

Is the US going to war with China over North Korea?

News:

US President Trump said in a Fox news interview on the 12th of April that “It’s all set up with the president of China.” He was referring directly to a scheduled telephone conversation that night, but as he repeatedly expressed how, during his summit meeting with President Xi Jinping, “*There was a great feeling, between both of us*”, it seems that Trump believes or hopes that China will be compliant to his threats over trade and North Korea. However, there are very mixed messages coming from all sides and a massive display of force from China.

Comment:

Currently a US naval strike group is heading toward the Korean peninsula, but Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in Moscow, on the 12th of April that there was “*no particular objective*” to this naval movement and that he “*would not read too much*” into it. However, both allies and adversaries are reading a great deal into it! The US has instigated a massive escalation in tension following recent North Korean missile tests and the promise of “a big event” by North Korea on its 15th of April anniversary celebrations, which many analysts are speculating will be a nuclear test.

Chinese CCTV7 has broadcast images on the 12th of April of mobile DF-21 anti-ship ballistic missiles with a claimed capability of destroying an aircraft carrier 3000 km away, while 3 months ago news was released of DF-41 inter-continental ballistic missiles, with a range of 14,000 km, being stationed very close to China’s northern border where they could strike the US by taking a northerly route over the arctic, which is a much shorter distance to the US than the trans-pacific route. There are also reports circulating in the regional media of a build-up of 150,000 Chinese troops on the border with North Korea.

In addition to the naval strike group, the US has displayed its own destructive capacity twice this week. First, by sending, during dinner with President Xi Jinping, 59 Tomahawk missiles to hit a Syrian airbase, and, second, on the 13th of April by dropping a GBU-43 in Afghanistan. The GBU-43 is the heaviest non-nuclear bomb ever used by the US in combat, and this was its first combat deployment.

Despite these aggressive postures, both China and the US are making some conciliatory gestures towards each other. Trump has promised not to label China a currency manipulator and China has fulfilled previously agreed sanctions against the export of North Korean coal. Nevertheless, Trump has also warned of US intentions to “take care” of North Korea by itself if China doesn’t cooperate, and China released trade figures on the 13th of April showing an increase of 37.4% in first quarter trade with North Korea. Furthermore, a recent UN report has shown that North Korea’s missiles have been built with parts and technology sourced through China. With the tension increasing, and uncertainty about who is fooling who, someone will either have to back-down or there will be a major event. In both cases, the relations between the two biggest economies in the world will not be the same.

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