

China, between Trump's amateurism and Kim's obstinacy

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North Korea's crisis seems to have reached a point of no return, where tensions would only continue to escalate in the coming hours. The outcome of this situation is absolutely unpredictable, with the aggravating fact that, as things stand today, none of the scenarios for resolution that are coming to light present an optimistic result for world peace and security.



Several preeminent military experts on the subject agree that the scenario of armed confrontation, regardless of who initiates hostilities or whoever finally triumphs, would trigger a catastrophe with hundreds of thousands of dead in the densely populated Korean Peninsula, in addition to incalculable material and environmental damages.

There is no way that the United States, with the possible support of its allies South Korea and Japan, will carry out coordinated military and cybernetic attacks capable of neutralizing North Korea's missile firepower, without Pyongyang previously responding in a way strong enough to cause a disaster that would have its epicenter in Seoul.

As Kim Jong-un reaffirms his commitment to continue to increase his nuclear arsenal aiming to the West, Donald Trump scares the international community with his contradictions, swings and disturbing displays of amateurism in the handling of what undoubtedly constitutes the most delicate issue for US foreign policy.

Everything seems to indicate that Trump does not have a clear understanding and strategy on this critical issue. He appears to be looking to cover the failures of his administration in domestic politics and relaunch his low approval rates from the foreign policy arena.

In this sort of geopolitical trap is now the Chinese President Xi Jinping, whose government has decided to cooperate with the United States, but insists on a "realistic" solution to this serious problem that is about to explode in its northeastern border.

In this regard, Beijing continues to oppose a modification of the status quo on the Peninsula via unilateral military action and instead suggests the peaceful way of "double suspension" to de-escalate the conflict. This means that Pyongyang must suspend its nuclear and missile tests, while the

United States and South Korea also deactivate in return the installation of the controversial Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) and the military drills in the area.

China has ratified that it will continue to propose itself as an interlocutor with Pyongyang, while continuing to condemn its nuclear tests at the United Nations and other international forums. In addition, China is ready to increase economic retaliation if necessary, following last February's tough sanctions, in which Beijing suspended all imports of coal from North Korea for 2017.

Pyongyang depends economically on more than 80% of its link with China and it is clear that the economic choke could end up contributing to precipitate the fall of the regime. However, despite Trump's pressures, this scenario of seeking to provoke the implosion would also have a worrying outcome and is not endorsed by China.

How the collapse of a nuclear and military power under control of an unpredictable dictator, with most of its 25 million inhabitants starved would be? At the very least, this could lead to a civil war for Kim's dynasty succession, with massive exodus of refugees fleeing to China and South Korea. Likewise, China would surely reject an eventual Korean reunification formatted by the United States and its allies.

China is therefore consistent in opposing unilateral military action as well as the strategy of economic suffocation, since neither of these alternatives will solve the problem, but surely aggravate it. However,

it is also true that Kim Jong-un does not seem willing to negotiate his nuclear project, with China or anyone, which supports the tightening of Trump's stance.

Meanwhile, events continue to develop in the Korean Peninsula. A new attempt of the recently failed sixth nuclear test by North Korea would be imminent. At the same time, China carried out a massive deployment of troops near the North Korean border, although Beijing attributed it to "routine operations".

On the other hand, in the next few days is expected the arrival to the peninsular waters of "USS Carl Vinson" carrier strike (finally, after the strange false announcement from the White House on April 8). Japan will add two military ships to join the drills, while North Korea announced that is "ready to sink the US aircraft carrier to demonstrate its military might".

In this framework, the question then becomes: How to combine the Chinese pacifist realism with Trump's militaristic amateurism, in front of the boundless obstinacy that Kim exhibits? Today there seems to be no answer to this. The world can only hold on to the hope that engenders the good level of dialogue that Xi and Trump have established. But unfortunately, at the moment there is not much more to hang on to.