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China-US Trust Building on Nuclear Strategy: A Chinese Perspective

Zhong Zhenming

School of Political Science and International Relations, Tongji University, China

Currently, the US-China mutual trust is eroding due to a series of misperceptions, miscalculations and suspicions between China and the US from different fields. ¹Strategically, some key elements and origins of those mistrust factors need to be discovered and addressed so that the US-China Strategic Mutual Trust on nuclear strategies of both nations can be enhanced. This paper argues that the current relative vulnerable strategic stability between China and the US may deteriorate if it remains a dilemma of interpretation about the motives and intentions of each other – think of China-US nuclear relations today. This is because the consequences of not trusting in the international nuclear arena can be a security competition in which each side wrongly attributes aggressive intention to actions that are taken for defensive reasons by the other. Currently, Mutual trust between China and the US is the key to the process of cooperation and partnership building that can mitigate and transcend the dynamics of security competition between them. Therefore, it is important for scholars in community of nuclear strategy studies to have a detailed explanation of those prevalent and potential mistrusts in China-US nuclear relations and explore the origins of them, so that we can find reasonable and practicable way to enhance strategic confidence between the two countries.

The paper will first review the main manifestations of mistrusts between China and the US on Nuclear Strategy and point out the possible unfavorable outcomes that may result. Second, by introducing conventional realism wisdom about the origin of the mistrust between different states and attaching importance to the psychological effects under certain circumstance, the paper will develop an analysis framework of integrating realism theory in international relations and psychological theories to examine the issue of trust building between China and the US on Nuclear Strategy. In the third part, the author will further explore the key factors that contribute to mistrust between China and the US, with a focus on specifying the conflicting tendencies manifested both by declaratory policy and actual effects in nuclear terms between China and the US. Finally, this paper will make some policy suggestions for building US-China Mutual Trust on Nuclear Strategy.

I. China-US Mutual Trust on Nuclear Strategy in Context

The lack of US-China Mutual Trust on Nuclear Strategy is manifested in many critical

¹ Mutual strategic mistrust has become a central challenge to the Sino-U.S. relationship and a focal point for academics to discuss. See David Lampton, "Power Constrained: Sources of Mutual Strategic Suspicion in U.S.-China Relations," Policy Paper to the National Bureau of Asian Research, June 2010.

aspects relevant to nuclear strategies of both countries. The first mistrust comes from misperceptions over the purpose of possessing nuclear weapons. For China, it has declared since the first day it had nuclear weapons that China's going nuclear is to break up the US and USSR monopoly of nuclear weapons, that China's holding nuclear weapons is totally for self-defense and defense, and that China will not use its nuclear weapons first at any time and under any circumstance. China views itself as taking the moral high ground in the realm of nuclear weapons and as a responsible nuclear weapons state. This self-perception contrasts sharply to the US, which is set up to no waiver of first use policy. The Fact of the US actual use of nuclear weapons against Japan at the end of WWII and its repeated attempts to blackmail other countries, including China, with the possibility of nuclear attack will long hover over the minds of Chinese policy makers. On the part of US, the viability and persistence of China's no first use policy is frequently doubted by US officials and academics. In addition, both sides may worry about the other side seeing themselves as deterred targets, regardless of both repeatedly announcing the mutual non-targeting. There are several issues which are regarded as weakening the Chinese power: in 2001, the US Nuclear Posture Review ever named China as one of the nuclear-targeted countries, although the US and China had agreed not to target nuclear weapons at each other in 1998 and the Defense White Paper of 2008 reinforce this agreement by stating that Chinese nuclear weapons are not targeted at any country.² Moreover, in the fourth US-China Security Dialogue in 2008 China expressed its interest in a US commitment to not use nuclear first against, which the US have not yet made.

The second mistrust concerns the strategy of nuclear development and nuclear deterrence. China's nuclear development and nuclear deterrence policy has been remarkably consistent since it became a nuclear weapons state. This policy has consisted three points: minimum but comprehensive development of nuclear weapons; capability of second strike with a minimum deterrence; opposition to extra-territorial nuclear weapons development. While the US has the most powerful nuclear capabilities and remains a very strong and effective nuclear deterrence to other countries, China maintains a very small nuclear counterattacking capability in order to deter possible nuclear attacks by other nuclear capable countries. However, China's minimum deterrence is recently regarded to be increasing the country's vulnerability to be attacked by other nuclear weapon state's superior conventional forces and offers no means to control an arms

² Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China: "White Paper: China's National Defense in 2008".

race. Therefore, it is speculated by some American academics that China's nuclear modernization program may be geared toward developing the capacity to move from a minimum deterrence to a limited deterrence.³ Meanwhile, China has been critical of the policy of extended nuclear deterrence, or so-called "nuclear umbrellas", provided by the other nuclear weapon states, particularly the United States, to their allies. China is also officially opposed to the deployment of nuclear weapons outside national territories. As a strong nuclear weapons state that lead numerous allies around the world, the US alleged to have commitments to protect all its allies and friends and tried its best to extend nuclear deterrence to them, including Japan and ROK that lie in East Asia. As a result, the Chinese criticism of US alliance policy and extended nuclear deterrence constitutes one of the major origins of mistrust between China and the US.

The third mistrust concerns the nuclear transparency. In recent years, some US officials and experts repeatedly criticized that China's nuclear strategy and capabilities are not transparent.⁴ In the eyes of some Americans, Beijing has traditionally disclosed far less information about the most critical aspects of its military capabilities than has the US. The American reaction to the appearance of new aircraft, ships and missiles is to ask, essentially, "What's it for?" China on the other hand has consistently responded that China has made very clear about its nuclear doctrine from the beginning of China's becoming a nuclear weapons state. The US may concern about some ambiguity or uncertainty of China's nuclear policies, including China's NFU statement and policy of nuclear minimal deterrence, but it is also reasonable for China to doubt US policy of nuclear ambiguity and dual criteria with regard to nuclear issues. For those Americans who hope to learn details on some of the most controversial developments in China's military modernization, it is highly expected for China to release data involving China's technological progress and quantitative deployment of its anti-ship ballistic missile system, ballistic missile submarines, new stealth fighter, or other asymmetrical military offensive capabilities. But China as a less capable nuclear power may have her own considerations on this kind of military transparency. On the one hand, as a much weaker side comparing to the US, China's ambiguity of nuclear capability can to some extent protect its relatively vulnerable nuclear arsenal from being preemptively disarmed by the US. On the other hand, as a rising power in a process of military modernization, China's absolute transparency in its technological

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⁴ Michael Kiselycznyk and Phillip C. Saunders, "Assessing Chinese Military Transparency," Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University (June 2010). www.ndu.edu/inss/docUploaded/China%20FINAL.pdf.

progress and quantitative deployment may invite unnecessary suspicion and dread.

The fourth mistrust deals with their attitudes toward nuclear arms control and disarmament. Although US president Obama's recent nuclear free world initiation has successfully attracted focused international attention, few may acknowledge that it is China that first called for a complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and regarded a nuclear weapon free world as a final goal.⁵ In order to realize that goal step by step, China proposed unconditional no-first-use policy be declared by all nuclear weapons states, negotiations be launched to establish more nuclear-weapon-free zones, security guarantees be provided to waive use or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states, nuclear weapons that were deployed abroad be withdrawn to the homelands of nuclear weapons states, a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty be negotiated and implemented, deployment of weapon systems of outer space and missile defense be banned, the US and Russia massive nuclear arsenals be significantly reduced, and commitment be made by all nuclear weapons states to have complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons according to the Non-proliferation Treaty. If we have an objective look on the fulfillment of those suggestions of nuclear arms control and disarmament, we can easily find that the US side still has a long way to go. In addition, Americans have long been asking China to join the new round of nuclear arms control and disarmament, while China has responded that it will have to join the process until the two nuclear superpowers reduce their arsenal so significantly that their nuclear capabilities being comparable to China's.⁶ China also takes a view that the US deployment of ballistic missile defense in East Asia is neutralizing Chinese nuclear deterrent force. China has consistently stressed that a global missile defense system would be detrimental to strategic balance and stability, undermine international and regional security, and have a negative impact on the process of nuclear arms control and disarmament. The Chinese willingness to join the nuclear disarmament process is highly dependent on US measures. Not only does the precision strike capabilities and superiority of the US nuclear arsenal, but the US nuclear first-use policy as well as targeting China and keeping their nuclear warheads on hair-trigger alert make an effective nuclear disarmament for China impossible today.⁷

⁵ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China: "White Paper: China's National Defense in 2010".

⁶ See Pan Zhenqiang, "Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: Why Not Outlaw Them First?" http://carnegieendowment.org/files/abolishing_nuclear_weapons_debate.pdf.

⁷ Jan Paul Franken, The Chinese Position on Nuclear Disarmament: A Perspective, Policy Paper to the Delhi Policy

The distrust mentioned above is the result of misperceptions, miscalculations and suspicions between China and the US when it comes to the area of nuclear strategy. If inadequately addressed, this toxic mix will be conducive to a higher level of future conflict between the two nations.

II. Psychology Meets Theory of Trust on Nuclear Strategy

The concept of trust is probably the weakest one developed in the whole IR literature, yet trust is so central to our lives and to international relations. It is a most important idea but it is at the same time one of the most problematic and ignored of all concepts. Mutual trust is a key to mitigate and transcend the dynamics of suspicion and cheating behavior among different countries.

The concept of trust has been ignored for a simple reason: the domination of the realist view in international relations studies is that there is little room for trust among states.⁸ The realist view is that to trust can actually be dangerous because if you trust too readily, they argue, you risk being taken advantage of exposing yourself to betrayal. The outcome may be disastrous, such as that brought about by Chamberlain by risking trust on the untrustworthy Hitler. Therefore, the most frequently used concept by realists is the uncertainty of the intention and thus the possibility of being cheated. Even if we are confident about the current motives and intentions of a government, we are not sure what we will have in the future.

Realists also wrote much about the logic of security dilemma, in which scenario one state's military buildup due to its concern over alleged reasonable security interests tends to be perceived as security threat to the other state, which will have to make the same military buildup that may in turn lead to the counterpart's new round of military buildup. The concept of security dilemma in the context of realism is well developed because for realists, nation-states as major actors in an anarchical international system always seek to win survival, get power or security, preserve a favorable international status, and pursue to maximize their national interests. If a state seeks to get a moderate objective of security, power, status and national interest in a mild and restrained way, others do not need to worry about aggressive intention of that state. Nevertheless, not all states will adopt a self-restraint policy in pursuit of their national objectives even when they take it for granted that they are having defensive intentions and pursuing

Group on the Nuclear Policy Project, 2009.

⁸ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

reasonable interests. In an anarchical international system, it is not easy, and sometimes risky, for one state to conclude that the behavior and the strategy of the other is necessarily defensive and will not hamper its own national objectives.

The realists are right because uncertainty cannot be eliminated due to the impossibility of escaping from what philosophers call the minds problem. We can never have 100% certainty about the intentions of others; we have to assume the worst. We are always faced with dilemma of interpretation about the motives and intentions of others. Fear among great powers derives from the fact that they invariably have some offensive military capability that they can use against each other, and the fact that one can never be certain that other states do not intend to use that power against oneself.⁹ Here, the psychology dynamics generated as a consequence of uncertainty about the motives and intentions of others need to be examined in detail. Actually, the policy elites in either side concerned may feel the terrible fear that they have of the other party, but they cannot enter into the others counter-fear, or even understand why they should be particularly nervous. It is never possible for us to realize or remember properly since we cannot see the inside of others' mind. The fundamental problem is that a government might find it very difficult to realize what they see as a defensive, others might reasonably perceive as offensive. Despite of that, it is wrong to conclude that we cannot have trust. We need trust because our condition is one of existential uncertainty, and because trust is potentially to emerge. If we can achieve trust, we can transcend the negative dynamics of security competition and promote cooperation between China and the US.

To a large extent, students of trust building between China and the US have to acquire not only the intellectual ability of international relations theories, but also the knowledge of psychological theories that are conducive to explain those factors contributing to mistrust and the ways to build mutual trust between China and the US. I would first argue that it is important to distinguish three major kinds of mistrusts: misperceptions, calculations and suspicions between China and the US. These mistrust manifestations tend to be originated both from offensive behavior by one side and the psychological perceptions by the other side. I use the term misperception referring to inaccurate inference and misjudgments about how the other state will take an adversary policy toward one state and hereby form a conflicting or even confrontational bilateral relation. Miscalculations means statesman either overestimate or underestimate the

⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, "Power and Fear in Great Power Politics," in G.O. Mazur, ed., *One Hundred Year Commemoration to the Life of Hans Morgenthau (1904-2004)* (New York: Semenenko Foundation, 2004), p. 185.

other side's capabilities and its hostility. Conflicts are especially likely to occur when a state simultaneously underestimates an adversary's strength and exaggerates its hostility.¹⁰ Suspicion is hereby referring to one country's misunderstandings and doubts on the fundamental objectives that drive the foreign policy and external behavior of the other country.

Furthermore, I would hereby argue that understanding the theories of attitude and behavior change is useful for us to elicit some ways to address the issue of mistrust between China and the US on nuclear strategy. The reason is that the eroding mutual trust between China and the US has already led to some unfavorable attitudes and behaviors which would further motivate to a potential spiral of security competition. To avoid this tendency to happen, it is worthwhile for us to learn from the theories of attitude and behavior change. The first is theory of changing attitudes through communication, which posits that information exchanged throughout the process of communication is helpful for better understanding between change agents and cultivate coordination in the step-be-step process of attitude change. For the trust building between China and the US, we can draw from this theory the importance of effective communication. The second is theory of changing attitudes through activity participation, which presumes that the participation of group activities by change agents is helpful to form their identity on the norms and values of the group and thus change their unfavorable attitudes and behaviors. For the trust building between China and the US, we can draw from this theory the importance of cultivating common and complementary interests through participation of wide-range and multi-level cooperative mechanisms. The third is theory of changing attitudes through expectation and prophecy, which assumes that a favorable expectation and prophecy on one change agent might be leading to a self-fulfilling result in which scenario the agent change its attitudes or behaviors little by little and finally meet the initial favorable expectation and prophecy. For the trust building between China and the US, we can draw from this theory the importance of avoiding a self-fulfilling prophecy of rivalry and enmity relationship between China and the US. The fourth is the social learning theory. The social learning theory, later renamed social cognitive theory, proposes that attitude or behavior change is affected by environmental influences, personal factors, and attributes of the behavior itself. The change agent must believe in its capability to perform the behavior (i.e., the agent must possess self-efficacy) and must perceive an incentive to do so (i.e., the agent's positive expectations from performing

¹⁰ Robert Jerivs, "War and Misperception," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol.18, No.4 1988. pp.675-700.

the behavior must outweigh the negative expectations). Again for the trust building between China and the US, we can draw from this theory the importance of proper management of accident events that provide background of trust building between China and the US. In addition, it's also important to provide clear expectations and the opportunity for development of crisis management by both sides in the process of trust building.

III. Major Factors Contributing to China-US Mistrust on Nuclear Strategy

Many different factors have contributed to the China-US mistrust on nuclear strategy. Rather than list them sporadically, I would like to explore those factor in a way connecting to the realism of international relations emphasis and those psychological factors that can be drawn from theories of attitude and behaviors changes.

First, Waltz's neorealist approach provide a structural presumption that state leaders have little or no choice owing to the confining international structure in which states must operate. The current international structure suggests it might have negative effects for China-US mutual trust building in terms of nuclear strategy. The central feature of the international structure between China and the US is the sensitive power transition tendency with which the US as the current only superpower worrying to be challenged by the rising powers including China. In the context of realism, the existing hegemonic powers tend to be challenged by rising powers which generally resort to use violent means to maximize their powers and overthrow the status quo system.¹¹ China seems to perfectly meet the requirements of such a challenger: the rapidly developed economic and military strength, the less satisfied attitude toward the current international political and economic order, and the frequently happened tension with the hegemonic US power. So it is no wonder that quite a lot Americans take it for granted that China will inevitably take a similar way of development to the Hitler's Germany's or Stalin's Soviet Union. On the other hand, a rising China finds its development is to some extent restrained by the current international economic and political system. Some Chinese people hold the view that the US doesn't like to see the rising of China and tries to contain the rising of China.

Second, the asymmetrical nuclear capability relationship between China and the US has brought forward some arguments that may deepen their mistrust on nuclear strategy. Currently, the US has established the most powerful nuclear arsenal in the world while China maintains a

¹¹ John J. Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise," *Current History*, Vol. 105, No. 690 (April 2006), pp.160-162.

small and vulnerable nuclear arsenal due to its persistence in the principle of limited development of nuclear weapons and a minimal nuclear deterrence.¹² This asymmetrical nuclear capability has now invited some underestimate of China's capability of second strike in US community of nuclear strategy. The example of this kind of miscalculation is an article written by Keir Lieber and Daryl Press in 2006, in which they jointly put forward an argument that the US has now an absolute nuclear superiority over Russia and China and that the US is capable of eliminating the other two countries' nuclear arsenal and being free from their nuclear retaliation.¹³ Such rhetoric is rooted in the perceptions that Russia and China jointly have less nuclear capability and that both of them are potential opponents of the US. While such rhetoric is no good to build trust between American and China, it is possible to remind China to build a more powerful and effective nuclear capability.

Third, the inconformity of declaratory policy disseminated by government and ambiguous comments made by correlative officials or academics or actual behavior that might be happening in a real conflicts will increase suspicion between China and the US. Such inconformity comes from several aspects. The first aspect may come from dishonesty or conceit itself. Many national governments in the world may have disseminated declaratory information about their capabilities or intentions for political and psychological effects. Some of them have been known to mass people thanks to the declassification of some official documents. Some governmental decisions are suspected to have concealed untold strategies but may be uncovered in future. The information explosion that has resulted from the rapid growth of the internet has led to more concealed information uncovered, as evidenced by the recent accident of Wiki Leak. The second aspect is the so called dual criterion of policy concerning nuclear affairs. For example, it's well known the US government has developed very different non-proliferation or anti-proliferation policies toward different countries. It has adopted more tolerant policy toward its allies than that toward non-allies. The third aspect comes from the incongruous attitudes that exist in different branches of government and different individuals, interest groups or political parties. Some views have been differently expressed from the government's in one country by individual scholar, official, governmental or non-governmental organization and as a result lead to more misunderstandings and suspicions by the other. The fourth aspect comes from the policy

¹² M. Taylor Fravel and Evan S. Medeiros, "China's Search for Assured Retaliation: The Evolution of Chinese Nuclear Strategy and Force Structure," *International Security*, Fall 2010, p.53.

¹³ Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, "The End of Mad? The Nuclear Dimension of US Primacy," *International Security*, Spring 2006, pp.7-44.

transformation due to changes of different administrations. Nuclear strategies have been developed to meet the national interests in different periods by different administrations which may have defined national interests in a different way and thus transformed nuclear strategies accordingly.

Fourth, there is a link between the outlook of one state's nuclear strategy and the calculation of its conventional capability comparing to the other state's conventional capability. Conventional or strategic conventional weapons are often taken into account when making the policy of nuclear deterrence. As a result, misperception or suspicion of the nuclear strategy of the other country tends to be increasing. For example, one state's adoption of nuclear first-use policy is often linked to the concerns of its conventional inferiority comparing to the other. In the part of America, it might be reasonable to doubt the credibility of China's no first use policy since China may have to consider for using nuclear weapons if it is defeated in a major conventional war due to a potential conflict between the two countries over Taiwan issue. That's why suspicion over China's policy of nuclear deterrence was sparked when Gen. Zhu Chenhu made a comment of a possible using of nuclear weapons against US military intervention in a potential conflict in Taiwan Strait.

Fifth, accidental security events that involve both China and the US can affect the trust building between the two countries. For China, such accidental security events mainly come from three aspects. The first aspect concerns China's national sovereignty and territorial integration. For example, most Chinese people believed that the US government has been supporting Taiwan, Tibetan and Xinjiang independent elements for a long time, as evidenced by US providing arms sale or other kinds of support to them in recent decades. The second aspect concerns US partial support to its allies over their territorial disputes with China. A pertinent example is US siding with Japan's hardliner policy toward Diaoyu Island disputes with China in recent years. Another example is Obama Administration's subtle declaration of involving the territorial disputes over the South China Sea between China and several Southeast Asian countries. So far, the US policy of going back to East Asia has been widely perceived to be targeting to hedge against China. The third aspect concerns US efforts to strengthen military alliance relationship and military presences in China's peripheral region after certain kind of security crisis or regional war happened. For example, after the Bush Administration launched anti-terrorist war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US military presence was enhanced and the US

sought to permanently keep its military bases there. In addition, after the two crisis happened on Korea Peninsular in 2010, the US successfully strengthen its alliance relations with Japan and ROK, while increase China's sense of insecurity.

Sixth, the structural distinction that involves conflicting political ideation, divergent strategic interests and different cultural tradition between China and the US functioned as a vital restraint on trust building between the two countries. The structural distinctions between China and the US include the following two factors. The first is the difference of ideology and social system. A socialist China with the leadership of the Communist Party has been a focus of criticism by both conservatives and liberals in America. The contest over social system and model of development will bring forward even more competition between China and the US when worldwide extollers hailed China's development model while cast doubt on the American Model under the circumstance of the recent financial crisis and its severe blow on U.S. economy. The second is the conflicting interest on geopolitics and geopolitical strategy. As a global hegemony, the US has big interest in East Asia and tries to dominate this region. China as a rising power has long been viewed as a potential challenger to the US. According to the realism of the western international relations theory, a rising power generally poses a strategic threat to the existing hegemony because the former seeks to maximize its power while the latter have to defend the status quo. Their competition is said to be leading to a hegemonic war, as evidenced by historical experiences again and again. Although China develops the theory of peaceful rising and peaceful development, so far it is regarded to be an unpersuasive argument for many westerners. Therefore, the US strategists tend to have misperceptions that China is eroding the US geopolitical strategic space whatever China does outside its homeland to extend its national interests in recent years. Meanwhile, there is a growing conviction among Chinese policymakers that the US is bent on curtailing China's rise and looking for opportunities to destabilize China.¹⁴

IV. Policy Suggestions to China-US Trust Building on Nuclear Strategy

The preceding analysis has suggested some policy directions to which China and the US have to head if they are to build mutual trust on nuclear strategy, rather than moving to a dangerous scenario of security competition between the two nations.

Firstly, for mutual trust to build between China and the US, it's highly demanded that

¹⁴ Elizabeth Stanley, International Perception of US Nuclear Policy, SANDIA REPORT, February 2007, p.27.

policy elites in both countries discard the mentality of cold war and take an impartial, rational and objective attitude toward the other country. In the part of America, it is important to acknowledge that China's rising is not necessarily leading to a coming conflict with the United States. China is not like the Soviet Union; it has made consistent reform and opening up efforts to merge itself into the existing US-led international system and has developed close economic and cultural ties with almost all foreign countries, including the US and its allies. A rising and responsible China is in the interest of the United States. In the part of China, it is also important to realize that China has still a very long way to develop itself, not only in its hard power, but also in soft power. China's strength is not only overestimated by foreigners, but also by many Chinese themselves. China is still a developing country that lags far behind the United States and faces a series of unprecedented domestic problems. In the process of China's modernization, a powerful and responsible American presence in East Asia is also possible to bring a favorable and stable international order in the region. In addition, policy elites in both countries have to avoid a self-fulfilling prophecy to occur. On the one hand, if one regards the other as your enemy, the other will sooner or later become a real enemy of you; on the other hand, if one regards the other as your friend, the other finally becomes your real friend.

Secondly, if it is impracticable to prevent a government from adopting a declaratory policy for its political and psychological effects, then it is possible for the government of either China or the US to refrain itself from adopting dual criterion of policy concerning nuclear affairs. As mentioned before, the US has adopted more tolerant non-proliferation policy toward its allies than that toward its non-allies. Such policy itself means the US non-proliferation policy has made to serve its narrow national interest rather than a broader international non-proliferation objective. Furthermore, the US has the most powerful nuclear capabilities as well as the willing to use them against any severe external threats, but it is regretful that the US often makes a fuss about China's nuclear modernization. The same dual criterion has made over the issue of NFU policy since the US has long threatened to first use nuclear weapons against its enemy, but it has thrown harsh criticism to any individual Chinese who commented about the possibility of China's use of nuclear weapons over the potential Taiwan Strait conflict under the circumstances of US intervention. Although it is impossible to prohibit incongruous attitudes that exist in different branches of government and different individuals, interest groups or political parties due to the freedom of speech, it will make sense for both governments to clarify some

ambiguous information and misleading viewpoints. In addition, before a major change of nuclear policy happens, it is necessary for a new administration to make more demonstration and provide more transparent information accordingly. Or else, any major change of nuclear policy may invite misperception and suspicion by foreign countries. For example, any major change concerns no-first-use policy or deterrence policy will have to make it sure for others that it is a carefully considered, reliable and irreversible.

Thirdly, compound mechanism of dialogue, communication and cooperation is conducive to enhance confidence and clear up doubts between China and the US. So far, the two countries have established a wide-range and multi-level channels and mechanisms of dialogue, the most prominent of which include the China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue, the China-US legislative communication mechanism, the hot line connecting the two national leaders, and the second track meeting between Chinese and American academics. The two countries are also engaging cooperation in different areas like anti-terrorism, non-proliferation, regional security crisis, climate change, and energy cooperation. Nevertheless, the effects of those mechanisms on trust building will have to depend on the characteristics and contents of them. Some of the communication and dialogue can cultivate the phenomenon of confidence and reduce strategic miscalculation, but others can only functions as a manifestation of a posture. In recent years, some mechanisms of dialogue between China and the US have even create more mistrusts because the US side expected to force Chinese government to make concession in such issues as RMB appreciation, financial market access, protection of intellectual property rights, and domestic reform. Therefore, it is highly demanded to reform these mechanism so that they could become a real platform of enhancing confidence and clearing up doubts between the two countries.

Fourthly, great efforts need to be done to avoid the disturbance of trust building by accidental security events. Over the past decade, we have witnessed a series of accidental security events that have caused increasing mistrust between China and the US, including the alleged mistaken bombing of the Chinese Embassy in 1999 in Belgrade, the EP-3 reconnaissance plane incident over the South China Sea in 2001, several US-China maritime incident in the East and South China Seas in 2007-2010, the US arms sale to Taiwan year after year, the US support for a hardliner policy taken by Japan and several ASEAN countries toward their territorial disputes with China, and the US harsh criticism of China during the vessel sinking and island

shelling incidents happened in the Korea Peninsular in 2010. In order to have a proper management of such kind of accidental security events, both China and the US has to respect each other's core national interests, including state sovereignty, territorial integration, and the social and economic sustained development. As a stronger actor, the US has more reasons to be self-restrained to send out false signals to its allies around China over the territorial disputes. Furthermore, it is highly expected for the US to attach less importance to the military alliance and military means to solve regional disputes. On the other hand, China as a rapidly rising power could well afford to adopt a more moderate policy toward its much vulnerable neighbors, including Taiwan authority.

Fifthly, it would be helpful to build mutual trust if China and the US were to cultivate more common and complementary interests while address the conflicting and confrontational interests. Common interests and complementary interests are mutually favorable, and conflicting interests and confrontational interests are mutually unfavorable. Mutually favorable and mutually unfavorable determine the strategic relationship between the two countries.¹⁵ Common interests refer to those similar in content and mutually favorable, like peace between themselves, reform of UN Security Council, joint investment, and joint educational and cultural programs. Complementary interests refer to those different in content but mutually favorable, like bilateral trade, tourism, and educational and cultural exchanges. On the other hand, conflicting interests refer to those that are both different in content and mutually unfavorable, like US arms sale to Taiwan, US deployment of NMD in East Asia, political ideology, and reform of global financial system. Confrontational interests refer to those similar in content but mutually unfavorable, like arms exports, global leadership, model of development, and control of strategic materials. These four types of interests can exist in every aspect of the bilateral relations and the two countries have to identify each specific issue according to types of interests before deciding whether to cultivate the common and complementary interests or have an appropriate management of the conflicting and confrontational interests.

Last but not the least, communication at different levels still matters in reducing mistrust and enhancing the sense of interest-community and security-community between China and the US. The two countries has already built close economic and trade ties, but it is noticeable that we still lack a sense of interest-community and security-community. My view is that the cold-war

¹⁵ Yan Xuetong, "The Instability of China-US Relations," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, June 2011, p.270.

mentality not only exists in the minds of some officials in both countries, but also in the minds of quite a lot ordinary people, including some academics and medias who have to some extent developed a prejudiced view toward the other country and has some professional influence on shaping the public perception of the other country. To cultivate an objective and comprehensive perception of the other country by ordinary people, we need more economic, cultural, and educational communications based on grassroots participation. For the current political and military communications, it is not enough to be restricted in high level contacts because it is the lower and middle level staffs that constitutes the majority of the political or military community in both countries. Therefore, great efforts need to be made to promote communications in different fields and at different levels, but more attention should be paid to grassroots participation.