



The Reality: China ‘Would Take Serious Steps’ To Avoid Open Conflict With The United States

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While flash points in Asia with the potential to trigger a conflict between the U.S. and China are growing, a few foreign policy experts argue that the U.S. and China are actually moving farther from war.

There’s a veritable laundry list of powder kegs fueling tensions in the Asia Pacific: U.S. plans for the deployment of an advanced missile system in South Korea; tensions over disputed islets in the East China Sea; and the ever-present possibility of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

Regardless, some experts still argue China recognizes that an overly-aggressive response to any of the above issues could threaten long-term political and military survival.

Senior Associate Yun Sun, a scholar at Henry L. Stimson Center, explained in a recent article in [Policy Forum](#) that China has been attempting to de-escalate since The Hague ruled against Beijing’s nine-dashed line. Sun wrote, “China has not announced the creation of a South China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone, nor has it started land reclamation on the Scarborough Shoal.”

Sun told The Daily Caller News Foundation that she does not think China has become more aggressive, that their increasing military exercises are just a matter of show.

“It is unrealistic to expect China to do nothing,” Sun said, “because inaction will be perceived as weaknesses. Naval exercises do not count as escalation of aggressiveness. China has done them before, and China will do them again.”

Others take it even farther, into the realm of notional conflict, winners and losers.

“The Chinese do not have the confidence that they could win a war. Their military is not battle tested. A Chinese military defeat could cause the downfall of the Chinese Communist Party,” Bonnie Glaser, a top Asia scholar and Director of the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told TheDCNF. “I think a military conflict between the U.S. and China is highly unlikely in the near future.”

She added, “Xi Jinping has taken serious steps to avoid a military accident with the U.S. We have seen more willingness by Xi than by his predecessor to reduce the potential for an accident in the air or at sea...I don’t rule out the chance of conflict, but I think it is not likely.”

Executive Director of the China Center for Collaborative Studies at Nanjing University Zhu Feng wrote in a [recent article](#) in Bloomberg that while China may have certain grand ambitions, it is not threatening the world order.

Zhu explained, “[China] has benefited greatly from the rules-based order in place since the end of World War II and indeed, from the US security presence in the Pacific, which has given China the space to concentrate on its economic development.” He asked, “Why would it want to overturn that order wholesale?”

Zhu added, “China is clearly groping for a way to integrate into the global order while also being accorded the respect and influence it feels it deserves. Frictions are inevitable. That doesn’t mean each is an attack on the preexisting system.”

Experts indicate that if the U.S. and other states can work patiently with China to guide it into the present world order, conflict may be avoided.

“China feels vulnerable with the presence of the U.S. military and believes that the United States gives other countries the option of standing up to China, which is the cause of its instability (China’s view). Whether it feels that way will largely depend on other countries’ responses,” professor of security studies at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University Oriana Mastro explained to TheDCNF,

How the U.S. responds is crucial. As to whether or not the U.S. can properly manage its China problem remains to be seen, for experts have different views on which path the U.S. should take.

Senior Fellow for Defense and Foreign Policy Studies at the Cato Institute Ted Carpenter told TheDCNF, “By seeking to preserve its strategy of primacy in East Asia, the United States is needlessly putting itself on the front lines of all these crises. Washington should move to offload some of the responsibilities.” He feels that Asia should be more responsible for its own security issues.

Senior Fellow with the International Assessment and Strategy Center Richard Fisher and President of Global Strategies and Transformation at the Center for New American Security Paul Giarra asserted at a recent symposium that the U.S. is already in a Cold War scenario with China and should be strengthening its security and defense commitments to its allies and strategic partners in the region.