

The Crisis Erupts

Written by Dylan Kissane

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DYLAN KISSANE, APR 10 2013

This post continues discussion of the CEFAM Crisis Simulation outlined in last week's blog post.

I'll admit it: I'm a sucker for Tom Clancy novels.

It's little surprise, then, that the crisis in the POL 210 simulation is based at least in part on plot elements from *The Bear and the Dragon*, his Sino-Russian geopolitical thriller published in 2000. As in the book, in the POL 210 simulation a resource hungry China invades the Russian East in search of minerals and natural resources to feed its growing economy.

I have taken a few liberties with the scenario. For one, in order to mix things up a little, the PRC is moving in to Russia with elements of the DPRK armed forces. For another, to avoid any direct recourse to sustained military engagement, I ensured that the vast majority of the Russia forces – even those normally deployed in Siberia and the east – have been temporarily moved to the west for some extraordinarily large Spring exercises. As well, I made sure that the heavy American naval presence in East Asia has been, again temporarily, shifted to the Persian Gulf in anticipation of a strike on an Iranian nuclear facility and, potentially, a sustained strike on that regime. The goal here was to have the Chinese forces stage an incursion but not be immediately involved in a sustained shooting war with Russia – opening up the possibility for negotiation to resolve the conflict.

Of course, to spice things up a little I threw in a couple of curve balls. For example, while the Chinese troops are the subject of media reports that are complementary: soldiers are distributing water and food, even blankets to Russians they encounter. Indeed, they seem to be doing everything to avoid engaging in a fight. The North Korean troops, on the other hand, are engaging in all sorts of illegal and degrading behaviors, including summary executions and raids on civilians. I'm hoping this will provide a way for the students to split the two 'allies' from each other, maybe even giving the Chinese some wiggle room to negotiate without their peninsula partner.

I've also tried to bring India into the fold a little. India has an interesting geopolitical position between Russia, China and the Middle East and – importantly when it comes to a resource war – has the potential to influence or even obstruct the shipping routes that pass by its southern tip. This is especially important when it comes to Chinese oil imports, much of which pass by India on their way east.

The students will spend the day negotiating a solution with the goal of producing a final settlement that all states can agree to. The previous iteration of this simulation saw a negotiated solution emerge in one group – though it was a little farcical in that it included Russia ceding land to China – and a second group negotiated a solution that every state signed on to, bar North Korea. This was treated as a 'win' by the rest of the world, a 'travesty' by the DPRK, and a fairly good effort by their professor. We'll have to wait until later in the week to see what the students this semester come up with: who will win, who will lose, and who will manage to keep their finger off the metaphorical button long enough to listen to their classmates.

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