affairs or a precrisis situation presented in the initial scenario and create an atmosphere of emergency, with grave threats, high time-pressure, and extreme uncertainty, that drives teams to interact with each other.

Any opening scenario, especially those describing violent escalations, such as brutal civil war massacres, the takeover of a significant stronghold by rebels, or military retaliations to terror, should direct participants of political actors toward diplomatic talks. For this to happen the scenario should explicitly address the need for diplomacy among teams and schedule a date for an international event at the time the world politics round opens. It is also useful to offer a few points for discussion in the scenario so students can focus on similar topics as they revise their plans for world politics. Even if the simulation narrative is nonmilitary in type, such as a natural disaster, an economic crisis, or an integration offer between states, a turning point event in the opening scenario is necessary to create a tense, urgent, and acute atmosphere. These situations usually motivate teams to reach a compromise. In the course of such extreme events the participants can understand how difficult but still important it is to use diplomacy in world politics, to take advantage of opportunities, and to prevent escalation to violence.

To illustrate several story lines and formats of opening scenarios and to show the wide range of possibilities you have, we present examples from our own simulations. Each opening scenario builds on previous developments contained in the narrative of the initial scenario, discussed in chapter 5. You can adopt ideas from these stories for the simulations you plan or develop new ones that serve your curriculum and learning goals.

In the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict simulation, each of the political teams—Russia, the United States, Georgia, and the European Union—prepared a three-point plan for the reduction of tensions in the Caucasus region. To maximize the participants’ role in constructing the story of the simulation, we integrated the best points from each team’s plan into a six-point French mediation proposal as an opening scenario, as illustrated in figure 6.1. We took into account that both Russia and Georgia considered military tools as a second-best alternative, so military triggers in the form of a limited airstrike also appeared in the scenario to lower the chances of all-out war by highlighting the dangers of escalation.

The missile strike in this scenario was designed to set the agenda for diplomatic talks set for 8:00 p.m. Saturday evening, when the synchronous world politics round was to begin. Together with the offers for mediation and warnings against further violence, it was designed to compel all actors to join the negotiations. The unidentified attack was purposively described in order to add uncertainty and leave ample space for creative initiatives to restore stability. The detailed mediation plan touched upon the core stakes of all actors to shape the dialogue between them. At the end of the scenario we added some preliminary demands that would have to be met before the meeting could happen, to make compromise a bit harder so as to highlight trade-offs. In reaction to this opening scenario, all actors tried to bypass the risk of tit-for-tat...