

The Eighth China-U.S. Dialogue on Strategic Nuclear Dynamics

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Crisis Management Confidence and Security Building Measures

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- A. Crisis Management “Rules of Prudence” and Obstacles
- B. General Crisis Management Measures
- C. A Broader Approach to Nuclear CBMs

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Basic approaches to crisis management (“rules of prudence”) are logical, but hard to implement (I)

- Maintain **direct channels of communication** and send **signals** that are clear, specific, and detailed
- Preserve **limited objectives and limited means** on behalf of such objectives; sacrifice unlimited goals
- Preserve military flexibility, escalate slowly and respond **symmetrically** (in a “tit-for-tat” manner)
- Avoid “ideological” or “principled” **lock-in positions** that encourage “zero-sum approaches to a crisis and limit options or bargaining room; do not confuse moral or principled positions with conflicts of interest

Basic approaches to crisis management (“rules of prudence”) are logical, but hard to implement (II)

- Exercise **self-restraint**, and do not respond to all provocative moves
- Avoid extreme pressure, ultimatums, or threats to the adversary’s core values, and **preserve the adversary’s option to back down**
- Divide large, integrated, hard-to-resolve disputes into smaller, more **manageable issues**, thereby building trust and facilitating **trade-offs**
- Think ahead about the unintended **consequences** of one’s actions

Defuse, not win

Obviously, the desire to implement such guidelines would be greatest if all parties were primarily focused on *defusing* (as opposed to “winning”) the emerging crisis

Sino-U.S. crises present many obstacles to such rules and other CM approaches (I)

- High levels of **distrust**, resentment, and negative images
- High emphasis on conveying **resolve**
- Influence of weak/strong state **identities**
- Tendency to define crises in **moral** or principled terms

Sino-U.S. crises present many obstacles to such rules and other CM approaches (II)

- Unclear notions of what **types of interests/crises** might involve threats of force
- Unclear notions of **levels of relative commitment** in specific situations
- Unclear notions of the importance of **uncertainty as a source of deterrence**

Sino-U.S. crises present many obstacles to such rules and other CM approaches

- Blurring of **internal/external** in evaluating the stakes involved
- Different **internal decision making processes** create different expectations
- Unclear avenues for **authoritative** crisis signaling
- Growing overlap between strategic and conventional capabilities?

Steps toward CBMs

Thus, **clearer understandings of stakes, escalation thresholds, deterrence / reassurance signals, and overall limits on use of force** in general and wrt specific crises are essential as steps toward CBMs

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Unofficial (yet government supported) scholarly dialogues and related elite surveys on crisis perceptions and crisis signaling

- Designed to examine the origins and persistence of negative viewpoints and images, as a step toward developing ways to reduce their influence on a crisis
- Conferences between diplomatic historians, country specialists, international relations experts, retired officials, media representatives, and influential citizens
- Rigorous and systematic surveys designed to obtain a more precise understanding of exactly how and why the two countries create and harbor negative views toward one another

Agreement on the meaning of certain words and phrases used in crisis signaling

A multiyear, semi-official “track-two” dialogue and a series of bilateral crisis simulations

- To address
 - a. the **crisis decision making process** within each government
 - b. problems of crisis **signaling**, involving senior elite interactions, bureaucratic responsibilities, civilian-military relations, intelligence receipt and processing, and central-local linkages
- Particular attention given to how **standard operating procedures (SOP)** might influence crisis behavior

A joint governmental political-military working group on crisis management

- Issue a set of **working procedures** that define the modalities of authoritative crisis communication between the two sides
 - e.g. specify the conditions under which the existing **presidential hotline** between the two governments would be activated and employed in a crisis)
- Identify--and if possible rank--the **most authoritative sources**, other than the head of state, for the sending and receiving of messages outside the hotline, in order to counter the problem of multiple “messages”
- Consider establishing **direct lines of communication** between those **subordinate** civilian and military officials who would be directly responsible for implementing crisis interactions

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Nuclear arms reductions alone are insufficient

- Given huge U.S. lead in nuclear forces, and overall Chinese perception of military inferiority, any reductions must address **both strategic and conventional forces**, and broad suspicions and assumptions
 - PRC ASAT and A2/AD-type capabilities are pressing the U.S. to develop long-range, high speed, conventional weapons (such as Conventional Prompt Global Strike and aspects of Air-Sea Battle)
 - U.S. BMD systems are viewed as threats to PRC regional and ICBM missiles
- Such capabilities on both sides can create a **security dilemma** that impacts both strategic and conventional crisis stability

Establish a broad Sino-U.S. dialogue, encompassing all relevant strategic interactions: nuclear, offensive / defensive conventional missile systems, space, and possibly cyber

- Eventually develop a **durable balance of conventional forces** to obviate any need to ensure conventional security with nuclear weapons
- Provide information on **number of weapons intended for deployment** in ASBM and CPGS systems, to reduce worst casing
- **Ban the encryption of diagnostic data** transmitted during tests of high-speed conventional weapons (DF-21D and CPGS system)