioned—Croatia-Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya, Macedonia, Congo (Brazzaville), Russia-Latvia/Estonia, Russia-Ukraine, North Korea—are the ones on which we focus. They represent different types of conflicts that characterize the post-Cold War world, as well as a mix of successes and failures—i.e., opportunities missed and opportunities seized—that is important for testing arguments about what strategies work and which do not, and why and how they succeed or fail.

In the rest of this chapter, I present the structure of the study and elaborate on theoretical, conceptual, definitional, and methodological aspects that provide the context and framing for the case studies. The cross-case analytic comparisons, theoretical implications, and policy lessons are taken up in the final chapter.

The Realism of Preventive Diplomacy

That preventive diplomacy has been “oversold,” its difficulties underestimated in a number of respects, is a fair criticism. But to simply write it off would be to commit the mirror-image mistake of those too eager and uncritical in their embrace. We have here “an idea in search of strategy”—a basic concept that has a solid inherent logic and a potentially valuable utility, but that needs both a deeper conceptual grounding and a fleshing out of its policy relevance.

As part of this, it is important at the outset to confront the critique of preventive diplomacy as “unrealistic.” While virtually no one disputes the desirability of preventing ethnic cleansing, genocide, and other deadly conflicts, “realist” and other critics question both the viability and the value of preventive diplomacy. With regard to the former, aren’t many of these conflicts just the playing out of history—of “Balkan ghosts” that still haunt the region, of precolonial African tribal hatreds, of other deeply historical animosities? And as to the latter, is it sufficiently in the interests of major powers such as the United States that they should run the risks of trying to do so? And, after all, aren’t most taking place in locales that, as a former U.S. ambassador to Somalia put it about that country, just are “not a critical piece of real estate for anybody in the post–Cold
Why not just wait and see, and if needed resort to later stage conflict management?

Yet for all its self-styled realism, this line of argument is to be questioned with regard to its assessments both of the viability and the value of preventive diplomacy.

The Viability of Preventive Diplomacy

The question of the viability of preventive diplomacy is rooted in the broader debate over the principal sources of post-Cold War conflicts, ethnic conflicts in particular. In its essence this is a debate over historical determinism. The assumption of an overwhelming inevitability to these conflicts that is inherent to their characterization as a playing out of history is indicative of what is called the "primordialist view," in which ethnic conflicts are seen primarily as manifestations of fixed, inherited, deeply antagonistic historical identities. If the primordialist theory were valid, then it truly would be hard to hold out much prospect for preventive diplomacy. Yet as a number of studies have shown, ethnic identities are much less fixed over time, and the frequency and intensity of ethnic conflict much more varying over both time and place, than primordialist theory would have it. As David Lake and Donald Rothchild argue, "the [primordialist] approach founders on its inability to explain the emergence of new and transformed identities or account for the long periods in which either ethnicity is not a salient political characteristic or relations between different ethnic groups are comparatively peaceful." Michael Brown delineates such other variables as political institutions and socioeconomic factors that are less historically deterministic but still possible "underlying" sources of ethnic as well as other internal conflicts. He and others show that states with weak political institutions are more prone to political violence than institutionally stronger ones as measured by both the legitimacy of the authority they claim and their capacity to exercise that authority. Socioeconomic factors come into play in a number of ways, including the general destabilizing effects that poverty can have, the disruptive effects of major economic crises, and the compounding of ethnic and other political-cultural divisions by corresponding economic discrimination and inequitable distribution of wealth.

However, while these underlying factors are helpful in identifying dispositions toward political instability, they still leave us short of understanding why deadly conflict results in some cases but not others.

The existing literature on internal conflict does a commendable job of surveying the underlying factors or permissive conditions that make some situations particularly prone to violence, but it is weak when it comes to identifying the catalytic factors—the triggers or proximate causes—of internal conflicts... [W]e know a lot less about the causes of internal conflict than one would guess from looking at the size of the literature on the subject.
There is no question of the importance of having a comprehensive picture of the sources of conflict and the full lists of social, political, economic, demographic, environmental, and other underlying factors. But these almost always end up both over- and underdetermined in their explanations of the fundamental reasons why violence actually occurs. This is why, as David Carment concludes from a literature review, “no two scholars seem to agree on the exact causes of ethnic conflict.”

The optimal analytic approach both for avoiding the historical determinism fallacy and for getting beyond underlying factors to proximate, violence-trig-gering factors is through a “purposive” view of what the key sources of deadly conflict are. This approach acknowledges the deep-seated nature of ethnic identifications and the corresponding intergroup tensions, animosities, and unfinished agendas of vengeance and retribution that carry forward as historical legacies. But it takes a much less deterministic view of how, why, and whether these identity-rooted tensions become deadly conflicts. It focuses the analysis on forces and factors that intensify and activate the dispositions as shaped by history into actions and policies reflecting conscious and deliberate choices for war and violence. The dominant dynamic is not the playing out of historical inevitability, but rather the consequences of calculations by parties to the conflict of the purposes served by political violence. These are, as another author put it, “the purposeful actions of political actors who actively create violent conflict” to serve their own domestic political agendas by “selectively drawing on history in order to portray it as historically inevitable.” The Carnegie Commission in its Final Report, makes its own strong statement of the purposive view: “[M]ass violence invariably results from the deliberately violent response of determined leaders and their groups to a wide range of social, economic and political conditions that provide the environment for violent conflict, but usually do not independently spawn violence.” The key, therefore, is to get at why these determined leaders choose deliberately violent responses.

It is important to note in this regard that the sense of purposiveness goes beyond just posing these conflicts as a particular manifestation of the larger problem of the “security dilemma.” The notion here is that the parties are driven to military action less out of strict aggression than the uncertainty of the situation in which, given the conflicts that do exist, neither side feels confident the other won't strike first. A similar conceptualization is of this as a “commitment problem,” of situations in which “two groups find themselves without a third party that can credibly guarantee agreements between them.” Still we know that some security dilemmas and some commitment problems are resolved or at least ameliorated without resorting to or devolving into warfare. The key, therefore, still is to get at the purposive choices as made by the leaders of the principal parties to the conflict. These choices and the “conflict calculus” that results from them involve assessments as made by these leaders of the interests at stake and the potential costs-risks and gains-benefits of alternative options for achieving those interests. While hardly done as memolike net assessments or strategic plans, and notwithstanding all the accompanying vitriolic rhetoric and historical legacies, the dynamic is a deliberate, calculated, purposive one.

It is in seeking to influence this calculus by which parties to the conflict take...
their purposeful actions that preventive diplomacy has its potential viability. This is, to be sure, hard to do. But it is possible to do. Both points are integral to a genuine realism. The empirical-analytic evidence from our cases will be seen to be strongly supportive of this argument. The claims are not that some policy X surely would have prevented ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, or some policy Y smoothly rebuilt the Somali state, or some policy Z prevented genocide in Rwanda. But it also is not to accept the assertion that nothing else could have been done, that no more or nothing different was viable than the policies as pursued. There were missed opportunities. And in those cases in which deadly conflict was averted, the key point is that success was not a given, that failure was a very real possibility had not the opportunities for preventive diplomacy been seized.

The Strategic Value of Preventive Diplomacy

A second point in the critique of preventive diplomacy as not realist is the high risks and costs and low interests said to be at stake. Yet here too there are both theoretical and empirical bases for questioning the critique.

If it were the case that the fires of ethnic conflicts, however intense, would just burn upon themselves and not have significant potential to spread regionally or destabilize more systematically, or if the options for later action had the presumed pragmatic preferability, then in strict realist terms one could argue that major powers could afford to just let them be. But that is not always or even frequently the case. First, as numerous cases have shown and as much of the literature substantiates, spread is much more common than self-containment. This occurs through various combinations of direct “contagion” through the actual physical movement of refugees and weapons to other countries in the region, “demonstration effects” that even without direct contact activate and escalate other conflicts, and other modes of conflict diffusion. Consequently, among other things, when there is no prevention, the real estate in question risks getting bigger. Whether because the conflict then takes in areas that are more strategic or simply because a larger area is in crisis, outside powers can find their interests much more at risk.

Second, the costs and risks thus are not attached just to preventive action; wait-and-see also has its costs and risks. The conflict dynamics often end up narrowing the available policy options over time and working against later stage conflict resolution in other ways as well. Part of this is the “Rubicon effect” by which the onset of mass violence transforms the nature of a conflict. The addition of revenge and retribution to other sources of tension plunges a conflict situation down to a fundamentally different and more difficult depth, where resolution and even limitation of the conflict become much more difficult. Certain international strategies that might have been effective at lower levels of conflict are less likely to be so amid intensified violence.

This thus ends up as another version of the classic problem for statecraft that the more extensive the objectives, the greater and usually more coercive are the strategies needed to achieve them. Preventing a conflict from escalating to violence is a more limited objective than ending violence once it has begun. The logic is the same as for the distinctions made by Thomas Schelling between...
deterrence of a proscribed action from occurring and compellence of its cessation once it has begun. Options thus do not necessarily stay open over time; a problem can get harder down that road to where it has been kicked. The truly realistic policy question most often thus is not involvement “Yes or no?” but “When and how?” It is in this sense that opting for early resorts rather than having to fall back on last resorts can be the more realistic strategy.

One of the key tenets of the argument for not acting early has been that when the time comes, what is needed to be done can be done. Yet the experience has been that ending the conflicts has been one thing, putting such severely shattered societies back together quite another. It is a problem, to draw on other work by William Zartman, of “putting Humpty-Dumpty together again.”

A final point concerns the basic fallacy in the dichotomy so often drawn between realism and idealism. We long have seen that one of the persistent frustrations for realists generally with regard to American foreign policy has been that it never has been strictly a matter of “interest defined as power,” as in Hans Morgenthau’s classic formulation. Indeed just a few years after laying out this and other aspects of realism in his Politics among Nations, Morgenthau felt compelled to write another book, In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy, lambasting American statesmen for not thinking and acting in this manner and instead being “guided by moral abstractions without consideration of the national interest.” Yet in the most fundamental sense, “the distinction between interests and values,” as Stanley Hoffmann argues, “is largely fallacious... a great power has an ‘interest’ in world order that goes beyond strict national security concerns and its definition of world order is largely shaped by its values.” To this should be added Joseph Nye’s conception of “soft power,” by which as a pragmatic and indeed quite realist calculus the values and ideals for which the United States stands are not just virtuous but also a source of international influence.

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To be sure, affirming the possibility of preventive diplomacy must not be done without also recognizing the difficulties that inhere in moving from the possible to the actual. In our case studies the authors are quite deliberate and explicit in presenting the evidence and developing the analysis in support of arguments about what was and was not possible. In the final chapter I draw general analytic conclusions and policy lessons regarding the key requisites and conditionalities for successful preventive diplomacy. It is this balance between not dismissing the difficult as impossible and also acknowledging the difficulties that is the essence of genuine realism.

Defining Preventive Diplomacy

It is true, of course, that all diplomacy seeks to be preventive. Michael Lund attributes the coining of the term “preventive diplomacy” to UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in 1960 with reference in the Cold War context to UN efforts
“to keep localized international disputes from provoking larger confrontations between the superpowers.” Yet while this use and others convey a sense of what is meant, in strict definitional terms there still is “no agreed-upon meaning among practitioners and scholars.” In recent years it has been applied to an unmanageably broad range of activities, objectives, and policies, including people-to-people conflict resolution dialogues, crisis prevention mediation, war de-escalation and termination, democracy building, economic development, the eradication of poverty, and environmental preservation. No wonder one former State Department official referred to it as being “a buzz word among diplomats.”

Lund’s definition is as “action taken in vulnerable places and times to avoid the threat or use of armed force and related forms of coercion by states or groups to settle the political disputes that can arise from the destabilizing effects of economic, social, political and international change.” This is helpful but requires further focusing for our purposes with regard to the stage of the conflict cycle being focused on. The problems here are both how far back and how far forward to go. With respect to the former, it can be argued that prevention requires attacking the deepest roots of conflicts— as the Commission on Global Governance put it in its 1995 report, “a comprehensive preventive strategy must first focus on the underlying political, social, economic and environmental causes of conflict.” This is what the Carnegie Commission calls “structural prevention,” addressing “the root causes of deadly conflict,” as differentiated from “operational prevention,” which is “undertaken when violence appears imminent.”

Our concern in this study is more at the operational end, with diplomacy geared principally to the proximate and pressing causes of conflicts.

The other part of the stage-of-the-cycle issue is how far forward past the point at which violence breaks out one can still speak of conflict prevention rather than conflict management or conflict resolution. While demarcating a precise boundary is just not possible, an excessive blurring takes away from the meaningfulness of the conceptual distinction as well as from potential policy lessons for assessing how timing affects the relative utility of different strategies. This was a problem with the definition of preventive diplomacy in Boutros-Ghali’s An Agenda for Peace, which started with “actions to prevent disputes from arising” and continued on to “prevent existing disputes from escalating,” but then also went on “to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.” The first two fit much better within the prevention stage, while the latter gets more into conflict management. Our focus thus is on the period in which violence is imminent or early but still short of mass deadly conflict— i.e., going not too far back and not too far forward.

With this as our focus, we differentiate among three components of preventive diplomacy: early warning, key decisions on early action, and strategies of action. These are somewhat but not strictly sequential, and more analytically than operationally distinct.

Early Warning

Early warning is, as aptly put in another study, “sounding alarm bells at the right time and in a salutary and appropriate manner.” As Alexander George

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Bruce W. Jentleson
and Jane Holl observe in their chapter, while “specialists may disagree on the scope of preventive diplomacy and ... in their assessments of policies and strategies ... there is no disagreement, however, on the importance of obtaining early warning of incipient or slowly developing crises if preventive action is to have any chance of success.”

Effective early warning entails overcoming two distinct but interconnected problems: (1) the informational problem of obtaining the necessary quantity and quality of intelligence in a reliable form and timely manner, and (2) the analytic problem of overcoming various barriers that can impede or distort the accuracy of analysis. Even more than the traditional problem of the “signal-to-noise” ratio of such classical intelligence problems as an impending surprise attack or major advances in an adversary’s military capabilities, the nature of what constitutes early warning of ethnic and other post-Cold War conflicts is more difficult to ascertain in a number of respects. Take, for example, the “indicators of states at risk” cited in the Carnegie Commission Final Report and based in large part on a study by the State Failure Task Force, a group of scholars working with the U.S. National Intelligence Council (NIC). Among the indicators deemed particularly relevant were demographic pressures, a lack of democratic practices, elite/mass ethnic divisions, serious economic problems, and “a legacy of vengeance-seeking group grievance.” Yet not only does each of these have its own ambiguities and degrees, but there is even less definable specificity or regularity to what constitutes the “critical mass” for a “credible” warning. The “challenge for early warning systems,” as put in another study, “is not so much in identifying societies at risk, in general, but in recognizing patterns of change that will lead to the acceleration of conflicts.”

It is in the sense of the latter part of this statement that early warning is not just an informational problem but also an analytic one. Some sense needs to be provided that the conflict in question is not just a potential one but has a significant likelihood of occurring. This entails averting both the “underwarning” problem of missing developing conflicts and “overwarning”—ending up, as it’s been said, predicting eight of the next three coming deadly conflicts.

Even when the analysis is made, there is the question of whether recognition of the signals and conveyance of their import will bring rewards or run risks. The intelligence analyst who would push early warning risks “shoot the messenger” reactions of being blamed for the bad news even if it is accurate. Or, if inaccurate, the “cry wolf” label may follow, an appellation that can be professionally damaging as well as bring personal disdain from colleagues. Similarly, one veteran ambassador offered the following assessment of the “habitual behavior” and “mind-sets” of the career Foreign Service officer: “The habits of planning ahead, of taking strategic diplomacy beyond just the issues of the week, are not deeply ingrained. Preventive diplomacy requires the ability to sniff trouble in its early stages and then take steps to avoid it. This does not happen routinely or predictably.” These bureaucratic dynamics also pertain to the United Nations and other international organizations and their respective efforts to build institutional capacity for early warning.

Humanitarian relief organizations and other NGOs also can play important
early warning roles, but they too have certain obstacles to overcome. "The hallmark of NGOs," Larry Minear and Thomas Weiss write, "is their activity at the grass-roots level ... working on the front lines." Thus, by both location and activity, NGOs often are the first external actors to become aware of conflicts in their early stages. The reputation for nonpartisanship that many have earned can give information they provide and warnings they sound substantial credibility. Yet they may lack formalized and systematic channels through which to convey such warnings. There also may be serious disincentives for doing so, such as being seen by host governments and other local actors as interfering in ways that can both compromise NGOs' missions and put their field workers in danger. In addition, particularly with large NGOs, there also have been indications of the Weberian "iron law of bureaucracy" setting in and getting in the way of effective functioning for early warning.

Key Decisions on Early Action

Even if early warning is achieved, there remains the problem of what George and Holl call the "warning-response gap," of the need for key decisions to be made to take early action. Whereas the early warning problem is one of a failure of intelligence, the warning-response gap is one of a failure to use intelligence. The warning is there, but either explicit decisions are made not to act or inaction results from decisions bogging down or otherwise not being made. Cognitive, bureaucratic, and political factors all may contribute to this problem.

George and Holl cite relevant findings from psychological research on how and why cognitive dynamics can impede both the disposition and the capacity for acting despite evident warning signals. Precisely because most of these cases involve interests that while arguably important are less than vital, policymakers are inclined to treat conflict warnings as "discrepant" information. There is a natural cognitive tendency to discount information that is discrepant from expectations, or at least to make it "meet higher standards of evidence and to pass stricter tests of admissibility." This reflects an anticipatory assessment of the costs of having to act on a signal as exceeding the probable rewards for doing so. Because warning often "forces policymakers to confront difficult or unpalatable decisions," George and Holl emphasize, "early warning does not necessarily make for easy response."

The bureaucratic dynamic can have a number of aspects. The inherent difficulty of mobilizing for new initiatives, especially when a crisis is only potential or incipient, is more another Weberian axiom than a criticism of any particular bureaucracy (be it one or another U.S. administration, the United Nations, etc.). There also may be the "full plate" problem of other more pressing issues preoccupying policymakers. This was a problem, for example, for much of the international community and especially the United States in 1990–91 during the Gulf War with regard to both Somalia and Yugoslavia. It also has been a problem for the United Nations, which in the early 1990s had between fifteen and twenty peacekeeping forces scattered around the world, as well as twenty special mediators, all to be managed by the Secretariat.
Then there is the question of political will. While the essence of the strategic logic of preventive diplomacy is to act early before the problem becomes a crisis, it often is the same lack of a sense of crisis that makes it much more difficult to build the political support necessary for taking early action. This comes back to the earlier point on the prevailing view of preventive diplomacy as inconsistent with realist foreign policy. It is natural and normal, given this perception, for major powers not to muster the will for action: e.g., in the case of the United States, for presidents already under pressure to limit attention to foreign policy to give priority to those issues most imminent in their effects on U.S. interests; for Congress to be even less inclined to fund policies the rationale of which is principally about threats that might be there in the future; and for the attention of the American public to follow the ups and downs of the “CNN curve.”

Of course, the political-will problem also pertains to other international actors, as we will see for France in cases such as Congo and for Russia in Chechnya and Nagorno-Karabakh. For the United Nations, as well as for regional multilateral organizations, in one sense it involves basic decision rules and bureaucratic barriers to concerted action. In another sense it is an extension of the political-will problem of the major powers.

Strategies of Action

It surely is not enough, as Stedman pointedly argues, to succumb to “the urge . . . to do something, anything.” Not only are such reactive actions unlikely to achieve their objectives, but they run what might be termed the “quagmire” risk of incurring costs and setbacks more burdensome and damaging than if nothing had been done, as well as the “syndrome” risk of a paralysis carrying over to future situations, including some in which early action may actually have worked.

To be sure, there cannot be a standard preventive diplomacy strategy, one size fits all, any more than there could be a single strategy for any other area of foreign policy. In terms of overall strategy, preventive diplomacy usually will require “mixed strategies” combining both coercive elements capable of posing a credible deterrent, and inducements and other reassurances that provide positive incentives for cooperation. On the one hand, those who would resort to purposeful violence need to be deterred from doing so. On the other, reassurance may be needed against the uncertainties of the security dilemma and the commitment problem, and there must be something positive to show for taking the cooperative route. Some situations may require more of a coercive component, others more of an inducement one, but both need be encompassed conceptually. The tendency in much of the preventive diplomacy literature to focus more on the inducement-cooperation dimension than on the coercive-deterrence one is the mirror image of the overemphasis on the latter and often exclusion of the former in the Cold War-era deterrence literature.

Diplomacy and force can be antithetical, but they do not have to be. An Agenda for Peace, for example, includes preventive military deployments as one of its preventive diplomacy strategies. Whether or not the threat or use of force constitutes an act of diplomacy depends on a number of factors such as the purposes for
which force is being used and the normative legitimacy and international legality
of the act. Our approach thus does not exclude the threat or use of military force
from the range of preventive diplomacy instruments and strategies. In this respect
it is consistent with other studies that also define the parameters to encompass
mixed strategies, such as Lund's, whose "preventive diplomacy toolbox" includes
military and nonmilitary measures, coercive and noncoercive diplomatic mea-

sures, and the Carnegie Commission's Final Report, which in total serves as a quite
comprehensive inventory.

In taking this approach, our focus is particularly on the roles of international
actors. It is of course impossible to analyze the dynamics of any conflict effec-
tively without paying attention to both its domestic and international dimen-
sions. However, it also is necessary as a practical research design question for
any study, especially a multicase comparative one, to establish a priority focus.
This does not at all mean excluding domestic actors; indeed, they are key parts
of the story in all of our cases. It is more a matter of focus and emphasis. As such
we group the key international actors into five categories: (1) the United States,
which as the major world power warrants individual focus; (2) other major
powers (e.g., Russia, France, United Kingdom); (3) the United Nations in a num-
ber of capacities, including the role of the secretary-general, Security Council
resolutions, UN peacekeeping forces, and relevant UN agencies (e.g., the UN
High Commissioner for Refugees); (4) respective regional multilateral organi-

zations (e.g., the OSCE, the OAU); and (5) NGOs, both those on the ground in
conflict areas and those exerting political pressure on governments and inter-
national organizations.

Case Selection, the Comparative Case Analytic Framework,
and Other Methodological Considerations

As noted earlier, our study includes ten cases: Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya,
the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia) and the Russian troop withdrawal-Russian minor-
ity issue, Russia-Ukraine, Croatia-Bosnia, Macedonia, Somalia, Rwanda, Congo
(Brazzaville), and the 1993–94 North Korea nuclear crisis. In considering which
cases to include, we were guided by three principal criteria.

First was a priority on those cases that became or had the most significant poten-
tial to become deadly conflicts. The definitional problem with preventive
diplomacy was noted earlier. At one end of the conceptual spectrum, even the
regular and regularized consultations of day-to-day diplomacy are in their
essence preventive in nature. At the other end, the preventive claim also is made
for such long-term strategies as sustainable development, fostering of civic so-
ciety, environmental protection, population planning, etc. Our concern in this
study is the particular one of tensions and conflicts that are of greater magni-
tude than the norm of diplomatic disputes, on the one hand, and more proxim-
ate and pressing than long-term problems, on the other. This is akin to the op-
erational prevention/structural prevention differentiation formulated in the
Second is that we sought to include a range of different types of conflicts characteristic of the post–Cold War world. This cross-cuts our case sample in two ways. One is geographic with cases drawn from the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, and Africa. The other is in inter- and intrastate terms, albeit with the necessary fluidity in setting these parameters and allowing for mixed cases in this sense as well. The main contrast is between heavily ethnic conflicts such as the three African cases and the closer to classical interstate ones such as North Korea and Russia-Ukraine. The other ex-Soviet ones and the ex-Yugoslavia ones are more mixed with internal ethnic divisions as well as interstate dimensions. These variations in the cases allow us to consider how differences in the type of conflict may affect the problems posed and responses needed. They also must be borne in mind, though, so as not to overgeneralize, a point we come back to in the final chapter.

Third is that the case set includes both successes and failures. Here, too, this is in part a methodological consideration of providing sufficient variation in the outcomes of the cases to deepen the analysis and test the arguments. Also, all of our attributions of success and failure are made with two caveats in mind. One is that these are relative and not absolute measures, marking the sides of a continuum and not categories of a dichotomy. There are few successes that are purely so, whether it be in the study of preventive diplomacy or other areas of international affairs. Even in dismal failures certain policies that were efficacious can be sifted out analytically. The other is a sense of the potential transitoriness of these measures. This also can work in either direction: i.e., a policy that initially appears to have achieved its objectives then breaks down at a later date; a policy that initially seemed to have failed but becomes more successful over time. In the former case, the key analytic-evaluative question is whether the breakdown in prevention can be attributed to flaws inherent in the original strategy or comes about because of later mistakes that do not take away from the original success (in fact may even further confirm it). In the latter case, it is whether the policies in question or some other factors were most responsible for the deferred positive impact.

Comparative Case Analytic Framework

The essence of a comparative case study is to identify patterns rather than just single-case phenomena. The uniqueness of every case is to be respected, but the emphasis is on developing more general conceptual formulations, middle-range theories, and policy lessons. This amounts to more of an analytic than descriptive approach to the writing of case studies, with less need to “tell the whole story” of each case than to structure and focus treatment of the case on a set of analytic questions. The cases as such are less ends in themselves than means to the ends of developing “conditional generalizations,” a series of propositions with some general validity within and according to specified factors and parameters.
Accordingly, an initial set of case study guidelines was developed by the editor, and then modified based on first drafts and discussions at an authors' conference. These guidelines sought to strike a balance between establishing a sufficiently common framework to ensure cross-case analytic comparability, while avoiding a rigid framework that would preclude adaptations to fit the unique aspects of each case. A flexible yet focused structure was the goal.

The basic case study structure has five parts. It begins with a case summary, ends with a concluding section on lessons for both theory and policy, and includes sections on each of the analytic components of preventive diplomacy: early warning, key decisions on early action, and strategies of action. From the outset we stressed the flexible-but-focused analytic balance, allowing for different degrees of emphasis on different stages as warranted by different cases as well as some author discretion to modify the structure, but not to the point of fundamentally departing from the basic comparative framework.

Case Summaries

It is a given that each case in this project could warrant its own book—indeed, some of our authors also have written books on their cases. Yet for the purposes of a single comparative case study, we had to set limits (or at least targets!) of about forty to fifty manuscript pages. In their classic study *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, Alexander George and Richard Smoke faced a similar challenge and met it by starting each case with a short “résumé of the crisis.” We have used a similar technique.

These are the key points addressed by the case summaries:

1. **Nature of the Opportunity—Missed or Seized?** If a case of failure, was it largely inevitably so, or was it a missed opportunity in which preventive diplomacy could have worked—if so, why, how, and on what analytic and empirical basis is the argument to be made? If a success, was it fairly readily so, or was it an opportunity seized by international actors—and why, how, and on what analytic and empirical basis is this argument to be made?
2. **“Anatomy” of the Conflict:** What were the principal causes of the conflict? What were the central issues? Who were the principal parties? Here is where some attention can be paid to the structural/remote causes, although more as broad context than analytic emphasis consistent with the proximate-and-pressing focus established earlier.
3. **Key International Actors:** Who were the key international actors? What were their policies, and why? What was the broader geopolitical context in which this conflict occurred?

**Early Warning**

Was there early warning? Answers do not necessarily have to be strictly yes or no, neither for any particular international actor nor for the international
community as a whole. Whatever the answer, it was to be as well grounded empirically as possible in terms of what was known, or at least knowable at the time.

1. Early Warning Availability: Was timely and reliable information available to policy makers?
2. Assessment: To the extent that early warning was not available, how much was it an informational problem, how much an analytic one? Conversely, if early warning was not a problem, why and how were the informational and analytic problems overcome?
3. Lessons: What lessons with broader applicability are to be learned? Under what conditions are these most applicable?

Key Decisions on Early Action

To the extent that international actors really do not have significant interests at stake, then there is a realpolitik logic to restraint, and not much further explanation for decisions not to act or nondecision inaction is required. The case thus would be less a missed opportunity than a conscious decision based on an assessment of the interests at stake and the costs and risks involved to take only limited action—and that whatever the consequences for other parties, such a decision process has to be acknowledged as rational insofar as that international actor's ratio of interests to costs and risks is concerned.

However, as noted earlier, the realism of such assessments often is suspect. The calculation of interests, costs, and risks by policymakers does not have to be accepted at face value and is open to being shown as having been flawed.

The questions on what key decisions were and were not made then become both descriptive and analytic. To draw again on Alexander George's methodological work, the cases need to provide “process tracing,” rich and fairly detailed accounts of the policy processes of the key international actors. We want to show what the reasons were as policymakers saw them, as well as assess the logic of their self-explanations.

1. Missed Opportunity: In cases in which effective early action was not taken, we need to assess the relative significance of the cognitive and bureaucratic factors discussed earlier, as well as political will.
2. Seized Opportunity: In cases in which effective early action was taken, the questions are the complements to the above: How was it that cognitive disinclinations were avoided, bureaucratic barriers overcome, and political will effectively mustered?

Strategies of Action

This part of the analysis is intended more to get at the “what” of the strategies pursued, the impact of those strategies, and how, why and at whose initiative(s) they may have changed over time.
1. Key Strategies: What were the key preventive diplomacy strategies that were pursued; e.g., international mediation, other negotiating and bargaining strategies, preventive military deployments or other threats or uses of military force, economic sanctions?

2. Mixed Strategies: What was the particular mix of coercive and noncoercive instruments in these strategies; e.g., how juicy a carrot/how big a stick, what part incentives/what part disincentives, how much diplomacy/how much coercion? Was military force, or the threat thereof, used?

3. International Coordination: How effectively were strategies, initiatives, and roles coordinated among the various international actors?

4. Domestic Political Orders: For conflicts over domestic political orders, what were the operative state constitutive formulas; e.g., power sharing, autonomy, secession? How appropriate were those chosen to the particular conflict at hand?

Conclusions: Implications for Theory, Policy Lessons Learned

We cannot undo the mistakes made in Bosnia, Rwanda, or elsewhere. But we can learn from these and the other cases of this first decade of the post–Cold War era, as we set out on the next decade—indeed, as we enter a new century.

We do not make claims to truths, laws, foolproof strategies, or any other such grandiose achievements. But we are very much concerned with drawing conclusions and deriving lessons that go beyond each particular case. The key is ensuring that the conclusions drawn are consistent with both the scope and the limits of conditional generalizations, as delineated earlier. This is true both for theory and for policy. Some of this conclusion drawing is done by each of the case authors, generalizing as appropriate from their respective cases. It is developed more fully in the cross-case analysis in the final chapter.

Methodological Considerations for Counterfactual Analysis

In all of our cases, we proceed from the proposition that neither the failures nor the successes were given. In the former, success was difficult, but failure was not a given; in the latter, failure was a very real prospect, success not a given—opportunities missed, opportunities seized, but either way opportunities were there for preventive diplomacy.

Among the failures we also try to distinguish between situations that primarily were failures of actions taken and those that primarily were failures to act. In the former situations, the international community did take certain actions but the policies were flawed; in the latter, it was mostly a matter of inaction, passivity, a virtual if not total absence of efforts at preventive diplomacy. Often the reality is a mix of the two, which is to be expected and can be accommodated with intracase analytic distinctions. But whether intercase or intracase, the differentiation between failures-of and failure-to has implications both for the explanation of the case in question and the more general policy lessons to be drawn.
All of this gets us into the realm of counterfactual analysis, of trying to make claims and offer explanations of what could have happened. This type of analysis brings potential benefits of important insights and policy lessons, but it also comes with attendant methodological difficulties. In their recent book on counterfactual analysis as applied to international affairs, Philip Tetlock and Aaron Belkin stress that while there is no strict singular method for this kind of analysis, it must be done substantively and according to explicit criteria if we are to be able "to distinguish plausible from implausible, insightful from vacuous arguments." Drawing in part on Tetlock and Belkin, we have held our claims of missed opportunities and other might-have-beens to five principal criteria:

1. **Specificity:** It is not enough just to say that something else could have been done; it is necessary to specify the policy or policies, act or acts, and decision or decisions that would have made a significant difference in the paths that the case followed and its outcome.

2. **Minimal Historical Rewrite:** Even when specific, the elements to be changed in the case history need to be kept to a minimum. Counterfactuals that require "undoing many events" or otherwise posit their own long causal chain are much weaker than those that focus on key drivers and watersheds.

3. **Plausible Causal Logic:** The argument needs to be made as to why the postulated change would have altered the case path and outcome. The plausibility of the causal logic depends on it being consistent with broader theoretical propositions that provide more general and independent support. For example, a claim that more coercive diplomatic measures might have worked in situation X would need to be consistent with theories of coercive diplomacy; a claim about an alternative negotiating strategy, with theories about mediation and bargaining; a claim about military intervention and peace operations, with this literature; etc.

4. **Knowability:** The information on which any of the prior arguments are made must have been knowable at the time. This means that it can be demonstrated either that the information was available to key policymakers at the time or that it could have been but wasn't for reasons that can be plausibly argued to have been within the control of key policymakers.

5. **Do-ability:** Again with particular sensitivity to being realistic to the dynamics of the moment, the case has to be made that the favored policy, action, etc., was "do-able" at the time. This means taking into account constraints that may have existed at the time, such as domestic politics, weaknesses in multilateral coalition, and other sources. Here too, though, it does not mean blanket acceptance of no-other-way rationalizations. The malleability or nonmalleability of constraints is to be approached as a matter for analysis.

For the failure cases and efforts to explain how they could have turned out better, all five criteria pertain. The more specific and minimal the assertions of
what could have been done differently, the more plausible the causal logic of why these differences would have had preventive effects; and the more convincing the evidence that the information on which such arguments are made was knowable at the time and that the proposed options were viable, the stronger the counterfactual claim.

In the success cases, the counterfactual analysis goes in the other direction. It asks how these cases might not have turned out as well as they did. The first three criteria still pertain largely in tact: specificity as to what the key differences could have been, the same minimal rewrite rule, and a plausible causal logic established for the alternative path. By definition knowability is not in doubt, so the analysis needs to be geared to why; so, too, do-ability is not to be taken as given but assessed for where the consequences might have been different.

The Cases and the Study

Two final points regarding the cases and the study. First, a number of the cases are based on original and primary source research. They thus both draw on, and add to, the literature. Second, some of our authors are principally academics, others principally practitioners. The blend makes for a richer study, as the reader gets the benefits both of analytic approaches based primarily on scholarly research and ones based primarily on firsthand experience. All are noted experts, their wealth of knowledge one of the lasting contributions this study makes to the developing literature on preventive diplomacy in the post-Cold War era.
SPECIALISTS MAY DISAGREE ON the scope of preventive diplomacy and, more broadly, preventive measures of various kinds. They may differ also in their assessment of policies and strategies to ward off undesirable events. There is no disagreement, however, on the importance of obtaining early warning of incipient or slowly developing crises if preventive action is to have any chance of success.

The end of the Cold War has diminished neither the importance nor the challenge of obtaining early warning. Indeed, the intelligence community today monitors and analyzes an increasing number of factors, in addition to traditional indicators of potential conflict, such as environmental degradation, economic conditions, and population trends. The increased complexity of gathering, sorting, and analyzing data for early warning results from the pressing need to respond quickly, efficiently, and effectively to rapidly changing global events. In an era of increasing demands on limited resources, the task is all the more difficult.¹

In recent years the problem of obtaining early warning has received a great deal of attention not only within the United Nations, regional organizations, and governments but also from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and research specialists.² However, the more difficult problem of marshaling timely, effective responses to warning has received much less systematic attention. A major objective of this chapter is to highlight this need for more emphasis on developing effective responses for preventive action of various kinds.³ We also emphasize that the design and management of early warning systems should be
intimately connected with the task of responding to warning. We base this view on the belief that an improved capacity to know about and correctly interpret events early will improve the responses that are brought eventually to bear — a belief that is shared by a range of policy professionals, government officials, and informed publics. We do not offer specific policy recommendations for overcoming the gap between early warning and effective response; rather, we provide a conceptual approach through which to analyze the problem. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of how warning and response interact in policymaking. When successful, that interaction can help avert violence. When unsuccessful, the result is often looked upon as a “missed opportunity.” We discuss such missed opportunities, but with reservations, not least because of the dangers associated with counterfactual analysis. However, well-crafted examinations of missed opportunities for preventive diplomacy can be useful in bringing to light and learning from past warning-response failures.

Toward an Integrated Warning-Response Framework

Too much of the considerable effort to develop improved warning indicators has been divorced from the problem of linking available warning with appropriate responses. One explanation for this separation may stem from the stark lines drawn between collection and analysis in the intelligence community. Perhaps there is reason for this separation, for this approach may be traced to the increased professionalization of the intelligence field, where intelligence analysts assiduously ward off any hint that they “do policy.” They focus their efforts instead on improving the ways in which information is acquired and analyzed.

Another explanation may lie in the very difficulty of policymaking in today’s international environment. It may simply be beyond the capacity of any single office or agency to stay abreast of global developments in such a way as to anticipate, craft, launch, and manage intricate, multilateral policy responses.

But whatever the institutional causes of the warning-response gap, expectations that governments will act responsibly to help ward off possible crises are quite real. These expectations arise, in part, because an increasingly mobile world population combined with the explosion of global communications (the so-called CNN effect) have helped create and inform attentive, expert, and often activist communities in many countries who know about problems before they become violent. In part as a consequence, it has become less plausible for government officials to try to explain away policy missteps or failures by pointing to the lack of timely or correctly evaluated intelligence, although the urge remains almost irresistible.

The complexity of world events combined with the compressed time span within which decision makers are expected to craft and articulate a policy to deal with unfolding crises make it harder, yet at the same time more necessary, for intelligence analysts and policymakers to work within an integrated “warning-response” framework. Indeed, the need for such an integrated approach was the fundamental lesson drawn from the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and
provided the starting point for post–World War II efforts to design systems and procedures for avoiding such a lapse.\textsuperscript{8} 

As with the need to respond effectively to avoid a surprise attack, preventive action to deter the outbreak of various post–Cold War crises also demands an integrated warning-response framework. Yet, for such crises, the warning-response problem is often more complicated and difficult than for avoiding surprise attack. In the latter case, policymakers have already determined that some set of observable hostile actions would be an unmistakable threat and have the strongest possible incentives to acquire timely warning and to respond to that threat in some way. The same cannot be said for many lesser contingencies, such as ethnic conflicts or patterns of gross human rights abuses. Since situations of this kind—even in crisis—pose a much less grave threat to the interests of a third party, policymakers are often less inclined to demand early warning or to take it seriously and respond to it.\textsuperscript{9} 

But one may wonder whether there have been many crises for which no warning was available, however misperceived, misjudged, or ignored. Experts predicted war in Bosnia even as the Vance plan brought a cessation of hostilities between Croatia and Serbia in 1992. The violent spasm in Rwanda in 1994 was anticipated months in advance, although the magnitude of the killing was not precisely foreseen. Even Saddam Hussein's precipitous invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was no great surprise to those who watch events in the Middle East closely.\textsuperscript{10} If events such as in Bosnia, Kuwait, and Rwanda are known (and increasingly knowable, given the rapidly contracting nature of global interactions), why are they not prevented? No simple answer is possible, yet a partial explanation may lie in the examination of how warnings are recognized and transmitted to policymakers, and with policymakers' assessments of the implications of such warnings for action.

### The Problem of Receptivity to Warning

Receptivity to warning has been a problem not only for conflicts that occur on the margin of states' interests but also for situations threatening a surprise attack. Although the reasons for inadequate receptivity and response to warning differ in some ways for these two types of threats, it will be useful first to review experience with the problem of receptivity to warning of possible surprise attack and, related to this, to unexpected diplomatic initiatives that trigger the possibility of war. Properly scrutinized and evaluated, this historical experience may be suggestive for the design and use of warning-response systems for preventive action for other types of crises.

Experimental research provides a useful starting point for analysis of factors that impede receptivity to warning. Laboratory studies of difficulties in perception of stimuli provide useful analogies to the problem of receptivity to warning of emerging threats in the international arena. The results of perception experiments, however, do not encourage hopes for easy or complete solutions to this problem. Studies of a person's ability to recognize a stimulus that is embedded in a stream of other stimuli have shown at least three factors to be important:
1. The “signal-to-noise” ratio—i.e., the strength of the signal relative to the strength of the confusing or distracting background stimuli
2. The expectations of observers called upon to evaluate such signals
3. The rewards and costs associated with recognizing and correctly appraising the signal

One might assume that the stronger the signal and the weaker the background “noise,” the easier it should be to detect the signal; weak signals are simply not picked up. However, even controlled laboratory tests reveal the task of correct signal detection to be more complicated than this. The results of perceptual experiments that deal with relatively simple psychophysical auditory or visual stimuli indicate that detection of a signal is not simply a function of its strength relative to background “noise.” Indeed, the effect of a signal’s strength on the ability to identify it can be less important than the second and third variables mentioned above.

The complex environment of international affairs only complicates matters further, adding domestic and international overlays to the basic “map” of the crisis situation. A decision maker’s expectations and the rewards and costs associated with recognition of the signal may be more important in determining receptivity to and correct appraisal of information about an emerging threat.

But while expectations regarding both the emerging crisis and the potential responses play a key role in a decision maker’s receptivity to warning, the logic of warning and the logic of response conflict. The logic of warning can be summarized as “the sooner the better.” However, policymakers generally prefer to put off hard choices as long as possible. Thus, even if a leader expects a situation to deteriorate, additional information or warning to this effect may not prompt preventive action.

Because policy choices in a crisis are often so difficult to make, individuals (as well as small policymaking groups and organizations) may discredit information that calls into question existing expectations, preferences, or policies. It is well known that discrepant information of this kind is often required, in effect, to meet higher standards of evidence and to pass stricter tests of admissibility than new information that supports existing expectations and policies. As a result, it is disconcertingly easy at times for policymakers and their intelligence specialists to discount discrepant information or to interpret it in such a way as to protect a preferred hypothesis or policy. In the United States, the establishment of multiple intelligence organizations, with their capacity for redundancy and rich detail, was designed, in part, to counter this tendency. Yet the habit persists. Indeed, not only is the discrepant information still discounted, but entire intelligence organizations can be discounted. 12

The “reward-cost” aspect of correct signal detection, too, can sharply reduce the policymaker’s receptivity to information of emerging threats, for early warning does not necessarily make for easy response. On the contrary, warning often forces policymakers to confront difficult or unpalatable decisions. One means for avoiding such difficult decisions is to reduce one’s receptivity to warning signals. Moreover, the policy “background” against which new information is judged can strengthen
the tendency to ignore or downgrade incoming information that challenges existing beliefs or exacerbates decision dilemmas. Thus, once policy decisions have been made within the government, they tend to acquire a momentum of their own and the support of vested interests. Top-level decision makers are often reluctant to reopen policy matters that were decided earlier with great difficulty; to do so, they fear, can be taken as an indirect admission of policy failure and easily plunge the government once again into the turmoil of decision making.

The Korean War

Psychological mechanisms of this kind have contributed to a number of important intelligence and policy failures. Among them was the Truman administration's pronounced lack of receptivity to the ample warning available in the spring of 1950 of the forthcoming North Korean attack on South Korea. As studies have shown, had the warning been taken more seriously, the administration might have weighed more carefully whether the perceived stakes in Korea warranted U.S. military intervention. If an affirmative answer to this fundamental question had emerged, the administration might have undertaken to deter North Korea. As it was, the North Koreans acted as they did on the mistaken notion that the United States would not intervene militarily on behalf of South Korea. Thus, the Korean War, with all of its fateful consequences, qualifies as a genuine example of war-through-miscalculation. It was a war that might well have been avoided had Washington been more receptive to warning and acted on it.

This case illustrates how information processing within the U.S. policymaking system was impeded and distorted both by the expectations or mind-set of the administration and by the costs that greater receptivity to incoming information of the emerging threat would have entailed. Taking available warning seriously always carries the "penalty" of deciding what to do about it. In this case, it would have required President Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson to reconsider the earlier decision that they had made in 1949 to draw a line defining U.S. security interests in the Far East to exclude Formosa, South Korea, and Indochina. The exclusion of Formosa was part of the administration's policy of disengaging from the Chinese Nationalists, a decision that was far more controversial within the administration and with the public than the exclusion of South Korea. So much so that a reversal of the existing policy of no military commitment to South Korea in response to the warning of a possible North Korean attack would have been politically inconceivable unless Truman and Acheson had also been willing—which they were not, prior to the North Korean attack—to extend a new commitment to the Chinese Nationalist regime on Formosa as well.

As this case and others show, the policy background at the time warning becomes available may subtly erode the policymaker's receptivity to it. A similar misfortune occurred later in the Korean War. During September and early October 1950, the administration eased itself into a commitment to occupy North Korea and to unify it with South Korea. But when repeated warnings came in that such a move would trigger Communist Chinese military intervention, the administration found itself so locked into its more ambitious war policy that it
dismissed the warnings as a bluff. To give credence to the worrisome indications of a forthcoming Communist Chinese intervention carried with it the cost of reconsidering and abandoning the war policy that had given rise to the danger. In this critical situation, wishful thinking contributed to the administration's grossly defective information processing. Once again the result was that Washington was taken by surprise when the Chinese launched their massive offensive in late November. A new war resulted that neither side had wanted, one that might have been avoided had Washington not misperceived and misjudged the evidence of Chinese intentions.15

The Blockade of West Berlin

Similarly, in the spring of 1948, most American policymakers refused to take seriously the possibility of a Soviet blockade of West Berlin despite mounting tension and the fact that the Soviets had recently imposed a temporary blockade of Western ground access to the city. Some of the same psychological dynamics that interfered with optimal processing of incoming information in the cases already described can be seen here, too. For U.S. policymakers to have taken available warning of a possible Soviet blockade of West Berlin seriously would have carried with it the “cost” of having then to face up to and resolve difficult, controversial policy problems.

At the time an American commitment to West Berlin did not yet exist. Officials within the administration were badly divided over the wisdom of attempting to defend the Western outpost that lay deep in Soviet-occupied East Germany. Under these circumstances, it was easier to believe the Soviets would not undertake serious action against West Berlin than it was to decide beforehand what the American response should be to such an eventuality. In this case, fortunately, although American policymakers were surprised by the Soviet blockade, Truman dealt with the crisis without backing down or going to war.16

The Gulf War

The August 2, 1990, Iraqi invasion of Kuwait offers a more recent example of the difficulty of correctly reading an adversary’s signals. By mid-July of 1990, U.S. intelligence had identified the buildup of some thirty-five thousand Iraqi troops and three hundred tanks on Kuwait’s border. At the same time, Iraq was bringing charges before the Arab League that Kuwait had, among other things, broken Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil production quotas and stolen oil from Iraqi territory. In compensation, Iraq demanded an increase in the price of oil (from $18 to $25 a barrel), $2.4 billion from Kuwait, and a moratorium on Iraqi debts to other Arab states stemming from the Iran-Iraq War. Should the demands not be met, Saddam Hussein threatened that he would “have no choice but to resort to effective action to put things right and ensure the restitution of [Iraqi] rights.”17 Through the latter portion of July, U.S. intelligence continued to monitor Iraqi troop advancements. By the end of the month, one hundred thou-
sand troops had been assembled on the Kuwaiti border, accompanied by strategic deployments of ammunition and supplies. These moves, together with other ominous signs, such as the continued buildup of biological and chemical weapons and strong evidence of a nuclear weapons development program, highlighted the threat posed to the region and vital U.S. interests.  

Analysis of Iraqi intentions differed within the intelligence and diplomatic communities. Even the Kuwaitis at first believed Hussein was merely bluffing to gain economic concessions. Analysts tracking the situation within both the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) eventually concluded (by July 25 and July 30, respectively) that Iraq intended to invade Kuwait. Even at this late date, however, high-ranking officials in the intelligence and military communities remained skeptical of the invasion analysis, believing instead that Iraq was likely to make only a limited border crossing.

American diplomatic response to the Iraqi troop movements was equivocal. Bush administration officials repeatedly stated that the U.S. had no defense treaties with Kuwait or other Arab states threatened by Iraq. The U.S. ambassador to Iraq reportedly told Hussein that “we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait.” At no point was Iraq told what the consequences would be should it attack Kuwait or other Gulf states. Many now believe that the absence of a clear response led Iraq to believe that its invasion of Kuwait would be met with little resistance by the international community and, more specifically, the United States.

These several lessons of historical experience regarding lack of receptivity and inadequate response to warning of surprise military or diplomatic actions are applicable also to the different kinds of threats in the post–Cold War world that effective preventive action must address.

Genocide in Rwanda

The Rwandan conflict offers another, brutal, example of the difficulties associated with generating effective responses to the types of conflict dominating the post–Cold War era—situations that do not threaten a nation’s vital interests.

“Most leading activists believe that the government has compiled lists naming people to be assassinated when circumstances require.” So reported Africa Watch in a 1992 report highlighting human rights abuses and tensions between the Hutu majority and Tutsi minority in Rwanda. Beginning on April 6, 1994, these lists were used as part of a killing spree that would, in a matter of weeks, take the lives of nearly one million people. The significant presence of international organizations (the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity) and representatives of key donor countries (including France, Belgium, and the United States) ensured that warning of the developing crisis was received by prominent actors in the international community. Despite this significant presence and ample evidence of deteriorating circumstances in Rwanda, there was an acute failure to respond. A number of factors contributed to this failure. According to one report:
There existed an internal predisposition on the part of a number of the key actors to deny the possibility of genocide because facing the consequences might have required them to alter their course of action. The mesmerization with the success of Arusha [the 1993 peace accord between the Hutu-dominated government and the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front] and the failure of Somalia together cast long shadows and distorted an objective analysis of Rwanda.23

Among the more obvious warning signals were “hate radio” broadcasts directed at Tutsi and moderate Hutu, continued training of Hutu militia units, and government-sponsored killings. Yet none of the major outside actors formulated, let alone articulated, a response to the potential outbreak of widespread violence. According to Human Rights Watch consultant Alison Des Forges, a particularly important event was the February 1994 murder of a moderate Hutu cabinet member by government soldiers. Des Forges noted, “[W]hen they [Hutu extremists] saw they could get away with that kind of violence . . . it encouraged them to go ahead with the larger operation.”24

While the foregoing discussion of receptivity to warning has been necessarily brief, it indicates that the impediments are numerous and that they cannot be easily eliminated. For this reason, most specialists have urged that the problem of securing and analyzing warning should be linked closely with the problem of deciding what responses are appropriate and useful in the light of the available warning, however equivocal or ambiguous it may be. While high-confidence warning is desirable, often it is not available. But neither is high-confidence warning always necessary for making useful responses to the possibility of an emerging crisis.

Indeed, this discussion of receptivity to warning of emerging threats applies also to information about favorable developments elsewhere in the world that offer opportunities for foreign policymakers to advance positive goals. For many purposes, policymakers do not need or require high-confidence forecasts of emerging opportunities in order to explore and facilitate such openings and possibly to turn them to account. Thus, for example, following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the enunciation at that time of the Brezhnev Doctrine, policymakers in Washington (as well as other observers) speculated that these events may have increased China’s anxiety regarding a Soviet invasion. Was this anxiety (which its ongoing border conflict with the Soviet Union could only have heightened) sufficient to make China interested in détente with the United States? We cannot be sure of Chinese thinking at that time, but the point that deserves emphasis here is that it did not require a forecast that could confidently predict Beijing’s readiness for détente to make it worthwhile for Washington to explore and encourage the possibility discreetly. Sensible steps could be taken to reinforce and activate any disposition for détente on the part of the Chinese. From the standpoint of U.S. policy, the matter of possible détente was “actionable” even in the face of considerable uncertainty as to China’s readiness and conditional willingness to reorient its policy toward the United States.25
The Warning-Response Gap

We have noted that policymakers are often not inclined to take early warning seriously or to act on it in situations that pose the possibility of severe ethnic and religious conflicts, humanitarian disasters, or gross human rights violations. A number of reasons exist for this passivity. The first is the relatively low stakes perceived to be at risk. At an early stage in their development, such contingencies simply are not perceived to pose grave threats to a given state's national interests. Moreover, whether a low-level conflict or incipient crisis will escalate in ways that would eventually engage major interests of individual states or the international community often remains problematic and difficult to forecast.

Second, despite efforts to improve early warning indicators of possible flare-ups, such events are likely to remain equivocal, subject to considerable uncertainty, and capable of diverse interpretations. It is not that potential major trouble spots cannot be identified; rather, the problem lies in understanding such situations well enough to forecast which ones are likely to explode and when. Experts and observers are likely to differ in their estimates of how serious a low-level situation will become, with what probability, and how soon.

Third, early warning indicators typically do not speak for themselves; they require analysis and interpretation. But the kinds of knowledge and theories needed for this purpose may be in short supply. As noted earlier, specialists have worked more on improving possible indicators than on developing better theories and models to assess and predict the significance of the indicators.

Fourth, even in a case in which there is relatively good warning, policymakers may be reluctant to credit the warning and to take preventive action because they have been subjected too often to the "cry wolf" phenomenon. Oddly enough, intense policy concerns that actions may be seen as premature or unnecessary—revealing an embarrassing policy naiveté, or worse, the possible unneeded commitment of scarce resources—generate a real wariness of "false triggers." These policymakers, typically preoccupied with a battery of other problems that require urgent attention, often give only the barest attention to new, low-level crises that may never develop into serious concerns.

Fifth, and related to this, overload induces passivity. Given the large number of simmering crises, and given the ever-growing limitation of resources, policymakers find it impractical to respond with preventive actions to all of them, thinking that is reinforced by the general lack of knowledge regarding what efforts would be effective. Early warning of an equivocal, uncertain nature in such situations is insufficient for costly or risky responses.

Thus, in many ethnic and religious conflicts, humanitarian crises, or severe human rights abuses, timely or accurate warning may not be the problem at all. Rather, for one reason or another, as noted, no serious response is likely to be taken solely on the basis of early warning simply because a simmering situation that threatens to boil over may not be deemed important enough to warrant the type and scale of effort deemed necessary to prevent the hypothetical catastrophe. Moreover, this reaction can occur not only when what is at stake is only dimly perceived or not foreseen at all, but also if the coming crisis is fully and accurately anticipated.
Indeed, sixth and finally, it may be that a reluctance to act in the face of warning at times results not because warning is not taken seriously but rather because decision makers take it very seriously but are nonetheless deterred by the prospects of a "slippery slope"—that is, inexorable (and potentially intractable) involvement in an already nasty problem. This dilemma is particularly poignant for political leaders who must weigh incurring political costs now (in addition to the human and material costs that action entails) for benefits that will accrue downstream, if at all, with no guarantees that they would be given credit for preventing a disaster, now a nonevent. Thus, even in cases where the prospect of a catastrophe is taken seriously, there may be a lack of "political will" to take timely and effective action.

Numerous observers have noted that governments often ignore an incipient crisis until it has escalated into a deadly struggle or a major catastrophe. All too often political leaders find it difficult to persuade their people to support potentially costly and risky operations before a disaster actually occurs. As one report put it:

People throughout the world tend to be guided by the media—and they are predominantly Western media—in determining when a problem warrants international action. Television coverage of a situation has become, for many, a precondition for action. Yet for most commercial networks, the precondition for coverage is crisis. There has to be large-scale violence, destruction, or death before the media takes notice. Until that happens, governments are not under serious internal pressure to act. And by then, the international community's options have usually been narrowed, and made more difficult to implement effectively.29

But as noted earlier, even when events that could precipitate a major humanitarian or violent crisis are perceived in a timely manner and accurately evaluated, decision makers will often still defer taking preventive action. As we have seen, this inaction is either because the warning is not taken seriously, for the reasons mentioned, or because the warning is taken very seriously but decision makers are loath to confront the unpalatable choice of responses facing them. Particularly for the complex and seemingly intractable disputes that have characterized much of the violence of the post–Cold War period, it may be less the unfolding crisis that conditions how a decision maker processes warning than the implications of that crisis for action.

Toward Better Use of Warning

However a policymaker responds to warning, that response entails costs and risks of its own; indeed, some responses could even be quite harmful. There is clearly a need to search for responses to warning that are useful in the situation without posing unacceptable costs. Even ambiguous warning, for example, gives policymakers more time to consider what to do: to step up efforts to acquire more information about the situation, to rehearse the decision problem that they would face if the warning proves to be correct, to spell out the likely consequences if the equivocal warning to which low probability is assigned proves to be genuine, to review their commitments and contingency plans, and— not least in importance—to seize the opportunity to avert a possible dangerous crisis.
Thus, even ambiguous warning provides an opportunity to deal with the conflict situation and/or the misperceptions associated with it before it leads to a violent conflict.

Nevertheless, it is a truism to note that policymakers prefer to receive unequivocal warning before deciding whether and how to respond. But, as noted earlier, high-confidence early warning is seldom available, and it can be highly disadvantageous if policymakers defer action altogether until more conclusive warning is available. It is precisely because unambiguous warning is so difficult to obtain that policymakers must confront the question of what types of response are useful and acceptable, even though the warning is uncertain or equivocal.

As noted earlier, once the problem of warning is linked with its implications for action, it becomes significantly redefined. Early warning of a possible crisis is desirable not in and of itself but insofar as it provides decision makers with an opportunity to make a timely response of an appropriate kind that might otherwise be impossible. Warning gives the decision maker time to decide what to do and then to prepare to do it. Warning provides an opportunity to avert the expected crisis, to modify it, or to redirect it into some less dangerous and less costly direction. On occasion, warning may provide an opportunity to deal with a conflict-of-interest situation or misperceptions before they lead to a military conflict.

Consideration of the warning-response problem requires that we introduce another dimension into the analysis at this point. Since response to warning is never without cost or risk, the development of warning-response systems, contingency response options, or ad hoc responses requires careful consideration of the possible costs as well as of the expected benefits of each option, weighed, of course, against the costs and benefits of inaction. At the same time, there are undoubtedly some responses to early warning of an equivocal and ambiguous character that are less costly than others. One could, for example, quietly intensify the collection of intelligence and/or begin discreet consultations with selected allies to clarify an uncertain situation before “going public” with more assertive measures, such as placing forces at increased readiness.

Admittedly, some low-cost responses may make only a limited or uncertain contribution to dealing with a troublesome situation. There may be, in other words, a trade-off between responses that promise a great deal but are costly and risky, and responses of a more modest but still useful kind that do not pose large costs and risks. The experience with trade-offs of this kind in dealing with the problem of surprise attack may be suggestive. In part, the trade-off dilemma in these cases can be dealt with by developing a calibrated warning-response system, one in which the level-of-readiness response increases with the level or urgency of warning.

For special historical reasons related to the trauma of Pearl Harbor, as noted earlier, American analysts concerned with the warning problem have focused attention primarily on the danger of a surprise all-out military attack. Lesser types of threats and crises associated with the broader and, in many ways, more complex tasks of preventive diplomacy and preventive actions have not yet received as much systematic attention in efforts to develop warning-response systems. Thus, the major uses of warning contemplated by the U.S. planners in the
past have focused on (1) the use of warning to alert military forces in order to reduce their vulnerability and to shorten their response time; and (2) the use of warning to reinforce deterrence by signaling to the adversary a strong and credible commitment to respond.

A broader range of threats and types of crises should engage the interest of policymakers and specialists on crisis anticipation. Similarly, a broader range of response options than the two uses of warnings noted above should be developed. A longer, more diversified list of possible uses of warning would include, but not be limited to, the following (general response options are listed here without attempting to judge their utility in any particular situation):

1. Gather more information about the situation. Step up collection of intelligence and public information.
2. Reduce vulnerabilities. Alert forces and citizens abroad to reduce their exposure and susceptibility to attacks of all kinds. Increase readiness of standby forces and alert special forces for contingency operations.
3. Reinforce commitments. Strengthen deterrence, whenever necessary, by signaling credible "red lines" that should not be crossed, using diplomatic means and, if necessary, military demonstrations.
4. Engage the targeted state in sustained dialogue. Establish clear and reliable channels for exchange of communications.
5. Take measures to reduce potential political/diplomatic/economic costs that could result from the emerging crisis in the domestic or international arena.
6. Conduct consultations with key states and allies. Raise the issue in the United Nations and other appropriate international forums.
7. Undertake a public information campaign to inform populations at home and abroad of the unfolding circumstances. Prepare publics for possible coercive diplomacy or military action.
8. Conduct a decision rehearsal; i.e., rehearse the decision problem that one would be confronted with if the warning proved justified. A rehearsal involves (a) assessing the damage to important interests should the crisis erupt (something that policymakers have done very poorly in some past crises) and (b) anticipating the political and psychological pressures that are likely to be brought to bear upon policymakers should the crisis occur.
9. Consider and, if necessary, clarify one's commitment to take action should the crisis emerge. Warning can have the useful function of encouraging policymakers to identify and assess the complex interests that may be jeopardized if the crisis develops. Such a review may also result in a timely redefinition or clarification of existing commitments, identifying and separating issues that are peripheral and negotiable from those that are central.
10. Review, update, and rehearse existing contingency plans. Improvise new policy options tailored to the emerging crisis, taking into account potential actions of other states with interests at stake.
11. Initiate formal negotiations, efforts at conciliation, or mediation. On many occasions, for example, the UN secretary-general's office responds to early warning by sending out fact-finding missions or by extending "good offices."
The preceding list of response options characterizes in general terms the types of responses available to decision makers and is intended for illustrative purposes. More specific options must be identified in policy planning tailored to the type of situation and problem that is envisaged by the warning. Obviously, different types of incipient crises will require identification of different response options.\(^{31}\)

This brief list should not obscure the implied steps that each measure entails. For example, using military demonstrations to underscore one's seriousness of purpose must be balanced against the desire to control the level of engagement (and avoid a "slippery slope").

So much of this list seems like straightforward policymaking. What we mean to emphasize, however, is the need for an explicit effort to map various responses to anticipated developments—before those developments occur—and to associate particular response options more closely with foreseeable cues.\(^{32}\)

**Missed Opportunities**

Those who call attention to failures to take timely, appropriate actions in response to early warning of an emerging crisis often refer to them as missed opportunities. The clear implication is that it might well have been possible to avoid or limit the development of a major crisis—whether a violent ethnic or religious conflict, a humanitarian catastrophe, or a gross human rights violation—if only the international community or an external actor had intervened.

A word of caution may be in order. "Missed opportunities" implies that the "misses" constitute important policy failures of various kinds. Indeed, it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid the analytic conclusion that such "failures" contributed measurably to a worsened situation on the ground. This assumption, that a crisis situation is the measure against which policy decisions and their aftermath are judged, may contribute to analytic clarity, but it fails to represent adequately all of the factors that constrain policy decisions—especially in times of crisis. Indeed, as we have tried to illustrate, factors unrelated to the crisis situation (domestic elections, credibility and other strategic concerns, or other international problems) can affect a decision maker's receptivity to warning more than the circumstances causing the alarm—even when warning is "loud and clear." Moreover, these other factors are frequently perceived by decision makers not only to be legitimate to take into account, they are often seen as more legitimate considerations than circumstances on the ground. Indeed, decision makers most closely associated with many of these so-called missed opportunities resulting in policy "failures" often strongly resist that indictment, arguing instead that their action (or wise restraint) was in the best interest of the public that they serve. Thus, even as the following discussion focuses on the crisis situation as the main measure of the effectiveness of actions taken (or not), we recognize the tensions that exist within the full context of these situations.

The assertion that a missed opportunity occurred is an example of counterfactual reasoning, a practice that is very frequently resorted to in everyday life as well as in serious analysis of historical outcomes. However widespread and indeed indispensable, counterfactual analysis is recognized to be a very weak,
problematic method. This is not the occasion to discuss recent efforts by scholars to identify requirements for more disciplined uses of counterfactual reasoning. Suffice it to say that statements that missed opportunities occurred in cases of failure of preventive diplomacy must be evaluated carefully to distinguish highly plausible from implausible or barely plausible claims. Efforts to do so are necessary not merely to improve historical analysis of cases in which preventive diplomacy was not attempted or was ineffectual; more rigorous counterfactual analysis is necessary also to draw correct lessons from such failures.

A useful start in this direction can be made by distinguishing different types of missed opportunities. The following is a provisional (though no doubt incomplete) listing:

1. Cases in which there was no response to warning by policymakers, who either ignored the warning or regarded it as insufficiently reliable, too equivocal, or uncertain (example: Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait)
2. Cases of inadequate analysis of ample warning indicators and thus an inaccurate forecast of what was to occur (examples: the 1979 Iranian revolution; the North Korean attack on South Korea in June 1950)
3. Cases of inadequate response to warning, either too slow or too weak (examples: slow international response to the developing crisis in Somalia; slow, graduated sanctions against Serbia)
4. Cases of misused opportunity involving responses of a misconceived, harmful, inappropriate character (example: European Union recognition of Croatia without securing a prior guarantee of the rights and interests of its substantial Serbian minority)
5. Cases of inconsistent responses (example: in the unfolding crisis in Yugoslavia, European countries often acting at cross-purposes, such as in 1991 when they tried to serve as mediator between Serbia and Croatia while pushing international recognition of Croatia and the imposition of sanctions on Serbia)
6. Cases of incomplete response to a complex crisis (example: Somalia, where the international community undertook to deliver humanitarian assistance but refused to engage in peace enforcement efforts)
7. Cases of contradictory responses (example: efforts by some states to install peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh being undermined by other states opposed to such a move)

In addition to some such typology of different categories of possible missed opportunities, we need, as noted earlier, some way of assessing the merits of claims that there was indeed a missed opportunity to avoid a particular disaster that followed. Counterfactuals are a way of rewriting history (exploring the possibility of an alternative outcome) by conducting a mental experiment—i.e., "if only this rather than that had been done, the outcome would have been quite different." Some counterfactual assertions are more plausible than others. Those of us who believe in the necessity for timely responses to early warning may inadvertently
exaggerate the plausibility of a missed opportunity in cases that developed into major conflicts or severe humanitarian catastrophes.

Several suggestions can be made for assessing the plausibility of assertions of a missed opportunity. A basic distinction needs to be made between two connotations of the word opportunity. One use of the term implies that a significantly better/good outcome would surely have been achieved if it were not for ..., or if only this rather than that had been done. A weaker connotation of the term opportunity is that a better outcome was possible; it might have been achieved if ... A still weaker connotation states merely that a better outcome was possible but without indicating what might have been done to secure it. In making assertions of a missed opportunity, and of course, in evaluating such claims, it is important to keep this distinction in mind. Frequently, critics who identify a missed opportunity blur this distinction.

Admittedly, it is often difficult to judge the degree of confidence that can be ascribed to what appears to have been a missed opportunity. Practitioners who engage in efforts at preventive diplomacy may well regard these distinctions as an academic exercise. It must be recognized that those who engage in preventive actions often do so without demanding of themselves that they be able to predict outcomes with high confidence; they make what they regard to be appropriate efforts and use what leverage they have to influence the course of events. They reason that when the stakes are high, one must make efforts to influence the course of events even when prospects of success are highly uncertain. It is only human to believe that adverse outcomes might have been avoided or moderated, if only ...

Such explanations for what may be dubious claims on behalf of a particular missed opportunity leave us with the task of developing reasonable ways of evaluating them. To construct a good counterfactual analysis of a missed opportunity one needs to start with a good explanation of the actual outcome of the case at hand. This step is important, obviously, because the counterfactual changes what is thought to be the critical variable(s) that presumably accounted for the historical outcome. If one has an erroneous/unsatisfactory explanation for it, then the counterfactual analysis that argues that a better outcome was possible, "if only ...," is likely to be flawed. Both the historical explanation and the counterfactually derived alternative to it are likely to be more correct or plausible if they are supported by relevant generalizations (and theory).

In formulating hypothetical missed opportunities and in evaluating them, at least two questions need to be addressed: First, was the alternative action possible at the time and known to be possible, or was it something that one sees only in retrospect? If the latter, then the claim of a missed opportunity is weakened since it rests on the argument that alternative action could have and should have been seen at the time. Missed opportunities that rest too heavily on hindsight carry less plausibility, but, of course, such claims should not be dismissed if one wants to draw useful lessons from such experiences. An after-the-fact identification of an action or strategy not known or considered at the time can still be useful in drawing lessons.
Missed opportunities differ, too, depending on whether the alternative is a simple, circumscribed action or whether it is a sequence of actions over time. In the latter case, counterfactual reasoning involves a long, complex chain of causation involving many variables and conditions, all of which would have to fall into place at the right time for the missed opportunity to be realized. The plausibility of a missed opportunity is enhanced, in contrast, when the chain of causation is shorter and less complicated. A missed opportunity is obviously less plausible when it rests on the belief or expectation that a different set of actions could have occurred over time and overcome a series of obstacles, thereby achieving a successful outcome.

The second question: Was there at least one or a few decisive turning points? Those who take a “path-dependent” view of history point to the importance of “branching points” in a developing situation. At such points, once events start down a certain path, all possible future outcomes are not equally probable. If an analyst who asserts that there was a missed opportunity does not provide a plausible scenario of how the outcome would have been more favorable, then it is not yet a strong candidate for a plausible missed opportunity.

Those of us interested in assessing possible missed opportunities more rigorously may find it useful, if not indeed necessary, to keep such distinctions in mind. At the same time, we believe that the difficulties of assessing missed opportunities should not discourage us from efforts to do so. It is not that we are interested in rewriting history per se. Rather, careful study of possible missed opportunities is necessary if we are to learn from experience.34

Conclusion

In this chapter we have argued that policymakers must cultivate an integrated strategy that develops potential responses with anticipated warnings. The need to do so will only increase as publics increasingly expect their governments to do something about crises that they surely see coming. We believe that it has become implausible for Western governments to claim that they “didn’t know” that something on a scale of Bosnia or Rwanda could happen. Similarly, claims that “nothing could be done” ring hollow when coming from such advanced, wealthy states. These states cannot prevent every conflict, but they would do well to strengthen their ability to act responsibly and in a timely manner.