

China's Stated Desire for Military Talks with the US Signals Its Interest in a "New Détente"

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It'll remain to be seen whether a New Détente is even clinched at all, to say nothing of its modalities in that event (including speculatively secret clauses), but the scenario is credible enough to discuss considering China's public signals of interest in seriously exploring its parameters. A lot can still happen to derail that trajectory, and it's even possible that it wouldn't perpetuate the bi-multipolar system in which they both have a stake contrary to their expectations, but it's still worth thinking deeply about.

China [pulled out](#) of military dialogue with the US in August as part of its response to [Pelosi's provocative trip](#) to Taiwan, yet Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Tan Kefei [just said](#) on Sunday that Defense Minister Wei Fenghe is ready to hold talks with his American counterpart. The proposed meeting, which the spokesman disclosed is already being discussed by "the relevant agencies of the two sides", would prospectively take place during the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus in Cambodia this week.

This development signals China's interest in further exploring the parameters of a possible New Détente with the US, which former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger [presciently predicted](#) in early October. That globally renowned China expert's foresight came several days after I asked whether "[The Ukrainian Conflict Might Have Already Derailed China's Superpower Trajectory](#)", in which case it would naturally follow that China would seriously countenance such a rapprochement.

I argued that the [prior bi-multipolar intermediary phase](#) of the [global systemic transition to multipolarity](#) could have remained in effect indefinitely whereby the American and (speculatively aspiring) Chinese superpowers would jointly manage world affairs, but India decisively intervened to offset this. It unexpectedly became [Russia's irreplaceable alternative valve](#) from Western pressure and thus [preemptively averted the scenario](#) of its partner becoming disproportionately dependent on China.

Had [Prime Minister Modi](#) and [his team](#) capitulated to the [unprecedented American pressure](#) upon them to unilaterally concede on their objective national interests by abandoning

Russia, then the latter would have become China's "junior partner", after which India would be pressured to become the US'. The [New Cold War](#) would thus likely have resulted in the formation of two rigid blocs across Eurasia respectively led by the American and Chinese superpowers, thus eroding all others' strategic autonomy.

[Instead](#), India's policy of [principled neutrality](#) resulted in it [carefully balancing](#) between the US-led West's [Golden Billion](#) and the jointly [BRICS-](#) & [SCO](#)-led Global South of which it's [now the voice](#), thus overcoming the prior bi-multipolar impasse in the global systemic transition. This [moved International Relations in the direction](#) of [tripolarity](#), pioneered by the Russian-Indian Axis (which closely cooperates with their [shared Iranian partner](#)), prior to its final form of more [complex multipolarity](#) ("multiplexity").

I [recently explained in detail](#) that the emerging dynamics are such that the American and Chinese superpowers have a self-interested stake in de-escalating their tensions at least temporarily in an attempt to jointly delay bi-multipolarity's evolution to tripolarity and then multiplexity. This contrasts with Russia and India's self-interested stake in accelerating the aforesaid evolution, especially through the joint assembling of a new Non-Aligned Movement ("[Neo-NAM](#)") for entrenching their progress.

The US finally acknowledged that India will informally lead this emerging multilateral network-centric platform, ergo the White House Press Secretary's [recent praise](#) of Prime Minister Modi's [indispensable role](#) in facilitating the wording of last week's G20 leaders' statement. China also acknowledges the inevitability of these emerging trends as evidenced by its prior proposal to jointly pioneer the [Asian Century](#) with India, but it too shares the US' interest in upholding bi-multipolarity as long as possible.

To that end, it's seriously exploring the parameters of a New Détente with its superpower peer despite the latter having not tangibly reversed any of its hybrid (economic, [military](#), political, [tech](#)) pressure on the People's Republic, at least not yet. To the contrary, the US' [Hybrid War](#) pressure on China has only intensified since August, yet Beijing is still sending olive branches to its rival regardless. This very strongly suggests that its leadership is keenly aware of their strategically disadvantageous position.

That's not to imply that it'll unilaterally concede on its objective national interests, at least not in any meaningful sense beyond potentially doing so superficially to facilitate the US "saving face" in the scenario of a New Détente after all its recent tough talk, but just that it's cognizant of its limits. The fact of the matter is that it's in the American and Chinese superpowers' interests to temporarily put aside their differences in order to jointly delay the end of bi-multipolarity and emergence of multiplexity.

It's impossible to reverse the global systemic transition, but the longer that its next phases are postponed, the greater the chance that those two (by then former) superpowers can become the so-called "first among equals" in the emerging Multipolar World Order. They'll always exert outsized influence over International Affairs by virtue of their economic, military, and technological power, but going with the flow instead of "gently" pushing back a bit could lead to them having a little less.

After all, the further acceleration of tripolarity-multiplexity trends would result in Great Powers like Russia, India, Iran, [Saudi Arabia](#), and [Turkiye](#) catching up with them a lot quicker than expected, not to mention the Neo-NAM taking shape sooner than many thought. Those

five-mentioned key players' [enhanced strategic autonomy](#) – brought about through complex bilateral and multilateral balancing acts, the latter also unfolding within the Neo-NAM network – would reduce US and Chinese influence.

Moreover, the rest of the Global South across Afro-Eurasia, Latin America, and Oceania would have multiple options available to them for balancing between the two former superpowers and the newly risen Great Powers shaping the Multipolar World Order. Altogether, these dynamics could greatly erode US and Chinese influence, thus further complicating their respective grand strategies that were already largely thrown into disarray as a result of the global systemic consequences of the [Ukrainian Conflict](#).

Despite these shared interests in indefinitely perpetuating the bi-multipolar intermediary phase of this irreversible transition, the American and Chinese superpowers still don't trust one another, nor will they ever do so completely regardless of whatever the terms of their potential New Détente might be. Each feels uncomfortable making any meaningful concessions on their objective national interests, even in coordination with complementary compromises by their rival, ergo the present dilemma between them.

The US' Hybrid War pressure on China was imposed a lot sooner than the People's Republic expected since its leadership seemed to have thought that it wouldn't occur until sometime next year at the earliest given its superpower peer's ongoing proxy war with Russia in Ukraine. By setting events in motion through Pelosi's provocative trip to Taiwan and the CHIPS Act that entered into force around the same time, the US caught China off guard at its most vulnerable grand strategic moment in decades.

The People's Republic is scrambling to recalibrate its long-term objectives in the face of the unexpected global systemic disruption brought about by the [special operation](#) that the US provoked Russia into commencing in late February. The double whammy of Pelosi's provocative trip to Taiwan and the CHIPS Act therefore occurred at the worst time possible, ergo why its new leadership from last month's 20th National Congress is seriously exploring the parameters of a New Détente with the US.

This doesn't mean that they'll clinch one, let alone right away and especially not at the expense of being coerced into making meaningful concessions on their objective national interests (not to mention unilaterally), but just that they've indisputably sent signals about their willingness to discuss this. That explains why President Xi engaged with his Western counterparts during the G20, including the new Australian leader [despite prior well-known bilateral tensions](#), and this week's possible military meeting.

The optics are intended to soften the Western public's propaganda-influenced dislike of the People's Republic while simultaneously facilitating the efforts of its rival's perception managers to gradually reshape their views in a more positive direction upon progress being achieved on the New Détente. The end result of this process could be that the US and China responsibly regulate their rivalry for the time being by reaching a pragmatic balance of influence between them aimed at upholding bi-multipolarity.

In practice, this could take the form of China tacitly acknowledging that there's no returning to the so-called "good 'ole days" of its ties with the Golden Billion, meaning that it'll accept AUKUS (despite likely continuing to criticize it), US-led "freedom of navigation" patrols in the South China Sea, and some continued bilateral trade and investment restrictions. Nevertheless, both sides could agree to restore limited cooperation on the climate, COVID,

military, and trade files as a necessary trust-building step.

It'll remain to be seen whether a New Détente is even clinched at all, to say nothing of its modalities in that event (including speculatively secret clauses), but the scenario is credible enough to discuss considering China's public signals of interest in seriously exploring its parameters. A lot can still happen to derail that trajectory, and it's even possible that it wouldn't perpetuate the bi-multipolar system in which they both have a stake contrary to their expectations, but it's still worth thinking deeply about.

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