

---

**PREVENTING  
VIOLENT  
CONFLICTS**



**PREVENTING**  

---

**VIOLENT**  

---

**CONFLICTS**  

---

A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy

**MICHAEL S. LUND**



**UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE PRESS**  
Washington, D.C.

The views expressed in this book are those of the author alone. They do not necessarily reflect views of the United States Institute of Peace.

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE  
1200 17th Street NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036-3011

©1996 by the Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace. All rights reserved.

First published 1996  
Fourth printing 2001

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Lund, Michael S., 1941-

Preventing violent conflicts: a strategy for preventive diplomacy /  
Michael Lund.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-878379-52-6 (pbk.)

1. Diplomatic negotiations in international disputes. 2. Pacific settlement of international disputes. 3. Conflict management. I. Title.

JX4473.L86 1996

327.1'7—dc20

96-4786

CIP

Dedicated to my father,  
Malcolm Gerhardt Lund,  
1913–1995



---

# CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b> by Richard H. Solomon	<b>ix</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>1 Between Idea and Policy</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Concept, Tools, and Targets</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>3 Lessons from Experience</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>4 Policymaking and Implementation</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>5 Organizing a Preventive Regime</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Appendix A: A Preventive Diplomacy Toolbox</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Appendix B: Bibliographical Essay</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>213</b>



---

## FOREWORD

### CAN WE ACT TO PREVENT VIOLENT INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS? AND SHOULD WE?

**H**opeful declarations in the early 1990s that the Cold War's end would make possible a "new world order" have, to widespread disappointment and concern, been disproved by new and persisting patterns of international conflict. While great power confrontations have eased, international stability has in fact eroded since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. Not only have long-running regional conflicts persisted, as in Korea, Angola, and Afghanistan, but substantial bloodshed and chaos have erupted in such places as Somalia, Rwanda, Chechnya, and the former Yugoslavia.

#### THE COSTS OF INACTION

In countries far from the fields of battle, these conflicts of the post-Cold War world are seen by many observers as posing little harm to their own nation's interests, and there is significant public resistance to taking on the costs and burdens of international peacekeeping to maintain stability. Yet, undeniably, the endurance of violent conflicts in many regions of the world has widening impacts and accumulating costs. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost in Bosnia and Rwanda, and millions of displaced persons are swelling the ranks of the world's refugees. The price tag for a growing number

of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance missions has increased dramatically. Scarce funds for stimulating economic development are being diverted into short-term relief operations and costly reconstruction efforts. A less tangible, but no less real, cost has been the erosion of political support for collective security operations. The impact of Somalia and Bosnia has been to discredit the idea that international cooperation can help solve common problems, and limited funding and political opposition have damaged the stature of the United Nations and other international bodies.

For the United States, while many of today's conflicts may not directly threaten our national security, they do disrupt trade and investment, gnaw at our sense of responsibility to prevent human suffering, undermine fledgling democracies, and strain our partnerships with key countries. Uncertainties about whether, and how, to respond to these conflicts have accentuated rancor in our domestic debate about America's role in world affairs and fueled efforts to reduce appropriations for a U.S. presence abroad. They have threatened the bipartisan political consensus that traditionally has supported U.S. foreign policy and world leadership in pursuit of our national interests abroad. Even though both the Bush and Clinton administrations can legitimately claim successes in peacekeeping operations in the Middle East and Gulf, and in matters of nuclear nonproliferation and fair trade, such achievements of high diplomacy have been overshadowed in the public mind by the practical difficulties and costs associated with responding to violence and turmoil in the former Yugoslavia and a number of African countries.

## **THE SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS**

Recognizing the costs of inaction and the political uncertainties associated with American interventions in such regional and local conflicts, the Policy Planning Staff of the Department of State in 1993 asked the United States Institute of Peace to assess prospects for a policy of "preventive diplomacy." The presumption of such an approach was that relatively modest political or economic interventions in pre-violent conflict situations would prevent disputes from getting out of control and subsequently becoming more disruptive as well as more costly and difficult to resolve.

A prime stimulus for this high level of interest in conflict prevention was the call for preventive diplomacy issued by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 report, *Agenda for Peace*. Other world leaders echoed the secretary-general's call, including Presidents Bush and Clinton, Russian president Boris Yeltsin, and leaders from Britain, France, and Germany. "Preventive diplomacy" was discussed in the UN General Assembly and in a variety of international conferences, multilateral organizations began exploring new conflict prevention mechanisms, the U.S. and other governments launched preventive initiatives, and nongovernmental organizations initiated research and action projects on the same theme. Perhaps not since the founding of the United Nations was so much international attention focused explicitly on how to prevent *future* conflicts from developing as opposed to alleviating *current* crises.

In this context, the Institute of Peace, under the leadership of Michael Lund, assembled an eminent group of diplomats, policy analysts, and representatives of nongovernmental humanitarian assistance organizations with firsthand experience in international operations to explore whether and how the United States could most effectively conduct a strategy of early warning and preventive action, unilaterally or multilaterally. The assessments and proposals of this study group, which met on four occasions in late 1993 and early 1994, were woven by Dr. Lund into a draft report, which was widely circulated among interested policymakers, practitioners in conflict resolution and development assistance, and scholars of international affairs and foreign policy.

Largely in response to the Rwanda crisis of spring 1994, the subject of conflict prevention acquired even higher priority on the foreign policy agenda of the U.S. government. With the Lund draft report being one of the few studies available on this relatively new subject, *Preventing Violent Conflicts* was used in international seminars, media discussions, training sessions for international professionals, and university classrooms to shape exploration of the topic.

## **OUTLINING A PRACTICAL STRATEGY**

Despite the recent currency of the concept of preventive diplomacy, the operational meaning of the term has not been easy to specify.

While some advocates contend that preventive action should come into play only in cases of imminent or even hot war, others insist that it is no less relevant to humanitarian disasters or instances of political repression. Still others believe that it should address such issues as overpopulation and poverty. Likewise, issues of *who* should act preventively, and *how* and *when* they should do so, have also been subjects of disagreement. Reflecting this diversity of opinion, the very name given to the idea varies widely, with terms such as "preventive diplomacy," "preventive action," and "crisis prevention" vying for acceptance.

As Michael Lund remarks in his introduction, "A less ambiguous, more precise definition is needed if the heightened interest in preventing conflicts is to produce any policy guidance and a meaningful assessment made of its promise and limitations." *Preventing Violent Conflicts* goes a considerable distance toward meeting such a need. This book is the most comprehensive, in-depth, and balanced analysis to date of the present practice and future potential of preventive diplomacy. It not only provides a workable definition but also develops useful lessons from concrete cases of recent preventive efforts, addresses the operational and organizational issues entailed in applying preventive diplomacy, and outlines a systematic international strategy for proactive initiatives. The book also seeks to provoke further discussion among those who may know something of the idea but have yet to wrestle with the concrete implications of an interventionist policy as a guide to applied diplomacy.

## **CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL PREVENTIVE ACTION**

Michael Lund reminds us that the notion of preventing conflicts is not new, at least not in its essentials. History, especially that of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, offers many examples of proposals and even practical achievements in discouraging the use of armed force as a means of dealing with international disputes. Even since the end of the Cold War, various methods and forms of preventive action have been applied with varying measures of success in dealing with previolent conflict situations in Macedonia, the Baltic states, Ukraine, the Korean peninsula, and the South China Sea. Lund

argues therefore that the central issue is not so much *whether* preventive diplomacy can work, but rather *under what conditions can it be effective*.

Not all conflicts can be prevented from escalating into violence, especially when highly organized parties are bent on provoking crises or projecting armed force. But the author seeks to show that well-timed, carefully measured, and appropriately tailored political interventions by a range of third parties—including governments, multilateral bodies, and nongovernmental organizations—in many instances have defused rising tensions and enabled the disputants to resolve their disagreements peacefully. In so acting, third parties have served their own interests as well as those of the contending states or factions.

*Preventing Violent Conflicts* is published at a time of growing debate in the United States over the country's post-Cold War international role. Public discussion has yet to generate specific policy alternatives to either of two unsatisfactory options: indifference toward all international conflicts, or dangerous and costly interventions into already inflamed hot spots. This book explores a third alternative: U.S. support for multilateral action, using proven measures to anticipate and respond to potentially explosive conflicts, before they erupt into unmanageable violence. In an era when resources for international programs of all kinds are in sharp decline, such an approach offers a cost-effective way to protect U.S. interests abroad, save lives, sustain American international leadership, and preserve our values in a world still ridden by conflict.

Richard H. Solomon, President  
United States Institute of Peace



---

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**L**ike a river, this book flows from many streams. The members of the United States Institute of Peace's Study Group on Preventive Diplomacy first marked out key issues and facets of this subject and provided insightful leads. Chapters 3 and 4 draw heavily from the stimulating presentations of Luigi Einaudi, Robert Frowick, James Goodby, Brandon Grove, Mohamed Sahnoun, and William Zartman.

Samuel Lewis suggested the study group and has provided continuing inspiration and support for this work. I benefited greatly from the detailed comments and suggestions on earlier drafts provided by the following individuals: Howard Adelman, David Biggs, Lincoln Bloomfield, Douglas Bond, Kevin Clements, Hank Cohen, Jurgen Dedring, George DiAngelo, Don Gross, Fen Hampson, Bruce Jentlesen, Donald Krumm, David Little, Jack Maresca, Connie Peck, Don Rothchild, David Shorr, Louis Sohn, Astri Suhrke, and Saadia Touval. Alex George gave feedback and much more in furthering my pursuit of this subject.

Susan Allen's initial research assistance helped get the Preventive Diplomacy initiative off to a good start. Special mention should be made of Craig Kauffman, whose painstaking chronologies provided much case-study data, and whose willing help, insights, and enthusiasm were key to the project's research and outreach success. I also thank the hundreds of participants in the training sessions, seminars, delegations, conference panels, and classroom discussions of the past two years, whose curiosity and good questions about this new subject made it exciting to be an explorer. Many others in the network of staffers in U.S. and international agencies and NGOs who are

becoming engaged in the subject provided much useful information and insight in many conversations.

Two people especially helped expedite the rewriting of the manuscript. Nigel Quinney's wordsmithing smoothed and brightened my initial prose, and his patience undertaking other tasks far beyond an editor's role greatly expedited the book's production. Harriet Hentges combined professionalism and warmth in her oversight of the process. I will greatly miss the interest and camaraderie of Pamela Aall, Eileen Babbitt, Ken Jensen, Joe Klaitz, David Little, Lewis Rasmussen, Tim Sisk, David Smock, and Mark Soley.

Finally, I thank my wife, Judith Bailey, my daughter Ingrid, and my son Peter, who cleared the way for a summer writing marathon and cheered me on.