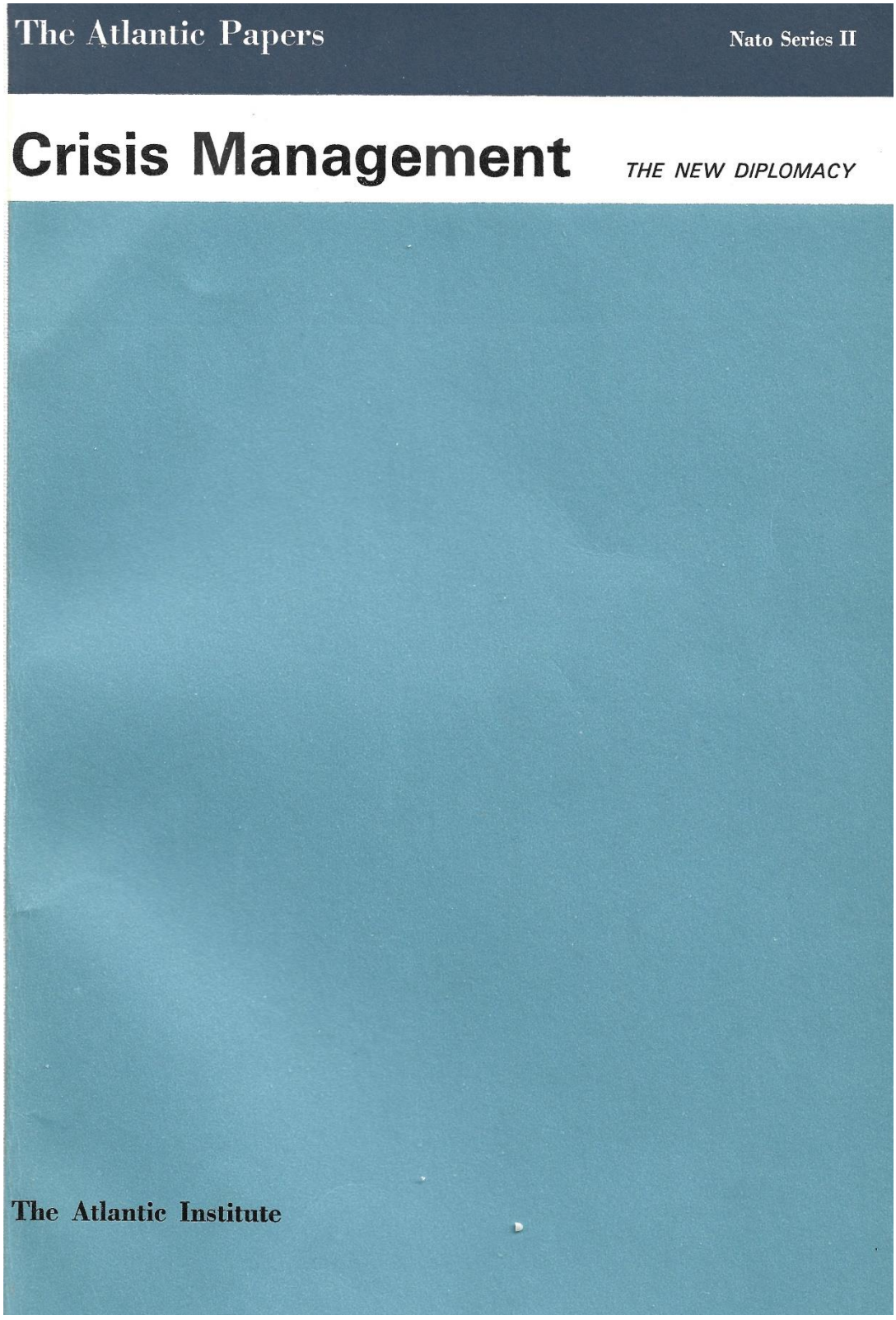
Uddrag af Alastair Buchan: *Crisis Management – The New Diplomacy*, Paris: The Atlantic Institute 1966 (side 20-22)



Crisis Management *THE NEW DIPLOMACY*

by Alastair Buchan

The Atlantic Institute
24 Quai du 4-Septembre, Boulogne-sur-Seine, France

II

The word « crisis » is one of the most overworked in the English and French languages (being short it fits newspaper headlines, and sub-editors think that its use boosts circulation). To make any sense of the subject of crisis management one must first consider what constitutes a crisis. The word derives from the Greek verd *kpiveiv* "to decide" and it was originally used in a pathological sense, to denote the turning point in a grave illness which leads either to death or to recovery. We no longer use it in this sense alone, but this meaning of a decisive turning point which changes the course of events, for our purpose the history of the international community rather than of an individual, is still useful.

Like illness, an international crisis generally contains an element of the unexpected: like illness research, consultation and action on the means of cure must be undertaken long before the turning point is reached. It may not involve the use or even the deployment of force on part of the great powers, but clearly it is those crises that may involve force which are of most concern to a group of allies in the nuclear age. A crisis must have a defined focus of conflict, the reversal of an action, the change in the status of a piece of territory or a change of regime: the word loses all meaning if it is applied to such broad or prolonged conflicts as the Sino-American confrontation or the Cold War. Crises are not necessarily engendered by our adversaries: they can arise from the deliberate decision on our own part to raise the level of existing diplomatic or military conflict in order to force a decision, as happened over Azerbaijan in 1946 or in Vietnam in 1965. In theory, at least, crises can arise from a head-on and simultaneous clash of opposing policies or forces. A crisis in the relations of the great powers may not arise from their own actions, but can be precipitated by a third party, as Egypt is held largely responsible for the Lebanon crisis of 1958. The protagonists in a crisis may be allies, as was the case over Suez in 1956 or Cyprus in 1963-4. They may even be close allies, as in the case of the Anglo-American quarrel over *Skybolt* at the end of 1962 [5].

For our purpose, then, a crisis is a period in a conflict between two or more states when one side has challenged the other on a defined or

definable issue, and a decision must be reached on the reaction to the challenge. The crisis period covers the formulation of the challenge, the definition of the issue, the decision on the appropriate reaction to the challenge, the impact of such a reaction upon the adversary, and the clarification of his response [6]. Once an international crisis has begun between important powers all other forms of international intercourse become subordinated to its management.

A crisis is not some accidental or brief flare-up in the relationship of two hostile systems—a row at Checkpoint Charlie, a stormy exchange in the Security Council, an aircraft blundering into the adversary's early warning system, or a slanging match between Peking radio and the Voice of America. These may be precursors of a crisis, just as Sarajevo provided Russia and Austria with an excuse to force the issue for which both had long been searching. A crisis normally implies a deliberate challenge and a deliberated response, of a kind which both sides hope will change the course of history in their favour.

If this is an adequate (though by no means comprehensive) working definition of a crisis, what is meant by "management", especially in the NATO context? There are two possible meanings. The first is that the policy and military strength and decisions-making techniques of the alliance should be developed in such a way that crises do not arise. The other is that the alliance should evolve a system for the handling of crises when they do arise, in such a way that it will maintain its internal cohesion and produce an outcome favourable to ourselves. It can be argued that both mean the same thing, that if an adversary knows he is bound to get the worst of every serious challenge he presents and will be faced with a united alliance, he will find it unprofitable to present them. But it is highly improbable in a world still strongly motivated by conflicting ideological drives, and of imperfect communication of preparations and intentions between adversaries, that

---

(5) This had all of the attributes of a genuine international crisis : the speed with which the storm blew up; the tendency of the protagonists to misinterpret each other's actions; the necessity to reach a speedy decision; the important ramifications of the decision.

(6) President Kennedy presented his close associates with a calendar for the month of October, 1962 with 13 days deeply engraved - from October 16th, the day the Soviet MRBMs in Cuba were identified by U2 photographs, to the 28th, the day Khrushchev broadcast his acceptance of the American demand for their withdrawal. One could attempt many different definitions of the Cuban crisis period: this was Kennedy's.

all forms of challenge and crisis will be deterred by declaratory policies, military strength or allied solidarity. Moreover, crises can be precipitated by third parties or the NATO powers themselves. "Management" must therefore mean the ability to handle crises when certain major challenges are presented to the Western alliance, or if it becomes desirable to clarify any obscurity about our intentions or to end an endemic conflict by presenting our own challenge to the adversary.

There is another aspect of the question. Once a crisis has started, especially between the great powers, the adversary becomes our own partner in the solution of the conflict which gave rise to it without recourse to war. His prestige is at stake as well as ours, his face must be saved as well as ours. The hairline balance between firmness and aggression must be preserved. The ordinary techniques of policy formation, especially within the alliance, are not adequate to so delicate a task.

III

We do not live in a world of perpetual crises. It is true that there have been many serious crises in the twenty years since the end of the Second World War; this is only to be expected in a period of ideological conflict when a very high degree of mobilised military force exists in both camps. It is also true that developments in lands far from Europe, the United States or the Soviet Union have become the focus of international crises; this is the inevitable corollary of a universal political conflict, a worldwide balance of power, the improvement of communications, and the end of the colonial empires. But the pessimist's picture of a contemporary world staggering from crisis to crisis is not valid.

So far one can enumerate eight situations since 1945 which involve the deployment of the forces of the great powers on a significant scale, and therefore imply a serious danger of war for the allies of the United