

Building Trust to Enable Cooperation with China in a Post- Conflict Korea

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Abstract

While ballistic missile and nuclear weapons tests are nothing new for North Korea, the frequency of such tests and the aggressiveness of Kim Jong Un's threats have reached an all-time high. North Korea's belligerent and provocative behavior towards the United States over the last several years has strained U.S.-China relations. War on the Korean Peninsula would be disastrous and cause instability of epic proportions. The refugee and civil security crises immediately following large-scale conflict would be particularly wicked problems to solve. Such an incredibly unstable environment on the Korean Peninsula would be vulnerable to misunderstanding, miscalculations, misperceptions, and errors in judgment between the United States and China. This could inadvertently spark hostilities or conflict between these two great powers. A post-conflict Korean Peninsula is no place for discovery learning with the Chinese. In order to mitigate such risk, the U.S. Army needs to build trust with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) now to enable cooperation and prevent hostilities with China in a post-conflict Korean Peninsula.

Building Trust to Enable Cooperation with China in a Post-Conflict Korea

Since February 2017, North Korea has fired 23 missiles as part of 16 tests.¹ Its sixth and largest nuclear test (6.3 magnitude event) detonated on September 3, 2017 proving that its emerging thermonuclear capability is formidable.² In addition to threatening Guam in early August 2017,³ experts estimate that North Korea can now target the U.S. with intercontinental ballistic missiles.⁴ While ballistic missile and nuclear weapons tests are nothing new for North Korea, the frequency of such tests and the aggressiveness of Kim Jong Un's threats have reached an all-time high. North Korea's belligerent and provocative behavior towards the United States over the last several years has strained U.S.-China relations. Both the U.S. and China have national interests relating to the Korean Peninsula. To China, having an ally and buffer between it and South Korea, defended by U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), is of great strategic importance.⁵ Regional security in the Indo-Pacific, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and prevention of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation by North Korea are all in the national interest of the U.S.⁶ As inflammatory rhetoric and threats continue to escalate between Kim Jong Un and President Trump, President Xi Jinping of China also feels threatened. As a "fragile, emerging major power,"⁷ war on the Korean Peninsula is contrary to China's national interest.⁸

War on the Korean Peninsula would be disastrous and cause instability of epic proportions. The refugee and civil security crises immediately following large-scale conflict would be particularly wicked problems to solve. Such an incredibly unstable environment on the Korean Peninsula would be vulnerable to misunderstanding, miscalculations, misperceptions, and errors in judgment between the United States and China. This could inadvertently spark hostilities or conflict between these two great

powers. A post-conflict Korean Peninsula is no place for discovery learning with the Chinese. In order to mitigate such risk, the U.S. Army needs to build trust with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) now to enable cooperation and prevent hostilities with China in a post-conflict Korean Peninsula.

Current China Engagement Strategy

While the Trump administration, Department of Defense (DoD), and Army have current strategies for engaging with China, they lack specificity and need to evolve. The 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) makes several references to U.S. national interests in the Indo-Pacific region, including China. The NSS clearly states that the U.S. and its partners will continue to “uphold a regional order” and “preserve our mutual interests in the Indo-Pacific region.”⁹ While much of this document expresses concerns over China's militarization of the South China Sea and its aggressive geopolitical aspirations, the NSS does acknowledge, “The United States seeks to continue to cooperate with China.”¹⁰ In reference to North Korea, the NSS emphasizes the U.S. “will work with allies and partners to achieve complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and preserve the non-proliferation regime in Northeast Asia.”¹¹ Regional security in the Indo-Pacific, cooperation with China, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and prevention of WMD proliferation by North Korea are clearly political objectives of the U.S. While U.S. objectives are clear, the NSS lacks specificity in linking the aforementioned cooperation with China to the evolving crisis in North Korea.

Several other strategic documents shed further light on the U.S.'s current strategy towards China. These documents echo many of the same concerns as the NSS – achieving regional security in the Indo-Pacific, denuclearization of the Korean

Peninsula, prevention of WMD proliferation by North Korea, China's militarization of the South China Sea, and China's aggressive geopolitical aspirations. While these documents address many of the same concerns, they also acknowledge the importance of having a cooperative relationship with China. For example, the most recent 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) highlights the importance of having a cooperative U.S.-China military-to-military relationship and states, "The most far-reaching objective of this defense strategy is to set the military relationship between our two countries on a path of transparency and non-aggression."¹² The most recent unclassified 2015 National Military Strategy (NMS) reinforces the importance of increased military-to-military relations and asserts the U.S. should "remain committed to engagement with all nations to communicate our values, promote transparency, and reduce the potential for miscalculation. Accordingly, we continue to invest in a substantial military-to-military relationship with China..."¹³ The 2017 Army Posture Statement also acknowledges the importance of maintaining cooperative military-to-military relations in the region and advocates "a robust training and exercise program to increase interoperability and build partner capacity with our friends and allies."¹⁴

To meet the cooperative intent with the Chinese that these strategic documents suggest, the U.S. has participated in some limited military-to-military engagements and security cooperation exercises with the PLA over the last few years. In 2014 for the first time, the PLA navy participated in Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) alongside the U.S. Navy and several other countries. The PLA participated in this multinational maritime exercise with a missile destroyer, missile frigate, supply ship, hospital ship, special battle force, and a diving force.¹⁵ In 2016, the Chinese again participated in RIMPAC with a slightly

increased but similar presence.¹⁶ In 2014, the PLA also participated in Cobra Gold, another multinational military exercise led by the U.S. and Thailand. During this exercise, 17 members of the PLA assisted in building a school in northern Thailand and participated in civic health events.¹⁷ China's limited participation in all three of these exercises included humanitarian and civil assistance training only. Considering the PLA has 2.3 million members,¹⁸ its presence and participation were relatively minimal. Although a good start, these exercises provided little opportunity for military-to-military relations to occur between the Army and PLA because of modest Chinese participation and the primary focus on maritime forces.

Building Trust to Enable Future Cooperation

If the U.S. is going to build trust to enable cooperation with China in a post-conflict Korean Peninsula, then the Army needs to contribute by significantly increasing its military-to-military engagements and security cooperation efforts with the PLA. This is a time-sensitive and urgent call to action as the possibility for conflict on the Korean Peninsula is increasing at a feverish pace. Trust, cooperation, and a better understanding between China and the U.S. would reduce the possibility of misunderstandings and miscalculations occurring between the two countries in a post-conflict Korean Peninsula. Andrew Kydd, a leading scholar on trust research, points out that "Mistrust and fear play a crucial role in many explanations of international conflict."¹⁹ The last thing the U.S. and China would need or want after such a disaster is further armed conflict between the two countries. Fortunately, many theories and studies suggest that trust building enables better understanding and increased cooperation. Cooperation between the U.S., Republic of Korea (ROK), and China would be

absolutely necessary to collectively solve the refugee and civil security crises following a conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

Two theorists on trust and cooperation, Gareth R. Jones and Jennifer M. George, explore the experience and evolution of trust and its implications for cooperation and teamwork. In their view, trust is a psychological and multidimensional experience that evolves over time as people interact.²⁰ “The interplay of people’s values, attitudes, and moods and emotions” determine trust.²¹ Shared values between disparate groups “help create relationships characterized by trust.”²² Individuals who hold a particular set of values will look for those same values in others. If other individuals hold the same values, then this “conditions the experience of trust and is upheld as a standard to strive for in the future.”²³ For example, if a particular Army engineer unit values technical competence, reliability, and teamwork as part of its value system, then it will look for these same values when it works with other units. Trust will begin take root among those who share the same values of tactical and technical competence, reliability, and teamwork.

Attitudes are also important in determining trust. In an organizational sense, there is always a certain degree of uncertainty. In a multinational training environment such as Cobra Gold, for example, the same Army engineer unit may feel uncertainty working with a PLA construction team when it comes to its technical competence, reliability, and its ability to work as a team. As individuals form attitudes towards others in this environment, they are likely to make judgments on others’ trustworthiness. If the PLA construction team promises to help the Army engineer unit build a school in northern Thailand and it successfully follows through with it, then the Army engineers

will probably develop an attitude characterized by greater trust toward its disparate counterpart. As time goes on, multiple positive and consistent experiences likely reinforce attitudes of trust towards others.

Finally, emotions and moods are important aspects in the trust experience as well. One's emotions or mood at the time often decides an individual's initial trust of another. When individuals meet for the first time, they examine their feelings toward one another. If it is a positive engagement, then a certain level of trust likely develops. Conversely, if an individual's first impression of someone is off-putting or awkward, then the individual will likely not trust the other person. Even being in a 'bad mood' can impact one's trust experience and cause faulty trustworthiness judgments of another. As emotions and moods fluctuate, so does the trust experience.²⁴

As trust evolves between two groups or organizations, it can develop into three distinct forms. In the first form of the trust experience model, distrust usually characterizes initial interactions based on the unknown values between the two groups. As groups discover shared values and positive attitudes and emotional responses develop, then trust begins to take root. This second form of the trust experience to develop between groups is conditional trust.²⁵ According to Jones and George, "Conditional trust is a state of trust in which both parties are willing to transact with each other..." and "attitudes of one party toward the other are favorable enough to support future interactions."²⁶ In conditional trust, conditions are favorable enough to suspend suspicions or uncertainty and collaboration becomes possible. Most organizations interact on a foundation of conditional trust, the most common form of trust. Unconditional trust, the third and final form of the trust experience model, is more of an

idealistic concept. This is when individuals completely abandon all suspicion or uncertainty and “shared values now structure the social situation and become the primary vehicle through which those individuals experience trust. With unconditional trust each party’s trustworthiness is now assured, based on confidence in the other’s values...”²⁷

Currently, the first form of the trust experience model, distrust, characterizes the U.S. Army’s relationship with the PLA. As previously discussed, extremely limited opportunities for engagement have stifled the evolution of this relationship. Continued friction over Taiwan’s independence and territorial disputes in the South China Sea continue to fuel uncertainty and suspicion between the two militaries. Achieving an unconditional trust relationship with the PLA is highly unlikely and friction over Taiwan and territorial disputes will probably continue for the foreseeable future. Although these frictions will certainly continue, developing a conditional trust relationship is possible. Over the last several years, for example, China has placed greater value in supporting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) missions across the Indo-Pacific. It has also shown a greater interest in civil security operations and, more specifically, the transition from military to police operations. The U.S. places similar value on these activities as ways that support its national interest of maintaining regional stability in the Indo-Pacific. In order to take the next step in developing a conditional trust relationship with China, the U.S. Army needs to cultivate these shared values with the PLA and use it as an opportunity to build trust now.

Scholars and theorists widely acknowledge that trust enables greater cooperation. At a minimum, a certain level of conditional trust needs to be resident in

the relationship for cooperation to occur. In a conditional trust relationship, “attitudes primarily govern the exchange process,” and groups “are likely to cooperate to maintain their own good standing in the eyes of others.”²⁸ Shared values, on the other hand, govern unconditional trust. In unconditional trust relationships, groups “look more to the future than present when deciding how to behave.”²⁹ Groups achieve greater interpersonal trust and teamwork as they approach unconditional trust on the conditional-unconditional trust continuum. High confidence in others, help-seeking behavior, free exchange of knowledge and information, ego suspension for the greater good, and high involvement are some of the behaviors that evolve as groups move closer to an unconditional trust relationship.³⁰ In a post-conflict Korean Peninsula, these behaviors would be extremely valuable in reducing the chance of misunderstanding, miscalculation, and hostilities between the U.S. and China. Cooperation and teamwork between China, the U.S., and the ROK would be absolutely necessary for solving the refugee and civil security crisis in the early stages of the post-conflict environment.

Communication and Diplomacy Challenges

Ideally, the U.S. would like to directly engage China on several cooperative efforts regarding a post-conflict North Korea as preventive measures to avoid hostilities. These efforts include stabilizing the refugee crisis that would certainly ensue, enforcing public safety, establishing civil security, transitioning from military to police operations, establishing demilitarized zones and no-fly zones along the China-North Korea border, securing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and other HADR-related missions. Such cooperation with China is impossible without first putting in the time and effort to build, at the very least, a conditional trust relationship.

Unfortunately, the Chinese will not engage with the U.S. on any of these issues. For years, one subject that is absolutely not up for discussion between the U.S. and China is what happens if and when Kim Jong Un's regime collapses through conflict or otherwise. North Korea would feel threatened if such talks occurred between the U.S. and China. After all, China has been North Korea's strongest ally and supporter since the Korean War. According to the Senior Advisor for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, Bonnie Glaser, the Chinese have not been willing to engage in any such discussions for fear of triggering a retaliation from North Korea. According to Glaser, "When we first started these efforts, the Chinese told us – and many other people, including U.S. officials – that if they engaged in such discussions with the United States it would come out, it would get leaked, North Korea would find out and they would retaliate."³¹

The fact that the Chinese will not even engage in "Track 2 dialogue sessions between academics in each country's foreign policy establishment" adds to the growing concern over what will happen when "soldiers from the world's two biggest economies come face-to-face."³² A defense researcher for the RAND Corporation, Bruce Bennett, highlights the danger of having no plan or trust developed with the Chinese when he states, "If we intervene and the Chinese run into our people and if we run into their people, what are we going to do? Are we going to shake hands or what? All of that needs to be really thought about seriously."³³ Even some in China have criticized the lack of a comprehensive plan if and when Kim Jong Un's regime collapses. Jia Qingguo, Dean of the School of International Studies of Peking University, advocates greater planning and consideration on several issues to include the U.S. coming north

of the 38th Parallel, securing North Korea's nuclear weapons, restoring order in Pyongyang, and possibly establishing a safety zone between North Korea and China to "prevent a large flow of people into its northeastern provinces."³⁴ But, according to Qingguo, "Beijing doesn't have a good plan, the U.S. doesn't have a good plan, and the entire world doesn't have a good plan. It's beyond the point that a neat solution can be found. So, hope for the best and prepare for the worst."³⁵

HADR and Establishing Civil Security

Despite Bennett and Qingguo's skepticism regarding the U.S. and China's ability to develop a comprehensive and cooperative plan for a post-conflict Korean Peninsula, there are still opportunities to build trust, enable cooperation, and reduce the possibility of misunderstanding, miscalculation, and hostilities between the two countries. First, the U.S. should examine issues that China is willing to discuss. Within the realm of security cooperation, there are at least two areas it is willing, and even eager, to engage with the U.S. on – HADR and establishing civil security. These are areas where the U.S. Army and PLA can find some common ground. Security cooperation using these two mission sets would be advantageous for both countries. First, these are many of the same mission sets that would be necessary to stabilize the Korean Peninsula in a post-conflict environment. Secondly, the Indo-Pacific is the world's hot spot for natural disasters. As China aspires to become a stronger regional hegemon, this is one way to amicably demonstrate soft power to its neighbors. Third, it would help build trust and enable cooperation between the U.S. Army and the PLA now instead of, as Bennett said, running into each other for the first time in a post-conflict environment wondering what is next.

The U.S. Navy's RIMPAC and Cobra Gold exercises have already set the foundation and precedent for HADR security cooperation in the region. While the Navy and its Indo-Pacific allies have done well in their multinational HADR exercises on the high seas, the Army also has a responsibility to ensure it can execute its HADR and civil security competencies when called upon. In its proposal for increased security cooperation with China, the U.S. should use caution. Proposing such an increase in order to prepare for a post-conflict Korean Peninsula would be a mistake and likely cause the Chinese to disengage. To avoid retaliation from North Korea and disengagement from China, the U.S. should not propose increased security cooperation as preparation for any sort of post-conflict Korean Peninsula scenario. Instead, the U.S. should propose large-scale military-to-military exercises with China that focus on HADR and civil security to ensure continued stability in a region prone to natural disasters. There is a history of natural disasters in the region with plenty of supporting data to easily justify such training and cooperation.

There are at least two significant reasons why security cooperation efforts with China should begin with HADR. First, Indo-Pacific stability is under constant threat as the most disaster-prone region on earth. From 1971 to 2010, the number of natural disasters across the globe has almost quadrupled and resulted in approximately three million deaths. Over half of these disasters and associated deaths occurred in the Indo-Pacific region. Compared to the decade spanning from 1971 to 1980, the number of natural disasters has increased by 76.5 percent. From 2001 to 2010, 234 million people across the globe were either significantly affected or displaced by such natural disasters. Ninety percent of these total victims lived in the Indo-Pacific region.³⁶ Large-

scale natural disasters can cause chaos, threaten stability, and wreak havoc on regional and global economies. Natural disasters “are emerging as the single most devastating cause of death and instability” in the China Seas region.³⁷ Serving as a diplomatic instrument, HADR can “offer immediate relief and, over time, enhance regional security in East Asia.”³⁸

The second reason the U.S. should engage in security cooperation efforts with China focusing on HADR is more psychological. HADR is an unselfish and altruistic effort designed to prevent loss of life and alleviate human suffering following a disaster. Seeing a potential adversary engage in such unselfish and benign activities reduces skepticism and encourages cooperation.³⁹ HADR is not coercive in nature, nor does it threaten a country’s national security in any way. According to Alessio Patalano, author of “Beyond the Gunboats” in *The RUSI Journal*, “HADR operations have a diplomatic element to their conduct, especially in East Asia” where naval diplomacy, in particular, has contributed significantly to “coalition building and situational awareness, creating trust and promoting cooperation.”⁴⁰ According to J. J. Widen, a theorist on maritime strategy, if HADR is “guided by a clear political object aimed to influence the behavior of a political actor then, in essence, this is diplomacy.”⁴¹ HADR is a good example of how the military instrument of national power can enable the diplomatic instrument of national power to achieve political ends.

Japan’s response to Typhoon Haiyan offers a great case study on HADR’s ability to improve diplomacy, build trust, and enable cooperation between two countries with historically strained relations. In November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan ravaged many parts of Southeast Asia, especially the Philippines. The typhoon affected 11 million people

(10 percent of the Philippine population), destroyed 130,074 houses, displaced 544,606 people and put 2.5 million people in need of food.⁴² Typhoon Haiyan was indeed one of the largest humanitarian disasters the world has ever seen. Within hours of the disaster, Japan sprang into action and sent two medical teams comprised of 50 personnel each. As conditions continued to deteriorate, the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) dispatched 1,100 personnel as part of a joint task force as well as several ships to aid in the humanitarian effort. As a result, the Japanese provided 11,924 vaccinations, 630 tons of food aid, medical aid to 2,624 people, engineer support, command and control, and logistical support.⁴³ Japan's readiness and willingness to offer a helping hand during Typhoon Haiyan was no accident. Since World War II, Japan's constitution has limited its ability to have a robust or offensive military. In the absence of such hard power capability, the Japanese have long since recognized the importance of diplomacy through HADR operations. In fact, the JSDF specifically designed its naval fleet to be dual-purposed as both defense and HADR platforms.⁴⁴

Japan and the Philippines share a complex history dating back several centuries. During World War II, Japan invaded the Philippines and brutalized many of its inhabitants. As a result, mistrust and skepticism have plagued Japanese-Filipino relations for the past 70 years. Japan's HADR support to the Philippines during the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan turned out to be a diplomatic gold mine for Japan. Work between the JSDF and the Filipino military during the crisis built trust, enabled cooperation, fostered coalition building, and contributed to stronger bilateral ties. A year after the disaster, in fact, President Benigno Aquino of the Philippines expressed his public support for Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's desire to be a "proactive

contributor to peace” in the region.⁴⁵ Prime Minister Shinzo immediately reciprocated by offering a 20 million yen investment loan to the Philippines for transportation and flood management projects.⁴⁶ Military-to-military HADR cooperation efforts during Typhoon Haiyan translated into tangible diplomatic wins that will surely pay dividends well into the future for both Japan and the Philippines.

Another area of security cooperation that China is likely to engage with the U.S. on is the establishment of civil security. Just like Japan, China is beginning to recognize the diplomatic value of HADR engagement in the region. Since 2002, the PLA has executed 28 HADR missions and provided 22 countries with aid.⁴⁷ During this time, China has certainly recognized the importance of establishing civil security in the wake of a disaster. Immediately following a chaotic disaster, the military is often the best suited to carry out civil security missions – cessation of hostilities, peace agreements, develop/improve national army and intelligence services, conduct disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, border control, boundary security, and freedom of movement.⁴⁸ As time goes on and capacity improves, however, civil security should transition back to a police force. After all, civil security is a very resource-intensive mission set that requires immense manpower and materiel. Surely the Chinese have experienced this tension during their recent HADR experiences. Well versed in this mission set, the U.S. Army could certainly offer the PLA practical training and many lessons learned as a result of several recent conflicts to include the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Civil security and the transition from military to police operations, more specifically, are areas of opportunity that the U.S. can seize upon to build trust and enable cooperation with China.

By conducting security cooperation with the PLA focused on HADR and establishing civil security, the U.S. Army and China would be training and cooperating on mission sets similarly required for a post-conflict Korean Peninsula. For example, assisting displaced persons during a HADR mission is much like assisting refugees from a war torn country. Establishing civil security after a chaotic natural disaster is similar to establishing civil security after a conflict. In addition to training applicable mission sets for a post-conflict Korean Peninsula, increased security cooperation between the U.S. Army and PLA will build trust, enable cooperation, and reduce the risk of miscalculation, misunderstanding, and hostilities in a post-conflict Korean Peninsula.

The Way Ahead

The United States' NSS, National Defense Strategy (NDS), and NMS need revision to more clearly articulate the U.S. military's engagement requirements with the PLA. With respect to China, U.S. ends are clear – maintain regional stability in the Indo-Pacific and cultivate a cooperative relationship with China as a “fragile emerging major power.”⁴⁹ For national military strategy, the military serves as the chief means and resource to accomplish such ends. The methods by which the U.S. applies the military are the ways that achieve these desired ends and objectives.

Within the Department of Defense (DoD), there are a number of obstacles that continue to hinder the ways within the China engagement strategy. For example, the 2000 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) places strict legal restrictions on the U.S. military's contact with the PLA and limits most interactions to issues regarding humanitarian and civil assistance.⁵⁰ These restrictive laws that limit contact inadvertently perpetuate skepticism and distrust between the two militaries. Because of such restrictions, even the Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI)

must follow a very strict protocol when engaging with China's Peacekeeping Center. PKSOI is the joint proponent for peace and stability operations with a mission to "promote the collaborative development and integration of peace and stability capabilities across the U.S. government and the international community in order to enable the success of future peace and stability activities and missions."⁵¹ Strictly regulated visits and discussion topics with its Chinese counterparts inhibit the cultivation of interpersonal relationships and opportunities to build trust and enable cooperation between the two militaries. DoD should immediately revise the engagement and visitation restrictions present in the 2000 NDAA. A revised NDAA should allow and even encourage open communication, military-to-military visits, officer exchange programs, and partnerships. Organizations that champion peace and stability, such as PKSOI, should have direct liaison authorized (DIRLAUTH) with its counterparts at China's Peacekeeping Center. If communication and visitation channels were more open, then PKSOI could immediately engage its counterparts on increasing security cooperation efforts focused on HADR and establishing civil security. For having such an important role as the military's joint proponent for peace and stability operations, PKSOI is a very small organization with limited resources. At full strength, PKSOI only employs a total of 47 personnel.⁵² PKSOI should be immediately expanded with a more robust staff and increased resources.

Future U.S. strategic documents (NSS, NDS, NMS, etc.) should more clearly articulate ways for achieving ends. These documents need to explicitly direct the U.S. military to engage in security cooperation with the PLA focused on HADR and establishing civil security. Unlike the U.S.'s current strategy, these efforts require higher

prioritization. As part of U.S.'s informational campaign, the U.S. should use positive language within these documents to emphasize the U.S.'s partnership with China in maintaining stability and natural disaster preparedness in the Indo-Pacific, the most disaster-prone region on earth. The NDS and NMS should also emphasize more security cooperation efforts with the PLA by the U.S.'s land forces and not just the Navy. Many HADR and establishing civil security tasks are land-based efforts well suited for both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. For example, providing aid for displaced persons, terminating hostilities, enforcing peace agreements, developing/improving national army and intelligence services, conducting disarmament, demobilizing, reintegrating, controlling the border, enforcing boundary security, ensuring freedom of movement, and transitioning from military to police operations are all missions the U.S. Army (and Marine Corps) should be training with the PLA. Ultimately, these documents need to create more opportunities for greater military-to-military engagements so that trust building and cooperation can begin to take root. Improved and expanded military-to-military relations will enable greater diplomacy and create a better understanding – better understanding that would be absolutely necessary in a post-conflict Korean Peninsula.

Conclusion

In a post-conflict Korean Peninsula, the U.S. cannot afford to risk miscalculation, misunderstanding, or hostilities with China. The results of such would be absolutely catastrophic for both countries and the region. The U.S. Army needs to do what in can now to build trust and enable future cooperation with the PLA. Security cooperation focusing on HADR and establishing civil security are ideal ways to do this for several reasons. First, the Chinese are willing to engage on these non-threatening topics and

eager to learn more from the U.S. Second, these are important skillsets that the U.S. and China can offer the world's most disaster-prone region of the Indo-Pacific. Cooperating in these areas will ensure continued security and stability in a region prone to natural disasters. Third, HADR and establishing civil security are the same mission sets needed in the immediate aftermath of a potential conflict on the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. and China need a relationship characterized by trust and cooperation, especially if their armies come face-to-face on a post-conflict Korean Peninsula someday. Already having a trusting and cooperative relationship established from security cooperation efforts would prove extremely valuable in an environment where discovery learning could be very dangerous.

As discussed, DoD should fix impediments to military-to-military relations and lift legal restrictions on communications and visitations by organizations whose focus is peace and stability. Rescind these restrictions in the 2000 NDAA, in particular, and replace them with more liberal communication and visitation policies. DoD should also expand PKSOI and grant it DIRLAUTH with its counterparts at China's Peacekeeping Center. This will cultivate interpersonal relationships, build trust, and enable greater cooperation.

The NSS, NDS, and NMS need to more clearly articulate ways and direct the military to engage in security cooperation with the PLA focused on HADR and establishing civil security as a priority. The U.S. military's land forces need to play a greater role in security cooperation efforts, and not just the Navy. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps conduct many of the HADR and establishing civil security core tasks.

This adjusted China engagement strategy will certainly not solve all ongoing frictions with China. Tensions over the U.S.'s informal relationship with Taiwan and China's illegal sovereignty claims in the South China Sea will likely continue. Despite these complex issues, the U.S. should still establish at least a conditional trust relationship with China built on increased security cooperation. This alone may reduce tensions enough to avoid hostilities with China on a post-conflict Korean Peninsula. With China emerging as a regional hegemon, a major international power, and the fastest growing economy in the world, the U.S. needs to build trust and enable cooperation with China as an ally to prepare for a wide range of challenges and wicked problems following a potential conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

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