8. Getting to the Table: The Triggers, Stages, Functions, and Consequences of Prenegotiation

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Comparative examination of our cases of prenegotiation enables us to identify a number of important attributes of the process of getting to the table. We look first at the factors that trigger active consideration of negotiation as one among an array of options. We then explore the pattern of progress through the stages of prenegotiation as leaders approach and avoid the table. We turn next to the functions that a process of prenegotiation performs. By comparing the evidence from cases where the parties reached the table, we then attempt to identify the conditions of getting to the table. Finally, we explore the larger significance of prenegotiation as a process of learning and of conflict management.

TRIGGERS: WHY DO PARTIES CONSIDER GOING TO THE TABLE?
The beginning of a process of prenegotiation is generally marked by a turning point in the relationship between the parties, an event or change in conditions that triggers a reassessment of alternatives and adds negotiation to the strategies of conflict management that are seriously considered. In most of the cases

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1 For a discussion of crises and turning points in the process of negotiation, see Daniel Druckman, 'Stages, turning points, and crises: negotiating base rights, Spain and the United States,' Journal of Conflict Resolution 30(June 1986), 327-60, and I. William Zartman, 'Common elements in the analysis of the nego-
examined in this study, either a recent crisis or the attempt to avoid an impending crisis was the most important turning point that prompted serious consideration of negotiation as one among a series of options. Comparative evidence from these cases suggests, first, that prenegotiation is triggered by an attempt to prevent a crisis or to manage a relationship in the wake of a recent crisis.

In the Canadian-American relationship, as Brian Tomlin argues, the acute conflict that developed in 1981 over Canadian energy and investment policies and the probability of American retaliatory measures triggered a crisis in Canada. American threats to the security of Canada's access to a market on which it was overwhelmingly dependent increased uncertainty in Canada about the future of the bilateral economic relationship and provoked a reassessment of Canadian strategy. This led to a redefinition of the problem and consideration of the option of negotiating a trade agreement.

The context of prenegotiation in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) could not differ more sharply from that of free trade in the Canadian-American relationship. As Gilbert Winham notes, negotiation is routine behaviour in this highly institutionalized régime. Consequently, prenegotiation can almost be considered 'business as usual,' as part of a cyclical process in régime maintenance. Yet even within the GATT, it was a perception of threat by important members which triggered consideration of this particular prenegotiation. Members anticipated an erosion of the régime as a result of extra-legal actions taken by member-governments. The strong perception of impending trouble triggered consideration of a new round of negotiations as a strategy of crisis avoidance.

Crisis avoidance and management were somewhat less apparent as triggers in the onset of prenegotiations on arms control between the Soviet Union and the primary adversary. In
his examination of Soviet prenegotiations, Franklyn Griffiths identifies a pattern of broad policy failure interacting with a perception of opportunity. Under Lenin, the failure of the socialist revolution to spread lent urgency to an embattled leadership’s search for strategies to moderate the hostility of its adversaries. In 1963, the memory of the Cuban missiles crisis was vivid. In 1969, even though the relative strength of the Soviet Union had increased, the Brezhnev-Kosygin régime faced the shadow of policy failure in the Soviet economy. Under Mikhail Gorbachev, an acute economic crisis was one important trigger of Soviet interest in prenegotiation. Policy failure, interacting with identification of opportunity, led Soviet leaders to reframe their problem and consider negotiation actively. In each case, however, the Soviet leadership considered negotiation not only, or not even necessarily, because it promised agreement but because the process of getting to the table was expected to have important political and strategic benefits that were largely independent of a negotiated agreement. Under these kinds of conditions, Soviet leaders considered what type of negotiation was most likely to bring the broad political and strategic benefits they wanted.

In the United States it was perceptions of threat interacting with perceptions of opportunity which promoted active consideration of negotiation. In Washington, a mixture of strategic crisis and domestic political pressure triggered processes of prenegotiation. In 1921, as Fen Osler Hampson notes, the threat of a new naval arms race among the great powers was an important motivating factor in American considerations. Even then, the need to come to terms with Congress was the catalyst. Harding’s calculus of the relative costs and benefits of negotiation of a naval arms control agreement was tipped by the exigencies of domestic politics. In 1963 the experience of the Cuban crisis was central in prompting active American consideration of negotiation. President Kennedy wrote to President Khrushchev in the immediate aftermath of the crisis that ‘perhaps now, as we step back from danger, we can make some real progress in
this vital field.'² Both leaders seized on the prospect of negotiating a test ban treaty as an important symbol of de-escalation.

In 1969 President Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, responded both to the threat they perceived from Soviet strategic parity and to the opportunity to link progress in arms control to broader changes in Soviet behaviour. Crisis avoidance was an important impetus to the consideration of negotiation. Only under President Reagan did the United States consider negotiation largely in response to domestic and allied pressures rather than as a strategy of post-crisis management or crisis avoidance. In that case, consideration of negotiation was prompted largely by the important side-benefits it was expected to bring.

The importance of crisis avoidance as a trigger is most strikingly apparent in the case of the processes that preceded the negotiation at Camp David in 1978 on the Middle East. The first process of prenegotiation was initiated in early 1977 by the new president of the United States as a deliberate strategy of crisis avoidance. Carter began this process because of his memory of the adverse consequences of the war between Egypt, Israel, and Syria in 1973, the priority he gave to the development of a comprehensive energy policy to prevent renewed 'oil shocks,' and his fear of the consequences of renewed war. He and his advisers were convinced that the status quo was inherently dangerous; in Zartman's terms, there was an unstable and hurting stalemate.³ Only progress in negotiation could avoid a slide towards war. Arab leaders, especially in Egypt, also anticipated a crisis if progress were not made before the expiry of the second disengagement agreement then in place between Egypt and Israel in September 1978. The deadline served as the 'forcing mechanism' to a process of prenegotiation. The urgency of negotiation was multiplied by the domestic crisis in

Egypt. Food riots, student strikes, and growing political opposition to the régime intensified the need for a strategy of crisis avoidance in Cairo. An option of negotiation became especially attractive because the obvious alternative, renewal of military action, was unappealing in the light of the mixed military outcome of the 1973 war. Israel’s leaders also faced an intensifying domestic crisis. Its balance-of-payments deficit had soared and inflationary pressures were particularly acute for Sephardi voters in the large cities. The Rabin government was weak and bitterly divided. Thus, in Jerusalem, in Cairo, and in Washington, domestic and strategic factors interacted to promote active consideration of negotiation.

When the negotiation which issued from the first prenegotiation failed, sunk political costs increased the attractiveness of a second attempt at prenegotiation in January 1978. Domestic political incentives were greater than they had been a year earlier in both Washington and Cairo. President Sadat had incurred heavy costs, at home and abroad, as a result of his trip to Jerusalem. To counter these pressures, he encouraged the resurgence of nationalist parties that supported the return of the Sinai. Consequently, a negotiated agreement had become even more important in January 1978 than it had been a year earlier. In Jerusalem, Prime Minister Begin faced increased domestic opposition, both from the Labour party to his left who opposed the return of the airfields in the Sinai on security grounds and from leaders on the right who urged the establishment of more settlements in the West Bank. In Washington, the president was increasingly anxious for a visible foreign policy success to offset domestic criticism. Under these conditions, Egypt and Israel, followed by the United States, reframed the problem and began again to consider actively the option of negotiation.

This comparative review of evidence across a variety of issues suggests that either recent or anticipated crisis, or a paired perception of threat and opportunity, was the most important catalyst of a process of prenegotiation. Under these conditions,
exploration of the option of negotiation was attractive for several interrelated reasons. Most directly, as Zartman argues, mutual perception of a hurting stalemate informed by a recent or impending crisis leads policy-makers to consider actively the option of negotiation. At a minimum, introduction of this additional option changes the relative weighting of the options already under consideration. At a maximum, consideration of negotiation as one among several options encourages leaders to think about the advantages of a co-operative solution in comparison to unilateral action.

Consideration of a co-operative solution can encourage leaders to frame the problem differently. Experimental evidence from the laboratory suggests that, contrary to the expectation of rational models, decision-makers’ choices are not invariant. As Ronald Fisher notes, when the same problem is framed differently, people shift their preferences. Evidence from these cases suggests that the intensity of the perception of impending crisis may affect the way leaders frame their problem.

Impending crisis was most acutely perceived by leaders in Canada in the 1980s and in Egypt and Israel in the wake of the war in 1973. Leaders in these countries gave greatest weight to a joint solution; neither side anticipated that it could avoid a crisis through escalation and both expected a unilateral strategy of conflict management to be ineffective. In these cases, getting to the table was a principal purpose of prenegotiation. The reframing of the problem was extensive, as leaders seriously considered the benefits of a joint solution. Although the problem was identified and reframed, however, the problem diagnoses of the participants in the process differed widely.

Where perception of impending crisis was not so great, as in Moscow and Washington when they considered negotiation

5 See also George A. Quattrone and Amos Tversky, ‘Contrasting rational and psychological analyses of political choice,’ American Political Science Review 82(September 1988), 719-36.
of arms control agreements, getting to the table was only one among several purposes of the process. In Moscow, particularly, the attractiveness of prenegotiation was in large part a function of the political benefits it promised, benefits which were largely independent of the outcome of negotiation. As Griffiths argues, although the table was in the foreground of Soviet calculations, it is the background which merits serious attention. When Soviet leaders identified and reframed the problem, they paid attention not only to the benefits of a joint solution but also to the anticipated benefits of the process of prenegotiation itself, over and above whether it culminated in an agreement at the table. The same held for members of the Reagan administration in Washington when they considered the prospect of negotiating an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union. As Zartman suggests, the perception of the consequences of stalemate and the positioning of the impending crisis or the conjunction of threat and opportunity affect the framing of the problem and the salience of negotiation as an option. 6

Prenegotiation was also attractive to leaders for other reasons. It can be an effective strategy of risk management, especially for leaders whose principal purpose is a negotiated agreement. It can permit the parties to reduce uncertainty and to manage complexity at lower levels of risk than a formal commitment to a strategy of negotiation would allow. Leaders who agree only to explore the option of negotiation can begin to assess the intentions and objectives of other parties without public commitment to a process of negotiation.

A process of prenegotiation also allows leaders to make preliminary judgments about the bargaining ranges and reservation points of others, again without publicly committing themselves to a negotiation. It allows the exploration of requitement and assessment of the likelihood of reciprocity, again at a lower cost. Reciprocity is in part a function of the way problems are framed, the attribution of others' intentions and motives, and

6 I. William Zartman, 'Prenegotiation: phases and functions,' in this volume.

The reduction of uncertainty is especially important in an adversarial relationship, when there can be both strategic and political costs to a strategy of negotiation. In Cairo, for example, there were important domestic and ‘reputational’ costs to negotiation with Israel. Prenegotiation minimized these costs as President Sadat acquired valuable information about Israel’s intentions, strategies, bargaining range, and critical minimum for a negotiated agreement.

Prenegotiation can also provide a valuable opportunity to manage complexity when there is a multiplicity of interests, parties, and roles. When leaders first consider going to the table, it is frequently unclear who will come, what their roles will be, how the table will be structured, and what will be on and off the agenda. The answers to these questions are important components of leaders’ decisions to commit to negotiation. This kind of complexity was prominent in the multilateral prenegotiation of economic issues for the Uruguay Round and in the prelude to Camp David, where participants and roles were undefined at the outset. Indeed, President Carter structured the preliminary rounds of prenegotiation to acquire and share information. In brief, prenegotiation promises to lower the cost of critical information. In so doing, it is attractive to leaders as a strategy of risk management in situations of uncertainty and complexity.

Prenegotiation is attractive as well because it promises lower exit costs than formal negotiation does. Leaders make a com-
mitment to explore negotiation, not to negotiate. The option to withdraw remains open, and leaders can exercise that option before domestic political interests have had the opportunity to organize and mobilize, either on behalf of or against negotiation. Prenegotiation is usually a less public process than negotiation and interested outsiders have less access to critical information. The exploratory process is better insulated from political interests and, in this sense too, leaders can acquire critical information at lower cost. The political costs of information are less at the outset of prenegotiation than in negotiation. As Israel's leaders anticipated, for example, interested publics had almost no access to information through the early stages of the process of prenegotiation in 1977.

Finally, prenegotiation is attractive to leaders whose interest is not exclusively in a negotiated agreement as the outcome. Hampson suggests, for example, that President Reagan valued the benefits that an exploration of negotiation would bring to his relations with allies and his image with domestic publics. Similarly, Soviet leaders anticipated broad political benefits independent of agreements that might result should prenegotiation succeed. Under these conditions, prenegotiation is an attractive political strategy for the management of a continuing adversarial relationship. At the extreme, exploring the possibility of going to the table can be a preferred alternative to getting there.

Evidence from our cases suggests that leaders have decided to consider negotiation when they see the need for a strategy of crisis avoidance or post-crisis management or when they see a conjunction of threat and opportunity, when prenegotiation promises to reduce some of the risks associated with negotiation, and when they anticipate benefits from the process which are largely independent of whether or not it culminates in agreement. The limited evidence we have does not permit us to establish whether these three conditions are all necessary or, indeed, whether they are sufficient; more work is needed. In all the cases examined, however, more than one of these con-
ditions was present. Indeed, when they reinforced one another, they made exploration of negotiation an attractive option.

THE STAGES OF PRENEGOTIATION
A recent review of analyses of international negotiation concludes that attempts to model deductively the outcome of negotiation from a clearly defined set of initial conditions have generally proved unsatisfactory. Daniel Druckman and P. Terrence Hopmann note that the outcome of a negotiation on an international issue is generally determined through the process itself.8 This observation is even more pertinent in the analysis of prenegotiation. The process of prenegotiation is less structured, less governed by norms, and less regulated by rules than is negotiation. Indeed, as we have argued, prenegotiation is attractive at the outset in part because it is open-ended and fluid.

The process of prenegotiation has not received a great deal of attention from analysts of negotiation. Those who have acknowledged its importance have tended generally to treat it as the first phase of a larger process. William Zartman, in his introductory article to this volume, considers prenegotiation as a critical diagnostic phase that precedes negotiation. Harold Saunders conceives of the first stage of the process of negotiation as a shared definition of a problem and the second as a commitment to a negotiated settlement where parties conclude that a fair settlement is likely. The third stage consists of arranging the negotiation and, in the fourth stage, the negotiation begins.9 The integration of prenegotiation into a phased model

9 See Harold Saunders, 'We need a larger theory of negotiation: the importance of pre-negotiating phases,' Negotiation Journal 1(July 1985), 249-62. Zartman and Berman (Practical Negotiator) identify the diagnostic phase as the first of their three phases of negotiation. It is followed by the formula phase, when each party perceives the other to be serious about finding a negotiated solution. The third phase is that of negotiation itself. Only Zartman and Druckman focus
of negotiation can blur the distinction between the two processes and mask the important analytic differences. And, as we have argued, for some of the participants, some of the time, negotiation is not the principal purpose of prenegotiation.

To model the process of getting to the table, Tomlin suggests that prenegotiation proceeds through five stages, two of which precede the formal onset of prenegotiation. If, in the initial stage of problem identification, at least one of the parties adds negotiation to the array of options under active consideration, the process moves to the next stage. In the search for options, the second stage, leaders consider their options and choose negotiation as the preferred one, at least for the moment. The third stage, when one party makes a commitment to negotiate, marks the shift from whether to negotiate to what will be negotiated. At this point, Tomlin suggests, the preoccupation of the leaders with internal dynamics gives way to increased attention to the interests of other parties to the negotiation as leaders begin to try to define the scope of the negotiation. The beginning of the fourth stage is signalled by the communication of a desire to negotiate by one of the parties to the others. In this stage, the parties must agree to go to the table. The fifth and final stage of prenegotiation is dominated by the setting of parameters for the negotiation to follow. This stage may shade into the first stage of the negotiation process.

Tomlin's model nicely illuminates the process of prenegotiation between Canada and the United States as the parties proceeded sequentially through the stages towards negotiation on free trade. It works especially well because the initiative was explicitly on the 'diagnosis' phase or prenegotiation and its appropriate contextual conditions. See Daniel Druckman, 'Prenegotiation experience and dyadic conflict resolution in a bargaining situation,' *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 4(1968), 367-83. Brian Tracy, 'Bargaining as trial and error,' in I. William Zartman, ed, *The Negotiation Process: Theories and Applications* (Beverly Hills CA: Sage 1978), includes many of the structuring activities which are better characterized as part of a process of prenegotiation in negotiation. His analysis collapses many of the functions of prenegotiation into the negotiation process itself.
taken by Canada which perceived a strong threat, was most anxious to avoid an anticipated crisis, and yet had considerable time to mobilize its policy-making resources to consider its options. As Tomlin expects, the third stage of commitment to negotiate was the most protracted as the two governments explored their options and simultaneously negotiated with important constituencies at home. Indeed, as governments explored their options, at times in public, opposition from powerful bureaucracies and interest groups grew. In part because of the intensified perception of a threat of protectionist legislation by the United States, and in part because no other option appeared as promising as a strategy of conflict management, the two governments nevertheless agreed in principle to bilateral negotiation. Tomlin finds that for the United States, it was the dim prospects of multilateral solutions that made a bilateral agreement attractive. In Canada, the flaws of a sectoral strategy moved the government incrementally towards a comprehensive strategy. The evidence suggests that the process of prenegotiation proceeded to agreement to negotiate through the progressive elimination of alternatives. Only after agreement in principle to negotiate did the two governments turn to the creation of the structures and boundaries of the negotiation to follow.

The process was much messier in the other cases examined in this volume. In 1985 the United States secretary of state and the Soviet foreign minister specified the structure and the boundaries before they committed to negotiation. By contrast, only after the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) negotiation began in 1969 did the parties specify the boundaries and the agenda. In the process that preceded the negotiation of the test ban treaty, the United States first developed a broad definition of the problem and then a narrow definition as a fallback position. In the Middle East, neither Israel nor Egypt would commit to negotiate until the risks of a negotiation were reduced through the clarification of the participants, the boundaries of negotiation, and the agenda.
Analysis of these cases suggests that the sequencing of stages in a process of prenegotiation needs further examination. In all cases, definition of a problem, although not shared diagnoses, and a search for options constituted the first two phases of the process of getting to the table. The placement of the commitment to negotiate in the sequence is more troublesome. The evidence suggests that when leaders consider the process of negotiation a high-risk option, with potentially large costs, the reduction of uncertainty will dominate the process and order the phases.

The management of complexity and competing trade-offs is also important in the progress of prenegotiation. In the prenegotiation of the Uruguay Round, for example, agreement to negotiate came only at the end, after much of the structuring of trade-offs had taken place. As Winham points out, the commitment to negotiation came in the final hours of the process of multilateral consultation; the third stage followed all the others.

Examination of the evidence from our cases also suggests that domestic politics affected the ordering of the stages of prenegotiation in different ways. In some cases, domestic pressures tended to intensify as prenegotiation proceeded and opposition forces had the opportunity to organize and coalesce; as they did, trade-offs sharpened and complexity grew. In the prenegotiation process before Camp David, for example, the political costs of prenegotiation intensified over time for Egypt, Israel, and the United States; sunk costs grew as the process proceeded. Commitment to negotiation became more difficult until the trade-offs were clear. Under these conditions, leaders tried to maintain their option to exit at the lowest possible cost by delaying the commitment to negotiate. In the prenegotiation of Canada-United States free trade, by contrast, the support of an influential commission created by the government and of important elements within the business community and the bureaucracy in Canada facilitated an early commitment to negotiate.

Both the reduction of uncertainty and the management of
complexity appear to be critical determinants of the ordering of the stages of prenegotiation. Uncertainty and complexity were functions, moreover, not only of the issues likely to be on or off the table, but also of the anticipated domestic consequences. The limited evidence we have suggests that the sequencing of prenegotiation appears to be highly context-dependent.

THE FUNCTIONS OF PRENEGOTIATION
We distinguish the process of getting to the table from that of negotiation by an important difference in their functions. Generally, as Zartman argues, prenegotiation focusses on the promotion of a joint solution and a commitment to negotiate, although, as we have seen, this is not always the aim of some participants in the process. It does so by attempting to create structures for negotiation which make a commitment to negotiate possible or attractive to those considering the option. Analysis focusses then not on integrative or distributive bargaining, or on processes of concession-convergence, but rather on creating the structures in which these kinds of activities can take place.

Analysis of our cases suggests that prenegotiation structures the negotiation which follows in several important ways. Indeed, some of this structuring activity, which is usually considered a part of negotiation, might be better located within the process of prenegotiation. As we have noted, prenegotiation is attractive in part because it reduces uncertainty and manages complexity at lower cost. It provides valuable information and reduces risk by defining the structure of negotiation through the specification of the boundaries, the participants, and, at times, even the agenda for the negotiation that may follow.

**Boundaries**
In most of the cases examined in this volume, prenegotiation was critical in specifying the boundaries of the negotiation to follow. In getting to the table to negotiate free trade, the United-
States and Canada agreed on a comprehensive framework for negotiation. They eliminated sectoral negotiations or ad hoc bilateral arrangements and committed both governments to a comprehensive strategy. In the multilateral process that preceded the Uruguay Round, the declaration of principles similarly set the framework and the formula for the complex negotiation to follow. Although less extensive, boundary setting was also important in Soviet and American prenegotiation of arms control issues. As Griffiths and Hampson demonstrate, what was excluded from the framework during the process of prenegotiation set the broad boundaries for the processes that followed.

Nowhere was the importance of boundary setting more important than in getting to Camp David. The first process of prenegotiation was dominated by the search for principles to guide the negotiation of a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Extensive exploratory discussions revealed that no agreement was possible; without such an agreement on boundaries to reduce the risks, none of the principal parties was willing to make a commitment to negotiate. The failure of the first process of prenegotiation led the parties to explore a negotiation with much more narrowly defined boundaries in the second round.

Participants
Generally, the participants were obvious and non-controversial in the cases examined in this volume. In the bilateral discussions between Canada and the United States, in the exploratory multilateral process that preceded the Uruguay Round, and in Soviet and American consideration of negotiation of arms control agreements, the participants were generally not at issue. In the prenegotiation of the limited test ban treaty, the process quickly produced agreement on the appropriate participants. In the process of getting to Camp David, however, the selection of participants was critical.

The first process of prenegotiation included a wide range
of participants: the United States, the Soviet Union, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and Israel. Both Egypt and Israel, for quite different reasons, found some of these participants unacceptable and, as the prenegotiation proceeded, discovered their convergence of interest in eliminating those who, in their judgment, were most likely to obstruct an agreement. Only after unacceptable participants were eliminated in the second round did the two, at the urging of the United States, agree to negotiate.

**Agenda**

In almost all the cases we examined, prenegotiation was critical in setting or delimiting the agenda for the negotiation that followed. Agenda formation differed across processes of prenegotiation in two distinct ways. First, in some of the cases, prenegotiation proceeded through its stages by enlarging the agenda and creating bundles for future negotiation and trade-offs. In others, what was kept off the table was far more important than what was put on; prenegotiation significantly narrowed the agenda and, in so doing, reduced both uncertainty and risk. More important, in some cases the agenda was largely defined by the process of prenegotiation, while in others significant issues of agenda formation spilled over into the process of negotiation.

In the prenegotiation of the Uruguay Round, participants began the process by creating an exhaustive inventory of the agenda items in preparatory committees. In the early stages of the process, those developing countries opposed to the inclusion of services on the agenda succeeded in creating a separate negotiating structure for services independent of goods. As Winham observes, however, pyramidal relations among the participants increasingly structured the agenda as the process of prenegotiation proceeded. By the end of the process, the agenda created packages of items which will subsequently permit trade-offs among the major coalitions in the complex multilateral process of negotiation to follow. The process of prenegotiation
between Canada and the United States similarly broadened the agenda.

Agenda formation in the process of getting to the table at Camp David was dramatically different. When the process began, the agenda was diffuse and uncertain and it was progressively narrowed as the principal parties proceeded through the stages of prenegotiation. By the end of the second prenegotiation, the most controversial issues had been eliminated or postponed and the agenda for the meeting at Camp David had been basically set. Indeed, Stein finds that the narrowing of the agenda through the elimination or the postponement of the most controversial issues was a critical component in the lessening of uncertainty and complexity and in the reduction of the anticipated costs of negotiation for Israel. Agenda definition was an important part of risk management and a critical prerequisite of the commitment to negotiate.

The politics of agenda formation were most obvious in Soviet strategy during the process of prenegotiation. The role of politics differed, however, depending on the internal and external constraints and opportunities. In the first case examined by Griffiths, he finds that Lenin and his associates were unprepared to go to the negotiating table with its proposed agenda. On the contrary, Soviet leaders designed their strategy to modify the agenda by creating political pressure on western governments. The extra-negotiatory side-benefits, however, were far more important than progress at the table; the agenda was a vehicle rather than a target. By contrast, Khrushchev was willing to narrow the agenda on a test ban in order to improve Kennedy’s bargaining situation as well as his own. Even then, however, what would happen at the table was not Khrushchev’s only concern. As Griffiths observes, Khrushchev needed measures that constrained conservatives simultaneously in the United States and the Soviet Union. In Soviet strategy, politics were generally more important than reduction of uncertainty and risk management in agenda formation.

The process of prenegotiation differed not only in whether
the agenda was narrowed or expanded but also in whether it came to be inclusive or indeterminate. This latter difference is more important analytically than the former. Irrespective of whether an agenda is narrowed or expanded, as long as it is set it reduces uncertainty and risk for the participants. Consistent with our argument that prenegotiation is attractive in part because it serves to reduce uncertainty and risk, we would expect that in the majority of cases, prenegotiation would set or at least delimit the agenda for the negotiation to follow before the parties committed themselves to negotiation. Although there are important differences in degree, the evidence that is available from our cases generally sustains this expectation.

As we have seen, during the process that preceded Camp David, the agenda was agreed before the parties arrived. Similarly, Winham finds that the multilateral process of prenegotiation virtually set the agenda for the negotiation to follow during the Uruguay Round. The agenda for the negotiation of the limited test ban treaty was also established by the wide-ranging process of consultation that preceded the formal session. As Hampson observes, the agenda was narrowed by both external and domestic constraints.

In the process that preceded the negotiation of the SALT I agreement, however, only a rough agenda emerged after exploratory talks between the Soviet and American delegations. The agenda was even less defined as the Soviet Union and the United States began the negotiation in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks. Important struggles within the bureaucracy, congressional and public pressures, and allied demands shaped the outlines of an agenda for the United States. Equally important, however, was the determination of the Reagan administration to define the agenda differently, to emphasize reductions rather than the limitations or ceilings which were characteristic of SALT. Agenda formation proceeded by the elimination of alternatives; the agenda was delimited by what it would not include.

In the prenegotiation of free trade between the United States
and Canada, both committed themselves to negotiation before they defined the agenda. Differences between the two parties as to what should be put on and what should be kept off the agenda were not resolved before the start of the formal negotiation in Ottawa. The divergence flowed from different diagnoses of the problem and from the way the prenegotiation process developed. Serious structuring activity began only late in the process. As Tomlin notes, these differences would subsequently become major obstacles in the negotiation itself.

Where negotiation was not perceived as an inherently risky process in and of itself, the parties gave correspondingly less attention to the reduction of uncertainty through the specification of the agenda. In a process like the one that preceded Camp David, however, where the major participants anticipated serious costs to entry into negotiation, they gave far greater attention to structuring activity. The evidence suggests, moreover, that when the parties made a commitment to negotiate without some structuring of the agenda, the negotiation that followed was far more likely to reach impasse and deadlock.

A comparative analysis of the evidence suggests that the process of prenegotiation was generally characterized by important structuring activity. It set broad boundaries, identified the participants, and, in at least half the cases, specified the agenda for negotiation. Even in those cases where it produced only a rough outline of the agenda, it nevertheless reduced uncertainty and complexity by establishing what would be kept off the table. In every case, prenegotiation framed the problem and set the limits of the negotiation to follow. Without an analysis of the process of getting to the table, we cannot explain the shape of the table, who gets there and who doesn’t, what is on the table and, equally important, what is kept off.

*Management of domestic politics and coalition-building*

Analysts of the process of international negotiation have long recognized that bargaining takes place not only among the part-
Participants in the process but also within each party as representatives try to manage their domestic constituencies and to build support for anticipated agreements. Indeed, as Robert Putnam argues, the politics of many international negotiations can usefully be conceived as a two-level game.10 Domestic politics, however, does not only constrain; leaders are not passive in their domestic arenas. The process of prenegotiation permits political leaders to perform important structuring activity in the domestic as well as in the international arena. It enables leaders not only to manage domestic constituencies but also to attempt to structure domestic coalitions.

In many of our cases, political structuring, both at home and across borders, was an important function of the process of prenegotiation. In the process of getting to the table with the United States, a task force created by the Department by External Affairs in Ottawa, an independent bipartisan royal commission set up by the government, and a series of government reports and statements were all important in legitimating the option to negotiate free trade among the Canadian public. In Egypt, prenegotiation permitted Sadat, at least for a time, to neutralize growing domestic political opposition through the manipulation of elements within the coalition that provided critical support. Begin was even more adept at using the process of prenegotiation to restructure and broaden the base of his political support in Israel. Domestic political management was also evident in American strategy. As Hampson notes, domestic pressure played a decisive intervening role in processes of prenegotiation. Indeed, Washington frequently explored negotiation to deflect strong public, congressional, and bureaucratic pressures.

Domestic political management was most striking, however, in Soviet strategy. Indeed, the structuring of domestic politics, both at home and abroad, was often the most important purpose of Soviet participation in a process of prenegotiation. As Griffiths concludes, the underlying pattern in Soviet strategy is one of tendency shifts in processes of internal bargaining whose outcomes favour reformist approaches to negotiation. External bargaining has not been unimportant; typically Soviet leaders have engaged in simultaneous internal and external bargaining as they contemplate moving to the table. The essence of Soviet prenegotiationary behaviour, however, is internal bargaining which serves to build critical political support for action by the régime. Lenin had to manipulate and reconcile conflicting predispositions within the régime to move the Soviet Union to the table in 1922. Khrushchev propelled the Soviet Union to the table in part to strengthen his weakened internal bargaining position. The prenegotiation of SALT was characterized by active structuring by Brezhnev of coalition politics to build support for reformative tendencies in the Soviet Union. Again, under Gorbachev, active consideration of going to the table has been used as much to strengthen and consolidate political support as it has been to change the texture and direction of the relationship with the United States. It seems that Soviet behaviour during processes of prenegotiation can be understood as much as a strategy of domestic restructuring as of external bargaining. The process gave Soviet leaders the opportunity to manipulate constraints and structure coalitions at home. These benefits were largely independent of what happened at the table.

Putnam has also observed that the representative of one side has a strong interest in the political strength of the other; in two-level games, there are synergistic linkages in which strategic moves in one game facilitate unexpected coalitions in the other. A process of prenegotiation not only permits leaders to build political support at home but also to build transnational coalitions.

The building of transnational coalitions was important in the process of prenegotiation between the United States and Canada. It was facilitated, of course, by the permeability of the border, the easy access each has to the communications network of the other, and the strong transnational ties that characterize the relationship. Summit meetings between the leaders, addresses in each other’s capitals, and testimony of experts were all designed to build political support on the other side of the border as well as at home.

Among our cases, attention to transnational coalitions is most pronounced in Soviet behaviour. As Griffiths observes, Soviet exponents of negotiation with the United States have found themselves engaged in informal alliances with counterparts on the other side. Consistently in the four cases he examines, Griffiths finds Soviet leaders designing their strategy to strengthen constituencies in the primary adversary and among its allies who favoured accommodation. They did so to reduce political opposition to the pursuit of negotiation; in this sense, prenegotiation can be conceived as a process of building transnational coalitions to circumvent domestic political obstacles which threatened the process of getting to the table. Even more important, Soviet leaders designed their strategy to strengthen political coalitions abroad which were likely to support changes in the general direction of the Soviet-American relationship over time. These were not extra-negotiatory effects but fundamental and important purposes of Soviet participation in prenegotiation. The model of prenegotiation that emerges from Griffiths’ analysis is one of highly informal transnational coalitions of people in the United States and the Soviet Union who pursue broad and parallel goals in separate internal bargaining exercises loosely linked by external bargaining.12 The object of prenegotiation was not primarily to get to the table but to manage an adversarial relationship.

12 For a formal analysis of the determinants of the ‘win-sets’ of simultaneous domestic and international bargaining, the implications for transnational coalition-building, and the counter-intuitive implications for strategy, see the excellent analysis by Putnam, in ibid.
In sum, the process of getting to the table performs an important structuring activity as leaders explore an option of negotiation. It reduces uncertainty, clarifies risks and costs, and manages complexity as leaders contemplate the boundaries of the table, who is likely to be there, the rules, and what is likely to be put on and kept off the table. Equally important, the possibility of going to the table permits leaders to structure domestic activity and to build transnational coalitions as the process proceeds. At times, however, as leaders looked over the heads of other leaders to constituencies abroad, the table did not loom very large.

EXPLANATION OF THE OUTCOME
Our evidence does not permit us to draw more than tentative conclusions about when and why parties get to the table. In virtually all the cases examined in this volume, the parties did get to the table. A more robust explanation of 'successful' prenegotiation must await detailed comparative examination of processes that failed to culminate in negotiation. Given this caveat, some suggestive preliminary propositions emerge from this comparative examination of successes.

If success is defined, technically, as getting to the table, earlier analyses of prenegotiation have suggested that the process is most likely to succeed when the parties assure each other that they will bargain in 'good faith,' when negotiation promises to help them avoid a mutually unsatisfactory breakdown in their relationship, and when parties focus on the issues and avoid intensive preparation of strategy.13 Our analyses suggest a broader analytic perspective.

At the outset, the parties considered the status quo unacceptable; they anticipated high costs, even crisis, if existing trends

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13 John Thibaut, 'The development of contractual norms in bargaining: replication and variation,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 12 (March 1968), 102-12; Druckman, 'Prenegotiation experience and dyadic conflict resolution in a bargaining situation'; B.M. Bass, 'Effects on subsequent performance of negotiators of studying issues or planning strategies alone or in groups,' *Psychological Monographs*, no 614 (1966); and Druckman and Hopmann, 'Behavioral aspects of negotiations on mutual security,' 82.
continued. They also hoped to change or at least to modify the overall direction of their relationship and they identified an opportunity to do so. These expectations not only triggered a process of prenegotiation but helped to propel it through its stages.

As the process of prenegotiation proceeded, the reduction of central uncertainties and the specification of the critical trade-offs were associated with arriving at the table. In most of the cases we examined, the definition of the boundaries, the identification of the participants, and the delimitation of the agenda were important in moving the parties to the table. Not only were core interests clarified as parties considered the alternatives, but each learned about the core interests of others. While keeping the costs of exit down, especially in the early stages, the participants acquired crucial, relatively low-cost information about others' bargaining ranges, critical minima, and reservation points and were able to explore the likelihood of reciprocity. Finally, leaders at times not only responded to domestic constraints and inducements but also actively manipulated the process of prenegotiation to build political coalitions in support of negotiation.

Only in three cases did prenegotiation fail to perform all of these critical functions. In the first multilateral attempt at prenegotiation of the Arab-Israel conflict, the parties could not define the boundaries or agree on the appropriate participants; ultimately, the process was aborted by the party most interested in a negotiated agreement. In the process that preceded SALT, only a very rough agenda emerged after exploratory discussions. In the prenegotiation of the free trade agreement between the United States and Canada, the parties delimited the agenda, but they did not define its contents. Indeed, they did not try to do so until very late in the process. Ironically, as Tomlin concludes, it may well have been the failure of the two countries to address a prospective negotiating agenda in detail until late in the process of prenegotiation which enabled them to begin formal negotiation. Here, the masking of some of the
complexity was an important component of success. Nevertheless, even in these cases, the process of prenegotiation did perform other critical functions.

Across the cases, our evidence suggests generally that the greater the anticipation of crisis and the greater the incentive to avoid crisis, the greater the identification of threat and opportunity, the greater the reduction of uncertainty and complexity through the specification of boundaries, participation, and agenda, the greater the identification and clarification of trade-offs, and the greater the structuring of domestic support, the smoother the progress through the stages of prenegotiation to the table. Whether all these conditions are necessary and whether, together, they are sufficient to get the parties to the table remains a subject for further research.

WHY PRENEGOTIATION MATTERS

From several perspectives, reaching the table is too narrow and technical a criterion of success. Prenegotiation matters both when parties get to the table and when they do not. It matters because the process provides the participants with significant opportunities for learning, both about themselves and about others. It matters because it permits the participants to learn about the preconditions for and possibilities of both a negotiated agreement and an alternative management of their relationship. Finally, and paradoxically, prenegotiation matters even when the outcome of the negotiating process does not. Some analysts of arms control, for example, have argued that the outcome of any given negotiation is not intrinsically important, but that the learning it engenders and its consequences for the management of the larger relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union are. In this sense, the process of 'getting to the table' is inherently valuable and significant irrespective of whether the table figures in its outcome.

Analysts of international relations differ substantially in their concept of learning. Some suggest that leaders learn insofar as they seek to reduce uncertainty and improve predictability in a loosely structured international environment. Others contend that learning is demonstrated by greater cognitive complexity or knowledge about means-ends relationships. This kind of learning may overcome the obstacles to cooperation created by anarchy and self-help. New technical information, shared knowledge, the development of common expertise, and better knowledge of cause-effect relationships may alter policymakers' beliefs and expectations.\textsuperscript{15} Leaders may be able to revise stereotypical images, to develop new vocabularies and new kinds of discourse, and, optimally, to reframe the problem they confront. Finally, analysts suggest that leaders learn as they redefine their interests over time.\textsuperscript{16}

Cognitive psychology cautions, however, against overly optimistic estimates of the capacity to learn. It identifies serious obstacles to learning at the individual level. Generally, people assimilate new information to existing beliefs; they are 'cognitive misers.' Until and unless the information is sufficiently discrepant, they are unlikely to 'learn.' Leaders are most likely to learn when they repeatedly encounter strongly discrepant information that challenges fundamental beliefs. Only then are they likely to reformulate their beliefs about others and reframe the problem.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{16} See, in particular, Nye, 'Nuclear learning and U.S.-Soviet security regimes,' and Axelrod, \textit{The Evolution of Cooperation}.

\textsuperscript{17} See, for example, Robert Jervis, \textit{Perception and Misperception in International Politics} (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1976); Robert Jervis, 'Cognition and political behavior,' in R.R. Lau and D.O. Sears, eds, \textit{Political Cognition} (Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum 1986); Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, and
Consistent with this cautionary note, analysts of institutions are also pessimistic about the capacity of ‘states’ to learn. They suggest that states do not adapt well to changes in their environment. Élites resist changes that threaten their interests, and bureaucratic organizations proceed routinely through highly institutionalized procedures. When learning occurs, it is a sporadic response to crisis, not a smooth incremental process of structural adaptation.\(^{18}\)

Analyses of processes of prenegotiation in this volume suggest that recent crises did promote substantial learning which facilitated the process of getting to the table. The shared experience of the Cuban missiles crisis encouraged Soviet and American leaders to reframe the problem and to seek to stabilize their relationship through negotiation. In the aftermath of the October War in 1973, leaders in Egypt learned that a renewal of war was unlikely to achieve their minimum objective of regaining the Sinai and Israel’s leaders learned that even superior military capability and a robust deterrent reputation could not prevent costly and unwanted war. Crisis provoked important and far-reaching changes in fundamental beliefs which permitted a reframing of the problem and the active consideration of negotiation.

Substantial learning also occurred as the participants proceeded through the phases of prenegotiation. The impact of scientific and technical information is most obvious. Winham notes the exhaustive enumeration and analysis of technical issues in the early phases of the prenegotiation within the GATT. The technical information was critical to the structuring of the

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\(^{18}\) Robert O. Keohane reviews this literature in ‘Reciprocity, reputation, and compliance with international commitments,’ paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, September 1988.
agenda and to the commitment to negotiate the Uruguay Round. In the process of getting to the table to negotiate the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, an accumulation of scientific evidence highlighted the dangers of nuclear testing in the atmosphere. Moreover, the absence of progress in the testing programmes of the two superpowers removed a potential constraint to progress towards the table. As Hampson observes, however, there were also limits to learning: although the destabilizing consequences of the technology of multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles were understood during the process of the SALT prenegotiation, the limitation of MIRVs was not included on the agenda. Generally, however, in all four processes of prenegotiation on arms control, expert knowledge and a growing understanding of the implications of new military technologies for crisis and arms race stability generated significant learning and facilitated progress towards the table.

Griffiths finds even stronger support for the impact of generalized learning on processes of prenegotiation. He argues that the most important obstacle to getting to the table was the stubborn and unrealistic optimism among Soviet leaders in estimating their capacity to transform their external environment. When this optimism was punctured and unrealistic expectations were revised, Soviet leaders moved through the stages of prenegotiation not only for its side-effects but to get to the table.

Our analysis has also demonstrated that significant and differentiated learning occurred during the process of prenegotiation. Leaders developed more informed assessments of the intentions of others, of their reservation points and bargaining ranges, and of the likelihood of requitement and reciprocity. Moreover, they learned not only about others but also about themselves. Although the degree of learning differed, in all the processes of prenegotiation we examined leaders clarified the trade-offs they were likely to confront, the risks, the opportunity costs of alternatives, and the nature of their domestic constraints and opportunities. They learned not only how to manage but also how to shape their political environment to facilitate a
commitment to negotiation. In addition, they were able to do so incrementally and at lower cost than in a formal process of negotiation.

Griffiths concludes that learning by Soviet leaders occurred largely during the process of prenegotiation. Much the same holds for the Egyptians and Israelis; they learned far more as they approached the table than they did at Camp David. Fisher argues that the prenegotiation process is especially conducive to the kind of fundamental learning that is required to move parties to a highly escalated and protracted conflict towards alternative strategies of conflict management. A shift towards more accurate perceptions, more veridical images, better communication, and a co-operative framing of shared problems, although extraordinarily difficult under any circumstances, is more likely to occur in the fluid process of prenegotiation than at the table.

Both the experimental and historical evidence reviewed by Fisher and the comparative analysis of cases suggest that prenegotiation can be usefully conceived as a process of learning. In this sense, the process has intrinsic merit, whether or not it culminates at the table. Indeed, cognitive psychology suggests that we learn more from failure than we do from success. Evidence from the only 'failure' examined in this volume, the prenegotiation process between the Arabs and the Israelis in 1977, suggests both that leaders did learn and that what they learned was critical to the subsequent prenegotiation that culminated at Camp David. Success does not equate with significance.

Analysts have suggested at times that when a conflict is 'not ripe,' the parties should stay away from the table because of the significant costs of failure. The same proposition may hold, albeit to a lesser degree, for prenegotiation. As Stein points out in her analysis of the Israel-Egypt relationship, President Sadat

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learned in 1971 about the bargaining range of his adversary and the risks of negotiation and concluded that negotiation was unlikely to produce an agreement; in consequence, war became a more attractive option. In a highly escalated conflict, the risks are real that the failure of prenegotiation can alter leaders' calculations in favour of intensified conflict. Prenegotiation matters both when it succeeds and when it fails.

If leaders are to overcome deadlock and impasse in a protracted and dangerous conflict, however, there is little alternative to learning. David Lax and James Sebenius warn of the risks of the table when a conflict is not ripe but urge that the parties move away from the table to consider actions that can reshape perceptions and promote alternative definitions of their problem.\textsuperscript{20} The analyses in this volume suggest strongly that the process of prenegotiation provides an environment especially conducive to this kind of learning.

Our analysis of prenegotiation was stimulated in large part by the call for a broader theory of negotiation which integrates the processes that precede it with bargaining at the table. The evidence in this volume suggests overwhelmingly that prenegotiation triggers, shapes, and structures the negotiation that follows. The process of getting to the table defines the boundaries, identifies the participants, and shapes the agenda at the table. A valid theory of prenegotiation can make an important contribution to the larger theory of negotiation. Our analyses also suggest that much of what is important in the management of international conflict and much of the significant learning that does occur happen as leaders approach and avoid the table. Whether they get to the table and what they do there may be less important for the management of international conflict than what leaders learn and do as they consider going to the table. Good theories of prenegotiation are important even when negotiation does not follow.

\textsuperscript{20} Lax and Sebenius, \textit{The Manager as Negotiator}, 59.