



CHAPTER 4

PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY: Halting and Reversing Escalation

Who, in our interdependent world, can turn their back on people in other lands when press, radio, and television bring us the graphic reality of abuse, death, genocide, and senseless and destructive wars?

—Nelson Mandela

Confronted with credible evidence that genocidal acts or mass atrocities are being planned or, worse, about to commence, the United States should seek to halt and reverse further escalation as quickly as possible. The clear preference would be to accomplish this peacefully, without having to threaten or use military force, and in concert with partners, given the many benefits of collective action. Such efforts, furthermore, should ideally be directed at not only defusing the crisis, but also resolving its underlying causes so that the problem does not have to be revisited at a later date.

Based on an analysis of the recurring challenges that have impeded effective action in the past, and on an assessment of current readiness, the Genocide Prevention Task Force has identified a number of reforms, options, and strategies that can enhance the responsiveness and effectiveness of U.S. efforts to halt and reverse escalating threats of mass atrocities.

Major Challenges

Past U.S. efforts have been shaped and ultimately determined by a recurring set of interrelated factors.

Interests and priorities. Calculations of national interest are always going to influence U.S. actions. Moral and humanitarian concerns—even when these are rightly recognized as U.S. national interests—have often been overridden by other priorities. For example, when U.S. ambassador Henry Morgenthau warned of unfolding atrocities against Armenians in 1915, the United States was resolved to remain neutral in World War I and not to sever relations with the Ottoman Empire, and therefore refused to take strong action. Similarly, despite repeated and detailed diplomatic reporting of widespread atrocities by the Pakistani army in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971, the Nixon administration declined to condemn Pakistan publicly for fear that such action would compromise Pakistan’s assistance in improving relations with China—the primary diplomatic initiative at the time. Similar calculations about Cold War political dynamics appear to have influenced the tepid U.S. response to atrocities in Cambodia and Central America.

In contrast, when U.S. interests have been more clearly threatened, the level of engagement has increased. Concern about the impact of the Balkan conflict on the cohesion of the Western alliance and stability in southeastern Europe clearly motivated the United States to act more forcefully in Bosnia and later in Kosovo. Fear for the stability of a major Asian country (Indonesia) and the need to support a valued regional ally (Australia) also motivated U.S. action in East Timor in 1999. Even so, these cases all followed considerable vacillation and missed opportunities for early preventive action.

Policy choices and dilemmas. Generating the necessary will to act involves calculations of national interest—costs, risks, and benefits—as well as assessments of the likely effectiveness of the available policy choices. In the past, the belief that little or nothing could be done to halt or reverse an escalating crisis, short of full-scale military intervention, has fatally undermined political will. Conversely, when a range of viable options are clear to decision makers, the United States is more likely to respond, not

only in situations when traditional U.S. interests are directly involved, but also when this involvement is less clear.

Various factors influence the availability of policy choices. Time is one. In circumstances when genocide or mass atrocities occur at a rapid pace—what we might call “volcanic” genocide—certain options are clearly less relevant than others. Fact finding and observer missions, for example, are better suited for use in slowly evolving crises—what we might call “rolling” genocide. They can help establish facts, deter potential atrocities within a narrow area of observation, and set the stage for more aggressive actions if escalation continues—as the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission did in 1998–99. But these missions take time to organize and deploy, and generally lack the power to affect fundamental calculations of perpetrators, so they are rarely viable options in the face of rapidly escalating genocidal violence.

Much depends on the characteristics of the country at the center of the crisis. The geographical location, political character, and economic profile of the target country all determine which levers of influence—positive and negative—are available to the United States and likely to be effective at any given time. Geographically remote countries that are autocratically governed and have limited integration into the global economy are generally harder targets to influence through diplomatic and economic means. Whether there are other groups or communities in a particular country, or diaspora networks, that can be used to exert pressure is another key variable. Much depends on the relationship of the target country to its neighboring states as well as major powers. Russia’s and China’s respective relationships with Serbia and Sudan are recent examples of how a great power patron can complicate diplomacy.

Successful diplomacy has also typically rested on finding the right mix of coercive and cooperative inducements. Reconciling the inherent tensions is not easy and entails a variety of calculations. Will an offer of positive inducements to cease genocidal preparations alter behavior or will it signal weakness that emboldens further escalation? Will a threat of penalties including ultimately the use of military force weaken or harden the behavior of key actors within the target country? Will overt support to the threatened communities reduce their vulnerability or embolden them to

take actions that will only escalate the problem? As past crises illustrate, there is no simple formula to follow. Every situation requires a careful calibration of these concerns and options.

International support. The benefits of collective action are clear, but international support can be difficult to mobilize. Aside from calculations of national interest, the generally accepted principles of national sovereignty and nonintervention present formidable barriers. While the 1948 Genocide Convention and more recently the “responsibility to protect” provisions of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document provide the legitimate basis for overriding national sovereignty, neither has been formally invoked by a state for the purpose of preventive action. Mobilizing international institutions for timely responses in crisis situations is usually difficult and often frustrating as a consequence, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. Thus, rather than demonstrating international resolve, attempts at collective action have often ended up having the opposite effect.

Legal and budgetary concerns. U.S. crisis response in the past has sometimes been impeded by legal and budgetary issues. The former often involves domestic jurisdictional questions about the authority of the U.S. government to restrict, for example, private commerce and personal interactions with foreign entities. When the U.S. interests at stake are perceived to be less compelling, the budgetary implications of mounting a response have also repeatedly emerged as a source of contention within the U.S. government. Thus, discussions about jamming the radio transmitters broadcasting hate speech in Rwanda, offering helicopters to aid peacekeeping forces in Darfur, and providing transportation for diplomats engaged in the Kenyan mediation effort reportedly got tied up by the question of who would pay the bill.

Readiness to Meet the Challenge

An assessment of the current readiness of the United States to meet the challenge of halting and reversing genocidal violence reveals a mixed picture. The United States has unparalleled capacity to respond to and manage international crises by virtue of its worldwide intelligence collection network, highly developed technical capacities and procedures for rapid

intragovernmental communication and consultation, diplomatic presence around the world, influence in major international organizations, preeminent place in the global economic and financial system, and, last but not least, military power projection capabilities that are second to none.

Yet for all its organizational and material capacity, the United States does not appear well prepared to respond rapidly to the threat of genocide or mass atrocities. Judging from an assessment of the relevant decision-making structures, policy planning arrangements, tools and capacities, organizational culture, and the state of prior coordination with prospective international partners, there is significant room to improve U.S. responses in future circumstances.

Decision-making structures. The U.S. government's decision-making machinery to respond to heightened warning of genocide or mass atrocities can be activated in one of two ways—either in a top-down fashion at the request of the president and the national security advisor or through a bottom-up process that likely originates in the Department of State. The former may be precipitated by something that the president or national security advisor has heard or read in their daily intelligence briefings, from private discussions with foreign leaders and the heads of international organizations, or simply from media reports. Alternatively, diplomatic reporting through the State Department's regional bureaus or analysis by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research could provide the stimulus for bottom-up activation. The U.S. ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues, who heads the Office of War Crimes Issues and reports directly to the secretary of state on U.S. policy responses to atrocities worldwide, could also prompt high-level attention.

While the circumstances of a crisis may warrant an immediate meeting of the National Security Council (NSC), deliberations generally begin first in its Deputies Committee—the senior sub-Cabinet interagency policy forum. Their recommendations, or set of policy options if no consensus has been reached, are then forwarded for discussion to the Principals Committee made up of Cabinet-level officials and formally chaired by the president. In principle if not always in practice, presidential decision follows from their deliberations and recommendations. This mechanism for crisis management, however, has rarely been used to consider threats of genocide or mass atrocities.

Policy planning. Currently, no single office or interagency body in the U.S. government is responsible for thinking about or planning for how the United States might respond to warning of genocide or mass atrocities. The Atrocities Prevention Interagency Working Group, which functioned between 1998 and 2000, was not continued or replaced with an equivalent mechanism in the reorganization of the NSC that followed the change in administrations.

The NSC does not currently have any significant planning and coordinating responsibility for actions vis-à-vis genocidal crises. NSPD-44 assigned the secretary of state—and specifically the State Department Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS)—lead responsibility for coordinating policy and planning for the broader category of complex contingency operations, which might include crisis response to potential mass atrocities. S/CRS has suffered from funding shortfalls, a relatively weak standing within the State Department (to say nothing of the larger U.S. bureaucracy), and uncertainties about its long-term future. Its dominant priority has been to improve U.S. civilian capacity and civil-military coordination for post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction rather than crisis prevention and response. Preventing genocide or mass atrocities is not part of its formal mission.

Tools and capacities. The United States has a wide range of tools at its disposal to halt and reverse mass atrocities. Indeed its overall capacity is unparalleled by any other state and, in most cases, coalitions of states. Table 1 encapsulates the range of measures that are in principle available to the United States. The tools are organized according to their functional type and whether they are designed to affect behavior either cooperatively or coercively.

As Table 1 shows, the United States can employ a range of diplomatic tools to influence an unfolding situation, from supporting mediation efforts or negotiations to condemning parties, expelling diplomats, or supporting the suspension of membership in international bodies. In the economic realm, cooperative measures may include trade incentives or increased aid, while more coercive tools such as trade sanctions, embargoes or seizure of assets may also prove persuasive. Available legal measures cover a similar range from arbitration or offers of amnesty to support for domestic indictments

Table 1: Tools Available to the United States to Help Halt and Reverse Escalating Threats of Genocide and Mass Atrocities

TYPE	COOPERATIVE	COERCIVE
DIPLOMATIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue facilitation/mediation • Negotiation support/technical assistance • Fact finding/observer missions • Recognition, normalization, membership, favored status, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condemnation (unilateral, multilateral) • Naming/shaming • Recalling/expelling diplomats • Travel bans • Withdrawal of mission • Suspension/expulsion from international organizations, cultural/sporting boycotts
ECONOMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade incentives (tariff reductions, direct purchases, favored status, subsidies, import/export licenses, etc.) • Investment • Debt relief • Increased aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade sanctions • Divestment • Aid reduction or suspension • Comprehensive/selective embargoes • Seizure of assets of elites responsible for the killing
LEGAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact finding • Arbitration • Amnesty/immunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic indictments • Referral to international courts
MILITARY (OVERT/COVERT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military assistance/intelligence • Arms supply • Training • Security guarantees • Information operations • Safe havens/evacuation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal of military assistance, arms embargoes • Heightened presence • Jamming, information operations, sabotage, leadership targeting • No-fly zones, safe havens • Intervention

Source: Adapted from Aaron Griffiths and Catherine Barnes, “Incentives and sanctions in peace processes.” *Accord*, Issue No. 19 (London: Conciliation Resources, 2008), p. 13. Augmented with other materials.

or referral to international courts. Finally there is a wide spectrum of military options, which are explored in more detail in Chapter 5, and may include overt or covert measures. These tools may include cooperative measures such as military assistance, training, or security guarantees; or coercive measures, from heightened presence to sabotage to intervention.

By virtue of its intensive, day-to-day global diplomatic, economic, and military operations, the readiness of the U.S. government to use some of these instruments at short notice is quite high—though not necessarily in a

fully coordinated or strategic manner. Some diplomatic measures could be implemented relatively quickly. Economic and military measures will typically take longer to execute; however, since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States has become more adept at designing and implementing targeted sanctions. (See sidebar on page 69 for a discussion of sanctions as a tool for responding to a genocidal crisis.) As always, much will depend on the given situation and competing demands. For example, recent diplomatic efforts to help prevent major violence in Kenya, while successful, exposed several difficulties ranging from redirecting intelligence support and securing reliable diplomatic transportation to getting contingency funds released to finance the negotiations.

Organizational culture. Despite general recognition of the clear benefits of early preventive action over more costly remedial efforts, the default organizational culture within the U.S. government still favors the latter. This is reflected in the low priority given to strategic planning, contingency preparations, realistic exercising, and learning from the past. The principal exception is the Department of Defense and the U.S. armed forces, which put a premium on all these activities. USAID and particularly its crisis response and humanitarian relief components are also to be commended for their pre-crisis preparedness. But in the NSC and the State Department, the dominant mode of operation is reactive and therefore improvised. Neither organization has any established mechanism or places any requirement on its staff to analyze its operations after the fact. As a result, knowledge gained from past operational experiences is not systematically retained or incorporated into future plans.

The lack of dedicated attention to learning from the past is matched by a tendency not to look ahead to the future. While many departments in the executive branch have a nominal responsibility to conduct strategic planning, the reality is that most staff either play a marginal role in policy development or they are drawn too closely into supporting day-to-day operations. This has long been the situation at the NSC despite periodic efforts to improve its capacity to conduct strategic planning and coordination.

Partners. The combination of America's unsurpassed diplomatic representation around the world, its preeminent position of influence in most if not all major international organizations, and the support it gives directly or

indirectly to a large number of NGOs provides it with an immense capacity to forge productive partnerships for the purpose of preventing genocide. But the United States has not yet made a significant effort to engage prospective partners in planning for coordinated or collective action in such circumstances. In addition, the bulk of U.S. international capacity-building initiatives has been aimed at enhancing the peacekeeping rather than the conflict prevention capabilities of other organizations. For example, the United States helped block a 2008 proposal by the UN secretary general to strengthen the UN Department of Political Affairs' capacity for preventive diplomacy. Global capacity for preventive diplomacy and crisis management remains underdeveloped.

Responding to the Challenge

Much can be done to improve the readiness and capacity of the United States to respond to acute warning of genocide and mass atrocities. As indicated above, a clear commitment by the president to the prevention of mass violence is a necessary starting point to accomplishing this goal. Instituting the measures proposed in Chapters 2 and 3 to help identify states at risk, mitigate that risk through early structural prevention measures, and warn of dangerous developments in a timely fashion is obviously necessary too.

It is nevertheless prudent for the United States to assume that threats of genocide and mass atrocities may emerge in places not previously identified or that early preventive action may prove insufficient. Putting the United States in the best possible position to respond requires that it enhance its current preparedness in four mutually reinforcing areas: the structure and process of crisis response arrangements; the analytical support and range of strategic choices available to U.S. decision makers; operational readiness and capacity to implement preventive action decisions; and the design of policy and preventive strategies drawing on lessons from experience.

Crisis Response Structure and Process

Recommendation 4-1: The new high-level interagency committee—the Atrocities Prevention Committee—should meet every other month (and as needed at other times) to review the status of countries of concern and coordinate preventive action.

With the goal of connecting early warning to planning and response, a standing interagency committee, the APC, should be established, as discussed in Chapter 1. The task force believes that, unlike with the earlier Atrocities Prevention Interagency Working Group, the work of this body must be directed from the White House and co-chaired by a senior NSC official with direct links to the national security advisor and by extension the president. Co-chaired by the assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor, the APC would comprise at a minimum representatives from State, Defense (including the Joint Chiefs of Staff), the intelligence community, Justice, Treasury, and USAID, all at the level of assistant secretary. It would convene every other month to discuss the latest risk assessment and warning analysis, or at any other time one of its members requested an emergency meeting. In the latter circumstance, a member would have the option to seek the emergency meeting at the level of deputy national security advisor/deputy secretary, making it in effect a meeting of the NSC Deputies Committee.

The APC would review the status of countries of concern on the Atrocities Watchlist (AWL) (and the related Instability Watchlist) and coordinate preventive action by executive agencies, facilitating decision making at successively higher levels as necessary. Every other month, the APC would review implementation of previously agreed actions, their resulting impacts, and the current status of relevant situations. The work of this body would be supported and coordinated by a newly created NSC directorate for crisis prevention and response. This directorate would be appropriately staffed and resourced to direct and coordinate U.S. government action across a broad range of violent conflict, political instability, and humanitarian emergencies, not solely the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities. On these broader issues, the NSC directorate would work in close partnership with S/CRS.

In addition to policy planning and coordination, the directorate for crisis prevention and response would oversee the regular exercising of U.S. crisis

management structures and procedures, the rehearsal of specific operational plans before implementation, and the commissioning of “after action” reports to generate lessons learned. Provision should be made to ensure that the results of these studies be taken into account during future crises and, where relevant, incorporated into future policy planning. A permanent and accessible repository for these studies should be established and made available to succeeding administrations.

Decision Support and Planning

Recommendation 4-2: The Atrocities Prevention Committee, working with NSC staff, should prepare interagency genocide prevention and response plans for high-risk situations.

With more systematic planning, policy and political dilemmas can be reduced and managed in ways that increase the likelihood that the United States will respond in a timely and effective manner. This requires a dedicated effort to prepare and support the decision-making process in situations of heightened concern with timely and accurate information, tailored risk assessments, and, most important, the provision of a broad and flexible range of policy options to avoid politically difficult all-or-nothing choices.

The APC would task and coordinate the preparation of crisis prevention plans for countries identified as being of “moderate concern” on the AWL. These plans would encapsulate the available pre-crisis prevention initiatives (described in Chapter 3). For those countries deemed to have a high and rising level of risk, the APC would have the authority to request heightened intelligence surveillance and monitoring of case-specific indicators and warnings (described in Chapter 2). Simultaneously it would also initiate the preparation of a specific interagency crisis response plan, beginning with three assessments:

- 1) A detailed target country assessment by the intelligence community that identifies potential points of leverage and policy intervention. This assessment would provide basic political-military, economic, and demographic information; details about the senior leadership, their sources of support (domestic and foreign), internal opposition, and potential motivations to authorize or permit mass atrocities; details

Table 2: Illustrative Targeted Measures

Target Group	Crisis Escalation
DECISION MAKERS	Diplomatic pressure Mediation/negotiation/arbitration Political/economic incentives or threats Media campaign Legal threats Political/economic penalties
PERPETRATORS	Arms embargo Informational operations/media campaign Legal threats Military options (radio/cell jamming, no-fly zones, covert operations)
VICTIMS	Defense support (warning, covert training, or military assistance) Interpositional deployments/physical barriers Safe havens/evacuation routes Humanitarian relief/support
THIRD PARTIES	Diplomatic pressure Political/economic incentives or threats Media campaign Indirect/direct support

about the potential perpetrators, their motivations, command and control arrangements, and potential methods of mass killing; and finally, details on the identity, number, location, and vulnerability of the potential victims.

- 2) An atrocities estimate and impact assessment including, among other things, the potential scale of violence, the risk to U.S. citizens and property, the impact on the political stability of the country, the probable effect in terms of internal or external migration, the risk of intervention by neighboring states, and the likely political and economic consequences both regionally and globally if action is not taken.

3) A policy options assessment that draws on the target country analysis to lay out a range of potential U.S. responses matched to rising levels of crisis escalation. This assessment should be generated by a standard planning framework to speed the process but also ensure that a comprehensive review of all the options takes place. More specifically, this would tailor specific responses to the relevant target groups in latent or emerging genocidal situations: (a) those planning, authorizing, and fomenting genocide/mass atrocities (to affect their decision calculus); (b) those likely to carry out the genocide/mass atrocities (to reduce their operational effectiveness); (c) the potential victims (to improve their chances of survival); and (d) other relevant domestic and foreign actors (to persuade and mobilize them to play a positive role). Table 2 presents illustrative preventive measures relevant to these target groups at various stages of crisis escalation. On the basis of this analysis, different policy packages or “playbooks” would be developed that could be mixed and matched to respond to a variety of contingencies for different phases of a crisis.

The crisis response plan would draw on these assessments to create a detailed interagency operations plan that would define among other things: U.S. interests, objectives, desired end-state, lead agency responsibilities and tasks, potential international partners, lines of authority and coordination, sequencing, and necessary preparatory measures. The latter would cover a host of requirements: congressional liaison, diplomatic coordination, consultation with necessary legal authorities, funding, and media coordination. Provision should be made to rehearse the crisis response plan and subject it to “red team” review—that is, gaming in which a group is designated to play the role of the adversary—so long as this would not delay timely response. The plan would be presented for approval to the NSC Deputies Committee, and if necessary, the Principals Committee, and then briefed to key members of Congress and their staff.

We cannot anticipate exactly how many crisis prevention and crisis response plans the APC should be capable of completing each year. If the number of countries on the AWL in the “moderate” and “high and rising” risk categories proves unmanageably large, the APC would need to identify priorities based on factors beyond risk of genocide—for example, the extent of U.S. influence and potential impact on other U.S. inter-

ests. This scenario should also spur further efforts to improve the precision of risk assessment methods and reconsider the level of resources given to the APC.

Operational Readiness and Capacity

Recommendation 4-3: The secretary of state should enhance the capacity of the U.S. government to engage in urgent preventive diplomatic action to forestall emerging crises.

The best conceived plans can still be rendered ineffectual if the ability to execute them in a timely fashion is flawed. An important first step is to ensure that the necessary funds to support a crisis response operation can be released and disbursed rapidly. As discussed in Chapter 1, a special fund with flexibility for rapid allocation should be established for this purpose. The capacity of the United States to mount and support at short notice a special diplomatic initiative—whether for fact finding, diplomatic representation, or mediation—should be enhanced. This has already begun for stabilization and reconstruction duties with the creation of the State Department’s Civilian Response Corps, which currently consists of a small active response corps that can be deployed within forty-eight hours, plus a larger civilian reserve corps, with “standby” and “reserve” members. A comparable surge capacity for preventive diplomacy should be created not unlike that being developed by the United Nations with its Mediation Support Unit and associated standby team of experts. This could be achieved as an extension of the Civilian Response Corps, if its scope and mandate were widened, or as a separate initiative.

As it improves its own readiness to respond, the United States should also actively encourage others to do the same, at both the national and international level. Many of the initiatives discussed above are equally applicable for other parties. As described in Chapter 6, we recommend creating an international network to “internationalize” the work described above by including like-minded governments and even nongovernmental actors. In addition, the United States should help improve the capabilities of the fledgling UN effort to improve its support to conflict mediation efforts such as occurred in the Kenya crisis of 2007–08. Similar initiatives are also underway in other international organizations, notably the African Union.

Advance consultations with likely partners about the generic challenges to collective action would also be desirable.

Policy and Strategy Design

Beyond these structural and process-related recommendations to improve U.S. readiness, we can also offer some broad policy guidelines—recognizing, as indicated earlier, that there is no magic formula for preventive action. These guidelines should be considered in preparing crisis response plans.

Recommendation 4-4: Preventive diplomacy strategies should include the credible threat of coercive measures, should avoid an overly rigid “escalatory ladder,” and should not dismiss potential benefits of rewarding “bad people” for “good behavior.”

The credible threat of coercive measures, including ultimately the use of force, is widely seen as a necessary complement to successful preventive diplomacy. Certainly, these threats have to be carefully calibrated in ways that do not undermine the prospects of a peaceful solution or, worse, become self-fulfilling in provoking or accelerating the very outcome that the diplomacy was intended to avert. Unless they are truly credible, however, such threats should generally be avoided. Aggressive rhetoric matched with meager action—as has been the case in Darfur—sends a clear message of weakness to potential perpetrators and damages the credibility of the United States more broadly. Policymakers must seriously consider what they are willing to do to prevent or halt mass atrocities before making bold public statements.

In crafting preventive diplomatic strategies, care must be taken not to follow an overly rigid process or “escalatory ladder” with potential perpetrators. While a set of sequential steps is often necessary to gain international support and, moreover, demonstrate that peaceful alternatives have been exhausted to enhance the legitimacy of coercive ones, this approach can be exploited and “gamed” by adversaries to undermine the impact of diplomatic action. Stronger measures at earlier stages, though perhaps difficult to muster politically, often have a greater chance of success.

Guidelines for Imposing Sanctions

It is important not to overestimate what sanctions can achieve in the face of impending genocide. However, several guidelines increase the chance of their success:

- Eschew the common approach of successively imposing gradually harsher sanctions over a long period of time. The regime in question is unlikely to be deterred by minor, symbolic measures (usually the first step); sanctions generally only succeed when they really bite. In addition, once genocidal rumblings begin, there is rarely much time to spare.
- Maximize the impact of the sanctions quickly. This suggests the importance of gaining international cooperation, since in today's world, unilateral sanctions are unlikely to cause sufficient discomfort to the regime to sway its behavior. Widely supported multilateral sanctions also signal to the offending regime that no major international player will defend its action.
- Couple sanctions with other tools to achieve the desired effect. Sanctions are a tool, not a strategy—and the strategy to prevent imminent genocide should embody multiple tools aimed at collectively changing the calculation of the regime in question. The quick, united, and multifaceted approach adopted by the international community toward Kenya in early 2008 is a rare but excellent example of such an effective strategy.

Following all of these guidelines may not always be possible, particularly in compressed time frames. However, sanctions may still be worth pursuing as a means to catalyze international action.

It is important to note that the threat of sanctions is often more effective than their actual imposition. If policymakers are using multiple tools, the threat of sanctions can provide leverage. In the wake of the Asian economic crisis, for example, the mere threat to withhold loans and aid to Indonesia in 1999 badly shook Indonesia's currency and helped spur Jakarta to rein in the military in East Timor.

Similarly, although it is likely to be distasteful if not morally hazardous, policymakers should not dismiss the potential benefits of rewarding “bad people” for “good behavior” if it is likely to have the ultimate effect of preventing an outbreak of mass violence. Halting and reversing crisis escalation may require negotiating with—and even offering inducements to—unsavory people.

Recommendation 4-5: Preventive diplomacy strategies should engage international actors who have influence with potential perpetrators, be mindful of becoming hostage to peace negotiations related to a broader conflict, and maintain consistency in the messages conveyed.

Policymakers should seek to engage those in the international community who have influence with the perpetrators and leverage those relationships as part of the crisis response plan. Neighbors will generally share an interest in peace and stability and desire to prevent spillover effects of genocide and mass atrocities, and they will often have greater influence on the ground and with the regime in question than other external actors will. When genocidal regimes have prominent patrons in the international community, these states should be a major focus of preventive diplomatic efforts. Prominent individuals and organizations including the business community and mass media outlets and, if relevant, diaspora networks should also be integrated into the overall diplomatic effort. The United States and the international community should demonstrate to potential perpetrators that their actions will not go unnoticed or unrecorded for potential criminal indictment. This includes encouraging the efforts of NGOs—indigenous and international—and mass media to increase transparency during a crisis.

Given that genocide and mass atrocities typically arise in the context of a larger conflict for which there is often an ongoing peace process, policymakers should be mindful of the dangers of becoming overly dependent on—or even hostage to—that process to the extent that other preventive initiatives are ignored or dismissed. Preoccupation with ongoing negotiations during the early stages of the Bosnia crisis as well as during the Arusha peace process in Rwanda effectively precluded other initiatives for fear that they would disrupt ongoing negotiations. At the same time, decision makers should also be prepared to exploit opportunities that present themselves, such as the possible deployment of monitoring groups and peacekeeping forces that can deter and hinder potential escalation.

Policymakers should maintain consistency and discipline in messages conveyed to potential perpetrators and other actors. U.S. and international diplomatic efforts suffer when they do not speak with one voice, as was reported to have occurred in Darfur. The same is also true for diplomatic initiatives that involve multiple international actors, to avoid potential perpetrators from playing one off against another or “forum shopping” to gain tactical advantage. The diplomacy during the Kenya crisis is an example where international engagement was consistent and disciplined, focusing on a single negotiating channel and with different actors reinforcing each other’s efforts.

