THE UTILITY OF CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES IN CRISIS SITUATIONS:
SOME CASE STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

Although the official agenda of the Fall 1983 review meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) vanished in an explosion of Free World outrage over the wanton Soviet destruction of an off-course civilian airliner, a number of ongoing CSCE matters were nonetheless addressed that could have important implications for the future East-West military relationship. Chief among these was an agreement to convene, in Stockholm in January 1984, the 35-nation Conference on Disarmament in Europe to negotiate a wide range of issues relating to so-called confidence building measures (CBM).¹

The potential role of CBM—as a means to help defuse nascent crises, to reduce the escalatory risks inherent in crisis situations should they develop, and to lessen international tensions in general—has recently become the object of considerable study and debate. The primary stimulus behind the resurgence of interest in CBM is, of course, the agreement to meet in Stockholm.² Moreover, given apparent deadlocks in the START and INF arms limitation talks (among others), CBM negotiations are currently seen by some as the most viable international arms control forum. Consequently, the confidence building question has become the object of great interest not only in various international communities but also in Western official circles.³

¹ The Conference on Disarmament in Europe will examine initiatives intended both to improve East-West relations and enhance Western security. Consequently, the term "Confidence and Security Building Measures" (CSBM) is now often used, as opposed to the older expression CBM. We focus here, though, on the earlier and more clearly defined concept of CBM as delineated in the Helsinki Final Act.

² Discussions relating to CBM issues have been stalemated for three years; thus, the new talks do break a significant logjam.

³ For two prominent examples of recent academic treatments, see Hans Brauch and Duncan Clarke, eds., Decisionmaking for Arms Limitation: Assessments and Prospects, Ballinger, Cambridge, 1983; and J. Holst, "Confidence-Building Measures: A Conceptual Framework," Survival, Vol. XXV, No. 1, January/February 1983. As far as U.S. official interest goes, in 1982 a "Senate Working Group on Nuclear Risk Reduction" was established to support the development of confidence building measures. Similarly, the Reagan administration has announced plans for new CBM-related undertakings, such as expanded and modernized "hot line" communications links between heads of state.
Along with the new prominence of CBM has come optimism in some quarters that confidence and security building arrangements can play a very considerable role in improving relations between the superpowers and their respective blocs. According to some of the more enthusiastic advocates of formal CBM, the negotiation of mutually acceptable confidence building regimes could have quite positive consequences for the Atlantic security scene, not to mention the long-haul U.S.-Soviet competition. Systematic analysis has yet, however, to confirm persuasively the assertion that CBM can play the promising role that is frequently attributed to them in both academic forums and in the larger public policy debate.

It would seem, based on a reading of both the current official and public scenes, that CBM are conceivably applicable in two generic scenarios:

1. "routine" situations where the problem is to provide the communications and protocols to help prevent or sort out unexpected developments, unintended actions, accidents, etc.--which one might characterize as "Acts of God" (AOGs).
2. crisis situations where it is necessary to resolve the issues giving rise to serious confrontations between nations.

There is no doubt that improving nations' ability to communicate is desirable (crisis or no). The key question for review, accordingly, is how far one could or should go to expand the scope of confidence-building options to include plans and other preparations for sorting out crises resulting from deliberate, "premeditated" choice—as well as Acts of God. So far, however, widespread interest in CBM has outstripped analytic efforts to evaluate in detail particular CBM options, never mind devise some kind of broad "theory of confidence building." Perhaps in the future certain exploratory techniques, for instance the analytic

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" In addition, many CBM advocates cite the advantages of a confidence-building forum in improving "day to day" interalliance relations by exchanges of data on force strength and disposition and the like; however, the use of CBM in situations occasioned by deliberate acts or accidental events is the primary concern.
gaming of CBM situations, can shed some more light on the subject. But pending any such discoveries, the CBM debate seems destined to revolve around a few "typical" measures—hotline upgrades, prior notification of maneuvers, exchanges of data, etc.—which have, given the lack of more thorough evaluation, come by default to constitute the net "universe" of CBM opportunities.

In our opinion, the historical record has much to teach when it comes to the nature of confidence building techniques, the circumstances of CBM use, and the probability that a given CBM will produce some result. For one thing, it is clear that what have in the past been used to build confidence in fact represent a very broad range of options compared to the usual list of measures one frequently hears discussed today. In other words, the "menu" of interesting CBM options may be far broader than much recent discussion would indicate. Second, based on a survey of historical cases in which confidence building strategies have been undertaken, it is apparent that detailed operational preplanning in anticipation of certain types of crisis situations is, by and large, a fruitless task: in particular, the most promising options tend to emerge only as the specific features of a scenario come into sharp focus. Third, in the gravest crises, CBM have tended to accomplish little or nothing. Since there is, in serious emergencies, an understandable tendency to trust much to apparent "ways out"—including CBM—any such overreliance can, moreover, blind policymakers to grim reality, with negative results.

Now it may well be that new CBM schemes and doctrine can be concocted that afford us dramatic new CBM possibilities compared, anyway, with the historical experience. But until such possibilities can be demonstrated, it is prudent to keep in mind the lessons of history (especially as they relate to the pitfalls of CBM and like measures in profound crises). To illuminate the lessons cited above this paper will, accordingly, dissect historical cases using the following framework for analysis.
AN HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE EVALUATION OF CBM

To set the stage for a more productive assessment of the CBM problem, this paper will examine a range of historical episodes in which CBM have been employed, gainfully or otherwise. The cases used are particularly intended to illustrate: (1) the great breadth of the possible roster of CBM options, and (2) the relationship of the interests at stake to the probability that CBM can help attain meaningful results. The cases are organized to highlight some important characteristics of two types of confrontational situations—one in which CBM may be useful, and one in which CBM may not only be not useful, but perhaps even counterproductive. Subsequently, we suggest some points to keep in mind as we approach conceptually and politically the CBM design problem in the months and years ahead.

But before proceeding with this review, it is useful to consider briefly the problem of sorting out what we have called "Acts of God" (AOG). Most recent CBM analytic effort has been focussed here, an understandable emphasis given widespread fear of accidents involving nuclear weapons. History suggests, though, that placing such a high priority on CBM for AOGs may be ill advised. Certainly, because AOGs may involve long-standing rivals and because prestige and/or injury may be at issue, the risk of war may seem to increase in the wake of an AOG. But AOGs do not represent an attempt by responsible leadership to gain some key advantage at its opponent's expense. In the absence of any evidence of willful premeditation on either side, then—and subject to the other side's recognition of that fact—reconciliation is usually relatively easy to accomplish.

For a representative example, in 1905 a Russian naval squadron en route from the Baltic Sea to fight Imperial Japan fired upon an English fishing fleet (mistakenly thought to be an ambushing force of Japanese torpedo boats) in the so-called "Dogger Bank incident." The outrageous nature of this episode was compounded when the disorganized Russian fleet failed to rescue survivors.⁵ Though relations between Britain and

⁵ In the undisciplined melee, the Russians scored several hits on their own ships, redoubling fears that potent enemy forces were lurking nearby.
Russia were then by no means cordial, even this event was no *casus belli*. In this case, CBM played a role in helping sort out this disaster: one Russian CBM tactic was, for instance, a speedy promise of restitution and punishment for those responsible for this error.

Thus, to sort out AOGs, the crucial problem is to demonstrate that an unintended development is just that. In anticipating AOG situations in the nuclear or any other age, CBM planning boils down to ensuring that the necessary means are available to inform and persuade. CBM design therefore seems to pose predominantly technical and procedural problems—how much data must be transmitted, what degree of redundancy should be built into communications links, what kinds of prior notification should accompany what potentially menacing activities, etc.

Though the resolution of AOGs garners much of the attention of CBM analysts from a crisis manager’s point of view the most important developments are not "bolts from the blue" but deliberate choices made by the different sides in the context of ongoing international rivalries. Here, two cases must be distinguished when it comes to the design and assessment of the utility of CBM-type techniques. The first consists of situations in which friction develops between major rivals during the pursuit of international "business as usual" in such a way that some risk of escalation to a more serious crisis exists. The second class of crises are those which arise over interests that the opposing sides both consider to be fundamental. We wish to stress that the two kinds of crisis are different in kind—not in degree.⁷

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⁶ In addition to the emotionally charged character of the "nuclear accidents" problem, CBM for AOGs tend to be "soluble" by relatively technical and legal means and are therefore more interesting to many than the far more murky and ambiguous types of crisis situations to be discussed below.

⁷ Interestingly, exactly this distinction is embodied in the charter of the International Court of the Hague, which restricts court jurisdiction to disputes involving "neither honor nor vital interests."
Crises That Occur During the Course of Business as Usual

Friction between nations can be the result of ongoing competition over trade interests, prestige, local military advantage, and so forth. From time to time, local standoffs result. But in this kind of crisis, none of those involved seriously contemplates risking general commitment since interests are at stake which are not truly vital to the survival or elemental aims of the confrontational states. Under nearly all circumstances in such crises actions are shunned that are willfully expected to expand a crisis in such a way that essential interests of the antagonists come to be jeopardized. These facts are clear at the time to all the sides involved—though the desire to save face, prevail in a narrow contest, or prevent the establishment of intolerable precedents or potential sources of future turbulence often may give rise to apparently ominous symbolic or declaratory policy adjustments in the context of the local action itself.  

Predictably, the desire to prevail in less than all-out confrontations has historically led to many situations in which the "stakes" have escalated far out of proportion to the basic interests of either side. Indeed, serious war scares occasionally evolve from relatively petty disputes. To help head off unnecessary calamities, a surprisingly broad range of CBM have been effectively used to relieve and localize the tensions that result from such escalation. Historically, the menu of successful CBM for controlling an emerging crisis has included the dismissal of pro-war factions in governments, face-saving gambits, side-trades of relatively minor interests, solicitation of third-party mediation, etc. Here, in short, the purpose of CBM is to assure that exacerbated "routine" tensions between antagonistic camps or localized conflicts over peripheral issues do not serve as a "lightning rod" that accumulates enough war potential to ignite serious hostilities that bring into play fundamental interests. 

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8 The only exception to this rule occurs when one side enjoys overwhelming military superiority over an adversary that has no hope whatsoever of obtaining significant outside support (political, economic, or military)—a condition not very likely to obtain in today's political environment. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan may be a partial, but if so, rare, modern exception to this rule. Prior to World War II, though, one finds many more examples of such situations.
To illustrate the nature and value of CBM in this type of scenario, we will refer to the vigorous Anglo-French competition for political and economic power in the colonial world after the Congress of Vienna. This contest was not a zero-sum one, but it was hot enough. Indeed, between 1815 and 1904, a number of localized confrontations occurred. Yet while there was occasionally talk of war on both sides (usually loudest, naturally, among hotheads and opposition party factions), the local stakes were never so vital that general conflict loomed. To help both sides disengage from a crisis in politically acceptable ways, diplomatic and military techniques to enhance confidence and security at many levels played a key role. Of perhaps the greatest interest to present day planners was the tremendous variety of CBM used by the British and French and the fact that the nature of the appropriate measure frequently depended almost entirely on the specifics of the situation in question.

**Crises in Which Fundamental National Interests are at Stake**

Our second class of situations in which CBM might be considered is formed of those episodes and crises in which vital national and bloc interests have come to be inextricably opposed. This is the case that holds the gravest risks for national well-being and the kind of situation in which successful CBM could, or so many advocates assert, be of extraordinary value. Yet we will suggest below that in what are generally recognized as the truly most threatening crises—i.e., those where supreme interests of the parties to the dispute are perceived to be at stake—CBM and related measures are unlikely to be effective, and may even be dangerous.

The reasons for this grim fact are self-evident. If sincerely and effectively employed, \(^9\) CBM at best facilitate better communication. They cannot change that which is communicated, i.e., the substance of the dispute. In circumstances where vital interests which affect—or which are perceived to affect—the very survival of the competing nations or regimes come into direct conflict, improved communication may

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\(^9\) I.e., if the CBM is not used as a deliberate aid to a strategic deception plot—see the caveat below.
serve only to clarify the extent to which the situation has become hopelessly irreconcilable. In our view, there are only three possible outcomes to this type of crisis: war, return to a *status quo ante*, or appeasement.

This characterization of potential outcomes may seem cynical. Surely, one would think, with both sides aware of the consequences of the failure to resolve a crisis short of what probably would seem to both in advance to be a mutually unacceptable outcome, they would readily ascribe to the notion that the judicious use of appropriate CBM and related approaches would help them steer clear of catastrophe and effect a satisfactory compromise. When adversary nations have at their disposal powerful military establishments, the consequences of resorting to arms to settle the issue are inevitably catastrophic. But by threatening to precipitate a disastrous war, albeit a mutually devastating one, one side could conceivably hope to bluff the other into surrender—or, as the popular term has it, prevail in a game of "brinksmanship." Considering the large costs involved, discretion may indeed be the better form of valor under many circumstances. But to surrender each and every time in major disputes too is unacceptable. Faced with the options of war or ultimate extinction by piecemeal surrender, war usually is the result, even if the odds of military victory are not promising to sober onlookers.

In crises of this type, leaders exploit every possible eleventh hour technique for averting disaster. CBM have featured prominently among the crisis control options exercised in past showdowns. But once constellations of vital interests come into opposition and military crisis momentum has developed, the situation is lost (unless interests are redefined by either party as "less than essential"). In such cases, CBM have tended not only to be ineffectual—they may in fact be downright dangerous. This is because in the heat of crisis self-delusion may be engendered by excessive optimism that good faith can save the day. Since CBM may come to be seen as a panacea at this point, they may actually serve to make a crisis situation worse.

To illustrate this type of crisis we will draw from the cases of the German and Allied camps' drift toward the two World Wars of this century. When confronted with irreconcilable differences, a string of
cruises, and a highly charged situation, some of the major powers exercised enormous restraint (in essence, "surrendered") during a series of European confrontations between 1911-1914. But the fundamental sources of dispute that had led to this string of disputes in the first place had not disappeared and the next time around--August 1914--general war began, to the great regret of all concerned. Similarly, the Western Allies elected a CBM policy based on appeasement through the late 1930s, but eventually had to fall off that position in 1939 to make good on their threat to fight Germany.

Two Caveats

Before turning to the historical cases, two caveats are in order. First, this paper restricts its attention to peacetime CBM situations. In war--even in the middle of all-out-wars--different kinds of CBM may be very important. This is especially true in an age of weapons of mass destruction in which relatively formal escalatory thresholds exist, as the following interesting example suggests. Neither side used gas in Europe in World War II--though stockpiles were available and often on hand even in combat areas. Thus, it happened that at Anzio in 1943 a forward American ammo dump--in which some gas shells had been stored--was successfully attacked by enemy artillery, releasing gas which drifted toward Axis lines. The American commander was, nonetheless, able to contact his counterpart and convincingly explain the situation. This CBM--undertaken during intense fighting in the middle of a total war--was, amazingly, successful. One can imagine modern parallels of such wartime restraint, e.g., avoidance of direct attacks on national command and control facilities.\(^{16}\)

Moreover, we do not address the problem of the deliberate "abuse" of CBM for the purpose of strategic deception: this matter may mitigate even more against the use of CBM in the worst crisis situations. For example, while the Allies used CBM to try to prevent war with Germany in the late 1930s, the Germans used CBM to improve their standing in a future conflict. Thus, one occasion, the Germans revealed true (and lower than "feared") Air Order of Battle data to RAF Intelligence to

dampen demands in the UK for the faster mobilization thought vital to fill in what was in fact an exaggerated air power gap. Similarly, the Austrians exploited German CBM in the July 1914 crisis, using the time bought by German efforts to develop a compromise solution to complete military preparations against Serbia. But such "confidence-building" steps were, on balance, hardly employed sincerely to build up much collective security. With these constraints in mind, let us turn now to our review of historical cases.

COMPETITION DURING 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' AND CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

When the national interests of both sides in a dispute are not absolutely critical, opportunities abound for resolving a crisis, sorting out the consequences of inopportune action, and what not. But when both sides' perceived interests seem to be more and more significant ones, then compromise on routine points becomes much harder, if not absolutely impossible, to reach on account of the increasingly major stumbling blocks which come to populate diplomatic and military forums and domestic political debates. In this section, we shall review the relevance of possible CBM to incidents that arise during the course of the former type of competitive context. We have selected two related case studies to illustrate some of the issues involved in these less than absolute rivalries.

Such historical cases are representative of ones in which CBM may be very usefully employed. However, both cases also reveal how hard it is to say in advance precisely what kinds of operational plans and other arrangements might be designed to facilitate the relief of future crises. Though CBM obviously can play a key role in defusing less-than-critical standoff, effective CBM tend to be so specific to the context of the crisis that advanced preparation of detailed plans is likely to be a fruitless endeavor.

The Anglo-French Rivalry of the Nineteenth Century

The most protracted and bitter global rivalry since the 17th century existed not between Germany and France or the USSR and the United States, but between Britain and France. Centuries of strife between these two nations climaxed in the early nineteenth century with
the successful global struggle led by Britain against the initiatives of Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. Following the ultimate military defeat of France in 1815, Britain emerged as the undisputed premier colonial and naval power, not to mention the fulcrum of European balance of power politics. After two centuries of costly failures, France never again attempted to impose her dominion on the rest of Europe through force of arms. Consequently the most fundamental of the issues in dispute between the two countries began to fade, particularly during the latter part of the 19th century with the Prussian defeat of France and the rise of the German Empire.

Yet Britain and France continued a lively and often intense competition, particularly in the colonial sphere, throughout the nineteenth century. With essential national interests no longer at stake, the issues remaining in dispute between the two nations were basically of a secondary nature. None of them justified the risk of war in the minds of the leaders of either country. Nonetheless, the ongoing competition between the two countries, taken in the context of the long history of rivalry and suspicion, made any dispute over subordinate issues potentially dangerous. This was particularly true in an era of slow and unreliable communications. Indeed, misunderstandings and unauthorized actions led the two countries to the brink of war more than once during this period. What follows are brief accounts of two such incidents which were deescalated in part by the use of *ad hoc* CBM.

**The Don Pacifico Affair, 1850**

In 1821 the Greeks rebelled against Ottoman rule. Russia, Britain, and France, though concerned about the outcome of the rebellion and the future status of the Turkish Empire, desired to avoid war. Eventually all three intervened militarily on the side of the Greeks, forcing Turkey to relinquish sovereignty. Yet the three major European powers remained suspicious and jealous of the others' positions in Athens.

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11 This section is based on British Foreign Office correspondence. No authoritative accounts of this incident have been published. For further information, see *British Sessional Papers*, Vol. LVI, Numbers 401-401c, "Correspondence Respecting The Demands Made Upon the Greek Government and Respecting the Islands of Cervi and Sapienza, October 1842-31 May 1850", London, 1850; and *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series, Volumes CVII-CXII, Cornelius Buck, London, 1850.
Finally, in 1830, they agreed at an international conference to establish a completely independent Greece under a constitutional monarchy ruled by a king from a neutral country. Prince Otto of Bavaria was selected as the compromise candidate.

This resolution of the Greek problem proved unsatisfactory, especially for the British. Besides being corrupt and despotic, Otto's court became a hotbed of intrigue for French, Russian, and British "parties," all jockeying for influence. By the 1840s the French party, supported by the Russians, had gained the upper hand, to the chagrin of Britain's activist Foreign Minister, Lord Palmerston. Furthermore, the Greek government badly managed its finances, and was unable to keep up its interest payments on English loans.

Several long-outstanding claims against the Greek government by British citizens--the most famous of whom was one Don David Pacifico--were finally employed as a pretext for the use of force to settle the Greek problem. In November 1849 Palmerston diverted the British Mediterranean fleet to Athens in the expectation that its presence would force the Greek government to acknowledge Pacifico's claim and other British demands; more important, this action would make clear to the other great powers which nation wielded the most real power in the region.

Unfortunately the Greek government refused to cooperate; instead, in January 1850 it rejected the British ultimatum and appealed directly to the French and Russian governments to intervene as the other co-guarantors of Greek independence. Insensed at the Greek response, Palmerston rejected French and Russian offers to mediate. Instead the Royal Navy imposed a total blockade of Greek ports and began seizing Greek ships as security against outstanding claims.

The stridency of French protests in the wake of Palmerston's forceful actions surprised and disturbed the British. In the interest of keeping the situation under control, Palmerston agreed to accept a formal French offer of mediation in return for lifting the blockade. But Britain refused to release the scores of Greek vessels the Royal Navy had seized and declined to alter its original demands. Thus friction between the major powers worsened.
A break in the impasse seemed to come in March when, with domestic political opposition to Palmerston's hard-line policy growing, the French mediator in Athens discovered evidence casting doubt on the veracity of Pacifico's major claim. Palmerston wavered, and the French successfully pressed for a London conference of French, Russian, and British representatives to settle the dispute while negotiations continued on a lower level in Athens. By April all parties in London had agreed on a settlement which conceded all British claims except the central Pacifico claim (which was referred to an international commission of arbitration). In return, the British in effect renounced the unilateral use of force against Greece in favor of international arbitration conducted by a conference of the three original co-equal guarantors of Greek independence.

With the London Convention signed, the way seemed open for a return to more normal Anglo-French relations. But within days a communications failure combined with unfortunate timing to transform the improving situation into a serious crisis between Britain and France bordering on open hostilities. The problem arose when the British and French dispatched messages informing their negotiating teams in Athens of the terms of the London Convention. The French message was sent by fast steamer and arrived nine days before the British message, sent via a slower overland route. Before either message had arrived, the Athens negotiations had completely broken down. As the British Ambassador to Greece was preparing to reimpose sanctions, the French Ambassador received news of the London Convention and conveyed it to his counterpart. The British Ambassador responded that without new orders from London he had to proceed with his original instructions of re-establishing a blockade. This was done; two days later the Greek government capitulated unconditionally to all of Britain's demands. Some days later the British Ambassador received news of the London Convention from his Foreign Office but the damage had already been done.

Louis Napoleon and the French Foreign Minister were outraged by what they considered a blatant breach of faith on the part of the British. The French government lodged a formal protest accusing Palmerston of deceit by deliberately withholding news of the London
Convention from the British Ambassador in Athens. The protest threatened serious repercussions if the British did not repudiate the Athens agreement in favor of the London accord. Palmerston refused, noting that some of the terms of the former were less harsh than those of the latter.

Palmerston's inflexibility brought the crisis in Anglo-French relations to a head. On May 14 the French recalled their ambassador to Great Britain for the first time in nearly four decades. Indignation over British conduct of the previous six months fed a growing war fever in the French capital. The Russian Ambassador hinted that he too was about to be recalled from London.

Since the inception of the Greek venture Palmerston had attempted to conceal the true deteriorating state of relations with France from the rest of the Cabinet and Parliament. Consequently the recall of the French Ambassador stunned responsible leadership in the Court and Parliament. With war with France suddenly looming "out of the blue," major factions in Parliament rapidly joined forces with the Queen to restrain Palmerston and send an immediate conciliatory signal to the French to prevent the situation from further decaying.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert placed enormous pressure on Lord Russell, the Prime Minister, to dismiss Palmerston. Russell agreed that such a course of action would be a useful way to rapidly defuse the crisis with France, but he also noted that it would lead to the downfall of the current Government, something unacceptable to the Court. Subsequently, efforts to remove Palmerston concentrated in the House of Lords. On May 28 a motion of censure against Palmerston contended that Foreign Minister's handling of the Pacifico affair had endangered "the continuance of our friendly relations with other Powers."

This censure motion sent a loud signal to both Palmerston and the French. The Foreign Minister reopened negotiations and offered numerous concessions to the French which amounted to a virtual renunciation of the Athens agreement. While rejecting the new offers, the French, no more wanting to be drawn into war than the British over subsidiary issues, felt vindicated and agreed to new negotiations. Palmerston had been chastised in the most humiliating matter by both his Queen and Parliament; negotiations could continue. Some weeks later a new
settlement was initialed by both powers; in all essential aspects it was identical to the original London Convention.

Palmerston's cavalier handling of the Pacifico affair combined with poor communications and bad timing to precipitate a crisis with France over a subsidiary issue which nonetheless could have gotten out of control and resulted in an unnecessary war. The effective use of a CBM, in this case the censure of the government official most closely associated with the onerous policy, clearly contributed to the easing of tensions and the resumption of peaceful and productive negotiations.

The Fashoda Crisis, 1898

Anglo-French relations continued on their roller-coaster course until 1904. Yet the two decades preceding the signing of the Entente Cordiale witnessed some of the worst Anglo-French tensions of the 19th century, culminating in a serious war scare over the Egyptian question in 1898. Only an adroit use of CBM prevented this dispute over peripheral issues from leading to open hostilities and a major setback to both countries' primary interests in Europe.

In order to protect lines of communications to India and secure interests in the eastern Mediterranean, the British intervened militarily in Egypt in 1882 to put down an anti-European rebellion. With Russian influence in the Ottoman Empire growing, the British decided that Egypt had to be permanently occupied. The prerequisites of this policy were: (1) securing the Upper Nile--Egyptian Sudan--to protect Egypt and the Suez Canal; and (2) gaining acquiescence of the other Great Powers, particularly France, to permanent occupation.

British occupation of Egypt infuriated the French and set off a new scramble for colonies in Africa. Moreover, the French claimed a special role in Egypt as a result of the precedent of the Napoleonic era and French involvement in the construction of the Canal. Therefore France demanded either withdrawal of British forces or territorial

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compensation. The British refused, and Anglo-French relations began a typical downward spiral.

The European balance of power had shifted dramatically, however, since the time of the Don Pacifico Affair. The German Empire had emerged as potentially the dominant power on the Continent after decisively defeating France in 1871. The major adversary to France thus was no longer Britain, but Germany; under these changed circumstances, war with Britain could only serve to aid France's chief opponent.

Thus, France desired more than anything else to reach a general settlement with Britain for the sake of the French position in Europe. But such a settlement seemed impossible without British concessions over Egypt. Since Britain would not budge over the Egyptian question, France adopted a strategy of territorial expansion into equatorial Africa as a means of increasing its leverage and improving its bargaining position vis-a-vis Britain. The problem with this strategy was that Britain promptly countered every French move and raised the current ante, backing France steadily into a corner. With each new escalatory step, the odds seemed greater and greater that a serious crisis would develop from which neither side, with their national prestige so heavily committed, could back down.

The immediate origins of the crisis may be traced to the Italian defeat in March 1896 at the hands of Ethiopian natives and their allies, the Dervishes, at Adowa. This defeat gave pro-French Ethiopians undisputed power and opened for France a route to the upper Nile from the east as well as the west. After years of fruitless negotiation, both sides now saw the opportunity to settle the Sudan problem once and for all. The French planned new expeditions to the upper Nile; the British were determined to conquer and occupy all Sudan.

Nearly two years elapsed as rival expeditions were organized and began to work slowly towards their objectives. A British force of about 1500 men under General Horatio Kitchener set out up the Nile from Egypt, methodically building up a major logistic network as it advanced. Meanwhile in the spring of 1897, a small French expeditionary force, primarily manned by Senegalese troops, set out from the Congo to seize the fort at Fashoda in the gap between British Uganda and Khartoum. In 1898 the French dispatched a second expedition of Ethiopians from the
east to link up with the original expedition under the command of Major Jean Marchand. Marchand's year-and-a-half trek through unspeakably hostile terrain (which included dragging a dismantled steamboat through long stretches of jungle), landed his expedition in Fashoda in July 1898.

On September 2 Kitchener's forces defeated the Dervishes at Omdurman and occupied Khartoum. Several days later the British set out for Fashoda. British forces arrived on September 19, and a tense standoff ensued. While Kitchener's forces were clearly superior to Marchand's, any outbreak of fighting would have made war between France and Britain inevitable, particularly because of the inflamed national passions of the populaces on both sides (who were closely following this high drama of imperialism). Communications between field commands and national leaderships were slow, yet any slip-up on the spot could mean a war no one wanted. Hence, local commanders and, later, the respective governments resorted to a series of CBM to defuse the crisis.

The first critical CBM was implemented on the spot by the field commanders. Whereas both sides refused to back down, the captains on-hand agreed to ease tensions by flying three separate flags over the fort at Fashoda—French, British, and Egyptian. Secondly, it was agreed that no action would be taken by either side until instructions were received from home.

Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, realized that the Fashoda strategy had backfired. Instead of coercing the British into negotiations, the British had raised the stakes, backed the French into a hopeless military situation, and constructed the infrastructure needed to deal with a better organized French challenge in the future. Yet, in large measure because of the jingoistic hysteria which gripped the French populace, Delcassé could not retreat gracefully without British help.

The British were adamant on the substance of their demands, but also did not want to force the French to fight to safeguard their national honor. Though they could have won easily in the Sudan, the British realized a larger war with France at this time would not serve their more basic national interests. Consequently, they telegraphed many CBM to the French to defuse the crisis atmosphere, chiefly in the
form of a willingness to discuss French face-saving proposals. For example, a proposal to withdraw Marchand's forces a short distance to a string of lesser forts was discussed, although the British had no intention of accepting it. Negotiators also came up with a formula to rule Sudan officially as an Anglo-French condominium, although in reality the French were to be given no power. Behind the smokescreen of these negotiations the French withdrew their expeditionary force. In March 1899 negotiators signed a final agreement which gave the appearance of compromise between equals yet which in fact amounted to a complete French capitulation. In essence, the French renounced all claims to the Sudan and fully recognized the British position in Egypt.

The Fashoda crisis of course had a much deeper significance for the future of the two countries. It demonstrated how conflicting subsidiary interests, if not handled very carefully, could lead two nations to war at the expense of primary interests—some of which were shared ones. In this instance, both Britain and France were beginning to perceive Germany as the primary threat to the stability of Europe. As a direct consequence of the sobering experience of the Fashoda Crisis, France and Britain worked diligently toward establishing closer relations, and openly joined in an alliance of friendship in 1904 directed implicitly against Germany.

In short, both sides in these representative crises recognized the existence of important shared interests, even in the heat of crisis. Under the circumstances, a variety of diplomatic techniques—including what today would be known as CBM—helped to ease dangerous tensions. To the extent that vital and subordinate interests can be kept distinct, CBM, particularly of an ad hoc variety, have proven of great utility.

CBM AND CONFLICTING VITAL INTERESTS
This paper suggests that the specific context of a crisis determines the likely effectiveness of CBM. Under certain circumstances localized conflicts involving secondary interests may be contained with the help of CBM. However in the gravest crises, where supreme interests of the parties to the dispute apparently are at stake, CBM tend to be ineffectual, and may even be counterproductive. This, as noted before, results from the fact that CBM only amplify and do not change that which
is communicated. Taking all factors into account, we find only three possible outcomes to this type of crisis:

1. *War*, often resulting in unfavorable results for everyone involved if the military balance is roughly equal at the outset of the crisis or if the military means for inflicting profound damage are in hand.

2. *Return to a status quo ante*, generally entailing only a superficial compromise on peripheral or even meaningless issues rather than a resolution of the profound causes of the crisis (resulting in only a postponement of the ultimate confrontation).

3. *Appeasement*, leading to a genuine resolution of the conflict if one side essentially surrenders by voluntary accepting a radical alteration in the status quo (which may profoundly alter or, more likely, diminish its global position).

This distinction among these three outcomes may appear overly stark and pessimistic to some. With so much on the line, one supposes that every effort would be made to negotiate compromises in an emergency. Yet the historical record paints a grim picture in this respect.

Perhaps the best example of such a competition (and the inability of diplomacy to prevent its awful result) would encompass the last decade preceding the outbreak of the First World War, when the vital interests of the Triple Entente (Great Britain, France, and Russia) came into increasingly direct conflict with those of the Triple Alliance.  

This episode is especially relevant because of numerous parallels with the current situation. First, the competition between the two pre-World War I blocs was global in scope and included most areas of state activity. Second, while always willing to take risks to gain advantages at the expense of their competitors, none of the statesmen of the period desired a general European war.  

Finally, the statesmen of the early

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13 Originally Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy; later under the rubric of the Central Powers, Turkey replaced Italy, which defected to the Entente.

14 Indeed, nearly all of the national leaders and military analysts of this period believed that a general war among the Great Powers would
years of this century were very much aware of techniques that today would be called CBM, and used them on numerous occasions during a long series of crises from 1895 to 1914. In every instance save one, crises were resolved peacefully. The July 1914 crisis, however, led to the general war so dreaded by Europe's leaders. Interestingly, the July crisis was remarkably similar with respect to geographical location, the issues at stake, and the nations involved to several earlier Balkan Crises. It is most instructive, therefore, to ask why some crises were resolved peacefully while one ended in global conflict.

We believe that the crucial lesson here is that in order to avoid having to chose between war or appeasement, modern statesmen must not allow crises of this type to arise in the first place. False hopes placed in the supposed efficacy of CBM may only undermine the vigilance necessary to avoid these dangerous situations. Once a crisis is mounting, furthermore, reliance on CBM in lieu of recognition of the realities of an evolving critical situation may tempt an enemy to preempt or accelerate the tempo of a crisis. The next subsection expands on these observations through a brief examination and comparison of the various Balkan Crises of 1912-1914 and the fatal July Crisis of 1914.

The Balkan Crises, 1912-1914\textsuperscript{15}

The basic causes of the First World War derive from long-term trends which were slowly but profoundly altering the relative power relationships among the major European states for at least a half-

century preceding the outbreak of the war. The most important of these involved the emergence of a united Germany and the enormous expansion of its economic and military power after 1871, the relative decline in power of France and Great Britain, the accelerating deterioration of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, and the continued expansionist ambitions of the Russian empire. These trends produced two potentially explosive problem areas involving (1) the determination of Germany’s ultimate status and power position in the European state system vis-à-vis the other Great Powers, and (2) the status of and distribution of influence over the Balkans.

The first problem area pitted two declining powers--France and Britain--determined to maintain the status quo, against a dynamic revisionist state--Germany--determined to gain recognition and influence commensurate with its growing economic and military power. On the surface of it, the second problem area was more regional and narrow in scope. It concerned who would benefit most--or be hurt least--by the disintegration of Ottoman sovereignty over its holdings in south-east Europe and the rise of south Slav nationalism. On a more profound level, however, the resolution of this problem would ultimately determine the continued viability of Austria-Hungary as a state and the future status of Russia in the European power system.

The system of alliances which grouped the Great Powers into two opposed blocks after 1900 gave this regional problem global dimensions. Austria-Hungary was Germany’s only major reliable ally in Europe. For domestic political and foreign policy reasons Russia allied with those forces in the Balkans which most threatened Austria-Hungary. In a parallel fashion, Russia was France’s principal ally on the continent. Thus any crisis in the Balkans had immediate implications for the Russian and French position vis-a-vis Germany and vice-versa. This situation inevitably involved Britain, because any radical change in the status of France and the Low Countries would pose an intolerable threat.

Nearly all of these factors came into play in both the Balkan Crises of 1912-14 and the July 1914 crisis. Many CBM were used in both, particularly the July Crisis. Yet in the Balkan Crises the leading states did not allow themselves to be backed into a corner by permitting regional issues to become hopelessly entangled with supreme national
interests, as happened in July 1914. This, rather than any role played by CBM, is the primary explanation why some crises ended peacefully and one led to general war.

Briefly summarized, the Balkan Crises involved a series of wars conducted by fourth- and fifth-rate regional powers who indulged in treachery and comic-opera shifts of alliances in an effort to absorb the Balkan territories of the moribund Ottoman Empire. In brief, the Balkan Wars began after an Italian attack on the Ottoman territory of Tripoli in 1911 revealed the full extent of Turkish impotence. In 1912 Bulgaria and Serbia, spurred on by Russia, made a grab for the Ottoman province of Macedonia with the help of Greece and Montenegro. Turkish forces were rapidly defeated, but a subsequent international conference produced a compromise settlement by establishing the new state of Albania. Dissatisfied with the settlement, Bulgaria attacked Serbia and Greece. In response, Turkey and Rumania, still legally at war with Serbia and Greece, invaded Bulgaria, defeating her by August 1913.

These petty regional quarrels had much wider implications because of the involvement of Russia and the fears of Austria-Hungary that such turmoil would destabilize its own shaky empire. Russia encouraged Slav nationalism, particularly as advanced by Serbia, against Ottoman rule in the hope of building up strong client states in the Balkans. Yet the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which included many restless Slav nationalities within its borders, viewed the growth of Serbian power and its expansionist appetite and close relationship with Russia as a mortal threat to the very existence of the Habsburg state.

These were the same critical issues which led to war in July 1914. Why didn't war break out in 1912 or 1913? At first glance, CBM appears to have played a major role in defusing the Balkan crises. A classic CBM employed in the early stages of the crisis was the symbolic dismissal of a senior official known to be an advocate of aggressive hard-line policies. The Austro-Hungarian government was extremely disturbed by the unprovoked Italian attack on Tripoli. Government officials realized that Italian successes would encourage Serbia to act against Ottoman interests in the Balkans, further stoking Slav insurgencies. The war party in Vienna was determined to stop Italy and aid the Turks. France and Britain, while greatly annoyed by Italy's
aggression, were equally determined to avoid a military confrontation with Italy, never mind general war. Similarly, Germany pressured the Austrians to avoid war with Italy.

Without German support, the Austrians had to defuse the crisis. In a well publicized move, the Emperor summarily dismissed Conrad von Hotzendorf, the Austrian Chief of Staff, and the most prominent advocate of war against Italy. This action sent a clear message to Rome which helped control the crisis situation. Later the London Conference, which involved the CBM of face-to-face negotiations among the principals, created the new state of Albania out of some of the Ottoman territories conquered by Serbia. The creation of Albania blocked Serbia's access to the sea, and removed the possibility of a return of Ottoman rule or annexation by Austria.

Thus, the Great Powers prevented an explosive situation from blowing up into general war, in part by means of CBM. However the compromise solution produced at the London Conference proved to be based on little more than self-delusion. If it accomplished anything, it served to lull the major powers into a false sense of security. In fact the parties most directly affected by the settlement were extremely unhappy. Serbia was incensed at having been robbed of the fruits of military victory, and was more determined than ever to undermine Austria's Empire. Indeed, as noted above, Serbia and the other members of the Balkan League broke the armistice twice throughout 1913 to conduct major military campaigns in attempts to force the hands of the major powers.

Serbia also condemned Russia for not backing her cause with sufficient vigor. Twice in five years—during the Bosnia-Herzegovina annexation crisis of 1908 and again during the Balkan Wars—Russia had intervened to restrain and undercut its prime Balkan ally in the interests of heading off general war. Russia now felt she had appeased once too often. In the next Balkan crisis, Russia believed she would have to back Serbia to the hilt; anything short of the most steadfast support would risk an open breach with her ally and a collapse of her entire position in Southeast Europe.
Austria felt it had temporarily stopped Serbia by being tough, and not by means of the negotiated settlement produced at the London Conference. Vienna realized that the Balkan League, led by Serbia, had now emerged as a major and immediate military threat to the survival of the Empire. The defeat of Turkey only convinced Austria that Serbia ultimately would have to be dealt with once and for all. Just as with Serbia's reaction to Russia, Austria bitterly resented German attempts to restrain her. (Indeed, Germany had played a decisive role in arranging the London Conference which had prevented an Austrian declaration of war.) With Italy drifting into the camp of the Triple Entente, Germany now felt more isolated than ever. So Germany too concluded that next time, Austria, as Berlin's only remaining ally, would have to be supported fully in its aims.

In a transparent attempt to pass the buck, Russia blamed its "sell-out" of Serbia on French unwillingness to back Russia during the crisis. In fact, France had concluded some time earlier that genuine security against Germany demanded full military support of Russia (which France had indeed offered during the Balkan crises). But Russia's public complaints (designed to mollify Serbia) made France even more determined to demonstrate her complete support the next time around. Finally, while Britain hoped to avoid being drawn into the Balkan mess, she could not extricate her own fate from that of France and the Low Countries.

In short, by the end of 1913 the supreme interests of all the Great Powers had come to be in direct opposition because of the Balkan situation. The London Conference and the use of various CBM had apparently helped prevent war. The more basic reason why peace had been preserved, however, was that both Russia and Austria had been willing to compromise at least temporarily in a manner that both felt undermined their supreme national interests. In their own eyes, both countries had been forced into a posture of appeasement for the sake of peace. Both also concluded that further appeasement was intolerable. In turn, the other major powers felt that unquestioning support of their major allies had become critical for the maintenance of their own positions. The next subsection shows how, despite a brilliant series of CBM, the next Balkan crisis collapsed this tenuous balancing act.
The July Crisis

The July Crisis was precipitated on June 28, 1914 by the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and his wife by a Serbian fanatic in Sarajevo, the capital of the Austrian province of Bosnia. Suspicion of Serbian government involvement provided Vienna with the pretext for ridding itself of the Serbian problem once and for all. Backed by a blank check of support from the German government, Austria formulated a purposely unacceptable ultimatum for the Serbian government. Austria was determined to crush Serbia militarily; Germany felt obligated to back her. At the same time, Russia saw no alternative to protecting Serbia, and demanded and received French support.

Diplomats and government leaders quickly recognized the explosiveness of the situation and worked feverishly throughout July to prevent war or at least confine it to the Balkans. On the diplomatic plane, proposed CBM included third-party mediation, bilateral negotiations between Austria and Russia, and a Europe-wide conference. The telegraph served as a sort of "hot-line" between Berlin and St. Petersburg, as Kaiser William and Czar Nicholas exchanged personal messages (the famous "Willie-Nicky" telegrams) in an attempt to forestall war. CBM were also employed in conjunction with military preparations to help avoid any direct provocation of potential adversaries. For example, at the height of the crisis the French pulled their forces back ten kilometers from the border with Germany, the British considered dispersing the fleet, the Russians initially ordered partial rather than full mobilization, and the Germans promoted a "pledge plan" to guarantee the localization of any Austro-Serbian war.

Ultimately all these efforts came to nothing; Europe became embroiled in a war that most observers considered suicidal, a war which destroyed the governments of Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and eventually Italy, and left France and England profoundly weakened and diminished in world power. CBM failed to avert war primarily because vital national interests had come into direct conflict at a time

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when no nation was willing to appease its adversaries or return to an unsatisfactory status quo ante. Germany's future standing in Europe depended on supporting Austria in her basic objectives. Therefore Germany would at most promise to guarantee Serbia's territorial integrity. Likewise, Russia's standing in Europe would decline catastrophically—in the view of her leaders—unless she could guarantee Serbian sovereignty. To Russia, Germany's position meant that Serbia would essentially become a vassal state of Austria. With the memories of the earlier Balkan crises fresh, neither side would, accordingly, appease the other. With no apparent grounds for compromise, the exigencies of military planning and technology took priority.

Epilogue: Munich and Danzig, 1938-1939

The lessons learned about the utility of CBM in the crises preceding the First World War are largely confirmed by the European crises of the late 1930s. Once again, with vital interests of the adversaries in direct conflict, the only real options reduced to war or appeasement. Unlike the earlier period, one of the players, Nazi Germany, refused to appease its adversaries and was more than willing to resort to localized war, even at the risk of general war, to achieve its aims.

Under these circumstances, Germany's opponents had to appease or fight. The Western Powers, led by Great Britain, chose appeasement through September 1939. CBM, including the famous flight of Prime Minister Chamberlain to Germany for face-to-face talks with Hitler during the height of the Munich crisis, clearly helped to ease tensions. As late as 1937 German and British air force officers were still routinely exchanging information and visiting each others' facilities as

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18 Austria-Hungary and Germany had adopted a similar stance in July 1914.

a means of controlling tensions during a period when both powers were undertaking massive rearmament programs. ultimately, however, the Western powers preserved peace in 1938 only by practicing appeasement--sacrificing national interests and tolerating a diminution of their international positions to prevent a catastrophic global conflict.

Continued appeasement--equivalent to surrender--inevitably became unacceptable for Britain and France, as it had for Russia and Austria before World War I. Thus, the Danzig Crisis of the summer of 1939 could have been resolved peacefully by another conference of the Great Powers, had Britain and France been willing to appease again. They chose not to and, as in August 1914, general war ensued.

While the psychotic racial obsessions and brutality of the Nazi regime were unique in the annals of modern Western European history, Hitler's diplomatic objectives in the 1930s actually did not differ radically from those of the Central Powers during World War I. Late in 1937, Hitler decided to initiate a more aggressive foreign policy in central Europe. In March and September of the next year Germany, like Austria-Hungary in July 1914, confronted the democratic powers with the choice of acceding to its demands or going to war. On both occasions--the Austrian Anschluss Crisis and the Czech Sudetenland Crisis--the democratic powers, led by Great Britain, elected to appease. Contrary to popular misconceptions, Britain's decision was founded on three reasonable premises, the first of which unfortunately proved incorrect: (1) Germany's territorial ambitions were limited and negotiable; (2) German control of Austria and the Sudetenland did not constitute a fundamental threat to vital British interests; and (3) a general European war did.

In March 1939, German forces occupied the rump state of Czechoslovakia. Following the "rape of Prague" the Nazis almost immediately turned on Poland and began demanding the cession of Danzig and the Corridor. These actions discredited the first premise of

British policy in force at the time of the 1938 Czech crisis and thus cast doubt on the validity of the second premise. Hitler's appetite now appeared insatiable and indeed seemed to be growing with the eating. Under these circumstances, the preservation of vital British interests meant that Hitler had to be checked. Appeasement would no longer do. Thus in the spring Britain and France opened negotiations with the Soviet Union and signed a mutual defense pack with Poland, assuring the latter state's national integrity against German aggression.

The pact with Poland virtually guaranteed that the Danzig crisis of the summer of 1939 would lead to general European war. Britain and France had now clearly committed their international prestige to the maintenance of Polish territorial integrity. For his part, Hitler was determined to settle the Danzig-Corridor question by force. He did not believe that Britain and France would go to war over this issue, but he was willing to fight them if necessary. A European conference organized to arrange for the orderly transfer of Danzig and the Corridor to German sovereignty in the summer of 1939 might possibly have prevented war, as the Munich Conference had in the summer of 1938. But, as in the July 1914 crisis, none of the principal states were willing to appease again or accept an unsatisfactory status quo. All perceived their vital interests to be in conflict with those of their opponents.22

Of course, in such circumstances CBM—which facilitate communication and help guard against misunderstanding—can not defuse the crisis. As the July 1914 and August 1939 crises show, when truly vital interests are permitted to collide head-on, the only real options left are appeasement or general war. Here CBM will only prove useful to the nation selecting the former course of action.

CONCLUSIONS

We believe that there can be no standardized definition of "confidence building measure." Nor is it likely that any unifying conceptual rules for a confidence building policy will be devised. Moreover, it is difficult to assess the exact effects of a CBM even

22 Strictly speaking Hitler seems to have been mystified by Britain's hardline response to the Polish crisis, since he appears to have sincerely believed Germany's continental ambitions did not directly threaten Britain's "real"--i.e. Imperial--interests.
after it has been employed, never mind to try to predict the effectiveness of a prospective measure in advance. Nonetheless, we believe in any case that a strict definition or detailed conceptual taxonomy of CBM is not needed to proceed with analysis. Evaluation of policy options can in fact proceed once three classes of situations in which CBM might be used are distinguished.

First are "Acts of God," namely, incidents in which there is no intent by any responsible leadership to gain some key advantage at its opponents' expense. Although incidents involving major rivals may appear to make war more likely, a reconciliation can usually be effected. Accordingly, the emphasis of CBM planners in this area is rightfully placed upon the technical means and procedural rules for facilitating communication and evading possible pitfalls.

In this paper we have not dealt with AOGs and technologies and techniques for dealing with them. True, AOGs pose particular problems in the nuclear age and, of course, we must buy some kinds of specialized insurance. But concentration on technical means for communicating can blind us to the fact that AOGs comprise, relatively speaking, a very small part of the list of troubles we encounter as we move about in an unfriendly and often dangerous international arena.

Simply put, nations just do not go to war as a result of an accident or the odd unfortunate development. Rather, it is the fundamental drift of nations to conflict that is critical, not the particular events that serve as benchmarks along the path that that drift follows. Though AOGs may often provide an excuse for action, in other words, the true explanation for a decision to act can be traced to steady and often quite predictable patterns developing over an extended period of time. Thus, the Dogger Bank incident, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the destruction of KAL 007 did not result in war because none of the sides involved was in a situation in which fundamental national interests were at issue. On the other hand, the destruction of the U.S.S. Maine, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, the mysterious explosion on a Japanese rail line in Manchuria in 1931, and the revelation of the Zimmerman telegram all apparently did help lead to war: but in each case the cause of conflict can be found in a trend toward conflict that can be traced back many years.
It is true that nuclear weapons have tended to make the consequences of isolated AOGs more serious. However, nuclear weapons have not changed the underlying dynamics of international competitions. Critical competitive factors will determine whether any particular event--be it an accident, an ambiguous provocation, a blatant challenge, a limited act of aggression, or whatever--leads to a more tense crisis situation or conflict at some level of intensity or other.

Nonetheless, consideration of AOGs has so far dominated the CBM agenda. Enthusiasts of CBM assert that techniques for smoothing over AOGs can play a larger crisis resolution role. Unhappily, our review of historical crises indicates that efforts to extrapolate a larger crisis role from this chiefly technical and procedural kind of routine CBM planning may often prove unsuccessful. The prognosis for prepared CBM intended to deescalate conflict situations that have arisen as a result of deliberate action by both sides is particularly bleak. In many cases, while much attention is focused on improving communications should a crisis begin, little if any is paid to a far more important determinant of any confrontation, namely the national interests over which the protagonists have collided. By ignoring the issues at stake, some of the more inspired CBM proponents in effect are allowing the contingency (or technical, as the case may be) tail to wag the strategic dog.

Hence, we have concentrated here on two types of crisis situation where deliberate steps are taken in the context of an ongoing international rivalry. The key distinction between these two types of crisis concerns the relative importance of the national interests at stake.

In the first of these--situations requiring the management of crisis events that in essence occur between rivals during the pursuit of "business as usual" (which nonetheless pose a risk of escalation)--none of those involved desire to risk major conflict because the issues at stake are not important enough to merit serious risk-taking. The parties involved usually are able to see that enough key interests are shared so that a peaceful resolution of the crisis is unquestionably in the interest of both.
In order to resolve such crises, nations resort to a number of diplomatic and other techniques. As we have seen here, many can be considered "confidence building measures" insofar as one nation seeks to signal to others that escalation need not occur and that, operationally speaking, military options are on a tight political "leash." In a review of historical CBM, one finds time and again that various goodwill measures have proved useful in assuring that "routine" or peripheral tensions between major antagonists do not accrete into a casus belli that ultimately may cost both sides quite dearly in terms of their more critical national objectives.

In sum, there is a role, and often a major one at that, for CBM in these crisis scenarios. But to the extent that the historical record continues to hold true in the nuclear age, we should assume that the nature of appropriate CBM would ordinarily depend on the specifics of of the situation. Extensive operational preplanning of crisis CBM options is probably not a very useful pursuit.

Sometimes, however, it becomes clear that the fundamental interests of nations cannot coexist or be kept in an acceptable balance over the long run. When this situation is reached, the only long-term solutions are conflict or for one side to give in. True, when adversary nations have at their disposal large military complexes, the consequences of fighting are inevitably catastrophic. But for a variety of reasons, to opt for piecemeal surrender too many times is equally unacceptable, for in the end it too can spell national extinction. Faced with the options of extinction by war or extinction by surrender, war is, unfortunately, the usual result.

In such crises CBM are unlikely to be effective, and may be counterproductive. When, during long-term national competitions, vital interests which affect--or which are perceived to affect--the very survival of the competing nations or regimes come into direct conflict, improved communication may serve only to clarify the extent to which the situation is beyond salvage. Predictably, CBM in this type of crisis are probably not only useless--if reliance on CBM gives rise to or at the very least abets self-delusion, CBM may be downright dangerous. If reliance on a "CBM-intensive" policy emerges as a last ditch panacea,
the ultimate effect might be to encourage enemy preemption (should part of the CBM strategy call for restraining one's willingness to take necessary and timely deterrent steps).

The Stockholm talks on confidence and security-building measures will address a number of very important topics. Some of the measures likely to be proposed in these talks—for instance, routine transfers of information on orders of battle, maintenance of adequate communications channels, and prior notification of field exercises—should be carefully considered. They are valuable no matter what (if any) broader role is attributed to CBM. It is not clear at the present time, however, just how far beyond such technical and procedural matters we should allow the CBM agenda to range and, correspondingly, how much emphasis should be placed on CBM as opposed to other sorts of diplomatic and security initiatives. More study is certainly needed to help bound the domain of useful future CBM options and to resolve some pressing CBM design issues. But until such research has been done, we should heed the cautionary signals conveyed by the historical cases recounted here, among others. We should not restrict our thinking about what is or is not a CBM to too narrow a list of options. We should avoid putting too much emphasis on CBM that require a relatively high degree of "preplanning" especially at operational (c.f., policy) levels. Finally, and probably most important of all, if we learn no other lesson from the historical record, we should keep in mind the fact that, pending the availability of convincing evidence to the contrary, the potential role of CBM in very grave situations should be very carefully scrutinized. The corollary of this statement is that peripheral and vital interests should be kept absolutely distinct by the great powers.