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Donald Trump

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Ahead of US, China meeting, Trump and Xi both face crossroads | Opinion

The Chinese leader has to deal with a legitimacy crisis at home. The U.S. leader knows that Republicans' success in the midterm elections depends on economic relief for the American people, fast.

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A [leadership summit](#) between any two countries is always cause for pressure-packed preparations by all relevant agencies, but for the [Sept. 24 White House U.S.-China summit](#) between President [Donald Trump](#) and Chinese President Xi Jinping, the stakes have arguably never been higher.

China faces the [loss of 18 million factory jobs](#), rampant income inequality and a [70% increase in rural protests](#) between 2024 and 2025.

The United States faces skyrocketing oil prices, persistent threats of escalation from Iran and [China's alarming trade surplus](#).

For big "bilaterals" like this one set for Thursday, every Cabinet agency and all senior White House staff scurry to put together an agenda. Here are strategies they'll likely submit to the president as bases for memorandums of understanding, which will come from the meetings if executed well.

At US-China summit, [Trump should ask Xi to release my brother](#) | Opinion

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Trump, Xi should call for a world conference on AI

Trump and Xi, first and foremost, could agree to participate in and lead a world conference on artificial intelligence, with positive usages and safeguards.

Trump must seek a halt to China's rampant intellectual property theft, which has enabled Chinese companies to save billions of dollars [training their AI on American frontier models](#).

However, because both countries deeply mistrust the other to fairly navigate AI safety on their own, the leaders must address patent and copyright theft laws, and implement AI guardrails against human harm. Offered in a spirit of friendly competitors, this could benefit both countries and the world.

A joint statement could be significant.

Big AI is begging to be regulated. [That should worry you.](#) | Opinion

Gain more rare earth metals for the United States

In 2025, [Beijing began requiring foreign companies](#) to obtain a special government-approved license to ship certain products containing rare earth metals sourced from China.

To obtain these licenses, companies had to share highly sensitive data, including [profiles of end-users](#).

Companies affiliated with foreign militaries would be largely denied licenses unless Washington maintains some information access (now recognizing U.S. military's [dependence on Chinese rare earth elements](#)) but the United States and China could agree on mutual assistance.

There could be higher tariffs or tighter restrictions on China's access to semiconductors unless China withdraws its expanded license requirements.

At Beijing summit in May, [Trump faced America's equal](#) | Opinion

Clarify US-China research collaboration

Recently, millions of dollars of Washington funding for colleges has helped Beijing develop critical military technology through academic research involving organizations [affiliated with China's defense industrial base](#), according to a House Republican report.

In response, clarify and regulate more strongly research collaboration between American universities and Chinese-military-affiliated organizations.

Negotiate guardrails on tech components that can spy

[Mounting evidence](#) reveals that [Chinese tech components](#) can [secretly transmit information to China](#).

This is a massive national security risk, particularly due to the [U.S. military's reliance on Chinese batteries](#). Trump must secure restrictions on components sold to the United States with surveillance capabilities.

Maintain strategic ambiguity on Taiwan

Taiwan remains the strictest red line for China, so any diplomatic negotiation requires strategic ambiguity on Taiwan contingencies. Remain vague about whether the United States would militarily support Taiwan in the case of a Chinese invasion.

Keep the [\\$14 billion pending Taiwan arms sale](#) up for negotiation and leave for later after this summit, depending on Xi's openness to other demands, and signal support for China while keeping future options open to support Taiwan if necessary.

Pledge to reduce oil prices

Washington wants Beijing to buy American goods. Unfortunately, rising oil prices from the Iran war exacerbated production costs in China, [slowing down its economic growth](#), and driving the Chinese to buy fewer American goods.

Trump could pledge de-escalation attempts with Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to bring down oil prices. Clarify that China should stop buying Iranian oil until the Strait of Hormuz is opened, and that China should expand its [agreement to import more American agricultural goods](#).

Cooperate on drug policy, target methamphetamine and fentanyl

Expand the [McCaffrey-China anti-drug agreement](#) made more than a quarter-century ago on methamphetamine and now fentanyl.

In 2000, retired Army Gen. Barry McCaffrey, as head of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, led a delegation to China and [negotiated a drug treatment and source prevention agreement](#). He explained that for China itself, treatment was more than warehousing thousands of addicts cold turkey in a big room in a Chinese city. It meant stop allowing import of drugs from Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, and providing jobs and counseling for addicts.

Now, [China is a major source of devastating fentanyl](#) in the United States. An agreement to help each other could be a productive component of the Trump-Xi summit.

Trump, Xi overlooked fentanyl [at Beijing summit. It can't happen again. | Opinion](#)

Increase cultural ties

To solidify long-term trust, Trump should increase cultural ties between the two nations by renewing a commitment to sharing arts and sports – like Chinese table tennis and U.S. football diplomacy – and inviting China's National Peking Opera back to the United States.

Both Trump and Xi are at a crossroads

Xi faces a legitimacy crisis. While many of his citizens have long supported the Chinese Communist Party's overall economic prosperity, China's stagnating

economy and skyrocketing youth unemployment have greatly weakened the party's internal political legitimacy.

For his part, Trump's reversing his low approval ratings ahead of the November midterm elections (and, consequently, the Republican Party's success) depends on his ability to deliver economic relief, and fast. That can be accomplished by increasing American exports to China.

Chinese leaders are as interested in making productive deals with the United States as we are with them, making the Trump-Xi summit an enormous opportunity for the two global superpowers as well as the world.

Robert Weiner was a spokesman in the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, the White House drug policy spokesman, chief of staff for the House Aging Committee, and communications director of the House Government Operations and Oversight Committee. *Emmbrooke Flather* is a senior policy analyst at Robert Weiner Associates, and served as copresident of the Chinese Culture Club at Phillips Academy Andover. At Boston College, she studied Mandarin, East Asian Security and the Rise of China.