

The Greater Middle East Studies Center

*A Crisis or Conflict
Prevention Center
for the Middle East*

Richard E. Darilek

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Richard E. Darilek

*Prepared for the
United States Institute of Peace*

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The Greater Middle East Studies Center at RAND undertakes integrated multidisciplinary studies of the underlying socioeconomic and political issues in the Middle East and adjacent areas of North Africa, Central Asia, and Southwest Asia. These studies propose a series of practical strategies and approaches to achieve the goals of material well-being, political development, and respect for human rights that are the prerequisites for regional stability and enduring peace.

FOREWORD

During the cold war, RAND contributed substantially to the expanding body of research and analysis directed toward political-military crises: their origins, subsequent development, management, and occasional escalation into conflict, as well as their deescalation in the interests of maintaining stability and preserving peace. The focus on crisis or conflict prevention in this volume grows out of that well-established tradition in RAND work. The volume not only draws upon some of the former studies, where appropriate, but it also extends the boundaries of previous RAND research efforts. In the past, the focus on crisis or conflict prevention possibilities was largely confined to cold war, East-West issues in Europe. This volume broadens that focus to encompass another regional application, namely, the Middle East and its Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the process, the author presents a rich menu of possibilities ranging from potential objectives that regional participants might seek via new crisis or conflict prevention facilities, on the one hand, to particular features of the various facilities, on the other. Throughout the volume, the author places his emphasis on the variety of possibilities available, as well as on the need for regional participants to make choices among them. Rather than prescribing those choices or predicting their likelihood, he constructs a framework for analysis of crisis or conflict prevention in the Middle East and identifies specific alternatives to be considered. The emphasis throughout, therefore, is really on what regional participants "can" do, as opposed to what they "should" or even "might" choose.

Because of the focus on crisis and conflict prevention, this volume contributes directly to the RAND research tradition noted above, reaffirms its existence, and seeks to demonstrate its utility in the post-cold war era. Given the particular focus on the Middle East, the volume marks a further phase in the continuing development of that tradition.

Zalmay Khalilzad
Director of the Greater
Middle East Studies Center

PREFACE

From the outset, the goal of this study has been to produce a conceptual framework for thinking about the issue of crisis or conflict prevention in the Middle East; to enrich that framework with sufficient detail to make first-order analytical assessments possible; to indicate, among a rich variety of possibilities, what types of crisis or conflict prevention “center” might be likely candidates for the Middle East; and to help policy planners decide whether any such “center” would be both desirable and feasible and, thus, worthy of further development. Although these original objectives have remained intact, the pursuit of them in this case has evolved substantially over time.

This study grew out of the interest in exploring its subject matter expressed by participants in the Middle East Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) at their meeting in Moscow during the fall of 1992. As cochair with Russia of these talks, the United States government volunteered to address the subject at the next ACRS meeting, which was scheduled to take place in Washington during the spring of 1993. Representatives of the U.S. government asked the author to make a presentation on the subject at that meeting.

The result was a short paper circulated in advance, as well as a presentation by the author on May 18, 1993, to participants at the ACRS meeting in Washington. Following that meeting, the author engaged in several other interchanges with interested parties from the region and conducted additional research on the subject of crisis or conflict prevention in the Middle East. Findings from both the earlier effort

for the ACRS talks and the more recent research have been incorporated in this report.

This document, therefore, represents the final product of an extended project on crisis or conflict prevention in the Middle East. Support from both the United States Institute of Peace and the Greater Middle East Studies Center (GMESC) at RAND made the project possible. The United States Institute of Peace supplied a timely grant. GMESC contributed its own in-house research funds to the effort. At RAND, the project fell under a broad program of work on international security issues administered by the National Security Research Division.

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SUMMARY

A recurrent theme in the multilateral talks on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) for the Middle East has been the suggestion by participants in the talks that some form of crisis or conflict prevention center might help to assuage Arab-Israeli conflicts of interest in the region. This study employs the term “crisis prevention center” to identify the basic concept at issue, but the phrase should also be understood to imply other possible formulations of the issue as well—in particular, conflict or war prevention, in addition to crisis prevention, and designated mechanisms or arrangements, instead of a geographically located center.

At bottom, the general problem being addressed by these various formulations is prevention, and the particular question they seek to answer or define, in abbreviated fashion, is “prevention of what?” A less encapsulated, more discursive response to this question than simply the terms “crisis” or “conflict” might go as follows: the escalation of differences and disagreements into potentially violent conflicts of interest, up to and including all-out war—this is what needs to be prevented in the Middle East.

Another, equally valid definition of the question might cast the purpose of any prevention efforts in positive rather than negative terms—by asking, for example, what such efforts should seek to achieve, rather than what they should try to avoid. An alternative way of formulating the same goals would be to speak positively of increasing mutual understanding, building confidence, and promoting peace.

One way to bring all of these various objectives together into a unified or integrated concept is to organize and present them in the form of a spectrum or continuum, which is bounded by peace, on one hand, and war, on the other, with a crisis as the midpoint between the two bounding conditions. Such a spectrum of potential real-world developments, as well as policy objectives involved in dealing with them, is depicted in Figure S.1.

CANDIDATE OBJECTIVES

As Figure S.1 indicates, any crisis can be viewed as a kind of waystation on the spectrum of developments between peace and war. Potentially, the chain of developments can move in either direction along this spectrum. One direction involves efforts to build or otherwise promote peace. The failure or absence of such efforts can help produce a crisis, especially in circumstances involving serious disagreements and the potential for hostile relationships, as in the Middle East.

If the issue of prevention is framed, as in this study, in terms of a crisis prevention center for the Middle East, then a set of objectives specifically formulated to address that issue can also be postulated and located in relationship to other objectives and developments portrayed along the spectrum. In Figure S.2, several such objectives have been hypothesized and located below the line, toward the center of the spectrum. For ease of identification, they are grouped

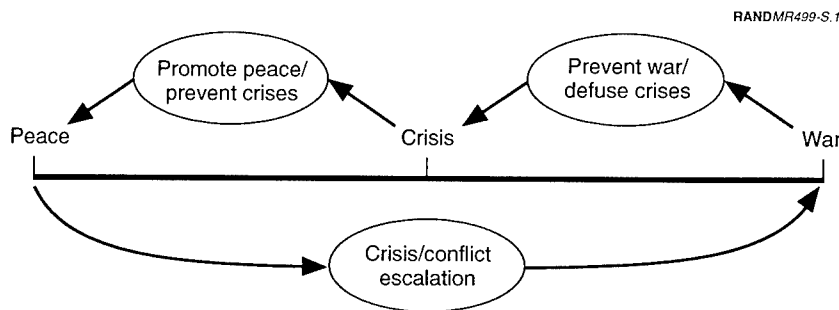


Figure S.1—Spectrum of Developments Between Peace and War

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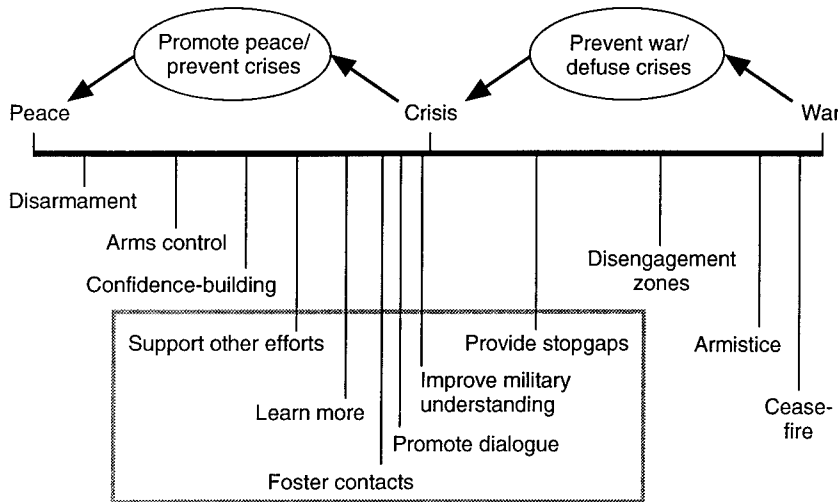


Figure S.2—Spectrum of Potential Developments and Objectives

together beneath the spectrum and boxed by a shaded line. A few other specific objectives have been indicated below the spectrum to provide a richer context for understanding where and how the crisis prevention objectives fit into a broader universe of potential objectives.

The particular set of crisis prevention objectives presented below the line in Figure S.2 should be viewed as representative or suggestive—not definitive. In the end, it is up to the various parties in the region to define specific objectives for any crisis prevention center in the Middle East.

HISTORICAL APPROACHES

The notion of a geographic “center” or gathering place is only one among several possible approaches to where and how such crisis prevention objectives as the foregoing might be pursued.

Regional Geographic Centers

A current, highly visible precedent for thinking about crisis prevention in terms of a place is the Conflict Prevention Center (CPC). The CPC was established at the beginning of this decade in Vienna, Austria, by the members of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—since renamed the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Apart from the United Nations on a global scale, there is probably no better example of regional conflict prevention envisaged as a physically discrete center than the CPC in Europe.

Dedicated Communications Facilities

Other historical precedents and approaches are available for learning about how conflict prevention has been and might be pursued. Some of these derive from the cold war crises experienced by the United States and the Soviet Union. The Washington-Moscow “hotline,” which was established during the 1960s in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, serves as a classic example of crisis prevention via dedicated facilities—primarily facilities for immediate and direct intergovernmental communications.

Multilateral variants of the direct communications approach to crisis prevention have also been agreed upon for Europe and North America in the Vienna Document of 1990.

Pre-Agreed Procedures

Yet a third approach to crisis prevention involves neither an established place nor dedicated facilities. Instead, this approach relies on procedures formulated, negotiated, and agreed upon in advance—referred to here as “pre-agreed procedures.” Such procedures can be completely independent of particular places or facilities. In the 1970s, for example, the United States and the Soviet Union reached procedural agreements aimed at reducing or preventing the risk of war, particularly nuclear war, between them. Both parties also agreed upon a general code of conduct toward each other and toward third parties to help avoid or, failing that, to deal with nuclear confrontations.

There is a fourth historical approach to crisis prevention that should be noted in passing. Such an approach would resemble a collage of different elements, some of them drawn from the procedural, others from the communicative, and even some from the locational—Panmunjom in the demilitarized zone on the Korean peninsula springs to mind—approaches discussed above.

THE POSSIBILITIES

In the spirit of making better-informed decisionmaking possible, this study concludes by suggesting how well, or ill, the range of crisis prevention objectives shown in Figure S.2 might be served by the different historical approaches to crisis prevention just described. The ultimate answer may be that some mixture of all three basic approaches is to be preferred. To reach that conclusion, however, one needs to develop a better-informed sense of how much each approach might contribute individually to meeting the various objectives. This study helps develop such a feel for the different approaches.

For the three main historically based approaches to crisis prevention, the study summarizes the possibilities as follows: The approach based on a geographic center would appear, on balance, to serve objectives on the “peace” side of the spectrum in Figures S.1 and S.2 more fully than any objectives on the “war” side of that spectrum. Conversely, the approach based on dedicated communications facilities would seem to address crisis management and conflict prevention objectives more directly than the crisis prevention and peace-building objectives situated to the left of the crisis point on the spectrum. The approach based on pre-agreed procedures could conceivably meet all of the various objectives specified in this study, but if regional participants harbor initial aversions to arms control, the full potential of this approach may not be achievable in the near term.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to extend special thanks to Paul Bracken of Yale University and Alexander George of Stanford University for their separate reviews of this study at an earlier stage. The current document has benefited immensely from their careful questioning, constructive criticism, and positive encouragement. I also wish to thank Fred Axelgard of the U.S. Department of State and Jonathan Pollack of RAND for their help and support in making possible the project that produced this document. Finally, I want to express my appreciation to the United States Institute of Peace for playing a crucial role in supporting the project through its various stages of development.

INTRODUCTION

In conjunction with higher-profile bilateral negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the parallel multilateral talks on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) help further the Middle East peace process launched in Madrid in October 1991. Since the Madrid conference, one issue that has aroused recurrent interest during the ACRS talks is the question of whether some form of crisis or conflict prevention center might help to assuage Arab-Israeli conflicts of interest in the region. This study addresses that issue.

The words “crisis” and “center,” however, are not the only terms that could be employed to identify the issue. Other descriptive labels—such as “conflict prevention,” which derives from Europe’s institutional experience in this regard and addresses approximately the same phenomenon, or “conflict avoidance,” or “avoidance of war”—could also be used to define the basic prevention objective. Similarly, words like “mechanism” or “arrangements” leap to mind as equivalent formulations or acceptable substitutes for the notion of a prevention “center.”

Some analysts have suggested that attempts at managing crises and preventing conflicts in the Middle East are difficult enough; trying to prevent crises may be virtually impossible.¹ Hence, use of the term “crisis prevention” here—much less the notion of a crisis prevention center—could be wrong-headed, since it invites acceptance, or at

¹See the chapters on the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 through 1973 by Janice Gross Stein and Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov in Alexander L. George (ed.), *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 126–159 and 304–367.

least encourages the spread, of a confusing and potentially erroneous concept.

This study defines a crisis in terms of decisionmaking that not only takes place in a relatively short, intense period of time but also marks a potential turning point: either toward war or in the direction of peace.² It follows from this definition that such decisions are susceptible to being influenced; depending upon the kind of influence exerted, the possibility exists that an incipient crisis could be prevented. The analysis that follows, therefore, will continue to employ “crisis prevention” as a basic—though not the only—concept and term for encapsulating in a single phrase the issue under consideration here.

In defense of this usage, one can argue that the term “crisis prevention center” is especially appropriate for the Middle East because the region is unique. As such, it requires terms and concepts that help to differentiate its particular problems and challenges from those of other regions. Distances and timelines, for example, are often incredibly short in the Middle East. At its maximum depth, the Golan Heights territory currently occupied by Israel is only 25 kilometers across, and Damascus, Syria’s capital, is less than 50 kilometers away from the eastern edge of that Israeli-occupied zone. The movement of military forces across such distances can be measured in hours and minutes (not months and weeks) for ground forces and in minutes and seconds (not weeks and days) for air forces.

Similarly, Amman, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv form a strategic triangle that measures less than 100 kilometers on any side, the longest of which (Amman-Tel Aviv) would take military forces only a few quarters of an hour by ground, or minutes by air, to traverse. Given such a lack of strategic depth and warning time, one can argue, something approximating crisis prevention simply must be pursued in conjunction with Arab-Israeli peace talks in the Middle East. By the time

²This particular definition of a crisis derives from a suggestion by Professor Paul Bracken of Yale University; in the course of reviewing an earlier draft of this study, he recommended that some such “working” definition of a crisis be made explicit and included here to help clarify the differences between crisis prevention and more generic conflict prevention.

crisis management or conflict prevention are involved, the argument would hold, it may already be too late to prevent the outbreak of war.

Furthermore, the notion of “preventive diplomacy” has recently experienced a renaissance in this era of post-cold war international relations. The United Nations Security Council discussed it at its Summit Meeting in January 1992; Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Gali raised it in his June 1992 report to the U.N. on “An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping”; the U.S. Congress mandated a response to that report, which President George Bush submitted in January 1993; and the current U.S. Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, discussed the concept in some detail at his confirmation hearings. “We must have a new diplomacy that can anticipate and prevent crises,” Christopher said, and he continued:

I would very much like to be known as someone who is involved in preventive diplomacy. Crisis management, of course, is important, and I’m sure there will have to be a lot of crisis management. But I’d very much like to be a crisis preventer.³

The term “crisis prevention center,” therefore, will occasionally be employed below on its own—without alternatives or qualifiers. If nothing else, it will be used for the sake of convenience. The term serves as a kind of shorthand, a quick and efficient way of referring to the basic concept at issue. Nevertheless, unless otherwise specified, the phrase should also be understood to imply other possible formulations of the issue as well—in particular, conflict/war avoidance mechanisms or arrangements.

At bottom, of course, the general problem being addressed by these various formulations is prevention, and the particular question they seek to answer or define, in abbreviated fashion, is “prevention of what?” A less encapsulated, more discursive answer to this question might take the following form: the escalation of differences and dis-

³Warren Christopher, as quoted in Mark M. Lowenthal, *Preventive Diplomacy: Prospects and Issues* (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, March 25, 1993), p. 3. This report also contains summaries and excerpts of the U.N. and Bush administration reports on preventive diplomacy.

agreements into potentially violent conflicts of interest, up to and including all-out war—this is what needs to be prevented in the Middle East. Another, equally valid definition of the question might cast the purpose of any prevention efforts in positive rather than negative terms—by asking what such efforts should seek to achieve, for example, rather than what they should try to avoid.

Both of these expanded formulations of the problem suggest a somewhat more elaborate conception of the basic issues and objectives at hand. Avoidance of crises, conflicts, or wars is certainly one way of expressing the purposes to be served by developing a crisis prevention center for the Middle East. An alternative, almost reciprocal way of formulating the same goals is to speak positively of increasing mutual understanding, building confidence, and promoting peace. One way to bring all of these various objectives together into a more unified or integrated concept is to organize and present them in the form of a spectrum or continuum, which is bounded by peace, on one hand, and war, on the other, with a crisis as the midpoint between these two polar conditions.

In Chapter Two, a proposed spectrum of potential events and objectives appears twice in diagrammatic form. These schematic figures are accompanied in the text by identification and exploration of a particular range of objectives that any form of crisis prevention center (or mechanism, or arrangements, etc.) might be expected to serve. Chapter Three examines various forms of, or approaches to, crisis prevention that have been drawn from recent—i.e., post-World War II—history. In Chapter Four, these various historical approaches are assessed in terms of the particular objectives explored in Chapter Two. The net result furnishes a preliminary indication of which approaches to crisis prevention seem more likely than others to help achieve particular kinds of objectives. The concluding chapter pulls these specific insights together into several more general observations on the potential contribution of crisis or conflict prevention centers to the Middle East peace process as a whole.

CANDIDATE OBJECTIVES

Clearly, the overarching objective of any crisis or conflict prevention center should be to help prevent crises or conflicts. But it should be equally clear that, with few exceptions, there are various stages in the development of a potential crisis. Although some crises seem to spring onto the scene with little or no advance warning, as the Cuban missile crisis did in 1962, even these crises can often be traced to a change in circumstances or a breakdown of efforts or conditions that tend, in the absence of extraordinary developments, to maintain the status quo. As a general rule, the status quo consists of those pre-crisis conditions that have characterized particular international relationships for some time.

For better or worse, the preservation of the status quo or restoration of the status quo *ante*, sometimes couched in terms of a need to maintain “stability,” is often associated with the objective of preventing a crisis or conflict. It is important to note, however, that crisis or conflict prevention is not necessarily synonymous with the objective of preserving a particular status quo or maintaining stability in that sense. True stability usually requires mechanisms for addressing legitimate, as well as illegitimate or controversial, demands for change in the status quo by one side or another. Neither the overarching prevention objective, therefore, nor that of preserving stability per se should be interpreted as a bar against making necessary changes. A dissatisfied party might even create a crisis deliberately—to force serious discussion or negotiation of its demands for change.¹

¹I am indebted here to Alexander L. George, whose comments on an earlier draft of this study called attention to the “catalytic” function of some crises and the need to

Some sort of center for crisis or conflict prevention could conceivably help address such demands. It could provide a forum or venue for guaranteeing the placement of calls for change on equal footing with claims for preserving the status quo. It could supply an ongoing mechanism for underwriting the written promise that regional agendas will always be open to additional issues and further negotiations. As a result, a center directed toward the objective of crisis or conflict prevention could conceivably obviate the need for a deliberately provoked crisis.

Furthermore, as noted above, any crisis can also be viewed as a kind of way station on a continuum or spectrum of developments. Some of these developments involve efforts to build or otherwise promote peace. The failure or absence of such efforts can help produce a crisis, especially in circumstances involving serious disagreements and the potential for hostile relationships. An inability to manage or control a crisis that has already broken out, notwithstanding any efforts to prevent it, can produce yet another set of developments. The crisis can escalate. One result of this course of development can be an increasingly tense, even violent, conflict of interests, including the possibility of outright war.

Figure 2.1 graphically portrays this notion of crisis development—and, ultimately, crisis prevention—as a somewhat notional but nonetheless distinctive midpoint in a continuous chain or spectrum of potential developments. This spectrum is depicted as the horizontal line in Figure 2.1. It is important to note that, potentially, the chain of developments can move in either direction along this spectrum. When people speak of preventive diplomacy (and, as noted above, they have begun to do so increasingly), they are seeking ways to prevent developments that move away from the “peace” side of the spectrum and migrate in the direction of a crisis or war.

Such developments can also be viewed in terms of more specific kinds of crisis or conflict prevention objectives, which point in the opposite direction—i.e., away from war or crisis and toward the

make clear that the “prevention” objective of any potential center should not be regarded as coterminous with preserving the status quo in all respects.

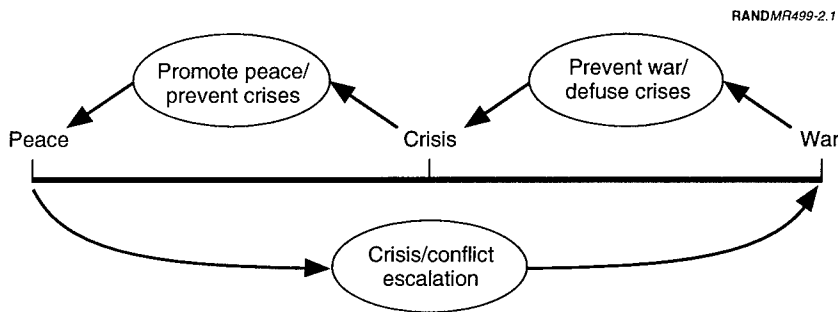


Figure 2.1—Spectrum of Developments Between Peace and War

“peace” side of the spectrum. These objectives can be envisaged as overarching goals that would appear to be worth pursuing throughout particular segments of the spectrum—depending, of course, on where real-world events have placed developments along that spectrum at any given time. At the extremes, for example, the objectives might be to promote peace and to prevent war. At various points in between, representative objectives could include preventing crises from escalating toward war, defusing an incipient crisis, peacefully resolving issues that have precipitated the crisis, and constructively addressing existing or potential conflicts of interest.

In current parlance, activities in pursuit of the goals or objectives just mentioned might be labeled crisis or war diplomacy when they take place on the “war” side of the spectrum, and normal diplomacy when they occur on the other side of this continuum in closer proximity to “peace.”² Figure 2.1 represents these various crisis or conflict prevention objectives and diplomatic efforts, as well as the direction in which they seek to influence and move developments (i.e., in general, away from war and toward peace), in the form of overarching goals that hover directly above the horizontal line depicting the spectrum of potential developments.

²These formulations come from an unpublished discussion paper by Bruce W. Jentleson and Michael Lund, “Preventive Diplomacy: An Idea in Search of a Strategy” (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, Preventive Diplomacy Study Group Meeting, November 17, 1993), pp. 7–10.

The portrayal of both the spectrum and these objectives in Figure 2.1 simply represents a convenient and, hopefully, an intuitively acceptable way of relating the issue of crisis/conflict prevention to the broader context in which it must ultimately play out. Beyond that, however, there is another purpose to be served by introducing this concept of a spectrum and related objectives. If the issue of prevention is framed, as here, in terms of a crisis prevention center for the Middle East, then a set of objectives specifically formulated to address that issue can also be postulated and located in relationship to other objectives and developments along the spectrum.

In Figure 2.2, several such objectives have been hypothesized and located underneath the horizontal line, toward the center of the spectrum. For ease of identification, they are grouped together below the spectrum and boxed by a shaded line. A few other specific objectives have been indicated beneath the spectrum as well—to provide a richer context for understanding where and how the crisis prevention objectives fit into a broader universe of potential objectives.

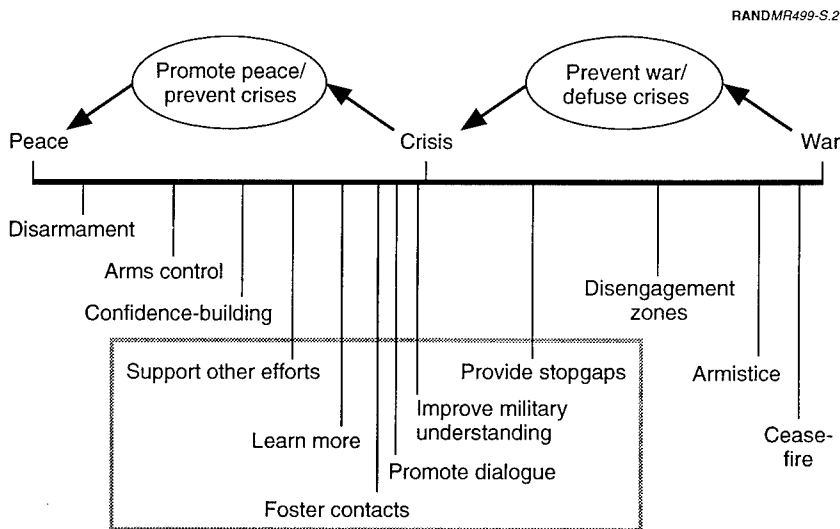


Figure 2.2—Spectrum of Potential Developments and Objectives

The more specific prevention objectives identified in Figure 2.2, or other objectives like them, attempt to define the issue of crisis prevention, in the Middle East or elsewhere, in fairly distinctive terms. The very notion of a crisis prevention center seems to cry out for further specification of the kinds of objectives any such center should be designed to pursue. In reality, however, it is hard to find much more than a few general objectives (e.g., to promote peace, to prevent war) identified in connection with current notions of a crisis prevention center for the Middle East.

The next step to be taken toward such a center is to begin envisioning and, perhaps, designing one or more prototypes. This requires aspiring architects to start thinking about and facing up to the many difficult problems that a transition from general concepts to more specific details can entail. These difficulties are to be expected when developing anything new and different, and this study is neither oblivious nor immune to them. Nevertheless, it is time to get more specific, without yet being definitive. That is what this study now attempts to do, recognizing that readers may not agree with the more specific objectives postulated here for a crisis prevention center but trusting that they will agree on the need to begin raising such details.

To talk more specifically about a prevention center in or for the Middle East, efforts should be made to elaborate on the objectives identified in Figure 2.2. That figure, which at first appears to be a horizontal variant of the vertical escalation/deescalation "ladder" so popular in cold war studies of nuclear war and peace, establishes conceptual and even temporal relationships along its "spectrum" between a set of crisis prevention objectives and other objectives, as well as between these objectives and potential developments such as a crisis or a war. How best to know what a center might do, or how it might look, than to understand, more precisely, what it is for? Clearly, further exploration and definition of the more purposeful kinds of objectives (such as the six indicated in the box below the horizontal line representing the spectrum) should help frame and guide any "center-building" efforts.

Before proceeding down the path to further specification of objectives, however, one caution (at least) is in order. The particular set of specific objectives identified below the line in Figure 2.2 should be viewed only as representative or suggestive—not definitive—of the

need for such objectives. In the end, it is up to the various parties in the region to define specific objectives and, ultimately, to decide whether any center for crisis prevention in the Middle East is in their interests. If so, it is likewise up to the participants themselves to determine what kind of center makes the most sense for their region, which Middle East countries should participate in any center arrangements (all the Arab parties in addition to Israel, or some subset?), and whether one type of center would suit all the various participants or several types might simultaneously serve different groups.

As far as this study is concerned, any new center for crisis or conflict prevention in the Middle East would neither appear nor function as an autonomous actor in the region but, rather, as an organic creation of the particular participants. Extraregional participants might facilitate this creation, but they would not engender it.

What follows below, therefore, is a necessary but not a sufficient attempt to flesh out in greater detail the representative set of crisis prevention objectives presented above. This set is clearly a limited one, however, and even the added detail supplied here can only be considered illustrative of what should ultimately be provided, on a broader basis, by regional participants themselves.

PROVIDING A "STOPGAP" IN EMERGENCIES

One objective of any crisis prevention center would almost certainly be to cope, more effectively than would otherwise be the case, with extraordinary developments that create or threaten to fuel a crisis. An already established center (or mechanisms, or arrangements) that could deal effectively with such developments as they arise might help prevent their escalating into a fuller-blown crisis. Thus, the center might function as a court of last resort or "stopgap," nipping potential crises in the bud through last-minute arrangements cobbled together via the center's good offices and applied to the threatening conditions immediately at hand.

The actual application of such ad hoc arrangements might take place either at one geographic center or elsewhere (e.g., in national capitals). As far as the potential objective itself is concerned, the critical point is to provide some sort of assurance, in advance, that steps will

be taken in emergencies to forestall the escalation of an incipient crisis. Where or how those steps might be taken constitutes the means, not the end, being pursued.

Any center or other mechanisms devoted primarily to serving the objective of stopgap, ad hoc prevention would line up relatively near the center (i.e., the crisis point) of the spectrum in Figures 2.1 and 2.2. Other potential objectives of a crisis prevention center, however, might tend to be distributed more toward the peace side of the spectrum, where—far from being identical with that bounding condition—their collective purpose would be to address pre-crisis conditions early in any chain of developments.

SUPPORTING ARMS CONTROL AND OTHER PEACE-BUILDING EFFORTS

Crisis prevention should be understood not simply as last-minute avoidance of immediate pressures to create a crisis but also as a longer-term effort whose ultimate goal would be to avoid such pressure-cooker situations entirely. The objectives of a crisis prevention center in this context might be to help establish and maintain the longer-term conditions that would render the outbreak of any crisis increasingly less likely. In other words, the objectives of any center (or mechanism, or arrangements) should also be geared, in one way or another, toward actively promoting peace.

At first glance, it might appear that this last formulation of potential objectives for a crisis prevention center in the Middle East would be tantamount to negotiating and implementing a peace treaty for the region. If that were to happen, of course, it would provide a tremendous boost for crisis prevention in the Middle East, with or without a center. Short of this ideal case, however, and between it and the opposite extreme of stopgap conflict prevention, as discussed above, there is a range of other potential “crisis-preventing” or “peace-building” objectives that could be served by some form of crisis prevention center.

As one moves away from peace and toward the crisis point on the continuum in Figure 2.2—i.e., in the general direction of the stopgap objective—the first objective specifically devoted to prevention that one might encounter could involve a center (or mechanism, or ar-

rangements) whose basic purpose would be to help promote arms control and other peace-building efforts. Such a center might pursue this objective by sponsoring, or otherwise making it possible to conduct, unofficial or official exchanges on arms control, disarmament, and other peace-building issues, without itself serving as the forum for negotiation of these issues.

In the absence of any centers, the role that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) currently play in crisis and conflict prevention tends to support peace-building, as well as other neighboring objectives in Figure 2.2. In the process, of course, NGOs typically operate more or less independently of governments. Moreover, some NGOs, like the Red Cross, also have to cope with the consequences of a failure to meet prevention objectives—e.g., with conflicts that have already broken out. A Middle East center could conceivably serve to bring NGOs and regional participants, including governments, closer together on a regular basis and to intensify their working relationships. The new forum or venue might also help improve the quality, as well as increase the quantity, of exchanges among this heterogeneous group of participants, thus promoting peace-building objectives in the broadest sense.

One form such exchanges could take would involve a wide variety of information sharing: from coordination on a humanitarian basis for naval search and rescue efforts on the one hand, to environmental incidents on the other; to urgent alerts of major military accidents or rogue terrorist operations; to implementation of confidence-building measures (CBMs) involving data exchanges, notification of planned military activities, or invitation of observers to those activities; and, ultimately, to the processing of information exchanges arising from and required by the terms of an arms control agreement or peace treaty.

Whatever its particular form and functions, any center's primary objective in this context remains clear. It would exist to promote arms control, disarmament, and other peace-building efforts, without necessarily serving as the venue for such efforts itself—i.e., the place where they might actually be negotiated or decided. In the course of promoting peace, however, the center would serve, at the same time, as a vehicle for helping to prevent crises and conflicts.

The multilateral ACRS process launched at the Madrid conference in 1991, for example, currently embodies this very objective, since it has served largely thus far as a vehicle for introduction and discussion of various disarmament and arms control proposals, while stopping short of becoming a forum for the negotiation of actual arms control agreements. Indeed, one forward-looking vision of ACRS would hold that its main task is to develop a robust menu of arms control possibilities. From that menu, the parties involved in the parallel bilateral talks initiated in Madrid between Arabs and Israelis can, in due course, choose specific arms control measures to negotiate in the context of their separate Middle East peace agreements.

Tension arises, however, when bilateral, state-to-state efforts or negotiations, on the one hand, overlap and compete with multilateral approaches to the same issues, on the other. The creation of a new multilateral center for crisis prevention might simply add to the numerous opportunities already available for increasing that tension. Even establishing new centers on a bilateral, state-to-state basis could have the same effect, particularly if this were to pit intrastate bureaucracies against each other over which tack to take in cases involving crisis or conflict prevention: whether to use the new center or employ more traditional diplomatic means. In the end, adding more tools to support arms control and peace-building efforts provides no guarantees of either more arms control or more peace.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT CRISIS PREVENTION PER SE

Moving back along the spectrum toward the crisis point in Figure 2.2, one might next encounter, as both a peace-building and a prevention objective, the desire to learn more about crisis prevention per se. In other words, one potential objective of a center devoted to crisis or conflict prevention would be to foster study, sponsor research, disseminate knowledge, conduct training, and support fieldwork. The purpose of such a center (or mechanism, or arrangements) would be to develop the field of crisis prevention, broadly defined, as a discipline.

Learning more about prevention by examining it studiously in an institutional setting does not guarantee, of course, that future crises or conflicts will be avoided. Failure to pursue this objective, however, could guarantee that the dynamics of prevention in the Middle

East—i.e., which approaches promise to work better than others, which ones bode ill, and why—will never be well understood. One form that pursuit of this objective could take in the Middle East might be the establishment of one or more institutes devoted to the study of crisis or conflict prevention in the region.

Such an institute could be set up by governments, it could be privately established and funded, or some mix of both approaches could be involved. More critical than the question of how it might be established, however, is the issue of who would participate in an institute of this type. Who is learning more about crisis prevention, in this case, is almost as important as what is being learned. An underlying objective of the institute, therefore, would be to bring Egyptian, Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese, and other regional scholars and policy analysts together to work on common problems in a collegial setting.

Arguments over who should or should not be included in this institute, which are probably inevitable, simply serve to demonstrate the need for such an all-inclusive center in the region. There needs to be at least one place, preferably within the Middle East itself, where—regardless of national origin—qualified individuals can come together, converse, study, and discourse on regional problems. That such a place does not exist already, and has to be invented, is itself one of the problems.

However it might come about, a center devoted to learning more about crisis prevention might be expected not only to improve knowledge and, therefore, the prospects of crisis prevention in the Middle East but also to help create a kind of common intellectual framework or culture for thinking about security issues in the region. Western Europe, and to some extent Eastern Europe as well, enjoyed such a common security culture during the cold war, thanks in no small measure to the various national and international institutes devoted to study and public examination of then-reigning East-West security issues. The Middle East might look forward to a similar experience if it were to follow a comparable, regionally based route to publicly oriented analysis and debate of security questions, including questions focused on crisis and conflict prevention.

As noted above, any initiatives undertaken in this regard—whether in the direction of fostering institutionalization or of promoting less formal mechanisms, scholarly networks, or arrangements that serve the same objective—could be launched through indigenous bilateral, via multilateral, or by way of third-party, channels. Two countries in the region could decide to pursue this “learning” objective and, thus, link their existing facilities together for that purpose, or they might jointly establish a new facility. The objective could be pursued multilaterally, with such fledgling fora as the ACRS talks themselves perhaps helping to foster establishment of a learning center or centers in the Middle East that would feature regionwide participation and focus. Alternatively, third parties such as the United Nations, the United States and Russia (as cochairs of the ACRS process), or private foundations might take the lead in promoting this particular prevention objective for the region.

FOSTERING DIRECT, PERSON-TO-PERSON CONTACTS

This and the last two potential objectives, which follow below, can be found grouped relatively close together in proximity to the crisis point in Figure 2.2. All three of these objectives represent specific variations on a general theme. The theme is that regular meetings or periodic talks between opponents are not only preferable to their waging war on each other but that such interchanges can actually help to prevent crises or conflicts. As the first variation on that theme, the potential objective now under discussion seeks direct personal contacts between and among adversaries, whether officially or unofficially, and implies that these contacts can be pursued separately, even independently, on their own merits.

In the Middle East, the importance of direct personal contact may be greater than in some other regions. Cultural differences play a role here. For example, the differences between Europe and the Middle East might suggest that relationships could stand or fall on the basis of person-to-person contacts in the Middle East, while in Europe, where other forms of contact (e.g., direct communication links) often substitute, direct personal contact is not quite as crucial. For the Middle East especially, pursuit of this particular objective may prove essential to achieving the expected peaceful benefits of a potential center for crisis prevention.

If direct personal contact is a prime objective, then a center might seek to accomplish this objective through periodic and regular, as opposed to ad hoc, familiarization meetings among opponents. Such meetings could include a variety of pre-crisis, nonemergency issues on the agenda. An emphasis on explaining (as opposed to attacking and defending) different perceptions of current security issues, force postures, or strategic or tactical military doctrines might be in order, as might similarly exploratory exchanges on future arms control possibilities.

Since long-standing adversaries may find it difficult to initiate the kinds of face-to-face encounters envisaged here, it might be necessary for third parties to take the lead in getting them started. At the outset, at least, third parties may even have to participate in any exchanges between or among the opposing parties.

Face-to-face encounters of personnel from opposing sides could involve high-level political-military or military-to-military seminars for ranking officials if such gatherings cannot be accommodated in a different context (e.g., in pursuit of one of the other objectives discussed below). In pursuit of this objective, opportunities for lower-echelon officials to participate in personnel exchanges could be provided via a crisis prevention center as well. On a more or less regular basis, they could be called upon to observe or inspect an opponent's military forces, exchange views on military strategies, and share perspectives on geopolitical issues.

PROMOTING AN ONGOING REGIONAL DIALOGUE

This objective differs from the preceding one by replacing the emphasis on direct personal exchanges with a focus on maintaining continuous dialogue, by whatever means. Such means might not include regular face-to-face meetings between opposing political and military establishments. Although it seems hard to conceive of a dialogue between or among adversaries without any personnel exchanges at all, it is possible to envisage an ongoing series of interchanges in which person-to-person elements play only a minimal or secondary role. Frequent communications via electronic media, for example, might serve as the mainstay for this form of dialogue.

The theory behind the objective of continuous dialogue is once again (as in the preceding objective) the notion that regular communication, through whatever means might be available, provides peaceful alternatives to fighting and helps prevent it. This is the logic, in its simplest form, that has undergirded the establishment of hotlines and other direct communications links between and among nations throughout the world. In this case as in others involving the Middle East, of course, third parties may have to play both an initiating and a supporting role. They might have to be called upon to help ensure that the objective of continuous regional dialogue is recognized, promoted, and maintained.

If it proves impossible for political reasons, therefore, to pursue a crisis prevention objective based on direct personal dialogue between or among representatives of opposing states, all is not yet lost. It may still be possible to launch and maintain a constructive dialogue, even in the absence of widespread face-to-face exchanges. Such a dialogue might be limited and, perhaps, far from ideal. Nevertheless, it would still be feasible, especially through the use of modern communications media in various forms; hence, the objective itself remains worthwhile.

IMPROVING MILITARY-TO-MILITARY UNDERSTANDING

Whether or not it proves possible to promote objectives aimed at improving face-to-face contacts or the communications dialogue between political-military adversaries in the Middle East, it may be possible and it is clearly worthwhile—independent of the other possibilities—to seek improvements in mutual understanding among opposing military establishments in the region. Such improvements could include two-sided and, even, multilateral efforts to promote greater understanding of one's own, as well as an adversary's, current military leadership, doctrine, force posture, deployments, and normal training/exercise practices.

These and other efforts at improvement might be pursued either through personnel exchanges, such as military-to-military seminars of the kind conducted periodically between current or former adver-

saries in Europe,³ or via communications networks likewise dedicated to the task. Examples of the latter include the hotlines that sometimes exist between opposing militaries, as they have before in the Middle East and currently do in South Asia (between the militaries of India and Pakistan), but they also encompass the risk reduction centers that Washington and Moscow have established (in national capitals) to help minimize and, hopefully, prevent the risk of unintended escalation in a crisis.⁴ As with other prevention objectives discussed above, this military-to-military objective might also require the good offices of third parties, drawn from outside the region, to help initiate the first steps toward improving mutual understanding between and among military establishments within the region and to orchestrate its continuing, salutary development.

SUMMARY

The foregoing set of six objectives in no way pretends to be exhaustive. Regional actors in the Middle East, moreover, might construct an entirely different list. As argued above, they alone should determine whether and what kind of center to have, as well as what they might call upon any center to do and what they might be reluctant to have it undertake. In the end, regional actors themselves must decide whether crisis or conflict prevention is worth the effort.

Nevertheless, the set of objectives presented above does attempt to be both illustrative and representative of the broad range of objectives that might be served by some form of crisis prevention center. To summarize at this stage—in succinct fashion and in ascending order, as one escalates from peace to crisis on the spectrum in Figure 2.2—one might say that the range of potential objectives encompasses, at a minimum, the following possibilities:

³For a discussion of some of these practices, see Kurt M. Campbell, "The Future of 'Military Diplomacy' in U.S.-Soviet Relations," in Alexander L. George (ed.), *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 519–543.

⁴See Fred Tanner, *Arms Control in Times of Conflict: A Contribution to Conflict Management in the Post-Cold War World* (College Park, MD: Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland, Project on Rethinking Arms Control Paper No. 7, October 1993), pp. 6–10.

- Supporting arms control and other peace-building efforts
- Learning more about crisis prevention per se
- Fostering direct, person-to-person contacts
- Promoting an ongoing regional dialogue
- Improving military-to-military understanding
- Providing a stopgap in emergencies.

HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO CRISIS PREVENTION

In the previous chapter, this study has referred without significant exception to the possibility of a crisis prevention “center.” That term connotes images of a specific place, at which parties interested in preventing crises might gather to pursue this interest. Before going any further, it should be reiterated that the notion of a geographic “center” or gathering place is only one among several models of where and how crisis prevention might be pursued. Considered from an historical perspective, in fact, a great variety of “center-like” activities have been conducted in the past without reference to a single geographic meeting point.

Some countries in the Middle East might have serious problems if a fixed geographic location or an all-inclusive institution were the only option available for crisis or conflict prevention. Israel, for example, might feel unacceptably outnumbered in such a place, particularly if its Arab counterparts controlled the agenda, procedures, and other operations of the center on the basis of majority rule. Fortunately, modalities other than a physical, institutional center are available to serve not only the crisis prevention function but also the potentially disparate requirements of interested parties. This chapter of the study reviews and categorizes the various historical alternatives.

REGIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CENTERS

There is, of course, a current, highly visible precedent for thinking about crisis prevention in terms of a place. The Conflict Prevention Center (CPC) was established at the beginning of this decade in Vienna, Austria, by the members of the Conference on Security and

Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—since renamed the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The CPC is clearly associated with a specific geographic location. It functions by convening meetings of resident representatives of the CSCE members in one place (although that place does not necessarily have to be Vienna), in accordance with procedures laid down in the Vienna Document of 1990.

Apart from the United Nations on a global scale, there is probably no better example of regional conflict prevention envisaged as a physically discrete center than the CPC in Europe. It maintains an institutionalized presence in Vienna, where it performs a variety of recurrent administrative functions related to arms control and military force data exchanges. When necessary, the CPC may also be convened at the request of any member state whose security concerns about an “unusual” or unscheduled military activity by another state have not been satisfactorily resolved through bilateral channels.

If one adopts a broader view of crisis and conflict prevention, however, as well as taking into account expanded notions of what a prevention center might be called upon to do (along lines discussed in conjunction with Figures 2.1 and 2.2), then one could argue that other regional centers, in addition to the CPC, already exist to serve the objectives of prevention. The International Institute for Strategic Studies in London (IISS) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) represent two such centers in Europe. Although these institutes exist outside of governments, have global as well as regional interests, and focus on *analyses* relevant to crisis and conflict prevention—among other issues—rather than on policy-making, they nevertheless provide relevant contemporary examples of attempts to address such issues seriously at one central location.

Both of these institutions, moreover, recruit both the analysts and the staff who work in them from a variety of different countries within the regions they serve. To the extent that prevention requires an analytic infrastructure, as well as international exposure to serious research and study, security policy centers such as the IISS and SIPRI serve as representatives of an historically valid approach to crisis or conflict prevention. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva may represent yet another example of the same approach. Although unlike the CPC in

many respects, these institutions do possess some of its ability to bring together, in a geographically identifiable place within the same region (i.e., Europe), a variety of national representatives. It seems appropriate to observe at this point that no similar institutions or historical approaches exist in and for the Middle East.

DEDICATED COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES

There are other historical precedents and approaches available for learning about how conflict prevention has been and might be pursued. Some of these derive from the cold war crises experienced by the United States and the Soviet Union. The Washington-Moscow "hotline," which was established during the 1960s in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis, serves as a classic example of crisis prevention via dedicated facilities—primarily facilities for immediate and direct intergovernmental communications. In addition to the original hotline, direct communications links were also established during the 1960s between Paris and Moscow and between London and Moscow. More recently (since 1972), India and Pakistan have maintained a hotline between their military establishments.¹

A 1984 RAND study argued that direct communications links offer several advantages:

The inherently permissive nature of communications links provides a flexible capability that could be useful in a wide range of circumstances. The use of modern, widely available communications technology would enable parties to exchange information and communicate intentions by rapidly exchanging verifiable evidence—a process that could lessen mistrust and apprehension . . .²

This study was undertaken in response to proposals in the early 1980s by two U.S. Senators, Sam Nunn and John Warner, for nuclear risk reductions centers to be manned simultaneously and continuously by both the United States and the Soviet Union. These pro-

¹See Tanner, p. 6.

²Dale M. Landi, Bruno W. Augenstein, Cullen M. Crain, W. R. Harris, B. Jenkins, *Improving the Means for Intergovernmental Communications in Crisis* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, R-3157-FF, June 1984), p. 2.

posals ultimately resulted in new agreements to add a facsimile transmission capability to the Washington-Moscow hotline, to upgrade capital-to-embassy links with high-data-rate communications systems on both sides, and to establish an additional direct communications link between Washington and Moscow pursuant to setting up nuclear risk reduction centers, staffed in Washington by American personnel and in Moscow by Russian personnel. In the context of their Sinai peace agreements, Egypt and Israel used military liaison officers from both sides at the same locations in the Sinai for analogous problem-solving and crisis-prevention communications.³

Multilateral variants of the direct communications approach to crisis prevention have now been agreed upon for Europe and North America in the Vienna Document of 1990. That agreement provides for a communications network with terminals in each of the CSCE/OSCE participants' capitals plus a terminal at the CPC in Vienna. The network is intended to facilitate the exchange of information, notifications, and messages required under the other confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) in the Vienna Document. Furthermore, members of the European Community have established their own diplomatic communications network; it relies on computer terminals for rapid transmission of large volumes of information.

PRE-AGREED PROCEDURES

Yet a third approach to crisis prevention involves neither an established place, as in the first approach, nor dedicated facilities, as in the second. Instead, this approach relies on procedures formulated, negotiated, and agreed upon in advance to prevent crises; it is referred to here as "pre-agreed procedures." These procedures can be completely independent of particular places or facilities.

In the 1970s, for example, the United States and the Soviet Union concluded agreements aimed directly at reducing or preventing the risk of war, particularly nuclear war, between them. The agreements included commitments to notify each other immediately in the event

³See Report of the Secretary-General, *Study on Defensive Security Concepts and Policies*, (United Nations General Assembly, A/47/394, September 22, 1992), pp. 58-59.

of any accidental, unauthorized, or unexplained incident involving possible detonation of a nuclear weapon, as well as of any planned missile launches beyond the territory of the launching party and in the direction of the other party. The two parties also agreed upon a general code of conduct toward each other and toward third countries to help avoid or, failing that, to deal with nuclear confrontations.⁴

At least as significant in this context is the agreement between Washington and Moscow in 1972 on a list of procedures—a fairly specific code of conduct—for their navies to follow in preventing incidents on and over the high seas.⁵ One of the most successful sets of procedures ever, given its highly effective track record over more than 20 years, this bilateral Incidents-at-Sea (INCSEA) agreement provides for

- steps to avoid collision
- noninterference in the “formations” of the other party
- avoiding maneuvers in areas of heavy sea traffic
- requiring surveillance ships to maintain a safe distance from the object of investigation so as to avoid “embarrassing or endangering the ships under surveillance”
- using accepted international signals when ships maneuver near one another
- refraining from simulating attacks at, launching objects toward, or illuminating the bridges of the other party’s ships
- informing vessels when submarines are exercising near them
- requiring aircraft commanders to use the greatest caution and prudence in approaching aircraft and ships of the other party

⁴See United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements: Texts and Histories of the Negotiations* (Washington, D.C., 1990), pp. 118–121 and 177–180.

⁵See *ibid.*, pp. 142–149.

- refraining from simulated attacks against aircraft or ships, performing aerobatics over ships, or dropping hazardous objects near them.⁶

As the last two bullets above serve to demonstrate, the INCSEA agreement does not simply apply to ships at sea but also to aircraft of the two parties. This aspect of the agreement, especially if it were to be applied to land-based aircraft of parties in the Middle East, could enhance the appeal of such a pre-agreed-procedures approach to potential crisis prevention or management problems in the region. If air as well as naval procedures were being addressed, this particular approach might pique the interest of participants in the current Middle East talks on arms control.

Furthermore, the INCSEA agreement

also provides for: (1) notice 3 to 5 days in advance, as a rule, of any projected actions that might “represent a danger to navigation or to aircraft in flight;” (2) information on incidents to be channeled through naval attaches assigned to the respective capitals; (3) and annual meetings to review the implementation of the Agreement.”⁷

The provisions for notification and information constitute particular types of pre-agreed procedures in their own right; as such, they will presumably be addressed in the course of the ACRS talks, which deal with confidence-building measures like these when they appear to be applicable on a regionwide basis.⁸

The provision for annual meetings to review implementation of INCSEA constitutes a pre-agreed procedure in itself. This is, moreover, the type of procedure that holds considerable promise in the context of helping to manage, and even helping to prevent, the development of a crisis. Other historical precedents exist for such pre-

⁶Ibid., p. 142.

⁷Ibid., p. 143.

⁸For more on the origins and execution of the Soviet-American INCSEA agreement, see Sean M. Lynn-Jones, “The Incidents at Sea Agreement,” in Alexander L. George, Philip J. Farley, and Alexander Dallin (eds.), *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation: Achievements, Failures, Lessons* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 482–509.

agreed, periodic review procedures. Like the INCSEA precedent, some of these have also established noteworthy track records of success in coping with real or potential crises.

The Standing Consultative Commission (SCC), for example, has played to some extent a crisis prevention role ever since Washington and Moscow first agreed on its establishment during the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) of the early 1970s.⁹ The Joint Compliance and Inspection Commission can be expected to perform the same function in conjunction with the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), as can similar procedural arrangements establishing the Joint Consultative Group for the multilateral treaty that dramatically reduced Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). In addition, the Dangerous Military Activities Agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union directed the formation of a joint military commission of senior officers from the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Soviet General Staff; the purpose of this joint, high-level commission was to serve as "a unique forum for both sides' militaries to examine issues raised specifically by the agreement or to explore other matters mutually deemed to fall in the realm of dangerous military activity."¹⁰

In addition, as pointed out in a paper circulated to participants at the May 1993 ACRS meeting in Washington by Canada, a variety of pre-agreed procedures currently exist in Europe among the signatories to the Vienna Document of 1992. These procedures, which aim at reducing risks in times of crisis, could be instituted on a bilateral as well as on a multilateral basis. They include agreements to take certain prescribed steps whenever a crisis threatens in Europe; these steps commit the signatories, in advance, to engage in

- timely consultations regarding unusual military activities
- cooperation as regards hazardous military incidents

⁹For more on the SCC, see Robert W. Buchheim and Philip J. Farley, "The U.S.-Soviet Standing Consultative Commission," in Alexander L. George, Philip J. Farley, and Alexander Dallin (eds.), *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation: Achievements, Failures, Lessons* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 254-269.

¹⁰See Campbell in George (ed.), 1991, p. 533.

- voluntarily hosting visits to dispel concerns over troubling military activities.¹¹

Clearly, a pre-agreed-procedures approach to crisis prevention and conflict resolution, in the broadest sense, could also draw upon regional experiences beyond those of the United States, Russia, and Europe. In particular, bilateral experiences with confidence-building measures in South Asia, of the kind that India and Pakistan have accumulated since their war over Kashmir in 1948–1949, would appear to involve the constructive use of established consultation mechanisms. These consist, for the most part, of specified procedures agreed upon in advance of, as well as in hopes of preventing, potential crises. For example, India and Pakistan reached an agreement in 1992 to prevent violations of the other side's airspace by military aircraft from their own side.¹²

Other states in various parts of the world have agreed to establish military disengagement zones in their respective regions and to follow pre-agreed procedures (specified "rules of the road," as it were) with respect to any military forces permitted within such zones. Bulgaria and Turkey, Peru and Ecuador, as well as Egypt and Israel provide current examples of states that have already agreed to such mutually constraining provisions in an effort to prevent future crises or conflicts from arising between them.¹³ In the Middle East itself, the various Sinai disengagement agreements between Egypt and Israel during the 1970s, followed by their peace treaty in the 1980s, as well as the current Israeli-Syrian disengagement zones on the Golan Heights, which have helped keep the peace there for 20 years, provide a wealth of evidence from within the region that pre-agreed pro-

¹¹Government of Canada, "The Confidence-Building Approach" (January 1993), a paper circulated by Canadian representatives at the May 18–20, 1993, meeting in Washington, D.C., of the Middle East Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security, p. 9.

¹²See Tanner, 1993, p. 6.

¹³See Ivo H. Daalder, *Cooperative Arms Control: A New Agenda for the Post-Cold War Era* (College Park, MD: Center for International Security Studies at Maryland, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland, CISSM Papers 1, October 1992), pp. 39–45.

cedures can and do contribute positively to both crisis and conflict prevention.¹⁴

It is tempting to posit a fourth historical approach to crisis prevention. This one would be characterized by on-the-spot improvisation, just as cease-fires arranged to halt conflicts and prevent further (post-conflict) crises from arising are often cobbled together from whatever tools are available. Such an approach would thus resemble a collage of different elements, some of them drawn from the procedural, others from the communicative, and even some from the locational—Panmunjom in the demilitarized zone on the Korean peninsula springs to mind—approaches discussed above. These various elements could be grouped together and identified as a distinct approach. The approach would be characterized, in part, by the lack of preparation or advance planning involved in putting it together.¹⁵

In repairing to this ad hoc approach, states would attempt to prevent crises by doing whatever it seemed useful to do whenever it seemed useful to do it. They might not spend much time worrying about the problem of crisis prevention until a crisis seemed imminent. Alternatively, they might employ a scattershot approach to the problem, but do so far in advance of any crisis. They could seek to prevent its appearance through some combination of elements drawn from the three other approaches, each of which seems most appropriate to or feasible in a particular time and place.

A mixed approach, after all, resembles the one that appears to have been taken historically by both the United States and the Soviet Union as they groped for ways to prevent crises during the cold war. Moreover, such an eclectic approach would appear to serve the needs of participants who may have particular problems, as noted earlier. If one or more participants were not ready to sign up for all

¹⁴For further details of the Sinai and Golan arrangements and procedures, see Itshak Lederman, *The Arab-Israeli Experience in Verification and Its Relevance to Conventional Arms Control in Europe*, (College Park, MD: Center for International Security Studies at Maryland, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland, Occasional Paper 2, 1989).

¹⁵For historical examples that, taken together, could be said to compose this fourth approach, see "Table 1: Arms Control Techniques and Conflict Termination, 1945–1993," in Tanner, 1993, pp. 20–21.

aspects of a comprehensive crisis prevention system—e.g., an institutional center, located in a geographically fixed place—they might still be able to participate in other parts of the system: certain pre-agreed procedures, for example, or a direct communications link. Not only some participants but even the center idea itself may have to adopt an eclectic approach in the Middle East. That approach might start with acceptance of a few limited, relatively noncontroversial aspects of a more comprehensive system and add other, more ambitious functions later on, in building-block fashion.

There is a difference, however, between an eclectic approach to crisis prevention and an improvisational one. The latter is clearly the product of circumstance and reaction. Whatever seems likely to work in a situation, which has already arisen, is key to the purely improvisational approach. With an eclectic approach—which, like the improvisational one, might include elements drawn from the three other, “main-line” approaches—time, thought, and decisionmaking *up front* should tend to produce much better informed, fewer spur-of-the-moment choices for how to go about preventing future crises or potential conflicts.

THE POSSIBILITIES

In the spirit of making better informed decisionmaking possible, it remains for this study to suggest how well, or ill, the range of crisis prevention objectives posited at the outset of the work might be served by the different approaches to crisis prevention just described. At a minimum, it is the first three historical approaches that are of interest here—i.e., the approaches based on regional geographic centers, on dedicated communications facilities, and on pre-agreed procedures. The ultimate answer may be that some mixture of all three approaches is to be preferred over any one of them alone. To reach that conclusion, however, one needs to develop a better informed sense of how much each approach might contribute individually—i.e., how far it can reasonably be expected to go—toward meeting the various objectives.

To repeat in succinct form, as well as in italics that are keyed to the identification of objectives in Figure 4.1, the six objectives employed here to represent the range or spectrum of possibilities are as follows:

- *Support arms control/ other peace-building efforts*
- *Learn more* about crisis prevention per se
- *Foster* direct, person-to-person *contacts*
- *Promote* an ongoing regional *dialogue*
- *Improve* military-to-military *understanding*
- *Provide stopgaps* in emergencies.

RANDMR499-4.1

Approaches	Objectives					
	Support other efforts	Learn more	Foster contacts	Promote dialogue	Improve military understanding	Provide stopgaps
Regional geographic centers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	?
Dedicated communications facilities	?	?	No	Yes	?	Yes
Pre-agreed procedures	Yes	Yes	?	?	Yes	Yes

Figure 4.1—Comparison of Approaches with Objectives

As Figure 4.1 suggests, the regional geographic center approach to crisis prevention may stand a good chance of meeting most of the six objectives considered here. A specified meeting place—a “center” in the classic sense—clearly provides opportunities for fostering direct, face-to-face contacts and more or less continuous dialogue between and among participants. Depending on the nature of any third-party involvement in such a center, however, these opportunities could be less robust than they might at first appear. If a third party were to play a strong intermediary role at a geographic center, a role that obviated the need for any of the other parties to deal directly with each other, the potential contribution of such a center toward meeting these two objectives could be reduced.

Furthermore, the judgments made about geographic centers in Figure 4.1 do not take into account the possibility that some Middle East actors may participate in such a center and some may not. Although an assumption has been made here that the judgments rendered above remain valid even if only two participants succeed in establishing a center for themselves, this may not be the case. The composition, type, agenda, procedures, and other rules of any center could exert an overriding effect that would alter these judgments. In

an ideal case, which would assume complete readiness on the part of all Middle East actors to participate in a comprehensive geographic center, the judgments might tend to fit and work best.

Regardless of the extent of regional or third-party involvement, the regional geographic center approach would seem to be able to improve mutual understanding of the military postures of all parties involved; to educate, as well as sponsor and disseminate research, about crisis prevention; and to support other peace-building efforts, such as arms control. In an emergency, however, it is not clear that a geographic center would provide much of a stopgap to the outbreak of a crisis or act as a brake on its escalation to conflict. If international pressures are mounting and a true political-military crisis seems to be in the offing, most parties involved may tend to draw inward. They might then start to rely primarily on other preventative mechanisms more closely connected to decisionmaking at home—e.g., ambassadors in capitals, even capitals of third parties.

Historical evidence suggests that participants probably will not want a center to play the key role, or even an important or substantive role, as a stopgap in emergencies. One reason the U.S. and the Soviet Union consistently opted during the cold war for improved communications facilities, as opposed to a single common center, was precisely because of concerns that, when the going got rough, any center would be bypassed in favor of direct communications and other bilateral links. Perhaps third-party involvement in a Middle East version of such a center would make a big difference in this regard, but there is precious little evidence to support that possibility.

For reasons just cited in the Soviet-American case, however, the dedicated facilities, or “communications,” approach would seem to be capable of providing a useful stopgap during an emergency, as Figure 4.1 suggests. Although it could not be expected to contribute directly to the improvement of face-to-face contacts, a dedicated communications facilities approach would tend to meet the objective of promoting an ongoing regional dialogue. This judgment would appear to be sustainable even if third parties were heavily involved in making any communications links possible.

Depending on the content of communications sent and received via direct links, an approach to crisis prevention based on dedicated

communications facilities might or might not be able to contribute to an increase in military understanding, to improvement of the knowledge base on crisis prevention, or to support of arms control and other peace-building efforts. If direct or indirect (i.e., third-party facilitated) military-to-military communications were established under this approach, it is possible that improvements in mutual understanding among opposing militaries could be well served. If, however, any communications facilities are confined to the political level alone, it seems unlikely that mutual *military* understanding will increase. Obviously, to have any effect on regional efforts in support of arms control, peace-building, or development of a knowledge base, an approach to crisis prevention based on dedicated communications facilities would have to include messages pertaining to these objectives in the continuous communications for which it provides.

The third approach, which is shown in Figure 4.1 and which focuses on pre-agreed procedures, might also be useful in providing stop-gaps to escalation as a crisis begins to unfold. If participants abide by or resort to the procedures in an emergency, this behavior itself may help dampen pressures to escalate into a crisis. To the extent that any of the procedures provide for face-to-face encounters—in particular, military-to-military contacts—or for continuous communications, the approach could serve the objectives of fostering direct contacts and improving military understanding as well.

Pre-agreed procedures might also contribute to building a crisis prevention knowledge base, although they would do so in retrospect more than in prospect. As the record of implementation of such procedures begins to accumulate and furnish its own historical data, this can be drawn upon for evidence of what might and might not work in crisis prevention. Similarly, pre-agreed procedures can provide examples and test cases for arms control and other peace-building efforts.

Some pre-agreed procedures (e.g., military disengagement zones) are really arms control measures themselves, arrived at perhaps by other means than formal negotiations and treaties. Precisely because they look and act like arms control, such measures may be difficult to adopt. In a regional climate characterized by crisis prevention objectives that tend to cluster more toward the “crisis” than the

“peace” side of the spectrum sketched above (in Figures 2.1 and 2.2), pre-agreed procedures that look like arms control measures might prove less desirable—hence, less likely to be established—than dedicated communications facilities.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

For the three main historically based approaches to crisis prevention developed in this study, their potential contributions to the various objectives postulated at the outset can be summarized as follows: The approach based on a regional geographic center would appear, on balance, to serve objectives on the “peace” side of the spectrum in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 more fully than any objectives on the “war” side of that spectrum. Conversely, the approach based on dedicated communications facilities would seem to address crisis management and conflict prevention objectives more directly than the crisis prevention and peace-building objectives situated to the left of the crisis point on the spectrum. The approach based on pre-agreed procedures could conceivably meet all the various objectives specified in this study; however, if regional participants harbor initial aversions to arms control, the full potential of this approach may not be achievable in the near term.

Clearly, some mixture or hybrid of approaches, based on objectives specified by regional participants, provides yet another—and possibly a more acceptable—alternative. If one participant views crisis prevention primarily as a way of maximizing the chances for peace and values that more than any other set of objectives, while another participant emphasizes preventing the escalation of a crisis that may already exist, they might be able to agree in the end on some combination of the historical approaches discussed above—for example, a new regional hybrid based on regional geographic centers and dedicated communications facilities.

If the approaches discussed above seem to address crisis prevention and peace-building objectives more thoroughly than they do crisis escalation/management possibilities, that could simply be a result of having failed to include more specific crisis management objectives—i.e., in addition to “providing stopgaps in emergencies”—in this study. Alternatively, a wealth of more specific objectives may not exist in this case, or the very notion of crisis prevention centers (or mechanisms, or arrangements) may be too limiting as a conceptual framework for drawing out, thinking about, and addressing such objectives.

As Alexander George has suggested, one way to sort out these different alternatives may be to view crisis management issues, on the one hand, more in terms of “strategies” like “coercive diplomacy” than in terms of centers, mechanisms, or arrangements.¹ On the other hand, as George has also argued, “*crisis prevention should be viewed as an objective, not as a strategy.*”² In the end, we may find centers, mechanisms, or arrangements better suited to preventing crises—and in that sense, preventing conflicts—than to managing crises already under way or preventing conflicts from arising out of such crises.

If so, this could impart a deeper meaning to the phrase “crisis or conflict prevention center,” as well as to the discussion that takes place early on in this study of whether the term “crisis” should even be included. The ultimate implication may be that any crisis or conflict prevention center for the Middle East should be focused first and foremost on preventing crises and thus, as a result, any potentially attendant conflicts. To establish such a center for, or direct it primarily toward, crisis management or conflict prevention after a crisis has already arisen could prove to be profoundly misguided.

As for this study as a whole, its main contributions flow from going through the exercise of specifying objectives, considering past approaches and precedents, and combining the two in ways that ap-

¹See Alexander L. George, “Strategies for Crisis Management,” in Alexander L. George (ed.), *Avoiding War*, 1991, pp. 377–394.

²Alexander L. George, “Crisis Prevention Reexamined,” in Alexander L. George (ed.), *Managing U.S.-Soviet Rivalry: Problems of Crisis Prevention* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), p. 369.

pear to work best. In the primary sense of the term, these contributions have been “exemplary”—as in “serving as a pattern” and “deserving imitation.”³ The exercise undertaken and presented here, in other words, should really be conducted by participants from the region who are actively engaged in the Middle East peace process. Encouraging interested parties from the Middle East to go through the process themselves, therefore, would seem to be a logical next step.

³See *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1983), p. 434.