

# THE EVOLUTION OF INTERSTATE SECURITY CRISIS-MANAGEMENT THEORY AND PRACTICE IN CHINA

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**A**s the frequency and scope of China's paramilitary and military presence activities in the East and South China Seas have increased in the last few years, officials and analysts inside and outside China have worried more and more about the potential for military crises erupting between China and other actors. Given the perceived high stakes of many of these potential disputes—they touch on sovereignty, territorial integrity, national dignity, and development resources—some observers are concerned about the risks of escalation to military conflict, whether deliberate or accidental.<sup>1</sup> Adding to the worries is uncertainty about China's commitment to crisis management and escalation control.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this article is to help fill the gap in knowledge about Chinese crisis-management theory and practice. Focusing mainly on the evolution of thinking in China about international security crisis management over the past ten to fifteen years, the study begins with a short introductory description of Chinese theorizing about the definitions and characteristics of interstate crisis, about crisis-management principles, and about how crisis management fits into the evolving military operations of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). It then analyzes factors in Chinese crisis-management theory and practice that might be in some tension with these principles. Finally it examines some of the problems that Chinese crisis-management experts themselves have identified in setting up a leaner, more efficient, and better coordinated military crisis-management decision-making system.

The bottom line is that China has developed a relatively large body of research on crisis management, work that more or less endorses the principles

and practices developed by many American experts during the Cold War. Indeed, much of the Chinese research explicitly draws on the substantial body of American literature on crisis management. Chinese experts have also developed concepts (e.g., nonwar military actions) and scenarios (e.g., border instability) that explicitly articulate roles for the PLA in crisis management distinct from its traditional war-fighting role. But there is also considerable tension between these principles and practices on the one hand and certain military operational concepts in China on the other. In addition certain biases—hypernationalism and visions of Chinese exceptionalism—are in tension with crisis-management principles as well. Finally, crisis-management decision-making institutions, mechanisms, and procedures are still relatively underdeveloped.

### CRISIS-MANAGEMENT THEORY DEVELOPMENT

It is common in the United States, and to some degree in China, to hear commentators pronounce that in the Chinese language “crisis” (*weiji*) means “danger” plus “opportunity.”<sup>3</sup> According to some Western and Chinese crisis-management experts, this is an inaccurate or facile way of understanding the term. Rather, “crisis” comprises the characters for “danger” (*wei*) and for “decisive point/fulcrum [*ji*] between life and death.”<sup>4</sup> Some believe it can also mean “danger” plus “turning point” (*zhuanji* or *zhuanzhe*), a sense in which some positive outcome is possible.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, a seminal study of crisis management by the influential China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) notes that the EP-3 crisis in 2001 led the United States (and China) to improve Sino-U.S. relations.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, much of the Chinese literature focuses on the negative nature of crises. One of the first Chinese works on crisis management, published in 1989, refers to a crisis as the intensification of contradictions between states that damages their normal relationship.<sup>7</sup> It is a situation with some probability of escalation to armed conflict or war, and where there is only a short period in which to resolve the crisis. It is also common for Chinese sources to describe a crisis as being situated between war and peace.<sup>8</sup> One source is explicit that there are three types of security situations: peace, crisis, and war.<sup>9</sup> More recently, Yu Qiaohua, a PLA crisis-management specialist at the PLA National Defense University (NDU), citing Chinese dictionaries, concludes that a crisis is a “hidden/concealed disaster or danger, a moment of serious difficulty[,] . . . a dangerous situation or stage where there is a possibility of war or armed conflict between countries or political groups.”<sup>10</sup> CICIR’s study calls a crisis a cut point in a line or trend of normalcy and notes that after a crisis the situation rarely returns to the status quo ante.<sup>11</sup> A widely cited NDU study argues that the resolution of a crisis means neither that complete cooperation has returned nor that the basic problem

behind the crisis is resolved.<sup>12</sup> In short, interstate-security crises occur between adversaries and enemies, not between friends.

Generally, Chinese crisis-management experts characterize crises much along the lines of standard American definitions. This should not be surprising, as much of the Chinese literature draws extensively on the U.S. literature.<sup>13</sup> In the American academic literature Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld's definition of a crisis has been the most influential. They define it as a political-military conflict where decision makers perceive there to be a threat to important interests, where stakes are high, where there is a growing probability of armed conflict, and where there is perceived pressure to resolve a dispute before it escalates to war.

Chinese crisis-management experts have adopted this definition.<sup>14</sup> According to the 2003 CICIR study, crises have three main characteristics: threats to important interests (*weixiexing*), high levels of uncertainty (*buquedingxing*), and a high sense of urgency (*jinpoxing*).<sup>15</sup>

According to a 2006 NDU study on crisis-management decision making, crises have five characteristics: they are threatening (*weixiexing*), sudden (*tufaxing*), and marked by a high sense of urgency (*jinpoxing*) and high levels of uncertainty (*buquedingxing*) but are controllable (*kekongxing*).<sup>16</sup> A 2008 NDU study of military crises argues that crises have four characteristics: the possibility of escalation to war (*zhanzheng weixianxing*), seriousness of threat to interests and costliness of escalation (*weixie yanzhongxing*), uncertainty about the direction of the crisis (*fazhan buquedingxing*), and urgency in handling it (*chuzhi jinpoxing*).<sup>17</sup> And the 2015 edition of the NDU's *Science of Strategy* simply adopts Brecher and Wilkenfeld's definition of a crisis.<sup>18</sup>

In short, according to Chinese experts, crises are dangerous, given that escalation to war is a strong possibility, but they are controllable through the application of crisis-management principles and mechanisms, as will be discussed more fully below.<sup>19</sup> As I will discuss later, the claim that crises reside between war and peace creates a potential set of missions for military power that are distinct from major interstate war. The problem is that, according to many Chinese military analysts, the PLA is still unprepared in terms of command, operations, and training to engage fully in crisis-management missions.

### *Types of Crises*

Yu Qiaohua identifies six types of military crises: those between great powers, those among alliance members or within political groupings, those between major and minor powers, those between states with traditional adversarial relations or rivalries, those within states between political groups, and those induced

by terrorism.<sup>20</sup> These types can be aggregated into traditional interstate crises, terrorism, and internal or domestic disorder (intrastate crises). Crises can be further categorized as those that lead to war (where one or more states provokes a crisis as an excuse for war), those that remain on the margins of war (where the threat or escalation to war is used for bargaining purposes to coerce the other side), accidental crises (where the crisis arises from unintended or chance events and actions), and quasi-crises (where sudden events in the context of somewhat conflictual relations precipitate a crisis but the probability of war is low, such as the EP-3 incident in 2001).<sup>21</sup>

As for the causes of crises, aside from the occasional nod to historical materialism (e.g., the claim that interstate crises are mainly a function of clashing economic interests, U.S. hegemonic pursuit of energy being a major source of these crises), Chinese crisis-management scholars identify a range of fairly specific factors and examples.<sup>22</sup> These fall into a number of categories from territorial and resources conflicts (e.g., Diaoyudao, Dokdo, South China Sea issues, energy disputes) to imbalances in, and the spread of, new military capabilities (e.g., nuclear proliferation in Korea and Iran, cyber weapons);<sup>23</sup> the spillover of domestic conflicts into other countries (e.g., ethnic separatism, terrorism, DPRK\* collapse, diversionary crises); unexpected military accidents and collisions; and the rise of new powers with more points of potential conflict with other states.<sup>24</sup>

### *Crisis Management: Definitions and Principles*

China's crisis-management specialists commonly define crisis management as involving the use of diplomatic, military, and economic means to establish an advantageous position from which to reduce tension, minimize losses, and get the adversary to compromise, all the while avoiding loss of control or escalation to war.<sup>25</sup> Crisis-management policy, therefore, entails "a series of measures to prevent and control the occurrence and development of crises."<sup>26</sup> These can include, among others, building confidence and trust, increasing transparency, strengthening contacts across militaries, prior notification of military activities, participation in multilateral security institutions, deterrence (and sanctions), summit meetings and regularized high-level mutual visits, hotlines, mechanisms for arms control and disarmament monitoring, and the use of informal high-level trusted emissaries.<sup>27</sup> A recent NDU study argues that direct communications between top leaders are more effective in restraining crisis escalation than sole reliance on military deterrence or economic sanctions.<sup>28</sup>

Definitions and characterizations of international security and military crises in Chinese research draw heavily from American academic and government research. Senior Colonel Hu Ping of the PLA General Staff Department (GSD)

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\* Democratic People's Republic of Korea; that is, North Korea.

was a major figure in transmitting these ideas to the Chinese crisis-management community back in the early 1990s.<sup>29</sup> In 2003, CICIR's breakthrough study on crisis management praised the rigor and sophistication of "Western" crisis-management research and the role it plays in influencing foreign policy.<sup>30</sup> Based on my own interviews with Chinese crisis-management specialists and from a look at the references used in PRC scholarship, it is also clear that a 2006 book coedited by Michael Swaine and Zhang Tuosheng on U.S.-Chinese crises—a product of a collaborative project on crisis management between the Car-

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negie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) and the China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies (CFISS)—has had an important impact on crisis-

management research in China.<sup>31</sup> The project has contributed to discussions inside China on the question of intracrisis signaling and it has contributed to a more critical self-evaluation of China's own crisis-management practice. Most important, however, it has helped propagate crisis-management principles inside the Chinese national-security bureaucracies.<sup>32</sup>

In particular, from this exposure to American crisis-management theory Chinese crisis-management theorists have converged on a set of principles for guiding crisis-management practice. The first analyst to develop such a list was Hu Ping, whose 1992 study, sponsored by CFISS, listed a range of dos and don'ts, mostly derived from American crisis-management literature.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, at the time, some in the PLA criticized his work as too "Western," as having insufficient "China" content. Judging from the frequency of its citation, however, this initial assessment evidently has not stopped scholars from relying on Hu's work. Later, in 2003, the CICIR crisis-management group distilled Hu's list down to six principles: "seek peaceful resolution" and don't think of punishing the other side; "seek limited and realistic goals"; exercise restraint over one's behavior; maintain communications with the other side; handle issues separately (e.g., don't engage in issue linkage); and avoid zero-sum approaches to crisis.<sup>34</sup>

The CEIP-CFISS project mentioned above appears to have been important in codifying crisis-management principles in China. The project participants worked out a list of principles derived mainly from Hu's 1993 book. By 2007, after some discussion, these principles had been accepted by both CEIP and CFISS:<sup>35</sup>

- Communicate with the adversary clearly and constantly and be specific about what is being demanded.
- Articulate limited goals; be prepared to drop unlimited ones.

- Maintain military flexibility, respond symmetrically in your options; don't excessively pressure the other side, and don't take the use of force lightly.
- Avoid excessively ideological positions; don't threaten the other side's basic values, and don't moralize conflicts of interest.
- Exercise self-restraint, including in response to provocative actions by the other side.
- Do not issue ultimatums; ensure that the adversary can back down in a face-saving manner.
- Divide large issues into smaller, manageable parts.
- Anticipate unintended consequences of particular moves.

These principles, or variants of them, are routinely cited in the Chinese crisis-management literature.<sup>36</sup>

Two additional principles are sometimes found in the Chinese literature. First, the geographical scope of a crisis should be limited to the immediate parties to prevent third-party intervention or internationalization.<sup>37</sup> Internationalization is generally considered a problem, because it can constrain freedom of action by bringing in the interests of third parties.<sup>38</sup> That said, Chinese specialists have argued that China can play and has played a constructive third-party role in crisis management (for instance, vis-à-vis the DPRK).

Second, China should respect international law, as international norms can generally reduce uncertainty and thus reduce the volatility of crises.<sup>39</sup> Two NDU crisis-management specialists, however, raise the caveat that national interest trumps international law. The main reason, it seems, for using international law in a crisis is to mobilize international and domestic support for one's cause. The flip side is that egregious, blatant violations of international law in the name of national interest put a state in a passive position and isolate it, constraining its diplomatic and military options.<sup>40</sup> Most recently a PLA study of military operations in crises suggests that if in border disputes China's forces (maritime and air included) operate outside its boundaries, it will have to abide by international law, and the prior permission of highest-level decision makers will be required.<sup>41</sup> Doing so, however, helps China gain the moral high ground.

Some of these principles are conditioned by the admonition that there are certain questions on which China cannot compromise or make concessions. NDU's Wang Yong lists these as issues related to national dignity, territorial integrity, or national unity.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, he and a coauthor argue that once a crisis has evolved to a point where "core interests" are threatened, standard crisis-management principles no longer apply and one has instead to use resolute methods to counter the adversary. Those methods include military means if necessary, though

with restraint, such that the adversary's core interests are not threatened.<sup>43</sup> Yu Qiaohua, for his part, includes these three in his list but adds others: long-term national development, the stability of political power, and ethnic unity.<sup>44</sup> He adds elsewhere that "sovereignty is more important than everything."<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the principles they now share with American crisis-management theoreticians, Chinese specialists point to some that they believe are uniquely rooted in Chinese historical experience. These are embodied in the phrase "just, advantageous, restrained" (*youli, youli, youjie*), an axiom often cited as a guiding principle in China's own approach to crisis management. Its meaning comes from its historical origins in the anti-Japanese war, when the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang were fighting each other while at the same time trying to collaborate against Japan. "Just" refers to the principle of self-defensive actions (*ziwei*), that of not going on the offensive or attacking without provocation or reason. In other words, it means exercising restraint even in conflict situations but reserving the right to strike second, to retaliate. "Advantageous" refers to the principle of seeking victory—that is, being fully prepared for struggle, while avoiding unnecessary losses from pursuing overly ambitious goals. "Restrained" connotes self-control in operations—not pursuing an adversary to a total victory, refraining from escalation even after defeating an attack.<sup>46</sup>

It is, of course, unclear to what extent this axiom actually constrains China's crisis-management behavior. One argument might be that, like the language of exceptionalism in the United States, the axiom is a self-justification of behavior that in fact violates its principles. Alternatively, it could have a domestic political purpose, that of justifying concessions (restraint) after a politically acceptable level of demands has been made (just, advantageous).

Another principle that Chinese experts claim to be particularly salient in Chinese thinking is the blending of crisis prevention and crisis management. Chinese ideas on crisis management often include more-general proposals about the need to promote economic development or political stabilization in failed states and regions, to build trust, etc., before focusing on specific crisis-management mechanisms. In my private conversations with them, some Chinese crisis-management specialists have stressed the role that track II (that is, unofficial) diplomacy could play in allowing all sides to gauge the stakes at hand and to enhance their determination to avoid confrontations. My Chinese interlocutors have not been confident that these kinds of measures would necessarily resolve major conflictual issues, such as those relating to Taiwan or the South China Sea, but they believe they could reduce the probability of confrontation.<sup>47</sup> Some have suggested that joint risk-reduction centers, joint crisis-analysis projects, or direct communications links between relevant military operations departments in China and other countries could also be useful in crisis prevention.

### *The Status of Crisis Management in PLA Military Operations*

As they theorized about crises and crisis management in general, over the last ten years or so PLA experts have begun to think both more conceptually and more concretely about the role of military operations in international crises. Their research appears to be moving from exploring (and even mimicking, to some degree) American-based work to developing concepts of military operations and of signaling more tailored to Chinese conditions.

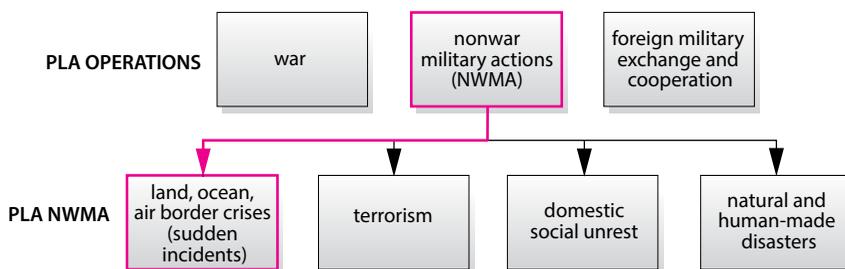
The first official reference to a special PLA role in military crises or “sudden incidents” (*tufa shijian*) came in the 2002 *Government Work Report* presented to the National People’s Congress in March of that year. In it Premier Zhu Rongji called for strengthening the PLA’s ability to fight self-defensive wars and deal with sudden incidents under high-technology conditions.<sup>48</sup> Two major real-world developments appear to have dovetailed during the years 2004–2009 to push forward this new focus on military crisis operations. One was a growing focus on domestic crisis management and on emergency-response laws, institutions, and operations in general. This impulse grew mainly from the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) experience in 2003 but also from problems experienced in coordinating responses to natural disasters.<sup>49</sup> In 2004 and 2005, in a flurry of legislation and institution creation, offices in charge of crisis and emergency response were quickly set up at all levels of government. Some of this legislation specifically addressed the role of the PLA in domestic emergency responses of various types.<sup>50</sup> A second factor, one outside China, was the U.S. development of the concept of military operations other than war (MOOTW). It may have played a role in sharpening the PLA’s focus on organization and operations in external crises short of war.<sup>51</sup>

As a result of these developments, in 2006 new PLA headquarters regulations (*silingbu tiaoli*) were issued that for the first time identified the handling of sudden incidents as an important part of PLA operations and outlined the principles, basic procedures, and important points of attention in this type of mission.<sup>52</sup> In the same year the top military decision-making body, the Central Military Commission (CMC), approved the *Overall Contingency Plans for the Military’s Handling of Sudden Incidents*.<sup>53</sup> This plan identified five types of such contingencies or events, the first being “military-conflict sudden events,” or military crises.<sup>54</sup> The 2008 *White Paper on National Defense* was the first to use the term “nonwar military actions” (NWMA), the Chinese term for MOOTW.<sup>55</sup>

The NWMA concept allowed the PLA to place crisis-management operations into a three-category overall typology of military operations (see figure 1): war, nonwar military operations, and foreign-military cooperation.

Crisis management falls in the NWMA category. Within this category are four subtypes of crises, or sudden incidents, that could require the use of military force:<sup>56</sup>

**FIGURE 1**  
**THE STATUS OF MILITARY CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN PLA NONWAR MILITARY ACTIONS**



- Incidents involving challenges to China’s control over its land, ocean, or air boundaries
- Incidents involving terrorist attacks
- Incidents involving domestic social unrest
- Incidents involving natural or human-made disasters.

According to Chinese experts, international security crisis management, as generally defined by both American and Chinese specialists alike, applies mainly to the first subtype—handling crises on China’s land, sea, and air borders.<sup>57</sup> The PLA’s role is also greatest in such crises. In the remaining three subtypes, in most cases, the lead in the use of force would be taken by the People’s Armed Police or the Public Security Bureau. The PLA should, it is argued, play a role in these last three subtypes only when the crisis constitutes a serious threat to national security—the lives, property, or security of the people—and only when ordered to by the CMC.<sup>58</sup>

With regard to incidents involving China’s land, ocean, or air boundaries, PLA crisis-management experts have identified a range of scenarios for which they need to plan and exercise (and, as I examine later, the PLA appears to have developed contingency plans for some of these scenarios):<sup>59</sup>

- Small-scale armed conflicts with other states over land-border disputes
- Small-scale armed conflicts over disputed ocean areas, over jurisdiction over shoals and reefs, and over the exploitation of resources in exclusive economic zones
- Small-scale military surveillance and harassment activities conducted by foreign militaries along land, ocean, and air frontiers
- Terrorist or violent attacks along land and ocean frontiers by foreign-supported separatist and terrorist organizations

- Limited sealing of the border to prevent internal conflicts in other countries from spilling over the border in the form, say, of refugee flows
- Mistaken incursions by foreign soldiers or personnel into land and ocean border areas under China's jurisdiction
- Accidental incidents that harm China's interests, flowing from exercises and military activities by foreign militaries along China's land, ocean, and air boundaries.

This effort to figure out where interstate military crisis management fits into the spectrum of military activity is, potentially, an important conceptual development. It explicitly differentiates between the traditional PLA mission of using force in wartime to annihilate the enemy, on the one hand, and NWMA, wherein military power would be guided by the principles of crisis management, on the other. While the distinction may be hard for militaries to maintain in practice, especially those not having specially trained forces for crises and emergency management, the making of this distinction by the PLA is, arguably, a step toward understanding that the use of force in crises has different purposes, different milestones, and different manifestations than it does in interstate war. PLA specialists, however, complain precisely of the military's difficulties in adjusting to crisis-management practices, wherein goals are much more limited than in wartime.<sup>60</sup>

### *The Institutional Development of Crisis-Management Research*

Stemming to some degree from the 1996 Taiwan crisis, the bombing in 1999 of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and the 2001 EP-3 incident, there has been a steady increase in Chinese scholarship on interstate crisis management. Much of this literature is still very self-critical with regard to the sophistication of crisis research. For instance, the authors of a recent volume on the military's handling of sudden events noted that crisis-management research and analysis tend to be done by nonmilitary institutions about nonmilitary crises (e.g., natural disasters, economic or social crises, etc.), while the PLA's study of, and training in, crisis management has tended to focus on counterterrorism, not on crises occurring around China's borders. The authors recommend, therefore, that the PLA set up its own crisis-management research institute.<sup>61</sup> Some PLA critics suggest China's practical ability to anticipate crises is hampered by unsophisticated techniques of crisis early warning (e.g., the lack of databases and statistical skills).<sup>62</sup>

The first sustained research project on interstate-security crisis management was started in the early 1990s by the China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies, a think tank connected to the GSD's intelligence department. As noted earlier, CFISS published one of the first major analyses of crisis management, by Hu Ping of the GSD, in 1993. Since then CFISS has become a major

player in the development of crisis-management concepts and their dissemination to the wider PLA and to the civilian foreign-policy community. It has collaborated with the U.S.-based CEIP on crisis-management discussions since the early 2000s.

A second important site of crisis-management research is the CICIR, an intelligence-analysis institute affiliated with the Ministry of State Security. In 2002 it set up a Crisis Management and Countermeasures Center. The idea for a crisis-management research capacity was first broached around 2000, and the EP-3 incident and 9/11 attacks in 2001 soon underscored the importance of such a center. Analysts from other research offices and centers at CICIR are allocated on a part-time basis to the center. A handful of analysts focus mostly on crisis management, including domestic disaster response; they mostly come from the American Studies Institute, the Information and Social Development Institute, and the Arms Control Institute.<sup>63</sup> Judging from citations, the center's important 2003 book on interstate crisis management has had a major impact on crisis-management research in China.

Another important institutional support for crisis-management research is the NDU's Crisis Management Center, set up in 2004. It is clear that much of the more authoritative open literature on crisis management comes from this center or its affiliated scholars. It has produced research on crisis-management theory, decision making, and early warning, among other topics.

Finally, the General Logistics Department (GLD) appears to be another important site for crisis-management theory development. Specialists associated with the GLD are writing about the operational details of command and control in crisis situations, in part because the GLD is responsible for timely responses to internal natural and man-made disasters, as well as pandemics and epidemics, by virtue of its control of the military medical system. In addition, traditional military crises require the GLD to ensure the rapid delivery of appropriate logistics support.

Chinese crisis-management theorists have adopted and developed principles that, if internalized by top leaders, should lead to restraint in interstate crises. Chinese writings suggest that crisis management requires empathy, clarity, and non-zero-sum perceptions of the issues at stake, especially in an era of nuclear weapons.<sup>64</sup> This view is quite close to the American literature on crisis management. Indeed, much of the Chinese approach appears to draw directly or indirectly from U.S. theory and practice. The authors of a recent NDU study were clear that proactive American research into crisis management and crisis prevention was "one important reason" for relatively successful U.S. handling of crises in the 1990s and after (such as the first Gulf war and Kosovo) and for its victories in

recent limited wars.<sup>65</sup> The authors suggested that the relative U.S. success had to do with adherence to the key principles of crisis management.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the convergence in many crisis-management principles and the rather steady development of research capacity, some PLA experts complain that there is still insufficient emphasis on practical and implementable crisis-management mechanisms.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, these theorists recognize that crisis management requires the military to think differently about the use of the military instrument. They understand that the PLA needs to be able to operate at levels of violence below that for which it has organized and trained in the past. But there are some major ideological, political, and military operational obstacles to the application of crisis-management principles. I take these up in the next section.

## PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN CHINA'S CRISIS-MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

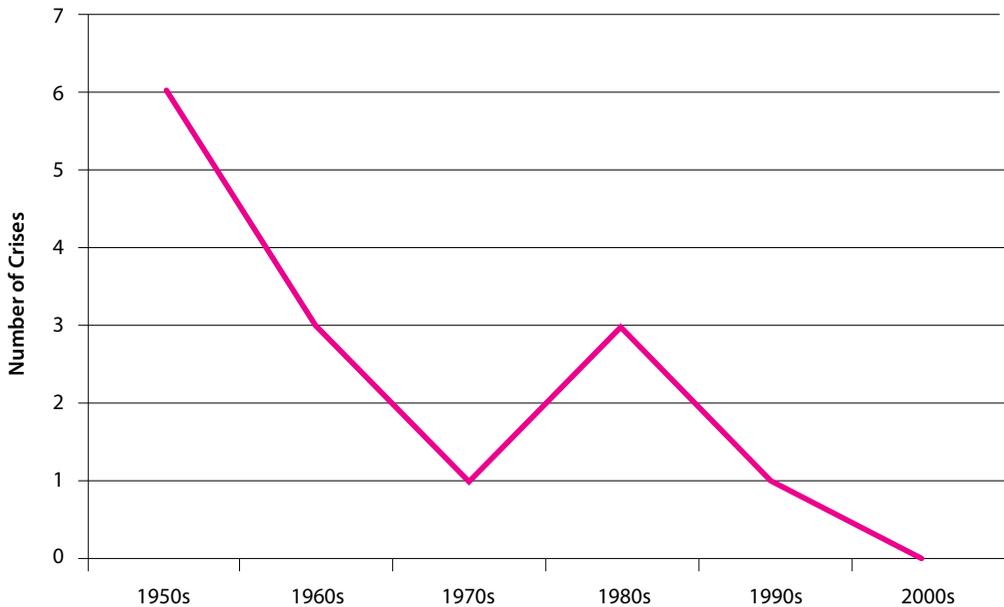
There is considerable tension between many of the concepts and principles in Chinese crisis-management thinking, on the one hand, and some of China's approaches to certain security problems, as well as certain military concepts and operational practice, on the other. Some of these tensions and contradictions are recognized as such by Chinese experts. Some are not. Many of them are not unique to China, of course.

### *Threats to Sovereignty and Territory*

A central feature of China's crisis-management behavior is sensitivity to perceived threats to the nation's sovereignty and territory. Concretely, this means that Chinese leaders have been more risk acceptant, harder to deter, and more likely to escalate coercion on issues related to the defense of territory and external and internal sovereignty than on other "national interests." In crises involving these matters it may be harder for them to preserve a limited-stakes perspective or to accept mutual concessions. Indeed, since around 2004 territory and sovereignty questions have been labeled "core interests," analogous to what Americans might call "vital interests." Thus far the content of core interests has been relatively stable. They include PRC control over Xinjiang and Tibet and the prevention of a de jure independent Taiwan, as well as, more generally, the preservation of China's current political system, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and sustainable development.<sup>68</sup> For some experts, the frequency of crises will increase as Chinese power increases and the scope of the nation's interests expands.<sup>69</sup> Others recognize, however, that in multilateral nontraditional-security crises, China may have to downplay its emphasis on absolute sovereignty.<sup>70</sup>

This determination to protect territory and sovereignty is neither new nor unique. It is, for one thing, evident in China's past crisis behavior. According to the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) data set, Chinese propensity to crisis

**FIGURE 2**  
**FREQUENCY OF CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY CRISES, 1949–2007**



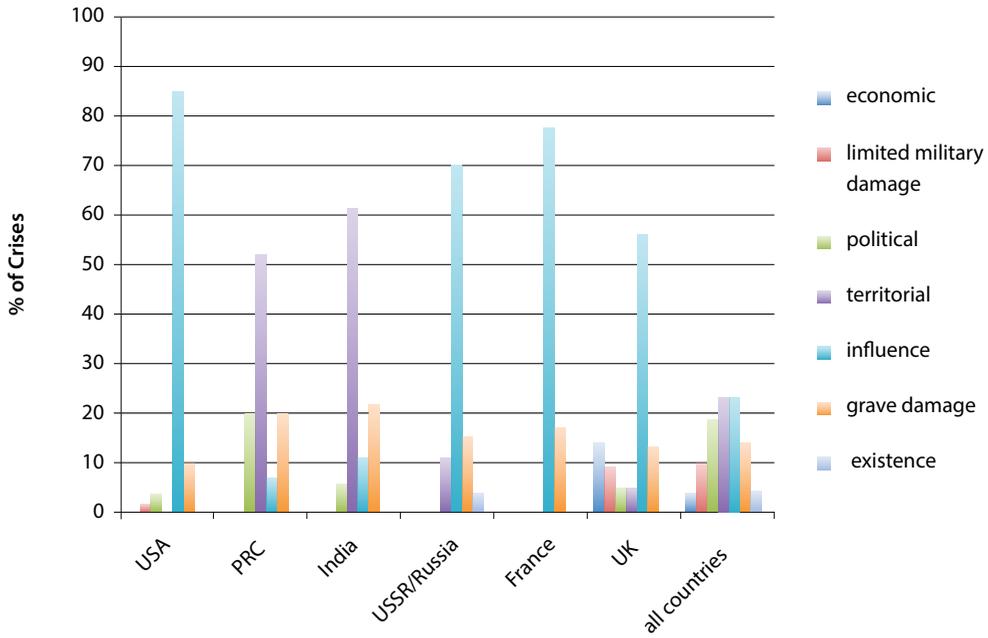
Source: International Crisis Behavior Database.

was at a peak in the 1950s and the 1980s. In the 1950s the key issues were Korea and Taiwan;<sup>71</sup> in the 1980s they were land and ocean disputes with Vietnam (see figure 2). The ICB data show that the majority of China's crisis involvement has been related to territory. This pattern is not uncommon for new states trying to establish the credibility of their control over boundaries or for states whose nationalism posits victimization at the hands of colonialism.<sup>72</sup> It would explain, for instance, the similarities between democratic India and nondemocratic China shown in figure 3.

Given the importance of territory for security and as a symbol of sovereignty, it is also not surprising that the level of coercion occurring in territorial crises tends to be higher than in nonterritorial ones. In crises where the main values threatened were territorial, violence was China's preeminent response in 50 percent of the cases. Otherwise, violence was preeminent in 33 percent of China's responses (see figure 4).<sup>73</sup>

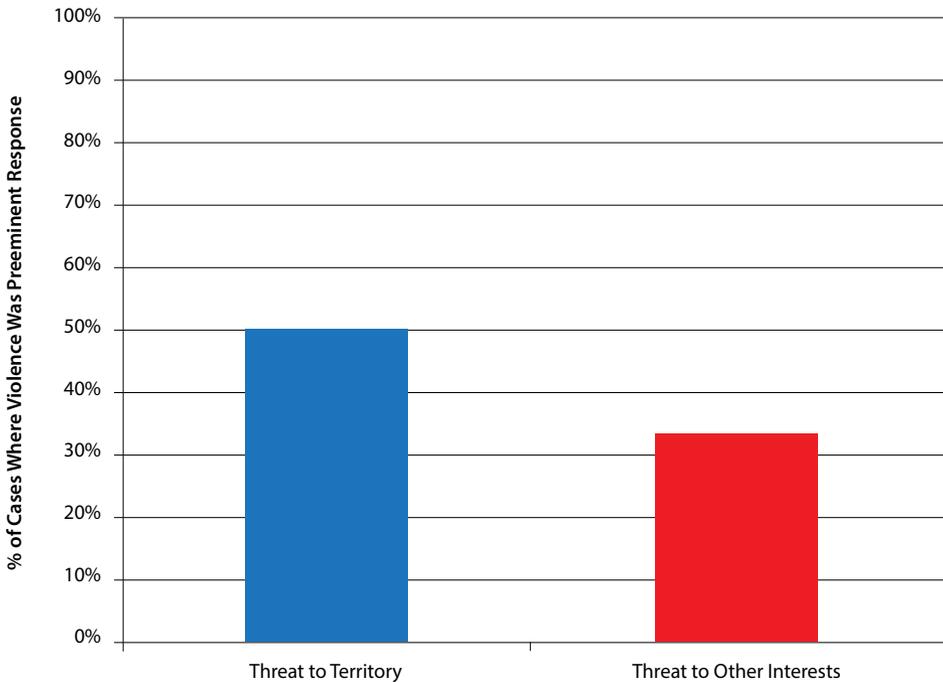
What might explain China's greater willingness to use violence in territorial crises? For the prereform era, the militarism inherent in Maoist ideology might be a reasonable hypothesis. The fact, too, that U.S. containment policy in East Asia was particularly and proactively coercive (at least as judged by China's leaders) may be part of the story. In the postreform period, we do not have a very large number of crises on the basis of which to test various explanations. Since many crises in the post-Mao Zedong era have involved Vietnam or Taiwan, the

**FIGURE 3**  
**COMPARATIVE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT ISSUES AT STAKE IN CRISES**



Source: International Crisis Behavior Database.

**FIGURE 4**  
**RELATIVE FREQUENCY OF VIOLENCE AS PREMINENT RESPONSE IN INTERNATIONAL CRISES, CONDITIONAL ON TYPE OF THREAT**



Source: International Crisis Behavior Database.

high level of coercion employed may have to do with the zero-sum nature of disputes over territory.

It is a little hard to know what to infer from these data about China today, since, as of the most recent data from the ICB (2007), China's last crisis was over the Taiwan Strait in 1995–96. Anecdotally, however, it does seem likely that the relationship between territoriality and intracrisis coercion will continue to hold. For instance, in my interactions with Chinese officials and analysts on crisis management, they have implied that in crises concerning territorial integrity, should an adversary take the “first shot” (e.g., an actual warning shot or the first use of, say, navy ships in place of coast guard assets) or threaten China's actual control over territory, Chinese decision makers may conclude that the issue has moved from the realm of crisis management to that of escalation dominance. At that point, force (framed as a “second strike”) becomes necessary to compel the adversary to back down. Such a response would also help demonstrate resolve against the prospect of any further escalation. Like their American counterparts, Chinese leaders are intensely focused on the credibility of their resolve. In addition, it is not clear that Chinese leaders believe the crisis-management principle of early and clear communications with other relevant actors applies to territorial and sovereignty issues. In a territorial dispute, China might decline to initiate top-level crisis-management communications with actors who are not themselves actual claimants (e.g., the United States with respect to China's maritime disputes), so as to underscore the illegitimacy of their involvement. The same reluctance to initiate high-level contacts might also be on display in a crisis incident (e.g., a ship or air collision involving foreign military forces) occurring very close to Chinese territory but outside territorial waters. The argument might be that the illegitimacy of foreign hostile actions so close to China means Beijing is not responsible for initiating high-level communication (though there are different views on this within China's crisis-management expert community). On territorial issues the crisis-management principle of flexibility may also not apply.<sup>74</sup>

*Blurring of Internal and External in the Concept of Comprehensive National Security*

The Chinese crisis-management literature tends to draw no clear distinction between internal and external contingencies. It acknowledges that internal crises often spill over into external conflicts (as the SARS and certain nontraditional security crises have suggested), and vice versa.<sup>75</sup> Chinese analysts' lists of the crises in which China has been involved in the past or may be involved in the future invariably include both external (e.g., the Korean War, the border war with Vietnam in 1979, the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in 1999, the DPRK nuclear crisis of 2002, conflicts over ocean rights in the South and East China Seas) and internal crises (e.g., Tiananmen in 1989, SARS in 2003, Taiwan independence, Tibet and Xinjiang separatism).<sup>76</sup>

The focus on the link between external and internal crises, however, implies that international crises can increase the intensity of any domestic legitimacy problems then ongoing.<sup>77</sup> In the view of one NDU study, external crisis affects “comprehensive security,” which includes social and economic stability.<sup>78</sup> The flip side of this is that international crises can also have a useful secondary effect in reinforcing domestic legitimacy and cohesion.<sup>79</sup>

Whether a crisis threatens or helps domestic stability, for Chinese experts effective crisis management includes information management—constraining and guiding public opinion and avoiding domestic public debate that “limits the space for the government to handle the crisis situation.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, according to these experts, a guiding axiom should be to consider the implications of external crises for domestic political power and stability.<sup>81</sup> As the 2003 CICIR study put it, in crisis management the leadership needs to prevent a bilateral political crisis from expanding into, or influencing, a domestic social one. Otherwise the population’s emotional and fearful responses could constrain options. Therefore, the authors argue, it is critical to manage the media and use them to guide public opinion.<sup>82</sup> Or in the words of the 2010 Shanghai Institutes of International Studies (SIIS) study, in crises “China’s policy propaganda to a large extent is aimed at the internal population.”<sup>83</sup> The risk for crisis management, however, is that this link between external crisis and internal legitimacy can raise the stakes in a crisis, making concessions harder. Indeed, according to some PLA authors, on issues related to domestic stability and the unity of ethnic nationalities in China there is no room for bargaining in a crisis.<sup>84</sup>

Another implication of the blurring of inner and outer has to do with how some in China and outside view ethnic Chinese as potential extensions of PRC power and influence. Some analysts see overseas Chinese as useful tools in crisis management, particularly in information and perception management. They recommend making use of overseas Chinese networks to make Beijing’s case in a crisis.<sup>85</sup> The downside for crisis management, however, is that other countries might see their ethnic Chinese communities as tools or agents of Chinese power and therefore as threats. For example, anti-Chinese sentiments in Indonesia have historically been a source of tension in PRC-Indonesian relations; also, there is survey evidence that a substantial minority of the U.S. population (around 30–35 percent) view Chinese Americans as less loyal to the United States than to China.<sup>86</sup> The risk for crisis management is that trying to exploit the presence of overseas Chinese to lobby in favor of China’s position, or even creating that impression, could lead to a backlash against them. In the American case, that in turn could accentuate zero-sum, racist, and ethnocentric perceptions in the domestic politics of the bilateral U.S.-Chinese relationship, with concomitant negative effects on long-term bilateral political stability.

### *The Need to Claim the Moral Upper Hand*

A number of Chinese sources note that in a crisis the nation's leaders need to appear to hold a normatively superior position, to be seen as just (*zhengyi*) and moral (*daoyi*). Preserving this image is considered a national interest.<sup>87</sup> This may explain the highly moralistic language used in crises. Some experts claim that one of China's strengths in international crises is its ability to mobilize external support through appeals to its normative superiority;<sup>88</sup> others note that the targets of this moralism are often domestic constituencies within China.

A corollary to moralism is the demand for apologies and symbolic concessions from the adversary. In particular there appears to be a preference for adversaries to accept responsibility before China acts to dampen the situation.<sup>89</sup> This emphasis on putting normative responsibility on the adversary's head is inconsistent with the crisis-management principle of avoiding zero-sum ideological positions. Moreover, to the extent that the notion of moral superiority is internalized, it can lead Chinese decision makers to underestimate the perceived threat that their actions can generate. In other words, it reduces the capacity for empathy and perspective taking, and perhaps even the urgency to resolve the crisis quickly.<sup>90</sup>

### *Beliefs about Chinese Exceptionalism*

Another apparently deeply held belief that could affect crisis-management practice is the claim that, among the major powers, China's people, history, and current policies are uniquely peaceful and defensive.<sup>91</sup> These essentialized traits are rooted, according to many in China, in ancient political philosophy, such as Confucianism.

This self-orientalization creates a problem for crisis management, however. Social psychology shows that under conditions of perceived threat, the more one believes that one's in-group is uniquely different from others—even if one believes this difference starts with its peacefulness—the more one is likely to hold a realpolitik worldview and to support realpolitik practices to resolve conflicts. At the level of the individual, perceived threats to the in-group increase the salience of negative out-group traits. The more salient the out-group, the greater the perceived identity difference with the Other. The greater this perceived difference, the less empathy for the out-group, and hence the more competitive the relationship with the out-group is perceived to be.<sup>92</sup> This sense of competition tends to be related to a view of the external world as dangerous to the group. This sense of danger in turn is associated with a greater concern for relative gains, and a more zero-sum perception of international politics.<sup>93</sup> It is also associated with "attribution errors," a tendency to see one's own actions as unavoidably defensive in the face of an adversary predisposed to threaten. In a crisis situation, therefore, strong perceptions of exceptionalism may escalate stakes and limit options in more-coercive

directions. This may be especially the case when perceptions of Chinese exceptionalism meet perceptions of American exceptionalism in a crisis.<sup>94</sup>

#### *Absolute Flexibility (Quanbian)*

The concept of *quanbian* infuses traditional and modern Chinese strategic thinking. It means, more or less, “weighing the situation and responding to [advantageous] change.” It is an axiom asserting absolute flexibility; any limits on acceptable actions are primarily political, not normative. This concept of expediency appears as well in discussions about how much benefit one side can prudently derive from a crisis. In the view of one NDU expert, one task of leadership is to discover and exploit any advantages that might accrue from a crisis.<sup>95</sup> This requires that decision makers constantly search to see how benefits in one issue might connect to benefits in another. According to one GSD analyst, this flexibility allows leaders to use small crises to prevent larger ones and to use larger crises to prevent war.<sup>96</sup>

The question is whether, in practice, this emphasis on absolute flexibility reduces or increases the likelihood of crisis escalation. On the one hand, it could reduce escalation pressures, because a prior knowledge of linked benefits allows one to come to an agreement with the adversary earlier rather than later. On the other hand, the constant search for maximum linked benefits could lead a side to hold out for more, denying the other side any payoffs and thus increasing the chances of escalation. While some Chinese crisis-management experts appear to acknowledge this first possibility, they do not provide particularly clear guidelines for avoiding the second.<sup>97</sup>

#### *Conforming to the “Overall Situation” (Da Ju)*

The term “overall situation” refers to the general political and strategic goals of the Communist Party. Conforming to the overall situation (*fucong da ju*) means subordinating narrower or parochial interests to this primary purpose of state action. More broadly, the overall situation can mean the objective trends in the development of a situation, as correctly understood by political leadership. Some crisis-management specialists believe that China’s strategic principle of subordinating coercion to the overall situation is a source of restraint in crises.<sup>98</sup> To the extent that the overall situation in, say, bilateral relations with another country is to preserve positive interactions, this concept could dampen escalation.<sup>99</sup> Dialectically, however, the “*da ju*” could have the opposite effect. From the perspective of *da ju*, military setbacks are not necessarily self-detering if they either do not negatively affect the party’s control over the *da ju* or can be construed as supporting the *da ju* (e.g., losing tactically, but gaining strategically by standing up to hegemonism). A common narrative in Chinese perceptions of the nation’s strategic history is that “good guys” operate often as the weaker side and so lose a lot of battles but win in the long run by focusing on *da ju*.<sup>100</sup>

### *Weak-State Identity*

Many Chinese crisis-management experts start with the assumption that China is weaker than the United States. Despite the growth in China's relative material power in recent years, this still seems to be a commonly held heuristic; the standard for judging progress in acquiring power is often the United States. Accordingly, they believe, it becomes important for China to show resolve in the face of superior capabilities and to be less transparent so that the stronger side (the United States) exaggerates Chinese capabilities, by which deterrence is enhanced.<sup>101</sup>

This concept of "asymmetrical transparency" (*bu duichen de toumingdu*) may well enhance deterrence, but it undermines crisis-management principles. Some

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*A central feature of China's crisis-management behavior is sensitivity to perceived threats to the nation's sovereignty and territory.*

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analysts in the PLA are aware of this tension or contradiction.<sup>102</sup> As a recent NDU study put it, decision makers need to understand the trade-off in crises between hidden inten-

tions and transparent communications. The admonition is that in general one should not reveal one's intentions but should also not let the adversary's strategic misperceptions persist if they are disadvantageous to oneself.<sup>103</sup> Nonetheless, it is not obvious from PLA writings how this tension should be resolved. That is, it is unclear under what conditions one should expect ambiguity versus clarity. This makes interpreting Chinese signals in a crisis difficult.<sup>104</sup>

Another problem for crisis management created by the weak-state identity is that, for some theorists, weak states are, and should be, less constrained by crisis-management principles than strong states. For instance, weak states are under more pressure to show resolve, so as to compensate for limited capabilities. One also hears the argument that the weaker side should be less constrained by crisis-management principles because it needs more flexibility and maneuverability. A weak state's deterrence signals are easier to read. Since it cannot credibly threaten to defeat the stronger side, there is a large range of threats it will not make. Therefore, the weaker side's deterrence signals are, proportionately speaking, more obvious than the stronger side's. This line of thinking, however, can lead to overestimating the clarity of one's intentions and underestimating the provocativeness of one's actions. In other words, it can reduce the empathy required to understand the other side's redlines and to predict unintended consequences.<sup>105</sup>

### *Tension between Crisis-Management Principles and Military Concepts*

Experts acknowledge that the PLA is primarily trained and configured to fight wars, not engage in crisis signaling. They tend not to go into detail about the contradictions between these two types of military actions. One exception is NDU senior colonel Xu Hui's list of coercive-diplomacy tactics that could be

useful in crisis situations (e.g., limited probes, faits accomplis, tit-for-tat retaliation, and clarification of bottom lines). He describes them as mostly involving limited demonstrations of capability and will to capture the diplomatic initiative and create coercive pressure on the adversary to back down. He is careful to point out that conditions for successful intracrisis coercive diplomacy are quite limited, and that in the heat of a crisis nonrationality, information problems, and rapidly changing circumstances can lead to escalation.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, a closer look at some PLA operational concepts suggests obvious areas of tension or friction between the principles of crisis management and how the Chinese military tends to think about the use of force.

*Windows of Opportunity/Vulnerability Logic.* There is some evidence that in applying force in the past, Chinese leaders have been particularly sensitive to the closing of windows of opportunity or the opening of windows of vulnerability. They believe that force, even when China is relatively weak, can be useful in shaping the political environment early on, before political and military trends turn even more unfavorable (*wan da bu ru zao da*—“fighting later is not as good as fighting earlier”), in order to seize the initiative and emerge superior.<sup>107</sup> There are too few cases in the post-Mao period to determine how much this thinking has persisted, but it would seem inconsistent with stabilizing a crisis situation.<sup>108</sup>

*The Importance of “Creating Inexorable Momentum” (Zaoshi).* Central in Chinese concepts of deterrence signaling is the notion of inexorable momentum, whereby the adversary comes to perceive that unless it backs down China is certain to use decisive force.<sup>109</sup> Instilling this perception appears to be mainly an exercise in signaling willingness and intent to escalate—in other words, that the adversary has lost its ability to deter. The risk here is that in a crisis over territorial disputes, for instance, once a threshold of violence—real or symbolic—has been crossed, escalation might be seen as a legitimate tool to force the other side to de-escalate. The PLA concept of “war control” (*zhanzheng kongzhi*) seems to capture this process of creating “inexorable momentum,” by which, through credible threats of escalation, the scope and duration of wars can be limited.<sup>110</sup>

In some PLA writing there seems to be a hierarchy of means for creating inexorable momentum. For instance, the latest version of the NDU’s *Science of Strategy* lists eight methods of signaling (moving from least to most escalatory): public statements indicating a willingness to use force; raising of the level of weapons preparations; displays of strength through publicized exercises; redeployment of forces; raising of military alert levels; attacks on the adversary’s information systems (including cyber attacks); weapons tests and proactive disruption of the adversary’s military movements; and limited attacks as warning signals.<sup>111</sup> Actions at and above category five could be particularly escalatory in a crisis, since they

would likely be viewed as marking a very dramatic shift in operational restraint and official policy.<sup>112</sup> Variants of this list of actions for creating momentum show up in other PLA writings on deterrence, including a classified study of nuclear campaign theory.<sup>113</sup>

*Uncertainty as a Source of Crisis Stability (and Deterrence).* In contrast to the principles of crisis management, some deterrence thinking in the PLA stresses the importance, initially at least, of a *lack* of clarity and transparency, on the ground that uncertainty induces caution in an adversary (thus the importance of “tricking” [*qi di*] and “confusing” the enemy [*mi di*] for deterrence purposes).<sup>114</sup> Even some PLA authors on crisis management who acknowledge the importance of clear signals also caution that this principle is not absolute. Rather, there are occasions in a crisis when deliberately ambiguous signals can be used to ascertain the other side’s bottom line.<sup>115</sup>

*Controlled Hard-Line Policies.* Another tension with crisis-management principles arises from the idea that the controlled escalation of force can enhance diplomatic leverage and resolve crises to one’s advantage. Indeed, some analysts believe China’s uses of force in past crises are examples of successful crisis management.<sup>116</sup> As one author puts it, limited war—conveying that even higher costs could result if a crisis is not resolved—is a potential tool of crisis management.<sup>117</sup> Other Chinese crisis-management experts note the positive role of military force for crisis prevention and crisis-management purposes. Yu Qiaohua argues, for example, that operationally, military blockades, quarantines, and actual attacks are all potentially useful tools within a crisis, as long as “limits” (*du*) are observed and the overall political purposes of crisis management guide their use.<sup>118</sup> Use of such tools would be a case of “using crisis to respond to crisis” (*yi weiji yingdui weiji*).<sup>119</sup> Wang Yong suggests that military preparations for war and displays or flaunting of military power can enhance deterrence and thus serve the purposes of crisis management. Deliberately fostering dissension and intra-state conflicts on the other side to enhance one’s political influence in a crisis is also useful. In the diplomatic realm, Wang suggests, cutting off or suspending diplomatic ties and trying to isolate the other side can on occasion be helpful diplomatic tools.<sup>120</sup> Chen Zhou, a major strategist at the Academy of Military Science (AMS) and the lead author of China’s National Defense White Papers, argues that under conditions of informatization, precision conventional weapons can take on strategic deterrence roles that nuclear weapons had in the past. But conventional weapons cannot by their mere presence generate the fear in an adversary that nuclear weapons can. Thus, unlike with nuclear weapons, actual demonstrations of conventional weapons are needed to enhance their credibility as instruments of deterrence.<sup>121</sup>

To be sure, the use of limited military operations is treated cautiously by some crisis-management specialists. Yu Qiaohua himself admits that there are risks in using military force as a bargaining tool in a crisis: it can lock one into a chain or cycle of escalation.<sup>122</sup> SIIIS crisis-management experts argue that given asymmetries in hard power, China cannot rely on military force as a first resort in Sino-U.S. crises, even on the Taiwan issue, where the balance of interests favors China.<sup>123</sup> Still, these voices of caution highlight the arguments in favor of limited uses of force to compel the adversary to back down.

*Network and Electronic Integrated Warfare.* Computer-network operations and electronic warfare are of growing importance in PLA operational concepts. There are at least three reasons why Chinese computer-network operations might make it harder to contain crisis escalation. First, the centrality of computer-network operations in the early stages of a conflict (to confuse and misdirect the adversary, disrupt command and control, and thereby seize the battlefield initiative) may lead the target of such operations to assume they presage a major escalation by the PLA.<sup>124</sup> Given the importance for the PLA of controlling the initiative, evidence of Chinese computer-network operations in a crisis might be interpreted by the target as a more aggressive act than warranted by the crisis itself. This interpretation, in turn, will make controlling escalation more difficult. In the case of the United States especially, fears of attack on critical infrastructure, against a backdrop of substantial offensive computer-network capability and policy guidance, might produce a large-scale offensive response. Second, the difficulty in identifying culprits (attribution) in some cases can have an added escalatory effect, because, given the apparent centrality of computer-network operations in China's conventional operations, adversaries may assume that false-flag or third-party attacks are in fact Chinese. Finally, asymmetry between Chinese and American (in particular) levels of confidence in attribution may also be escalatory. Compared with many American cyber-warfare experts, PLA cyber specialists appear to believe attribution is very difficult. This may lead them to more-risk-acceptant behavior in cyber, (overly) confident that operations will not be attributed to the PLA. Conversely, the United States may be more risk-acceptant in preemptive cyber attacks or cyber retaliation against China, confident that it has identified the source of attack.<sup>125</sup>

## PROBLEMS IN CRISIS DECISION MAKING AND RESPONSE

China's experts in the field are, on the whole, quite critical of what they see as the deficiencies in China's crisis-decision-making process. Their criticisms basically fall into two categories: first, top-level decision-making processes and institutions, and second, military command and operations.

### *Inefficient Decision-Making Procedures*

Prior to the recent establishment of the Central National Security Committee in 2013 (about which more below), there was somewhat of a consensus among Chinese experts that China's crisis-management decision-making system was inefficient and in need of a major overhaul. As NDU specialists bluntly put it, China lacked an up-to-date national-security structure that could effectively prevent or warn of threats or command and coordinate responses to them.<sup>126</sup> The danger of slow decision making was that crises could not be nipped in the bud with political and diplomatic tools. There could be major negative consequences—the longer a crisis festered, for instance, the more likely “hegemonic major powers” (e.g., the United States) would intervene to China's detriment.<sup>127</sup>

The problems started at the very top. It was widely recognized that the post-Deng collective senior leadership slowed decision making by searching for consensus, whereas the system had been designed to allow a stronger leader to coordinate and enforce policy.<sup>128</sup>

In 2000, in an effort to streamline national-security decision making, the party set up the National Security Leading Small Group (NSLSG), led by the party general secretary and comprising representatives of major national-security-related bureaucracies. The NSLSG was set up with considerable hope that it might improve information flows and break down interbureaucratic barriers. However, it proved a disappointment in practice, according to crisis-management experts. It lacked legal standing and clear lines of authority. It was too slow, and insufficient for cross-unit coordination.<sup>129</sup> It tended to lack detailed plans and response rules. In any case, as Chinese critics point out, “leading small groups,” although they often exist for long periods, are by nature temporary responses to pressing problems. They are not designed to preserve lessons learned.<sup>130</sup>

In principle, policy options for the NSLSG to consider were to have come from the Communist Party's Foreign Affairs Office, the Foreign Ministry, the General Staff Department, and specialized agencies, depending on the issue (e.g., the Taiwan Affairs Office).<sup>131</sup> But crisis-management experts complained that in practice these options were not sufficiently staffed—issues were sent to the top, but options were not, with the result that China's leaders had to debate the issues at stake and determine the credibility of the information sent to them before determining and then choosing between options.<sup>132</sup>

Furthermore, it appeared that even when a decision was made by the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), there was no coordination mechanism to mediate among bureaucratic or organization of interests and ensure implementation. In a traditional military crisis, three basic groupings need to work closely together: the State Council system (that is, the national government, through the Foreign Ministry) handles foreign-policy aspects; the party-affairs system handles

organizational issues (through the party Secretariat), propaganda (Propaganda Department), and relations with external ruling political parties (International Liaison Department); and the CMC system handles military affairs (through the GSD).<sup>133</sup> Horizontal coordination between these entities is very difficult without explicit direction from the PBSC. The CMC will not accept direction from the State Council on foreign or military policy. Other institutions as well have cross-system authority, but their authority does not extend to the PLA. For instance, the powerful National Development and Reform Commission, being at only the ministerial level, can coordinate the State Oceanic Administration (in charge of China's coast guard) but not the navy. The Foreign Ministry too is not authoritative enough.<sup>134</sup> Also, the party's International Liaison Department is not decisive in general foreign policy; it weighs in only on specific issues (e.g., it appears to have had a leading role in relations with the DPRK).

In short, there has been a clear tension between the need for quick decision making and the multiplicity of organizational interests involved.<sup>135</sup> In the decade and a half after the NSLSG was set up, Chinese crisis-management experts, including military ones, complained that China still lacked a powerful and authoritative crisis-management leadership hub that could effectively coordinate military and civilian elements within a clearly defined legal framework of responsibilities.<sup>136</sup> As one PLA study put it, citing internal critics, whether in terms of composition or function the NSLSG system was unable effectively to "protect national interest, preserve national security."<sup>137</sup>

In light of all these problems, over the years many Chinese experts in the field proposed various crisis-management decision-making mechanisms to replace or reform the NSLSG. For example, in its 2003 study cited above, CICIR suggested that an ideal system needs a small, powerful decision-making hub served by a crisis-management general-staff mechanism.<sup>138</sup> Diverse voices would need to be heard in the process. Beneath this decision hub, there should be, CICIR argued, an implementing agency composed of all relevant departments (national security, police, fire, medical, health, transportation, etc.). A third structure would supply timely, accurate intelligence; this information system would also be responsible for domestic information management, so as to ensure social stability and prevent the loss of domestic control, thus giving the decision-making hub more flexibility in a crisis.<sup>139</sup> One gets the impression that these were lessons drawn by CICIR from China's own management of past crises, not just foreign examples.

PLA crisis-management experts also made suggestions for institutional reform. In 2008, Yu Qiaohua proposed a crisis-management "decision mechanism" that would integrate decision making, implementation, propaganda, intelligence, and "feedback." It would be high level, small, and cross-bureaucratic.<sup>140</sup> Some of the most-detailed openly available proposals, however, came from NDU.<sup>141</sup>

Among their core elements was that China should build a “National Security Committee” on the basis of the existing NSLSG.<sup>142</sup> Its membership would be established in law and include the whole PBSC and the heads of the leading military, diplomatic, intelligence, and economic organs. This committee would design, prepare, and deploy a national security strategy. In crisis it would be in charge of decision making. It would be served by a specialized intelligence analysis unit to ensure the coordination of military (PLA) and state (Ministry of State Security) intelligence and to eliminate the stovepiping of information.<sup>143</sup> Within this committee would be a specialized “small group” with direct responsibility for development and execution of crisis-management contingency plans. Subcommittees would be specifically tasked to manage security, domestic/social, economic, and information/cyber aspects of a crisis. Beneath them would be an advisory group of experts and specialists on particular relevant topics, duly authorized to provide advice.

Providing further assistance, under the various NDU proposals, would be organizations in functional departments. These would provide detailed contingency plans and feedback to upper levels. In particular, they would focus on reducing frictions and inefficiencies in the military/civilian leadership systems, in the military/civilian intelligence integration process, and in the lines of administrative control over homeland and border or frontier security.

In the last few years, in light of the failure of the NSLSG to become efficient in crisis-management decision making, some experts suggested that the best that could be hoped for was for the PBSC to pick one of its members as the recognized coordinator and implementer of national security decisions, since (as noted above) no one below that level had authority to coordinate the State Council, party, and PLA. But these experts recognized that to grant such authority to one individual would likely run into two problems right from the start. First, it would imply a diminution of the authority of other members of the PBSC, who would be unlikely to accept any marginalization. Second, the PLA would be unlikely to accept any arrangement that could downgrade its status and access, through the CMC, to the top leader.<sup>144</sup>

I raise all this history as context for the decision in 2013 to set up the Central National Security Committee (CNSC), headed by the party general secretary and reporting to the PBSC. Reports about its composition, functioning, and scope are still quite vague, and as of this date the CNSC has not interacted as an institution with another country’s equivalent decision-making units. In contrast to the “leading small group” system, the CNSC is supposed to be permanent, though it is not yet an unambiguously legally established national or party institution. The CNSC handles both internal and external security issues. Much of the official commentary on the institution stresses its *internal* security role;<sup>145</sup> nevertheless,

some Chinese analysts believe among its tasks will be external crisis management.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, initial reports suggest that its main functional units are bureaus for strategy, intelligence, and crisis management, as well as a comprehensive bureau and an expert advisory group—elements intriguingly similar to the NDU proposals.<sup>147</sup>

It remains to be seen, however, whether the CNSC can reduce the tension between the need during crises for centralized decision making at the very top and the diversity of actors and interests involved. On the one hand, the CNSC explic-

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itly places national-security policy decision making in the hands of the party's general secretary, who outranks the leaders of all security institutions and organizations, including the PLA members of the CMC. Moreover, in

principle it moves the day-to-day management of national security policy up from the party's Foreign Affairs Office to its Central Office, the current head of which, Li Zhanshu, is a member of the Politburo and thus outranks the state councilor in charge of foreign affairs, Yang Jiechi. Li holds the same institutional rank as the leading PLA members of the CMC but formally works on behalf of the CNSC, which is headed by the general secretary.<sup>148</sup> That association may give him a degree of authority over the military members of the CMC.

On the other hand, it is unclear at this point how the new CNSC will actually function once it is fully operational. Its first meeting did not occur until April 2014, too recently to allow judgments as to how efficient it will be in a high-stakes, short-time-horizon dispute involving a real possibility of military escalation (e.g., a military crisis over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands). The functional bureaus were supposed to be up and running by the end of 2014, but that date was apparently missed. For another thing, the CNSC appears to be composed of the same fifteen or sixteen institutions and interests that made up the old NSLSG—the PLA, the Foreign Ministry, the security services, and the institutions handling Hong Kong and Taiwan issues and minority affairs, among others.<sup>149</sup> It is unclear that Li Zhanshu or his successor as head of the General Office will be all that involved in external crises, even though they are closer to the top leader than the state councilor in charge of foreign affairs. Indeed, as of this date, the Foreign Affairs Office continues to function, and some Chinese interlocutors believe the state councilor in charge of foreign affairs will remain, for the foreseeable future, a key interlocutor with foreign countries during a crisis.

Finally, there are some unanswered questions concerning how the committee will operate. One expert on crisis management from the National College of Administration has cautioned that the new CNSC will have to resolve the following four issues.<sup>150</sup> First, will it be mainly a decision-making body or a coordinating body designed to ensure smooth coordination among military, diplomatic, and other bureaucracies without replacing those institutions? Second, how will its responsibilities be bounded, given it is supposed to balance “internal affairs and external security”? (Xi Jinping has listed eleven types of security that would fall under the CNSC: political, homeland, military, economic, cultural, social, science and technology, information, ecological, resource, and nuclear. Presumably crises in all of these areas would be analyzed and managed by the CNSC.)<sup>151</sup> Third, what is the constitutional and legal status of the CNSC? It is currently defined as both a leadership organ directly under the authority of the party center and a state institution.<sup>152</sup> Its legal status affects its legitimacy and thus its effectiveness. Finally, will the CNSC have a sufficiently large, professional, and specialized staff to improve the flow of information inputs and decision outputs, and reduce parochial conflicts between participating departments and organizations?

That these are all still open questions well after the party stood up the CNSC suggests that it is unclear whether the new committee will fully fix the problems in decision making identified by China’s crisis-management specialists. As of this writing (mid-2015), Chinese interlocutors consistently state that the CNSC is neither fully staffed nor functioning as a decision-making institution.

### *Command and Control Problems*

Another question at the heart of military crisis management is how to employ the PLA to send clear signals and, if necessary, to respond to low-scale military challenges. Some Chinese specialists think that the nation’s options for using the PLA in a crisis are underdeveloped. They contend that it has engaged in purposeful military signaling almost solely on the Taiwan issue, raising the likelihood that should Chinese leaders try in other crisis situations to use the PLA to send political signals these will not be read correctly.<sup>153</sup>

Moreover, given the lack of experience among current Chinese leaders in coordinating diplomatic and military actions in crises, some Chinese experts believe that they may overreact to initial military moves by the other side. When Chinese leaders believe that a crisis is mainly diplomatic in nature, they may be reluctant initially to use the PLA for signaling purposes. This means that if other states resort to military means early on, in a crisis, even if only symbolically—for instance, shifting from “white-hull” (coast guard) to gray-hull (navy) assets—Chinese decision makers may believe the situation has evolved more quickly than they had expected to a serious military crisis and respond by escalating.

Beginning around 2005, there seems to have been some attempt to puzzle through how military power can be used in crisis management in ways that balance restraint (and thus downward pressure on escalation) with effective coercion to get the other side to exercise restraint itself. The PLA's Wang Yong, for instance, taking a close look at U.S. behavior in military crises, isolated a number of ways in which military power could be used by political leaders in preventing, or acting during, a military crisis. These modes ranged from using aircraft carrier groups (as signals of interest in particular areas or issues) to isolating or quarantining adversaries.<sup>154</sup>

Restrained employment of military power in crises, however, requires systematized and institutionalized analysis and planning in order to produce a useful set of rules, procedures, and templates for civilian leaders.<sup>155</sup> As noted earlier, in 2006 the CMC approved the *Overall Contingency Plans for the Military's Handling of Sudden Incidents*, which specifically identified five crisis-management tasks for the PLA, the first being the handling of military crises including border and territorial disputes.<sup>156</sup> The PLA has also set up an Emergency Response Leading Small Group, supported by the GSD Operations Department's Emergency Response Office and its twenty-four-hour emergency-response duty office. The GSD Emergency Response Office is responsible for coordinating PLA responses and when necessary coordinating with civilian units in all types of sudden incidents, domestic and external.

In addition, according to the 2006 *Overall Contingency Plans*, under certain circumstances division- and regiment-level commands could skip over the next-higher echelon in reporting on a crisis. Similarly, higher-level commanders could skip intermediate echelons to control forces. The point would be to have as flat a command structure as possible. In a crisis concerning national sovereignty, the purpose of this flexibility would be to reduce the intervening command nodes and speed up the response.<sup>157</sup>

That said, PLA crisis-management specialists are concerned that the PLA command structure is still primarily designed to fight and win more-traditional wars rather than to handle limited border crises. They fear that the PLA still does not train or arm itself in sufficiently diverse ways to respond to the myriad new operational scenarios that fall within international military crisis management (under the rubric of nonwar military actions). NDU experts, for instance, complain that the PLA has insufficient reconnaissance, early warning, and positioning capabilities to operate effectively in defense of maritime interests. Its personnel, they hold, need more political and psychological training to deal with large-scale terrorist attacks and informational uncertainty and rumor-mongering in complex political crises. It needs to revise fighting methods and its concepts

for a broad range of land and sea border crisis operations (e.g., how to blockade, intercept, deter, control, or defeat enemy actions).<sup>158</sup>

Moreover, according to these PLA analysts, traditional wartime command structures make it difficult in a crisis situation to coordinate with all the non-PLA units and organizations that are often involved (e.g., the various central, provincial, and local ministries, government agencies, and armed units involved in, say, border security, such as the People's Armed Police [PAP], the Public Security Bureau, and the people's militia).<sup>159</sup> Some PLA planners have worried, for instance, that the response time for getting soldiers to crisis areas is too long and that plans for physically setting up command posts to coordinate operations, communications, intelligence, logistics, and security in local areas are underdeveloped.<sup>160</sup>

Indeed, in recent years, the PLA has investigated different types of command models for handling NWMA including border or frontier crises.<sup>161</sup> One model would rely on a two-tiered command structure comprising a high(er)-level department's emergency management office and the local area command most directly affected—that is, the “key point.” The key point command organ would have authority to command forces from different branches and incorporate personnel from units in charge of land-, ocean-, or air-frontier defense management (presumably including nonmilitary groups). If the crisis were large enough to involve two or more war zones, the higher-level command authority would be national. If, in contrast, the crisis were contained within one war zone, the highest-level command authority would be the emergency management command office for that zone.

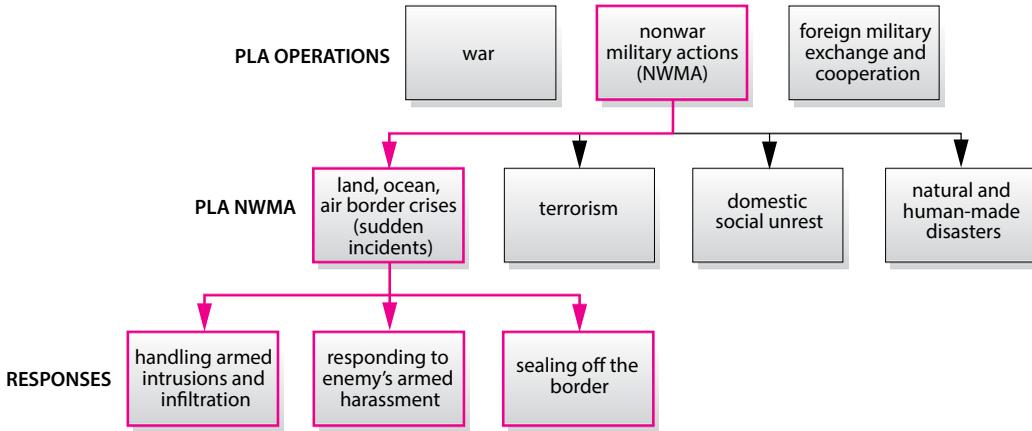
Another model for crisis command—for contingencies crossing two or more military regions or war zones—would have three layers. At the top would be the national-command emergency management or crisis response organization. Below it would be a joint military-region-level emergency management or crisis organization. Below that would be the local joint-command structure, comprising PLA, PAP, and land-, ocean-, or air-frontier defenses.

Under either model, first-line forces would need to have clear functions, rules, and legal support so they can respond as quickly as possible. Command groups dispatched to the scene of the crisis would also need more autonomy than they currently have.<sup>162</sup>

### *Contingency Planning Problems*

Regardless of level of command or how many layers of command there are, PLA specialists suggest that the emergency-response or crisis-management command organization at each level should fulfill a range of functions, foremost being

**FIGURE 5**  
**MILITARY OPERATIONS UNDER NONWAR MILITARY ACTIONS**



planning crisis contingencies.<sup>163</sup> These contingency plans would range from overall contingency plans for border/frontier crises (for the national military leadership, the military region and branch headquarters, and corps-level units) all the way to localized plans distributed to units at the corps, division, brigade, regiment, battalion, and company levels.

PLA crisis-management analysts envision contingency plans for three types of responses or operations (see figure 5).<sup>164</sup> The first is dealing with “armed intrusions and infiltration” by the enemy. Here, according to PLA writings, military crisis-management plans should focus on operations for interception, ambush, encirclement, and pursuit; confrontation and expulsion; and prevention of enemy landing, control of key points, cutting off of the enemy’s retreat routes, and surrounding and elimination of the enemy. There should be limits, however, PLA analysts believe, to these kinds of operations. In all such cases, command has to pay special attention to the political implications of operations within and beyond China’s boundaries. For instance, if an enemy aircraft infiltrates Chinese airspace, it is better that it be shot down within the borders than just outside. Once the enemy plane is between China’s boundary and the high seas, pursuit and attack should cease. Otherwise, should the enemy plane crash outside the border, diplomatic image problems could be created that put China in a more passive or defensive political position.

In the case of foreign military forces operating in disputed areas where China’s control is weak and the foreign country is “nibbling” (*canshi*) away at Chinese territory, the response should be to use bilateral channels to communicate China’s position, to engage in active military actions designed to deter further expansion, and if necessary to use force to expel the enemy from the disputed territory. This might involve directly confronting enemy forces, mounting surprise flank

attacks, cutting off routes of retreat, retaking small but easily defended parts of disputed territory, cutting off enemy supplies, or grabbing a high-profile piece of territory to shock and awe (in U.S. parlance) the adversary. The goal is to stop the enemy from occupying territory and yet limit escalation.<sup>165</sup> In this scenario, the PLA's actions, its own analysts insist, should be strictly subordinated to higher-level orders and to the overall border-defense policy.<sup>166</sup>

A second type of operation might involve responding to “armed harassment.” Here the key points of operations are gathering intelligence, warning of an attack, laying ambushes, attacking, blocking, and pursuing. The principle guiding the response should be, “Use firepower to strike; thoroughly eliminate.”<sup>167</sup>

A third type envisions sealing off or blocking access to the border. According to PLA research on crisis operations, relevant scenarios might include refugees fleeing domestic turmoil and trying to cross China's border (e.g., a DPRK collapse scenario); terrorists, ethnic separatists, or religious extremists on both sides of the border trying to coordinate actions; or foreign “enemy forces” trying to enter the country to engage in provocations. The situation most likely to require careful coordination of diplomatic and military actions, however, would be an influx of refugees from neighboring countries, such as the DPRK. Here, according to PLA writing, the first goal would be to deter refugees from crossing the border, ideally putting them in camps on their home country's territory. If this were not possible, China would set up camps just inside its border, well separated from local populations. The response would require a clear division of responsibilities between the people's militia, the police, the PAP, and PLA units, all under the command of military region-level PLA staff but, owing to the political and diplomatic sensitivity of such a crisis, under the guidance of the national command authority (*tongshuai bu*). Should there be among the refugees foreign military and political officials fleeing persecution or hoping to reorganize once in China, the command authorities would identify and disarm them, separate them from regular refugees, cut them off from any contact with forces inside their home country, and wait for higher-level political instructions. If these military and political officials were allowed into China, they would be put in isolated supervision and control zones (*jianguan qu*), in part to prevent foreign forces (such as from the United States) from trying to extricate or eliminate them.<sup>168</sup>

It is unclear how far the PLA has gone in choosing among and implementing these various options for command models, contingency plans, and operational procedures. The material cited here on handling border crises suggests, however, that such planning is certainly under way, as the sources go into considerable detail, down to the tactical level, about how to handle foreign forces “nibbling” at Chinese territory (e.g., India and various maritime claimants), refugees and retreating military remnant forces (e.g., from a collapsed DPRK), or terrorists

and ethno-religious separatists trying to cross the border (such as into Xinjiang or Tibet).<sup>169</sup>

Chinese theorizing about international crisis management has evolved relatively quickly within the last two decades. It is well grounded in key military (CFISS, NDU, AMS, GLD) and civilian intelligence (CICIR) institutions. It accepts many

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*The traditional wartime command structures make it difficult in a crisis situation to coordinate with all the non-PLA units and organizations that are often involved.*

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principles first developed by American specialists. In addition, within the last ten years, both civilian and military decision makers appear to have been wrestling with how

to set up decision-making mechanisms, planning procedures, and institutions for operational coordination and control in a crisis. Crisis-management experts have leveled considerable criticism at the structural (and ideational) obstacles to efficient decision making, including a top-level decision process that is slow and generally not especially well staffed or supported by an interagency policy process.

That said, there is considerable tension between crisis-management principles, on the one hand, and some basic principles and orientations behind China's security decision making and military operations, on the other. These tensions should not be surprising, and not all are unique to the China case: crisis management does challenge, to some degree, traditional military operational thinking. It is likely that most militaries and national-security decision makers face similar tensions and contradictions. Crisis management requires willingness to settle for less-than-ideal outcomes. It requires restraint on issues that entail, by the definition of a crisis, high stakes. It requires very strict civilian oversight and control to ensure that military operational preferences do not undermine political goals. It requires a mind-set that is empathetic toward the concerns of the other side, and it requires decision-making procedures that ensure careful study of the other side's interests.<sup>170</sup> Related to empathy are institutionalized, high-level, protected channels of communication between political leaders and between military operators of the two sides.

China's crisis-management experts understand all these requirements and have often advocated them in their writings.<sup>171</sup> The key will be whether top civilian and military leaders can be convinced to incorporate crisis-management principles and mechanisms into a leaner and more efficient civilian national security decision-making system and whether that system can minimize the impact of parochial military and paramilitary interests, intra-elite political competition, the ideology of territoriality, and Chinese exceptionalism. In this regard,

if crisis-management dialogues and mechanisms were given a more central and standard place in official U.S.-China military-to-military and political interactions, it is possible that the ideas of China's crisis-management experts would generate more attention at the top political levels in China. As a first step, China and its various interlocutors—the United States, Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam—need to dialogue bilaterally at the track I (that is, formal and official) level about internal mechanisms and exercises, by which each side might discern more clearly the other's redlines. They need further to engage each other about ways of institutionalizing rapid and transparent cross-national communications between the relevant military commands (e.g., U.S. Pacific Command and the General Staff Department's Operations Department) and between political leaders (e.g., regularly exercised and used communication channels between the U.S. national security adviser and China's equivalent). Finally, they must address the training and procedures needed to enable political leaders to understand clearly, and thus control, their respective militaries' operational plans and rules of engagement.

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#### NOTES

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1. Avery Goldstein, "First Things First: The Pressing Danger of Crisis Instability in U.S.-China Relations," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013), pp. 49–89, esp. the sources in footnote 2.
  2. See Lonnie D. Henley, "Evolving Chinese Concepts of War Control and Escalation Management," in *Assessing the Threat: The Chinese Military and Taiwan's Security*, ed. Michael D. Swaine, Andrew N. D. Yang, and Evan S. Medeiros (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007), pp. 85–110.
  3. John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, and Condoleezza Rice, among other influential Americans, have all used this formulation. For a history of this usage in English, see "Crisis = Danger + Opportunity: The Plot Thickens," *Language Log* (blog), 27 March 2007, [itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/004343.html](http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/004343.html).
  4. See Victor Mair's explication at "Danger + Opportunity ≠ Crisis: How a Misunderstanding about Chinese Characters Has Led Many Astray," Pinyin.info, last revised September 2009, [www.pinyin.info/chinese/crisis.html](http://www.pinyin.info/chinese/crisis.html). See also Li Xiaodong et al., eds., *Chaoxian bandao weiji guanli yanjiu* [Research on Crisis Management on the Korean Peninsula] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2010), pp. 95–96; and Chu Xiaobo, "Dangtian Zhong Ri guanxi yu wajiao weiji guanli" [Current Sino-Japanese Relations and Diplomatic Crisis Management], *Dongbeiyu xuekan* [Journal of Northeast Asian Studies], no. 7 (July 2013), p. 26.
  5. See Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun* [On Military Crises] (Beijing: National Defense Univ., 2008), pp. 7, 148–49; and Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji guanli yanjiu* [National Security Crisis-Management

- Research] (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 2011), p. 15. Another authoritative source, a study of crisis management by NDU scholars, does in fact argue that a crisis includes “opportunity” (*jihui*). This view appears to be a minority among analysts of security crises, but it is justified on the basis of dialectics; Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, eds., *Guoji weiji guanli* [International Crisis Management] (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 2004), pp. 2–3.
6. Yang Mingjie, ed., *Guoji weiji guanli gailun* [Survey of International Crisis Management] (Beijing: Current Affairs, 2003), pp. 4–5.
  7. Pan Guang, ed., *Dangdai guoji weiji yanjiu* [Research on Contemporary International Crises] (Beijing: China Academy of Social Sciences, 1989), p. 1. This formulation is picked up by other authors. See, for instance, Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece* [National Security Crisis Decision Making] (Beijing: Current Affairs, 2006), p. 14.
  8. Liu Junbo, “Shixi di san fang guoji weiji guanli de tiaojianxing” [Analyzing the Conditions of Third-Party International Crisis Management], *Waijiao Pinglun* [Foreign Affairs Review], no. 12 (2007), pp. 44–49; Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, p. 1. It is possible that this in fact reflects reading of Richard Ned Lebow’s *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crises*. See also Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 24; Cheng Xiaodong and Xu Xin, “Junshi weiji kongzhi xingdong fangfa wenti yanjiu” [Research on Methodological Question in Military Crisis-Control Activities], *Guofang* [National Defense], no. 9 (2007), p. 27; and Xu Hui, *Guoji weiji guanli lilun yu anli jixi* [Analysis of International Crisis-Management Theory and Case Studies] (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 2011), p. 17.
  9. Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi* [Border Crises Emergency Response and Control] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science, 2013), p. 11. As I discuss in more detail later, this conceptualization helps justify the idea of nonwar military actions as a category of military activity distinct from traditional warfare.
  10. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 9–10.
  11. Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, pp. 3–4.
  12. Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, p. 23.
  13. Indeed, one finds frequent citations to such major figures and coauthors in American crisis-management research as Edward Azar, Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing, Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, William Zartman, Alexander George, Ned Lebow, Charles Hermann, Ted Gurr, and Graham Allison, among others.
  14. See Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 4–5, 11–12; Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, pp. 14–15; Wang Jinhui, “Shilun guoji weiji guanli moshi” [On Models of International Crisis Management], *Xuexi yu tansuo* [Study and Exploration], no. 1 (2009), pp. 86–88; Wu Xinbo, “Managing Crisis and Sustaining Peace between China and the United States,” *United States Institute of Peace Peaceworks*, no. 61 (April 2008), p. 5; Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, p. 5; Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 12; Yang Jiemian, ed., *Guoji weiji fahua yu Zhong Mei gongtong yingdui* [The Spread of International Crises and Sino-U.S. Joint Responses] (Beijing: Current Affairs, 2010), p. 17; Xu Manshu, *Guoji weiji yujing* [International Crisis Early Warning] (Beijing: Current Affairs, 2008), p. 21; Zhang Tuosheng, “Zhongguo guoji junshi anquan weiji xingwei yanjiu” [Research on China’s Behavior in International Military Security Crises], *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi yanjiu* [Research in International Economics and Politics], no. 4 (2011), p. 104; Chu Xiaobo, “Dangtian Zhong Ri guanxi,” pp. 22–23; and Xu Hui, *Guoji weiji guanli lilun*, p. 6.
  15. See Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, pp. 6–7.
  16. Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, pp. 17–22. For an application of these criteria to analyze a potentially explosive real-world issue see the 2010 AMS study on crisis management on the Korean Peninsula in Li Xiaodong et al., *Chaoxian bandao weiji guanli yanjiu*, pp. 84–88.
  17. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 16–18.
  18. Xiao Tianliang, ed., *Zhanlue xue* [Science of Strategy] (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 2015), p. 105.
  19. Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji* [Modern Military Crises] (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 2005), p. 6.

20. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 12–13.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 41–49; Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji*, pp. 6–11. See Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, pp. 26–27; Chen Xiancai, *Tai Hai weiji guanli moshi yanjiu* [Research on the Taiwan Strait Crisis-Management Model] (Beijing: Jiu Zhou, 2010), pp. 106, 110; Zhang Tuosheng, “Zhongguo guoji junshi anquan weiji,” pp. 119–20; Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, p. 33; Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, pp. 162–66, 191–92; Li Xiaodong et al., *Chaoxian bandao weiji guanli yanjiu*; Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 107; and Xiao Tianliang, *Zhanlue xue*, p. 105.
23. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 93–94. A recent Academy of Military Science study on strategy suggests that cyber crises may become more frequent. Given their cost-effectiveness (low cost in terms of personnel and equipment, high value in terms of debilitation of information-centric enemies) compared to other forms of conflict, cyber attacks may occur more readily. See Academy of Military Science, *Zhanlue xue* [Science of Military Strategy] (Beijing: Military Strategy Research Department, 2013), p. 191.
24. In clear reference to China, NDU’s Wang Yong and Chen Senlin note that as a rising power takes on more responsibilities (e.g., peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance) or expands its energy sources, it generates more contact points with other actors that could lead to conflict (e.g., threats to nationals living abroad, threats to energy shipments, the possibility of being pulled into conflicts during humanitarian activities). Under these conditions the military instrument becomes more important in crisis management. Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, pp. 33–34, 216.
25. See Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 104, and Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, pp. 87–89.
26. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 95; Chen Xiaoyong, “Guoji weiji guanli jiben wenti tantao” [Discussion of Basic Issues in International Crisis Management], *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], no. 4 (2012), p. 110.
27. For an early statement of some of these measures, see Gu Dexin, “Guoji chongtu: guoji guanxi zhong de maodun yu duikang” [International Conflict: Contradictions and Confrontation in International Relations], in *Guoji zhanlue xue gailun* [On International Strategic Studies], ed. Gao Jinxi and Gu Dexin (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 170–71. For examples of different mechanisms, see also Guo Xuetang, “Guoji weiji guanli yu juece moshi fenxi” [Analysis of International Crisis Management and Decision-Making Models], *Xiandai guoji guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], no. 8 (2003), pp. 29–34; Xu Haifeng, “Lengzhan hou Zhong Mei weiji chuli zijhi de guanli yu goujian” [Post-Cold War Management and Construction of Sino-U.S. Crisis Handling Mechanisms], *Qianyan* [Frontline], no. 2 (2008), pp. 154–58; Xia Liping, “Mei Guo guanyu weiji guanli de lilun yu shijian—yi Zhong Mei guanxi wei li” [U.S. Crisis-Management Theory and Practice: The Example of Sino-U.S. Relations], *Meiguo yanjiu* [American Studies], no. 2 (2003), pp. 73–86; and Gao Xintao, “Weiji guanli shijiao xia de Tai Hai weiji tanxi” [Analysis of Crisis Management from the Perspective of Taiwan Strait Crises], *Taiwan yanjiu jikan* [Taiwan Research Quarterly], no. 3 (2007), pp. 10–18.
28. Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, p. 154.
29. See also Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, for his list, pp. 115–21; Li Xiaodong et al., *Chaoxian bandao weiji guanli yanjiu*, p. 100, for their list; and Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, pp. 361–62.
30. Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, p. 5.
31. Michael Swaine and Zhang Tuosheng, *Managing Sino-American Crises: Case Studies and Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006). In the interests of transparency, I should note that I have been involved in this project since its inception.
32. Interviews with various Chinese crisis-management and foreign policy officials, Beijing, 2011. Yang Jiemian believes that the Swaine and Zhang book was an important piece of research on Sino-U.S. crisis management; see Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 26; Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji*, p. 4; and Chu Xiaobo, “Dangtian Zhong Ri guanxi,” p. 26.

33. Hu Ping, *Guoji chongtu fenxi yu weiji guanli yanjiu* [International Conflict Analysis and Crisis-Management Research] (Beijing: Yiwen, 1993), pp. 167–73.
34. Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, p. 255. Some of these were later echoed in an AMS study of Korean Peninsula crises co-edited by Sr. Col. Li Xiaodong. He and his collaborators distill these principles to five: limit goals, maintain communications, signal clearly, avoid provocations that leave the other no room to retreat, and handle issues separately. See Li Xiaodong et al., *Chaoxian bandao weiji guanli yanjiu*, pp. 100–102.
35. For one version, see Michael D. Swaine, “Crisis Management: Confidence and Security Building Measures” (presentation, Beijing, 5 November 2013), available at [csis.org/files/attachments/131104\\_Session8\\_MSwaine.pdf](http://csis.org/files/attachments/131104_Session8_MSwaine.pdf).
36. For an early statement of many of these principles, see Gu Dexin, “Guoji chongtu,” pp. 172–77. See also Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji*, pp. 26–27; Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 115–23; Wei Zhijiang and Li Yanping, “Shilun Chaoxian bandao di er ci weiji yu weiji guanli” [Preliminary Thoughts on the Second Nuclear Crisis on the Korean Peninsula and Crisis Management], *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], no. 3 (2006), pp. 53–58; Chen Xiaoyong, “Guoji he weiji de kongzhi yu guanli—Nan Ya he weiji anli yanjiu” [Control and Management of Nuclear Crises: Research on the South Asia Case], *Nanya yanjiu* [South Asia Studies], no. 3 (2010), pp. 17–29; Xia Liping, “Mei Guo guanyu weiji guanli de lilun yu shijian,” pp. 73–86; Gao Xintao, “Weiji guanli shijiao xia de Tai Hai weiji tanxi,” pp. 10–18; Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, pp. 105–13; Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, pp. 53–54, 182; Cheng Xiaodong and Xu Xin, “Junshi weiji kongzhi,” pp. 28–29; Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, p. 247; Xu Hui, *Guoji weiji guanli lilun*, pp. 59–65; Lin Yi, “Zhongwai junshi weiji guanli yanjiu de lishi huigu” [Review of the History of Military Crisis-Management Research outside China], *Junshi lishi* [Military History], no. 3 (2012), p. 17; Chu Xiaobo, “Dangtian Zhong Ri guanxi,” p. 26; Chen Xiaoyong, “Guoji weiji guanli,” pp. 111–12; Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, pp. 35–38; and Xiao Tianliang, *Zhanlue xue*, pp. 112, 114.
37. Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji*, p. 26.
38. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, p. 115.
39. Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, p. 111.
40. See Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, pp. 138–39, 179. On the strategic use of international law for winning hearts and minds internationally and domestically, see Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, p. 158.
41. See Lu Hui, ed., *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian xingdong yanjiu* [Research on Actions by the Military to Handle Sudden Incidents] (Beijing: Tide, 2009), pp. 27–28.
42. Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji*, p. 26. This list is repeated in Cheng Xiaodong and Xu Xin, “Junshi weiji kongzhi,” p. 29.
43. Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, p. 156.
44. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, p. 115. Yu’s list, interestingly enough, comes close to what senior Chinese officials have since 2009 defined as China’s core interests. On China’s core interests, see Michael D. Swaine, “China’s Assertive Behavior Part One: On ‘Core Interests,’” Hoover Institution *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 34 (February 2011).
45. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, p. 102.
46. Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, pp. 309–11. See also GSD officer Lin Yi’s comment on the centrality of this concept, “Zhongwai junshi weiji guanli,” p. 15.
47. Discussion with PLA-connected crisis-management experts, June 2011. See also Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, p. 162.
48. Zhu Rongji, 2002 *Government Work Report*, available at [www.gov.cn/test/2006-02/16/content\\_201164.htm](http://www.gov.cn/test/2006-02/16/content_201164.htm). For a history of the concept of “sudden incidents” in Chinese politics, see Zhong Kaibin, “Tufa shijian gainian de laiyan yu yanbian” [Origins and Evolution of the Concept of Sudden Incidents], *Shanghai xingzheng xueyuan xuebao* [Shanghai Administration Institute Journal] 13, no. 5 (September 2012), p. 27.
49. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 71.
50. Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, pp. 128–33, 151.

51. For an explicit discussion of the evolution of U.S. concepts of MOOTW, see *ibid.*, pp. 160–69.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
53. Cheng-Yu Lee, “Zhonggong fei zhanzheng junshi xingdong de juti gainian yu neng li pouxi” [A Study of the Specific Concepts and Capabilities for PRC Military Operations Other than War], *Fuxinggan xuebao* [ROC National Defense University Political Warfare College], no. 100 (2010), p. 167.
54. Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, p. 176.
55. For a history of the PLA’s development of “nonwar military actions,” see Taylor Fravel, “Economic Growth, Regime Insecurity, and Military Strategy: Explaining the Rise of Non-combat Operations in China,” *Asian Security* 7, no. 3 (2011), pp. 1–24.
56. The list appears to be an authoritative PLA-wide typology. See Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, p. 18; Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, p. 3; Tian Yixiang, “Junshui zai yingji guanli zhong de zhongyao zuoyong ji qi fahui” [The Important Effect, and Bringing into Play, of the Military in Emergency Management], *Zhongguo yingji guanli* [China Emergency Response], no. 2 (2007), p. 31 (Tian is the former director of the GSD’s Emergency Management Office); and Dong Qiang, “Qianghua zhongda fei zhanzheng junshi xingdong baodao de quanweixing” [Strengthening the Authoritativeness of Important Reports on Nonwar Military Actions], *Junshi jizhe* [Military Journalist], no. 6 (June 2010), pp. 13–14. The PLA-specific *Overall Contingency Plans for the Military’s Handling of Sudden Incidents* includes limited military conflicts with other states; see Liu Shaowen, “Budui chuzhi tufa shijian yingji nengli yanjiu” [Study of the Military’s Emergency Response Capability When Handling Sudden Incidents] (master’s thesis, National Defense Science and Technology University, Changsha, 2008), pp. 9, 19, 28. While these subtypes do not all map directly onto all the purposes of MOOTW as developed by the U.S. military, there is sufficient overlap to suggest that MOOTW is an inspiration for NWMA and the incorporation of crisis management within it. MOOTW, for instance, includes deterrence signaling, crisis response, support for civilian authorities in emergency response situations, some counterterrorism operations, counterinsurgency operations, and peacekeeping, among many other activities of types similar to those within the PLA’s NWMA. For an early statement of U.S. MOOTW, see U.S. Defense Dept., *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other than War*, Joint Publication 3-07 (Washington, D.C.: 16 June 1995).
57. See Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, pp. 102–103.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28; Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, pp. 7–8.
60. For a more or less explicit recognition of this point, see Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, pp. 16, 24, 101, 152.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
62. Xu Manshu, *Guoji weiji yujing*.
63. Interview with Chinese crisis-management expert, Beijing, 2011.
64. Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, pp. 32, 109.
65. Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 98.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
67. See the GSD officer Lin Yi’s critique of the research, “Zhongwai junshi weiji guanli,” p. 17.
68. Michael D. Swaine and M. Taylor Fravel, “China’s Assertive Behavior Part Two: The Maritime Periphery,” Hoover Institution *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 35 (September 2011).
69. Xu Manshu, *Guoji weiji yujing*, p. 2; Pan Guang, *Dangdai guoji weiji yanjiu*, pp. 2–4; Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 34; Chen Xiancai, *Tai Hai weiji guanli*, p. 101. Some of the earliest crisis-management work also predicted that with globalization and integration, plus the rapid development of military technologies, there would be increasing tests of comprehensive national power between states.
70. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 76.
71. The ICB codes crises using the standard criteria in the literature: interstate conflicts where perceived important interests are at stake, those where the perceived probability

- of escalation to major violence is substantial, and those where decisions must be made under severe time pressure. For more on the coding rules for the ICB, see "ICB Data Collections," *University of Maryland Center for International Development and Conflict Management*, available at [www.cidcm.umd.edu/icb/data/](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/icb/data/). The ICB is the primary quantitative data set used in the study of interstate crises.
72. Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Wronged by Empire: Post-imperial Ideology and Foreign Policy in India and China* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2013).
  73. One should treat these data with some caution. The number of cases is relatively small: given a total of fourteen crises since the founding of the PRC, the inferences about frequency are unstable and susceptible to the addition or removal of a small number of cases.
  74. Cheng Xiaodong and Xu Xin, "Junshi weiji kongzhi," p. 29.
  75. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, pp. 41–42.
  76. Conversations with CFISS specialists, 2000; Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 9; Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, pp. 34, 96, 324–37.
  77. Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, p. 2.
  78. Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 29.
  79. Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, pp. 47, 345–46. The authors suggest that crises can also reduce societal tolerance for separatism, a domestic concern of particular relevance to the PRC. The blurring of the boundaries between external and internal is consistent with the apparent consensus in the PLA, discussed above, that interstate and military crisis management can be placed in the broader category of "sudden incidents." See Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*. See also Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 84.
  80. Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, pp. 245, 349. That said, one crisis-management expert suggests that China should use the media to mobilize the domestic population's sense of "ethno-national righteousness" (*minzu zhengyi*) to create psychological pressure on the enemy. See Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, p. 139.
  81. James and Zhang argue that in the first stage of decision making in crises, Chinese leaders are particularly sensitive to averting losses in the political realm (e.g., losses of legitimacy, party power, and personal power). They argue that this is a common response and not unique to Chinese crisis management. Patrick James and Enyu Zhang, "Chinese Choices: A Poliheuristic Analysis of Foreign Policy Crises, 1950–1996," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, no. 1 (March 2005), pp. 31–54.
  82. Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, pp. 15–16, 25. See also Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji*, p. 25; Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 137–38; and Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, pp. 166–67.
  83. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 112.
  84. Cheng Xiaodong and Xu Xin, "Junshi weiji kongzhi," p. 29.
  85. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, pp. 112–13.
  86. See "U.S.-China Public Perceptions Opinion Survey 2012," *Committee of 100*, survey [committee100.org/](http://committee100.org/); and "Still the 'Other?' Public Attitudes toward Chinese and Asian Americans," *Committee of 100*, survey [committee100.org/C100\\_2009Report.pptx](http://committee100.org/C100_2009Report.pptx).
  87. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 100. There is some criticism of a tendency in China's crisis-management practice to obstruct clear expression of interest. See Xu Haifeng, "Lengzhan hou Zhong Mei weiji," pp. 154–58.
  88. See Chen Xiancai, *Tai Hai weiji guanli*, p. 105.
  89. See Wu Xinbo, "Managing Crisis," p. 24.
  90. My thanks to Alison Kaufman for this last point.
  91. See, for instance, Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, p. 102; and Ding Bangquan, Tang Yongsheng, and Yu Manshu, *Guoji weiji guanli*, pp. 94–96. In a classic case of self-stereotyping, Xi Jinping has stated that Chinese people do not have the "genes" for invasion; see "Xi: There Is No Gene for Invasion in Our Blood," *China Daily*, 16 May 2014, available at [www.china.org.cn/china/2014-05/16/content\\_32406301.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2014-05/16/content_32406301.htm).
  92. Mina Cikara et al., "Their Pain Gives Us Pleasure: How Intergroup Dynamics Shape Empathic Failures and Counter-empathic Responses," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 55 (2014), pp. 110–25.

93. Mina Cikara and Jay J. Van Bavel, "The Neuroscience of Intergroup Relations: An Integrative Review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 9, no. 3 (2014), pp. 245–74; Cikara et al., "Their Pain Gives Us Pleasure," pp. 110–25.
94. On the foreign policy effects of American exceptionalism see Donald R. Kinder and Cindy D. Kam, *Us against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010).
95. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 153–54.
96. Lin Yi, "Zhongwai junshi weiji guanli," p. 18.
97. Back in 1995, NDU crisis-management expert Gu Dexin wrote that it was important for crisis stability that one side allow the other some benefit. Gu Dexin, "Guoji chongtu," p. 173.
98. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 106.
99. Cheng Xiaodong and Xu Xin, "Junshi weiji kongzhi," p. 28.
100. I benefited from Ron Christman's analysis of the concept of "overall situation" in "How Beijing Evaluates Military Campaigns: An Initial Assessment," in *The Lessons of History: The Chinese People's Liberation Army at 75*, ed. Laurie Burkitt, Andrew Scobell, and Larry M. Wortzel (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2003).
101. See, for instance, the discussion of the value of appropriate levels of ambiguity for nuclear deterrence in the Academy of Military Science, *Zhanlue xue*, p. 173. In conversations with PLA officers over the years, when the concept of asymmetric transparency comes up I have pointed out that China is both the weaker state vis-à-vis the United States and the stronger vis-à-vis smaller countries around its periphery. Thus, by the logic of asymmetrical transparency China should be more transparent in relation to these smaller states. On two occasions fifteen years apart my interlocutors indicated that they had never thought about this dilemma before. In the context of the United States as a reference group, for some in the PLA it is apparently not common to think empathetically about weaker states.
102. Interview with CICIR official, June 2011. See also PLA political work officer Zhou Yang's comment that in maritime disputes there is a contradiction between China's moderate position on shelving disputes and jointly developing the region, on the one hand, and regional fears of Chinese power, on the other. Zhou Yang, "Guoji chuanbo celue de yunyong—yi Zhong Mei jianchuan duizhi shijian wei yangben" [Employing International Broadcast Tactics: Using the Example of Sino-U.S. Warship Confrontation], *Xinwen qianshao* [News Outpost], no. 12 (2009), p. 54.
103. Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 193. See also Xiao Tianliang, *Zhanlue xue*, p. 112.
104. It may be that one determining condition is whether Chinese leaders want to communicate resolve more than they want to de-escalate a crisis. This would suggest that in crises related to territory and other "core interests," or crises where the other side escalates first, Chinese leaders will prefer clarity over ambiguity.
105. Thanks to Lonnie Henley for this point.
106. Xu Hui, *Guoji weiji guanli lilun*, pp. 48–58. Xu's listed modes of coercive diplomacy are drawn largely from the works of Alexander George.
107. Thomas J. Christensen, "Windows and War: Changes in the International System and China's Decision to Use Force," in *New Approaches to China's Foreign Relations*, ed. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert Ross (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2006).
108. NDU crisis-management expert Gu Dexin seemed to recognize this tension in his 1995 work "Guoji chongtu," p. 173.
109. A CICIR official has said that the concept of *zaoshi* is not language used at the top levels of civilian decision making but is PLA language; interview, June 2011. For a helpful analysis of the concept, see Forrest E. Morgan et al., *Dangerous Thresholds: Managing Escalation in the 21st Century* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2008), pp. 54–58.
110. On the concept of "war control," see Henley, "Evolving Chinese Concepts."
111. Xiao Tianliang, *Zhanlue xue*, pp. 128–31.
112. Goldstein argues that some PLA writing on the use of ballistic missiles as "shots across the bow" at U.S. naval forces underestimates the escalatory nature of such actions, particularly in the face of American incentives to go after Chinese C4ISR (i.e., command, control, communications, computer systems, intelligence,

- surveillance, and reconnaissance). Goldstein, "First Things First," pp. 64–65, 68.
113. See Yu Jishun, ed., *Di er pao bing zhan yi xue* [Second Artillery Campaign Theory] (Beijing: PLA, 2004), pp. 282–96; Wang Wenrong, ed., *Zhanlue xue* [Science of Strategy] (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 1999), p. 362; Wang Jinhui, "Shilun guoji weiji," pp. 876–88; and Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, p. 104.
  114. See, for instance, former deputy commander of the Second Artillery Zhao Xijun's discussion of stratagem and deterrence, *She zhan: daodan weishe zongheng tan* [Deterrence and War: Talking about Missile Deterrence] (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 2003), p. 33. See also Academy of Military Science, *Zhanlue xue*, p. 173.
  115. Li Xiaodong et al., *Chaoxian bandao weiji guanli yanjiu*, p. 101. This tactic is straight out of Sun Zi's *Art of War*—act in ways to get the adversary to expose its strategy while hiding your own.
  116. See Gao Xintao's claim that measured hard-line foreign policy has had successes—for example, bombarding Kuomintang forces in 1958 while avoiding hitting U.S. forces and establishing credible deterrence in the 1996 Taiwan crisis. Gao Xintao, "Weiji guanli shijiao xia de Tai Hai weiji tanxi," pp. 10–18.
  117. See Wang Jinhui, "Shilun guoji weiji," p. 88. This is not unique to PLA thinkers, of course. It is a standard realpolitik claim about the deterrence effects of escalation.
  118. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 128–30.
  119. *Ibid.*, p. 155. See also Chen Xiancai's claim that in various Taiwan crises, including those of 1954 and 1996, China successfully used a limited, though risky, escalation process to send credible signals and manage the crisis; Chen Xiancai, *Tai Hai weiji guanli*, pp. 148, 163.
  120. Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji*, p. 21.
  121. Chen Zhou, "Fazhan Zhongguo tese de zhanlue weishe lilun" [Develop Strategic Deterrence Theory with Chinese Characteristics], in *Mianxiang weilai de guojia anquan yu guofang* [National Security and National Defense Face the Future], ed. Chen Zhou (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 2009), pp. 214–15.
  122. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, p. 117.
  123. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, p. 99. Chen Xiancai concludes that China will be more reactive and passive in its crises with the United States owing to this asymmetry in hard power; Chen Xiancai, *Tai Hai weiji guanli*, p. 104.
  124. On the role of computer-network operations in PLA operational concepts, see James Mulvenon, "PLA Computer Network Operations: Scenarios, Doctrine, Organizations, and Capability," in *Beyond the Strait: PLA Missions Other than Taiwan*, ed. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Andrew Scobell (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), pp. 253–85; Larry Wortzel, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Information Warfare* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2014); and Academy of Military Science, *Zhanlue xue*, pp. 130, 188–93.
  125. On the low confidence in attribution among PLA cyber specialists see Academy of Military Science, *Zhanlue xue*, pp. 190, 193; and Lü Jinghua, "Guoji wuanguo junking wenti yanjiu" [A Study of International Arms Control in Cyberspace], *Zhongguo junshi kexue* [China Military Science], no. 5 (2014), p. 153. This asymmetry in confidence in attribution was clear from my separate interactions with U.S. cyber experts and Chinese military cyber experts in 2013–15.
  126. Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 344.
  127. Cheng Xiaodong and Xu Xin, "Junshi weiji kongzhi," p. 28.
  128. Wu Xinbo, "Managing Crisis," p. 25; conversation with academic specialist in Chinese foreign policy, March 2011.
  129. Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 339; Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, p. 123.
  130. Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, p. 123. It is unclear whether these criticisms refer to the high-level leading-small-group system in the party, or to the use of temporary leading small groups in civilian organs below the center, or to the use of a temporary leading small group in the GSD for handling crises, or all of the above.
  131. Zhang Tuosheng, "Zhongguo guoji junshi anquan weiji," pp. 115–16.

132. Comments by Chinese crisis-management expert, June 2011. This concern is implied in the CICIR analysis of the EP-3 incident. While the analysis explicitly refers to U.S. decision making, the episode would seem, reading between the lines, to be a lesson for China as well—implying that in a crisis there is a need for a permanent body (such as the National Security Committee) to process information before decision makers choose options. Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, p. 253.
133. Yang Jiemian, *Guoji weiji fahua*, pp. 90–91.
134. Nan Li makes the insightful point that military professionalism may in fact have increased the difficulty of coordinating civilian and military institutions. Professionalization strengthens the notion within the PLA that it is the primary and authoritative source of expertise on national-security issues. See Nan Li, *Chinese Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Deng Era: Implications for Crisis Management and Naval Modernization*, China Maritime Study 4 (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, January 2010). For a discussion of foreign-policy and national-security coordination problems, see David M. Lampton, “Xi Jinping and the National Security Commission: Policy Coordination and Political Power,” *Journal of Contemporary China* (2015), doi: 10.1080/10670564.2015.1013366; and Linda Jakobson, *China’s Unpredictable Maritime Security Actors* (Sydney, NSW, Austral.: Lowy Institute for International Policy, December 2014), available at [www.lowyinstitute.org/](http://www.lowyinstitute.org/).
135. Guo Xuetang, “Guoji weiji guanli,” p. 30.
136. Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji*, p. 36; Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, pp. 193, 205.
137. Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, p. 338. On the importance of clear lines of authority in crisis management, see Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, p. 18.
138. Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, p. 17. In 2004 the GSD Operations Department set up an emergency-response office. It currently has about twenty people and coordinates crisis management of all types between PLA and non-PLA units. See Dennis Blasko, “U.S. and Chinese Approaches to Peacekeeping and Stability Operations” (unpublished paper, 2011).
139. Yang Mingjie, *Guoji weiji guanli gailun*, pp. 22–25.
140. Yu Qiaohua, *Junshi weiji lun*, pp. 98–99.
141. The following draws from Zhao Zilu and Xian Fengli, *Guojia anquan weiji juece*, pp. 338–56, as well as from Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, pp. 168, 194–99.
142. These proposals are interesting because of what they reveal about the concerns of PLA crisis-management experts about decision-making processes.
143. Within the crisis-management-expert community there are persistent complaints about insufficient information flows to the PBSC, insufficient checks on the accuracy of information coming from self-interested actors, and the ad hoc, case-by-case distribution of information and intelligence. The military in particular has been accused of providing self-serving and inaccurate intelligence and of discounting the credibility of nonmilitary intelligence and analysis. See Wu Xinbo, “Managing Crisis,” p. 21; Xu Manshu, *Guoji weiji yujing*, p. 268; Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, pp. 125–26; and interview with civilian crisis-management specialist, June 2011.
144. Interview with senior analyst in the nuclear weapons and arms control community, June 2011.
145. In the Third Plenum communiqué, the announcement of the CNSC came in paragraph 50, which was primarily about public security, domestic stability, and legitimacy issues. Paragraph 50 fell under section 13, which discussed social management. Some PLA commentators—perhaps reflecting the prerogatives of the PLA on national security issues—have argued that the new CNSC will handle nontraditional security issues, whereas the existing CMC will continue to be in charge of traditional ones. See, for instance, NDU senior colonel Gong Fangbin, comments, available at [news.sina.com.cn/c/2014-01-24/181229337580.shtml](http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2014-01-24/181229337580.shtml). A commentator from the Ministry of State Security’s International Relations University claims that, judging by the composition of the committee, it will focus primarily on internal security. See Lin Hongyu, “Xin guojia anquan guan si da neihe” [Four Major Kernels of the New National Security Concept], *Renmin luntan* [People’s Forum], no. 6 (2014), pp. 21–22.

- In contrast, Xi Jinping's own remarks at the first meeting of the CNSC, in April 2014, indicated a balance between traditional and nontraditional, internal and external security.
146. For crisis management, see comments by People's University professor Jin Canrong, in Chen Jianli, "China's International Security Situation Is Complicated but Has Not Deteriorated," *Nanfang Dushi Bao*, 1 December 2013, [history.news.qq.com/a/20131201/001412.htm](http://history.news.qq.com/a/20131201/001412.htm).
  147. Interviews in Beijing, 2014, and Taipei, 2015.
  148. My thanks to Lonnie Henley for his insights about decision making. The official designated to be in charge of day-to-day functioning of the CNSC is Cai Qi, who has no obvious experience in foreign policy or national security, though he is considered smart and talented, and demands high standards for staff members of the NSC. Cai worked for Xi Jinping when Xi was in Zhejiang. He is said to have ministerial rank; that would not normally be sufficient to overrule the CMC's military leaders, who are vice-chairs, so he would have to use his personal relationship (and his institution's relationship) with Xi in order to "pull rank"; interviews, 2014, 2015. For additional details on the CNSC, see also Andrew S. Erickson and Adam P. Liff, "Installing a Safety on the 'Loaded Gun'? Recent Chinese Domestic Institutional Reforms, the New National Security Commission, and Sino-Japanese Crisis (In)Stability," *Journal of Contemporary China* (forthcoming).
  149. For the old NSLSG, Ma Haoliang, "National Security Committee Begins Operation under Leadership of General Office of CPC Central Committee: Li Zhanshu, Wang Huning Respectively Head National Security Office and Reform Office," *Ta Kung Pao*, 7 March 2014, available at [news.takungpao.com/paper/q/2014/0307/2330514.html](http://news.takungpao.com/paper/q/2014/0307/2330514.html). See also Lampton, "Xi Jinping and the National Security Commission," p. 13.
  150. Zhong Kaibin, "Guojia anquan weiyuanhui yunzuo de guoji jingyan, zhineng dingwei yu Zhongguo celue" [International Experiences, Functional Status in the Operation of National Security Council and China's Strategy], *Gaige* [Reform], no. 3 (2014), pp. 13–14.
  151. "Xi Jinping: Adhere to the Country's Overall Security Concept of National Security Road with Chinese Characteristics," Xinhua, 15 April 2014, available at [news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-04/15/c\\_1110253910.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-04/15/c_1110253910.htm).
  152. On 1 July 2015, the National People's Congress adopted a National Security Law that is still very ambiguous as to the formal name and functions of the CNSC. For the text of the law, see [www.81.cn/jwgz/2015-07/01/content\\_6565719\\_5.htm](http://www.81.cn/jwgz/2015-07/01/content_6565719_5.htm).
  153. Interview with Chinese civilian crisis-management expert, Beijing, 2011.
  154. Wang Yong, *Xiandai junshi weiji*, pp. 82–84.
  155. *Ibid.*, pp. 46–50.
  156. Liu Shaowen, "Budui chuzhi tufa shijian," pp. 19, 28; Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, p. 176. On the development of the PLA's domestic crisis response roles, see Blasko, "U.S. and Chinese Approaches."
  157. Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, pp. 176–77; Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, p. 57.
  158. Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, pp. 220–23; Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, pp. 127–28.
  159. Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, p. 180; Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, p. 55; Wang Yong and Chen Senlin, *Guojia anquan weiji*, p. 227.
  160. This is implied by Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, pp. 185–86. Interestingly, the problem of coordination across branches and among the PLA and other units is also the subject of political work inside the PLA related to crisis management. See Kong Chuiying and Guo Guicai, "Zhaoli tigao junshi tufa shijian chuzhi zhong zhengzhi gongzuo xiaoneng" [Focus on Raising the Efficacy of Political Work in the Handling of Military Sudden Incidents], *Zhengzhi xuekan* [Political Work Journal], no. 2 (2012), p. 36.
  161. The following discussion comes from Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, pp. 182–83; Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, pp. 58–60.
  162. Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, p. 186.
  163. *Ibid.*, p. 244, fig. 6-1. Additional functions might include disseminating crisis predictions, warnings, and analyses to upper

- and lower levels; maintaining information databases about all different kinds of crises; organizing equipment and technology, including arms, to be used in a crisis response; and organizing political, foreign policy, propaganda, and media-coordination work. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
164. The following draws from *ibid.*, pp. 288–321, and Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*.
165. Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, pp. 312–13; Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, pp. 173–78; Cao Zhengrong, Sun Longhai, and Yang Ying, *Xinxihua lujun zuozhan* [Informationized Army Operations] (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 2014), pp. 242, 250.
166. Lu Hui, *Jundui chuzhi tufa shijian*, pp. 311–12.
167. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
168. Some PLA planners envision three types of refugee zones along the DPRK border (“one station and two zones,” *yizhan liangqu*): reception stations at the border itself for preliminary processing; shelter zones for ordinary refugees extending no farther into China than areas administered by frontline townships; and supervision and control zones for military and political leaders fleeing the DPRK. These latter zones would be somewhat deeper into Chinese territory for security purposes but separated from the civilian shelter areas. Each frontline township would set up one to two shelter zones; each frontline county would set up two to three shelter zones, each able to accommodate 1,500 people, and one or two supervision and control zones, each accommodating five hundred people. The principles or concepts for setting up these zones and camps would be *xiao* (small scale for easier management), *yuan* (distance from any sensitive areas along the DPRK border or from concentrations of DPRK populations), and *san* (dispersal so that refugees in any one camp cannot link up with those in others). For details, see Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, pp. 162–66, 191–92; and Cao Zhengrong, Sun Longhai, and Yang Ying, *Xinxihua lujun*, pp. 244–45, 250–51.
169. See Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao, *Bianjing weiji yingji kongzhi*, pp. 162–66; and Cao Zhengrong, Sun Longhai, and Yang Ying, *Xinxihua lujun*. In 2014 Kyodo reported on leaked PLA contingency plans for dealing with a border crisis with the DPRK. See Jin Dong Hyeok, “Report: China’s Military Prepared for Collapse Scenario,” *DailyNK*, 5 May 2014, [www.dailynk.com/](http://www.dailynk.com/). There was skepticism among foreign commentators at the time concerning the credibility of the information, and the Chinese government dismissed the story; nevertheless, the details in the Kyodo report are identical to details in the book by Qiao Zhongwei, Wang Jiasheng, and Zou Hao cited above. The Kyodo report may have been referring to that book (which is classified “military circulation only”) or to documents with identical information.
170. David A. Welch, *Crisis Management Mechanisms: Pathologies and Pitfalls*, CIGI Paper 40 (Waterloo, Ont.: Center for International Governance Innovation, September 2014), available at [www.cigionline.org/](http://www.cigionline.org/).
171. For recent examples of such proposals see Zhang Tuosheng, “Crisis Management and China-U.S. Mutual Trust,” *China-US Focus*, 9 April 2015, [www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/crisis-management-and-china-us-mutual-trust/](http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/crisis-management-and-china-us-mutual-trust/); and Xiao Tianliang, *Zhanlue xue*, pp. 109–10.



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