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U.S.-China Extinction-Level Event Narrowly Averted



Photograph Source: Official Navy Page – Public Domain

We humans came within ten feet of extinction on October 24. That’s when World War III almost erupted due to a near collision between American and Chinese warplanes over the South China Sea. U.S. corporate media was quick to blame Beijing for the Chinese pilot’s “dangerous maneuvers,” but such accusations beg the question: What in God’s name were American fighter jets doing there, near Chinese airspace, eight thousand miles from U.S. borders in the first place? Their very presence is a provocation, aka military aggression. It could easily ignite war and thence nuclear Armageddon. And that first step, starting a war, is almost what happened.

The Chinese fighter jet pilot operated in “an unsafe and unprofessional manner...closing with uncontrolled excessive speed, flying below, in front of” the U.S. jet, “putting both aircraft in danger of collision,” CNN quoted the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command October 27. And this near catastrophe comes within the context of others. China’s defense ministry accused the “USS Ralph Johnson” of conducting “‘close-in harassment’ against a Chinese navy task group doing routine training in the South China Sea on August 19.” So clearly, regarding aggressive military moves, it takes two to tango. About the October near-miss, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Nong said: “U.S. fighter jets coming all the way to flex their muscles at our doorstep is the root cause of aviation and maritime safety risks.”

On the diplomatic front, however, there has lately been some good news regarding American-Chinese frosty non-relations. A meeting between Chinese leader Xi-Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden, on-again, off-again for a year, was on for November 15. Results include Beijing regulating fentanyl and military-to-military communication, though all was marred by Biden idiotically calling Xi names, post-meeting. Nevertheless, this confab between the two presidents on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco was excellent news and completely outshone the APEC shindig itself. The belated stab at diplomacy does follow many high-level meetings between the world’s two most powerful states and, very notably, the resumption of defense contacts at the end of October. If Chinese and American generals get back on speaking terms, there may yet be hope for our species.

But the Pentagon still has its complaints. “Since the fall of 2021, we have seen more than 180 such incidents,” Pentagon official Ely Ratner said regarding the October aviation tangle. Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin couldn’t get his Chinese counterpart, former defense minister Li Shangfu, on the phone for months – due to Washington’s suicidal sanctions on Li, so for a long time, there was zero military-to-military dialogue between these two nations. “Beijing cut off the communications after then-House speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan last year, infuriating Chinese leaders.” That was the Pelosi legacy. Zilch, zip, nada talk between the two superpowers’ militaries. Pelosi’s arrogance caused Beijing to erect a wall of ice that it took Washington over a year and extraordinary diplomatic efforts to breach. Seeing that the U.S. and China come close to clashing quite often over the South China Sea, that was a recipe for disaster. Hopefully, now we’ve turned a corner.

Because another military confrontation occurred in May. Back then, Beijing “demanded that Washington end such flights over the South China Sea,” NPR reported on October 27. Needless to say, imperial rulers refused. China claims the South China Sea as its own territorial waters, just as the U.S. claims much of the oceans that surround its coasts. Fortunately for us, Canada and Mexico know better than to make trouble in this regard, But in the South China Sea, a very busy trade route, Beijing has “longstanding territorial disputes with other countries.” Not only is Washington sticking its nose into these imbroglios, it’s busy making them worse.

Take the month of October again. That’s when a “Chinese coast guard ship and an accompanying vessel...rammed a Philippine coast guard ship and a military-run supply boat off a contested shoal in the waterway.” This prompted Joe “When in Doubt, Call the Other Guy a Dictator” Biden to announce that the U.S. would defend the Philippines, if that ally was attacked. Naturally, this pronouncement did not delight Beijing, which basically told Washington to mind its own business.

The problem is that with a ring of iron, i.e. numerous American military bases, surrounding China’s eastern coast, Washington has made everything that happens there its business. You hear lots of chatter about U.S. “interests” in the region. Well, what if China had such so-called interests in the Gulf of Mexico, or the expanse of the Pacific between California and Hawaii? Hello? We’re only talking about the U.S., the biggest and one of the most violent empires in human history here. Washington would evict Beijing from such close precincts tout de suite, and probably in a very bloody manner.

NPR politely understated the danger of the October near crash over the South China Sea: “A collision would have had the potential to lead to an escalation.” As in, um, a confrontation between two nuclear superpowers. I think we can all agree that that would be disastrous. As things turned out, the late October near miss was just one of many potential explosions of the Washington-Beijing powder keg. On November 3, U.S. vassal, uh, “ally,” Canada, complained that “a Chinese fighter jet fired flares in front of its military helicopter over the international waters of the South China Sea,” reported the *Hindustan Times* that day. “Major Rob Millen, an air officer...told CNN that the reckless behavior could have resulted in the downing of the aircraft.” There’s that word, “reckless,” again. It makes you wonder if the West isn’t preparing its public for an incident, with blame gift-wrapped for Beijing. Or maybe China really is just fed up with Western military high-handedness off its coasts. Either way, or both, prospects look dangerously bright for a Washington-Beijing hullabaloo in those “international waters”

that just happen to lie off China's coast. Will a Biden-Xi rapprochement avert such a fiasco? Stay tuned.

Further toxifying this poisonous pelagic mix is a rabidly Sinophobic GOP in Congress, and possibly, according to the latest polls, in a Trump white house next year. If Biden hoped to triangulate or cravenly win over some of these Republican fanatics with his tough talk about Xi, well, that flopped, and he wisely appears to have given it up. The GOP was not impressed. Anything short of nuclear war with China fails to grab that party's attention – in other words, the GOP will push and shove to that limit, the limit of human extinction, before it hesitates about the wisdom of its policies. And once the mushroom clouds billow and we all start to glow in the dark, well, then it will be a little late. So it sure would be nice to have a front-running Dem presidential candidate who performed a bit better in the polls.

Deformed, twisted and needlessly aggressive U.S. military policies have envenomed the Chinese response. For years, Beijing had but one foreign military base in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa, while Washington has over 800 military bases, spanning the globe. Well, that's begun to change. For some strange reason, Chinese leaders have got the idea that maybe they need more than one such outpost. Gee, I wonder why? But while we're wondering, over the last 18 months China has been enlarging a naval base in Cambodia. It now has a pier large enough for aircraft carriers. Also, reports keep surfacing of China attempting to increase its navy's reach by building other overseas bases. Maybe, just possibly this has something to do with the U.S. Navy, in the South China Sea, relentlessly threatening its Chinese counterpart. Uh, ya think?

Meanwhile, China, the U.S.'s second-biggest creditor after Japan, has been busy dumping U.S. Treasuries. This has been reported before in this space and guess what? It's being reported again because they're still at it. What is Beijing dumping USTs for? To buy gold, that's what for. In October China added another 23 tons of gold to its already mammoth supply. Now people generally don't buy gold unless they mistrust currency or believe financial catastrophe looms. Though Beijing also has a different and very good reason to ditch its UST albatross – namely it's a huge liability if or rather when Uncle Sam slaps sanctions on the 5000-year-old civilization – that's only part of the story. After all, Beijing isn't dropping USTs because it wants dollars, no, it's buying gold. That's a hedge against disaster. Where do Chinese leaders get the idea that a financial cataclysm is coming? Just by looking, objectively, at the reality of the American economy.

Between that and the gathering war clouds, U.S.-Chinese cooperation is precarious at best. It sure would be nice for Biden to acknowledge the reality of a multipolar world and the U.S. Empire's commitment to behave like an adult about it and not blow up that multipolar world in a fit of rage at no longer being the hegemon. Biden could make some gesture, I don't know what, though meeting with Xi was certainly a start, to signal to China that no, we here in the Exceptional Empire do NOT want the Atomic Apocalypse. We have our hands full going broke, thank you very much.

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