**North Korea REM DA**

A. UQ: North Korea stable now- China cooperation ensures. Global Times[[1]](#footnote-1) ‘13

The political bureau of the Central Committee of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party announced Sunday its decision to strip Jang Song-thaek of all posts and expel him from the party. He is accused of "anti-party and counter-revolutionary factional acts." As Jang was viewed as the second-most powerful figure and is North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's uncle, this announcement is considered a significant political event.

**It has** been almost **two years since Kim Jong-un took power** from his late father Kim Jong-il. The outside world generally believes **the whole process was smooth**. For China, such a **peaceful transition suits China**'s interest.

After the news of Jang's fall came to China, there has been speculation on the Internet, but ordinary **Chinese** are more willing to **see a stable North Korea** and **believe** **its leader has** the ability to **control** the situation. Recently, disputes between China and Japan have been the focus of Northeast Asia and there has been no major news about North Korea, but the country's geopolitical significance to this region does not change. On the one hand, it is a weak country in terms of national strength; on the other hand, it claims special strategic impetus. A friendly relationship between China and North Korea is not only critical to the North, but also a strategic and diplomatic leverage for China. With China's rise, its diplomatic leverage will become greater, yet the impact of bilateral relations in the Asia-Pacific region is irreplaceable. To keep this friendly relationship should be China's mainstream mentality toward this neighbor. Urging it to give up nuclear weapons and the bilateral friendship should have the common ground. China and North Korea have long taken different development paths. The two are not comparable in terms of politics and economy. Only on the Chinese Internet would anyone make comparisons between the two. Some Net users abuse North Korea as a way of venting their dissatisfaction with China, which is nothing but hot air.**China's** friendliness and **aid for North Korea are rooted in China's national interest**, as are China's ties with and aid for Pakistan. Those who make an ideological interpretation of Sino-North Korea relations probably are living in past times. **Kim Jong-un is young**, **which can** possibly **become the** country's **decisive factor in promoting the nation to move forward.** The outside world should help create conditions for North Korea to integrate into East Asia instead of elbowing this sensitive country toward a confrontational direction. China can exert the most influence on North Korea, while how to balance its friendship with the country and oppose its nuclear weapons is a test for China's diplomacy. China has gained the initiative in dealing with complexities in Northeast Asia as well as in Sino-North Korean relations.

China should help bring about Kim Jong-un's visit to China as soon as possible, which will benefit the North's long-term stability and bilateral friendly ties.

B. Links

1.rare earth metal mining is an instance of the conflict of the res- the aff must defend stopping extraction in North Korea. Downey et al[[2]](#footnote-2) ‘10

Computer production, for example, could not occur without the extraction of minerals, fossil fuels, and other natural resources from around the world. One such category of resources is **rare earth minerals**, which are **mined** primarily **in China** (NRC, 2008). The mining of rare earth minerals **produces** as much as **2,000 tons of solid waste**, including toxic heavy metals and radioactive thorium, for every ton of rare earth mineral produced (Farago, 2009; Rong & Yu, 2009). In China, **it** also **results** **in topsoil loss**, erosion, **and** widespread silting and **contamination of rivers** and reservoirs used for drinking and irrigation (Xu & Liu, 1999).2

2. CX concession

C. Internal Links:

1. Extraction of rare earth metals are vital to North Korean stability- they form the economic backbone of the nation and ensure continued growth, and bolster internal cohesion between party elites, the populace, and autocratic rule- while ensuring cooperation with South Korea, Japan and China. Petrov[[3]](#footnote-3) ‘12

Those who travel to North Korea regularly might have noticed that **the last couple of years have brought significant improvement in** the country's **[North Korea’s]** **economic situation.** Newly built high-rise apartments, modern cars on the roads and improved infrastructure come as a surprise to visitors. It begs the question, where does Pyongyang get the money from? The ambitious rocket and nuclear programs, which North Korea continues to pursue despite international condemnation, are expensive and harmful to its economy. International sanctions continue to bite the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's foreign trade and investment prospects. Regular floods and droughts, animal epidemics and other natural disasters hit the fragile economy even harder. **According to expert estimations, the DPRK should have ceased to exist in the mid-1990s**, after the Communist Bloc collapsed and Kim Il-Sung died. **But North Korea has** **fully recovered** after the famine **and** even **shows steady signs of economic growth**. Foreign critics looked everywhere with hope to unravel the mystery. After 2008, the stalled inter-Korean cooperation left North Korea without South Korean financial assistance. Western humanitarian aid has also been exhausted or reduced to a number of goods with little market value. Although the volume of North Korea's foreign trade is negligible, the domestic economic situation continues to improve. Pyongyang is routinely suspected of violating international sanctions by trading arms, smuggling drugs, counterfeiting US dollars and other crimes. These activities would be expected to refill the impoverished state with badly needed foreign exchange. However, anti-proliferation operations and bank account arrests have never disclosed anything criminal nor did they manage to answer the main question: where does the money come from? In fact, **North Korea is sitting on the goldmine**. **The northern side of the Korean peninsula** is well known for its rocky terrain, with 85% of the country composed of mountains. It **hosts** sizeable **deposits of more than 200 different minerals**, of which **deposits** of coal, iron ore, magnesite, gold ore, zinc ore, copper ore, limestone, molybdenum, and graphite **are the largest and have** the **potential for** the **development of large-scale mines**. After China, North Korea's magnesite reserves are the second-largest in the world, and its tungsten deposits are almost the world's sixth-largest. Still the value of all these resources pales in comparison to prospects that promise the exploration and export of rare earth metals.  Rare earth metals are a group of 17 elements found in the earth's crust. They are essential in the manufacture of high-tech products and in green technologies, such as wind turbines, solar panels or hybrid cars.  Known as "the vitamins of high-tech industries," REMs are minerals necessary for making everything that we use on a daily basis, such as smartphones, flat-screen TVs, and notebook computers. Some rare earth metals, such as cerium and neodymium, are crucial elements in semiconductors, cars, computers and other advanced technological areas. Other types of REMs can be used to build tanks and airplanes, missiles and lasers.  **South Korea estimates the total value of the North's mineral deposits at more than** US**$6 trillion.** Not surprisingly, despite high political and security tensions, **Seoul is showing** a **growing interest in developing REMs** together **with Pyongyang**.  In 2011, after receiving permission from the Ministry of Unification, officials from the Korea Resources Corp visited North Korea twice to study the condition of a graphite mine. Together with their counterparts from the DPRK's National Economic Cooperation Federation they had working-level talks at the Kaesong Industrial Complex on jointly digging up REMs in North Korea. An analysis of samples obtained in North Korea showed that the type of rare earth metals could be useful in the manufacture of liquid crystal display (LCD) panels and optical lenses.  The joint report also revealed that there are large deposits of high-grade REMs in the western and eastern parts of North Korea, where prospecting work and mining have already begun. It also reported that a number of the rare earth elements are being studied in scientific institutes, while some of the research findings have already been introduced in economic sectors. The North built a REM reprocessing plant in Hamhung in the 1990s but has been unable to put the plant into full operation due to power and supply bottlenecks. Rare earth minerals are becoming increasingly expensive, as China, the world's largest rare earth supplier, puts limits on its output and exports. In February, China's exports of rare earth metals exceeded the price of $1 million per ton, a nearly 900% increase in prices from the preceding year.  China, which controls more than 95% of global production of rare earth metals, has an estimated 55 million tons in REM deposits. North Korea has up to 20 million tons of REM deposits but does not have the technology to explore its reserves or to produce goods for the high-tech industry. Nevertheless, in 2009 the **DPRK**'s exports of rare metals to China stood at $16 million, and as long as someone invests, **exports will continue to expand.**  **This growing rise in REM prices and strong demand gives** the young leader **Kim Jong-Un** **a** **good chance** **to improve the** economic standing of **North [economy] Korea** without actually reforming its economy. **Following the Gulf States'** and **Russia**nexample of catching the wind of rising oil prices in their sails, **Pyongyang is likely to** follow suit**, becoming rich and powerful through** the exploration and **sale of natural resources**. **The export of rare earth metals will replenish** the **state coffers; stimulate** **the loyalty of** the **elites to Kim Jong-Un's** autocratic rule**; and secure the growth of consumption among** the **ordinary people.**  **Relations with South Korea, China and Japan are** also **likely to improve due to the large scale cooperation** on exploring, processing and utilizing REMs - the mineral of the 21st century.  Pyongyang needs international assistance through joint projects to explore its mineral resources, and mainly its rare metal and rare earth minerals. North Korean and Chinese teams have been cooperating to explore mineral resources in the DPRK for many decades. Seoul has recently expressed interest in working with Pyongyang on mining projects and technological innovations. Perhaps, **Japan and Taiwan, which look for alternative REM supplies** for their micro-processor and other cutting edge industries, **might** also **decide to contribute to** the **development** of this economically promising venture.

Paradoxically, the promise of Kim Jong-Il might soon come true and North Korea may become a "rich and prosperous state" - rich in natural resources and empowered by nuclear technologies. In that case, North Korea might not even need to go through a painful and potentially destabilizing economic reform. **Although the** political **regime will remain dictatorial**, the idea of unification with the South by war or absorption will soon become meaningless. **The purges of** political **elites** **and** the **mass starving** of ordinary people in North Korea **will cease**. Gradually **the level of prosperity** in the two halves of the divided Korea **will** **start equalizing, opening** more **opportunities for** greater exchange and **cooperation**.

2. The mere perception of instability or economic slowdown causes regime collapse- the implication is I only need to win a fraction of the external link to access the terminal impact. Lankov[[4]](#footnote-4) ‘11

The death of Kim Jong Il came unexpectedly this past weekend. Although he has visually aged much in recent years and was clearly in poor health, the news of his demise was almost a complete surprise. Indeed, in recent months, Kim Jong Il appeared to have recovered somewhat; he travelled extensively, seeming to slow the pace of dynastic transition to his son. Obviously, he did so on the assumption that he had more time to groom his heir, Kim Jon Un, to become the new leader of North Korea. With the transfer of power now at hand, Kim Jong Un finds himself in a challenging and dangerous position without much training. Success, above all, will mean survival -- political, and, perhaps, physical as well. Kim Jong Un’s most immediate task is to prevent any challenge from members of the top leadership. In most dictatorships, the chief bureaucrats and generals would feel ashamed to recognize a 29-year-old as the Supreme Leader, but **North Korean leaders understand** that **instability in their** divided **country** **is likely to bring a crisis which**, in turn, **could provoke** a **popular revolution** **and** eventual **unification with the South**. In such a scenario, the current elite would have no future. With that fear in mind, North Korea’s top brass is unlikely to threaten Kim Jong Un’s claim to power. Of course, some contenders might emerge, and reports may appear in the coming days and weeks of unexpected troop movements or disappearances of prominent generals and party leaders. But most of the leadership will likely stomach the rise of Kim Jong Un in return for maintaining internal stability, a necessary condition of their position. Should Kim Jong Un succeed in establishing himself over the next few months, policymakers and analysts will express hope that he will usher in an era of reform. But as long as he wants to remain alive and in control of North Korea, he will have little choice but to continue his father’s policies. To survive, the North Korean state will have no choice but to remain what it is now -- an anachronistic, nuclear-armed dictatorship whose population lives in an abject poverty. It has often been suggested that North Korea can cure its economic problems by implementing Chinese-style reforms and market openings. Although such changes worked well for China and Vietnam, both ostensibly communist states, neither country encountered the political difficulties that North Korea faces -- namely, that it remains part of a divided country. Indeed, **the existence of a rich and free South Korea** makes the situation in North Korea unique from that in China or Vietnam. The affluence and freedom of the South **represent a dire threat to North Korea**, **whose rulers realize** that the spread of knowledge in their country about **the prosperity of** the outside world, particularly of **their** **fellow Koreans in the South**, **would deliver a heavy blow to the legitimacy of the regime**. Chinese leaders, in contrast, do not have to contend with a similarly successful capitalist twin to its communist regime (Taiwan is too small to make a difference). Had nationalist forces retained control over the entire area south of the Yangtze River and fostered the living conditions of modern-day Taiwan, no Chinese Communist leader would dare to initiate reforms.

Korean war causes extinction. Hayes and Green[[5]](#footnote-5) ‘10

The international community is increasingly aware that cooperative diplomacy is the most productive way to tackle the multiple, interconnected global challenges facing humanity, not least of which is the increasing proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Korea and Northeast Asia are instances where **risks of** nuclear proliferation and **actual nuclear use** arguably **have increased** in recent years. This negative trend is **a product o**f continued **US nuclear threat projection against the DPRK** as part of a general program of coercive diplomacy in this region, North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme, the breakdown in the Chinese-hosted Six Party Talks towards the end of the Bush Administration, regional concerns over China’s increasing military power, and concerns within some quarters in regional states (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) about whether US extended deterrence (“nuclear umbrella”) afforded under bilateral security treaties can be relied upon for protection.  The consequences of failing to address the proliferation threat posed by the North Korea developments, and related political and economic issues, are serious, not only for the Northeast Asian region but for the whole international community.  At worst, **there is the possibility of nuclear attack**1, whether **by intention, miscalculation, or** merely **accident, leading to the resumption of Korean War hostilities**. On the Korean Peninsula itself, key population centres are well within short or medium range missiles. The whole of Japan is likely to come within North Korean missile range. Pyongyang has a population of over 2 million, Seoul (close to the North Korean border) 11 million, and Tokyo over 20 million. Even a limited nuclear exchange would result in a holocaust of unprecedented proportions.  But the catastrophe within the region would not be the only outcome. New research indicates that **even a limited nuclear war** in the region **would rearrange our global climate far more** quickly **than global warming**. Westberg draws attention to new studies modelling the effects of even a limited nuclear exchange involving approximately 100 Hiroshima-sized 15 kt bombs2 (by comparison it should be noted that the United States currently deploys warheads in the range 100 to 477 kt, that is, individual warheads equivalent in yield to a range of 6 to 32 Hiroshimas).The **studies indicate** that the soot from the fires produced would lead to a decrease in global temperature by 1.25 degrees Celsius for a period of 6-8 years.3 In Westberg’s view: That is not global winter, but **the nuclear darkness will cause a deeper drop in temperature than** at **any time during the last 1000 years**. The temperature over the continents would decrease substantially more than the global average. A decrease in rainfall over the continents would also follow…The period of **nuclear darkness will cause much greater decrease in grain production** than 5% and it will continue for many years...**hundreds of millions of people will die from hunger**…To make matters even worse, such amounts of **smoke injected into the stratosphere would cause a** huge **reduction in the Earth’s protective ozone**.4  These, of course, are not the only consequences. Reactors might also be targeted, causing further mayhem and downwind radiation effects, superimposed on a smoking, radiating ruin left by nuclear next-use. Millions of refugees would flee the affected regions. The direct impacts, and the follow-on impacts on the global economy via ecological and food insecurity, could make the present global financial crisis pale by comparison. How the great powers, especially the nuclear weapons states respond to such a crisis, and in particular, whether nuclear weapons are used in response to nuclear first-use, could make or break the global non proliferation and disarmament regimes. There could be many unanticipated impacts on regional and global security relationships5, with subsequent nuclear breakout and geopolitical turbulence, including possible loss-of-control over fissile material or warheads in the chaos of nuclear war, and aftermath chain-reaction affects involving other potential proliferant states. The Korean nuclear proliferation issue is not just a regional threat but a global one that warrants priority consideration from the international community.

Collapse risks both Chinese and U.S. intervention that risks war between the superpowers. Klinger[[6]](#footnote-6) ‘10

**During the early stages of a North Korean leadership crisis, China would try to contain the situation by prolonging the status quo and opposing any foreign intervention**, including through its position on the U.N. Security Council. Beijing would take steps to ameliorate a humanitarian crisis in North Korea in order to reduce the likelihood of refugee flow, preventing any spillover effect into China's northeast provinces. Beijing would prefer that any humanitarian assistance be provided to refugees while they remain in North Korea. The Chinese military could establish a control zone, either in China or, potentially, even in North Korea. The latter would provoke strong criticism from the U.S. and South Korea and, counter to Chinese interests, provide a pretext for U.S. and South Korean intervention. Beijing's calculation of factors that would precipitate its own intervention remains a mystery. China understands that the North Korean government and populace would not welcome Chinese intervention, given historical animosities. Beijing would therefore have to balance its intervention in order to secure an unstable country on its border with the realization that a Chinese military presence could not be permanent. However, **Beijing would intervene directly if it deemed the situation to be out of control** and saw itself forced to restore stability and political order. U.S. experts' discussions with Chinese academics indicate that Beijing has contingency plans for three military intervention missions in North Korea: \* Humanitarian missions (refugee aid or natural disaster response); \* Peacekeeping or "order keeping" missions such as serving as civil police; and \* "Environmental control" to clean up nuclear contamination resulting from a strike on North Korean nuclear facilities near the Chinese border or to secure loose North Korean nuclear weapons or fissile material.[25]

Beijing might prefer that any Chinese military intervention be done with U.N. authorization, but it is not known whether it would provide troops to a multilateral peacekeeping operation or demand sole authority over a zone of responsibility along its border with North Korea. South Korea would fear the latter option as legitimizing Chinese sovereignty over part of North Korea and hindering eventual Korean unification.[26] Chinese intervention would likely be undertaken to stabilize the situation and restore a sovereign North Korean state in order to prevent Korean reunification. If a North Korean collapse was inevitable, Beijing would want to ensure a seat at the negotiating table so that its concerns are addressed. Even if there were no chance of restoring North Korea, **the Chinese would insist that an expanded South Korea would have to provide guarantees** (e.g., no U.S. forces north of the 38th parallel) **in order to get Chinese troops to leave the Korean Peninsula.** During a North Korean succession crisis, China, **the U.S., and South Korea may** also **find themselves at odds over whether to seize North Korean nuclear weapons** and, if so, which country should send its military. **U.S. officials have affirmed** that **potential clashes between Chinese forces and U.S. or South Korean forces during a** North Korean **crisis are a "worst case scenario that brings the worst case fears**."[27]

War goes nuclear. Goldstein[[7]](#footnote-7) ‘13

Much of the debate about China’s rise in recent years has focused on the potential dangers China could pose as an eventual peer competitor to the United States bent on challenging the existing international order. But another issue is far more pressing. For at least the next decade, while China remains relatively weak compared to the United States, there is a real danger that Beijing and Washington will find themselves in a crisis that could quickly escalate to military conflict. Unlike a long-term great-power strategic rivalry that might or might not develop down the road, the danger of a crisis involving the two nuclear-armed countries is a tangible, near-term concern -- and the events of the past few years suggest the risk might be increasing. Since the end of the Cold War, Beijing and Washington have managed to avoid perilous showdowns on several occasions: in 1995–96, when the United States responded to Chinese missile tests intended to warn Taiwanese voters about the danger of pushing for independence; in 1999, when U.S. warplanes accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during the NATO air assault on Serbia; and in 2001, when a U.S. spy plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet, leading to the death of the Chinese pilot and Beijing’s detention of the U.S. plane and crew. But the lack of serious escalation during those episodes should not breed complacency. None of them met the definition of a genuine crisis: a confrontation that threatens vital interests on both sides and thus sharply increases the risk of war. If Beijing and Washington were to find themselves in that sort of showdown in the near future, they would both have strong incentives to resort to force. Moreover, the temptations and pressures to escalate would likely be highest in the early stages of the face-off, making it harder for diplomacy to prevent war THIN RED LINES It might seem that the prospects for a crisis of this sort in U.S.-Chinese relations have diminished in recent years as tensions over Taiwan have cooled, defusing the powder keg that has driven much Chinese and U.S. military planning in East Asia since the mid-1990s. But other potential **flash points have emerged.** As **China and its neighbors** **squabble over islands** and maritime rights **in the East** China **and South China seas, the U**nited **S**tates **has reiterated** its **treaty commitments to** defend two of the countries that are contesting China’s claims (**Japan and the Philippines**) and has nurtured increasingly close ties with a third (Vietnam). Moreover, **the Obama administration’s “pivot,”** or “rebalancing,” **to Asia**, a diplomatic turn matched by planned military redeployments, **has signaled** that **Washington is prepared to get involved in** the event of **a** regional **conflict**. Also, the United States insists that international law affords it freedom of navigation in international waters and airspace, defined as lying beyond a country’s 12-mile territorial limit. China, by contrast, asserts that other countries’ military vessels and aircraft are not free to enter its roughly 200-mile-wide “exclusive economic zone” without express permission -- a prohibition that, given Beijing’s territorial claims, could place much of the South China Sea and the airspace above it off-limits to U.S. military ships and planes. Disputes over freedom of navigation have already caused confrontations between China and the United States, and they remain a possible trigger for a serious crisis. It is true that **China and the U**nited **S**tates **are not currently adversaries** -- certainly not in the way that the Soviet Union and the United States were during the Cold War. **But** the **risk of a U.S.-Chinese crisis might** actually **be greater** than it would be if Beijing and Washington were locked in a zero-sum, life-and-death struggle. As armed adversaries on hair-trigger alert, **the Soviet Union and** the **U**nited **St**ates **understood** that **their** fundamentally opposed **interests might bring** **about** a **war**. After going through several nerve-racking confrontations over Berlin and Cuba, they gained an understanding of each other’s vital interests -- not to be challenged without risking a crisis -- and developed mechanisms to avoid escalation. China and the United States have yet to reach a similar shared understanding about vital interests or to develop reliable means for crisis management. **Neither China nor the U**nited **S**tates **has clearly defined** its **vital interests** across broad areas of the western Pacific. In recent years, China has issued various unofficial statements about its “core interests” that have sometimes gone beyond simply ensuring the territorial and political integrity of the mainland and its claim to sovereignty over Taiwan. Beijing has suggested, for example, that it might consider the disputed areas of the East China and South China seas to be core interests. Washington has also been vague about what it sees as its vital interests in the region. The United States hedges on the question of whether Taiwan falls under a U.S. security umbrella. And the United States’ stance on the maritime disputes involving China and its neighbors is somewhat confusing: **Washington has** remained neutral on the rival sovereignty claims and insisted that the disputes be resolved peacefully but has also **reaffirmed its commitment to stand by** **its allies in the event** that a **conflict erupts**. Such Chinese and U.S. ambiguity about the “redlines” that cannot be crossed without risking conflict increases the chances that either side could take steps that it believes are safe but that turn out to be unexpectedly provocative. MORE DANGEROUS THAN THE COLD WAR? **Uncertainty about what could lead** either **Beijing or Washington to risk war makes a** **crisis far more likely**, since **neither side knows** when, where, or just **how hard it can** **push without the other** side **pushing back**. This situation bears some resemblance to that of the early Cold War, when it took a number of serious crises for the two sides to feel each other out and learn the rules of the road. But today’s environment might be even more dangerous. The balance of nuclear and conventional military power between China and the United States, for example, is much more lopsided than the one that existed between the Soviet Union and the United States. Should Beijing and Washington find themselves in a conflict, **the huge U.S. advantage in conventional forces would increase the temptation for Washington to** threaten to or **actually use force**. Recognizing the temptation facing Washington, **Beijing might** in turn **feel pressure to use its conventional forces before they are destroyed**. Although China could not reverse the military imbalance, it might believe that quickly imposing high costs on the United States would be the best way to get it to back off. The fact that both sides have nuclear arsenals would help keep the situation in check, because both sides would want to avoid actions that would invite nuclear retaliation. Indeed, if only nuclear considerations mattered, U.S.-Chinese crises would be very stable and not worth worrying about too much. But the two sides’ **conventional forces** complicate matters and **undermine** the stability provided by **nuclear deterrence**. During a crisis, either side might believe that using its conventional forces would confer bargaining leverage, manipulating the other side’s fear of escalation through what the economist Thomas Schelling calls a “competition in risk-taking.” In a crisis, **China or the U**nited **S**tates **might believe** that **it valued what was at stake more than the other and** **would** therefore **be willing to tolerate** **a higher level of risk**. But because **using conventional forces would be** only **the first step in** an unpredictable process subject to misperception, missteps, and miscalculation, there is no guarantee that brinkmanship would end before it led to an **unanticipated nuclear catastrophe**. China, moreover, apparently believes that nuclear deterrence opens the door to the safe use of conventional force. Since both countries would fear a potential nuclear exchange, the Chinese seem to think that neither they nor the Americans would allow a military conflict to escalate too far. Soviet leaders, by contrast, indicated that they would use whatever military means were necessary if war came -- which is one reason why war never came. In addition, China’s official “no first use” nuclear policy, which guides the Chinese military’s preparation and training for conflict, might reinforce Beijing’s confidence that limited war with the United States would not mean courting nuclear escalation. As a result of its beliefs, Beijing might be less cautious about taking steps that would risk triggering a crisis. And if a crisis ensued, China might also be less cautious about firing the first shot. Such beliefs are particularly worrisome given recent **developments in tech**nology that **have** dramatically **improved the** precision and **effectiveness of conventional** military **capabilities. Their lethality might confer a dramatic advantage to the side that attacks first,** something that was generally not true of conventional military operations in the main European theater of U.S.-Soviet confrontation. Moreover, because the sophisticated computer and satellite systems that guide contemporary weapons are highly vulnerable to conventional military strikes or cyberattacks, today’s more precise weapons might be effective only if they are used before an adversary has struck or adopted countermeasures. If peacetime restraint were to give way to a search for advantage in a crisis, neither China nor the United States could be confident about the durability of the systems managing its advanced conventional weapons. Under such circumstances, both Beijing and Washington would have incentives to initiate an attack. China would feel particularly strong pressure, since its advanced conventional weapons are more fully dependent on vulnerable computer networks, fixed radar sites, and satellites. The effectiveness of U.S. advanced forces is less dependent on these most vulnerable systems. The advantage held by the United States, however, might increase its temptation to strike first, especially against China’s satellites, since it would be able to cope with Chinese retaliation in kind. COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN A **U.S.-Chinese crisis might** also **be** more **dangerous** than Cold War showdowns **because** **of the unreliability of** the existing **channels of communication** between Beijing and Washington. After the Cuban missile crisis, the Soviet Union and the United States recognized the importance of direct communication between their top leaders and set up the Moscow–Washington hot line. In 1998, China and the United States also set up a hot line for direct communication between their presidents. But despite the hot line’s availability, the White House was not able to contact China’s top leaders in a timely fashion following the 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing or the 2001 spy-plane incident. China’s failure to use the hot line as intended might have reflected the reluctance of its leaders to respond until they had reached an internal consensus or until they had consulted widely with their military. The delay might also have reflected China’s difficulties in coordinating policy, since China lacks a dependable counterpart to the U.S. National Security Council. Whatever the reason, **experience suggests** that frustrating **delays in** direct **communication are likely during** what would be the crucial **early moments of** an unfolding U.S -Chinese **crisis**. Instead, communication between the two countries might initially be limited to either public statements or tacit signals sent through actions. But public statements are aimed at multiple audiences, and nationalist passions in either China or the United States, as well as pressure from allies, might force either side to take a more aggressive public stance than it actually felt was warranted. Absent direct and confidential communication, the two countries might be unable to discuss politically sensitive proposals. They might also be unable to share information that could help head off a disastrous escalation, such as classified details about military capabilities or military maneuvers already under way. Communicating through actions is also problematic, with many possibilities for distortion in sending messages and for misinterpretation in receiving them. Chinese analysts seem to overestimate how easy it is to send signals through military actions and underestimate the risks of escalation resulting from miscommunication. For example, the analysts Andrew Erickson and David Yang have drawn attention to Chinese military writings that propose using China’s antiship ballistic missile system, designed for targeting U.S. aircraft carriers, to convey Beijing’s resolve during a crisis. Some Chinese military thinkers have suggested that China could send a signal by firing warning shots intended to land near a moving U.S. aircraft carrier or even by carefully aiming strikes at the command tower of the U.S. carrier while sparing the rest of the vessel. But as the political scientist Owen Coté has noted, even a very accurate antiship ballistic missile system will inevitably have some margin of error. Consequently, even the smallest salvo of this kind would entail a risk of inadvertent serious damage and thus unintended escalation. A final important factor that could make a U.S.-Chinese crisis more dangerous than those during the Cold War is geography. The focus of Cold War confrontations was primarily on land, especially in central Europe, whereas a future confrontation between China and the United States would almost certainly begin at sea. This difference would shape a U.S.-Chinese crisis in a number of ways, especially by requiring both sides to make some fateful choices early on. China’s small fleet of nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) and its much larger fleet of conventionally armed attack submarines are most secure when they remain in the shallow waters near the Chinese mainland, where poor acoustics compromise the effectiveness of U.S. undersea antisubmarine operations. Their proximity to Chinese land-based aircraft and air defenses also limits Washington’s ability to rely on its airpower and surface ships to counter them. For China’s submarine forces to play a role in a showdown with the United States, however, they would have to move out of those safer waters. The prospect of China’s submarines breaking out would dramatically increase the instability of a crisis. Although U.S. antisubmarine warfare technology would be more effective against China’s submarines operating in less noisy open waters (where the United States also enjoys air superiority), it would not be perfect: some U.S. naval assets that came within range of surviving Chinese submarines would be at risk. Early in a crisis, therefore, the United States would be tempted to minimize this risk by sinking Chinese attack submarines as they tried to leave their home waters. Especially because there are only a few narrow routes through which Chinese submarines can reach deeper waters, the United States would be tempted to strike early rather than accept an increased risk to U.S. naval forces. Regardless of the U.S. decision, any Chinese attack submarines that managed to reach distant deeper waters would face a “use them or lose them” dilemma, thanks to their greater vulnerability to U.S. antisubmarine forces -- one more potential trigger for escalation.China’s nuclear-armed SSBNs present other risks. Under its no-first-use policy, China has clearly stated that any attack on its strategic nuclear forces would justify nuclear retaliation, making a U.S. strike against its SSBNs seem unlikely. Early in a crisis, therefore, Beijing would probably believe that it could safely deploy its SSBNs to distant, deeper waters, where they would be best positioned to execute their launch orders. Such a deep-water deployment, however, would introduce new dangers. One is the possibility that **U.S. naval forces might mistake a Chinese SSBN for a conventional** attack **submarine and fire** on it, **inviting Chinese nuclear retaliation**. Another is the danger that a Chinese SSBN could escalate the conflict without explicit orders from Beijing, owing to the limited communication such submarines maintain with the mainland in order to avoid detection.

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