

Thank You DPRK: Driving the U.S. and China Together

 The NAPSNet Policy Forum provides expert analysis of contemporary peace and security issues in Northeast Asia. As always, we invite your responses to this report and hope you will take the opportunity to participate in discussion of the analysis.

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Nautilus Peace and Security Weekly Report—Contributor's blog entry for DPRK.

[Go to the Weekly Report for 21 June 2012.](#)

Continuing with the theme of North Korea paradoxically dividing and unifying Asia, the past few weeks have seen a tremendous amount of activity. Ironically, it also seems the source most likely to report the details of this activity has been the Chinese press. North Korea seems to cause many activities which are concerning to China, but have not yet risen to the level where China feels an existential threat - and this is a good thing, overall.

The official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, the *People's Daily*, reported the planned exercise between Korea, Japan and the U.S. in straightforward terms. Who, what, where, when and a little bit of why. The same style of reporting for four other items which would normally have caused concern and dire predictions: increased weapons sales to Korea, integration of South Korean and U.S. Air Defense systems, an increase in the missile range for South Korean missiles, and the George Washington Carrier Strike Group port call in Busan. These articles received a more alarmist reception in the *Global Times* and on bulletin boards. However, those publications are not strictly official press and serve as a sort of relief valve.

Chinese official press could have reported histrionics and breathless huffing that U.S., Korean and Japanese missile defenses will now be linked. They won't. But the press could have made such false linkages if they were allowed to do so. The press could have taken the DPRK line that the U.S. is trying to stoke tensions by selling more weapons to South Korea.

And the kicker, I honestly thought this one would have drawn much more grief, but it was another

straightforward report: USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN-73) Carrier Strike Group (CSG) to conduct port call in Busan. Every CSG is slightly different, but we're talking about roughly 7,500 people, probably 9 hulls, and a Carrier Air Wing able to sortie aircraft even if every runway in Korea were cut. Since the dates of the exercise and port call are announced, everyone knows that the entire CSG is within flying range of Pyongyang. The Navy also announced the port call much earlier than normal. I'm sure a few more "fishing vessels" will ply Busan harbor in the near future. So what?

China's straight-forward reporting likely indicates a relative level of comfort - and dare I say - a maturing relationship with the U.S. This is good news for all issues since the U.S. and China touch on almost all issues in Northeast Asia. A better relationship also means it is less likely countries will have to choose sides. It also means there is likely greater room for cooperation on specific issues like the environment, Rio, managing fishing stocks, etc.

Many areas of stark disagreement will remain. Finding ways to manage and channel away minor grievances leaves more flexibility for the larger issues and is a positive sign all the way around. Thank you, DPRK, for driving the U.S. and China closer.

—[Roger Cavazos](#), NAPSNet Contributor

*The **Nautilus Peace and Security Weekly Report** presents articles and full length reports each week in six categories: Austral security, nuclear deterrence, energy security, climate change adaptation, the DPRK, and governance and civil society. Our team of contributors carefully select items that highlight the links between these themes and the three regions in which our offices are found—North America, Northeast Asia, and the Austral-Asia region. Each week, one of our authors also provides a short blog that explores these inter-relationships.*

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