Cowardly Lions: Missed Opportunities to Prevent Deadly Conflict and State Collapse


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Abstract

What would have happened had the "road not taken" been the chosen action in past conflict interventions? What can we learn from a close look at alternatives that were not selected? Drawing on six detailed case studies (the Balkans, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia, Somalia, and Zaire/Congo), I. William Zartman identifies a series of missed options that arguably would have provided feasible and better outcomes for the reduction of violent conflict and the prevention of state collapse.

Zartman specifies potential solutions within the entire trajectory of each conflict, considering in each instance why the indicated decisions were not taken. The principles and mechanisms that he develops in the course of his analysis have profound implications for the actions of the international community in preventing conflicts from escalating to violence, and for managing violent situations when they do occur.