

Assessing Nine Potential Outcomes of the Trump–Xi Summit

THE ISSUE

On May 14 and 15, 2026, U.S. President Donald Trump is scheduled to meet Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping in Beijing, China. The summit follows an October 30, 2025, meeting between Trump and Xi in Busan, South Korea. Given that the Busan agreement included many reversible and time-bound commitments, the upcoming summit in Beijing should be approached as a compliance check-point with the potential to break ground on new topics. This *Factsheet*, a condensed version of The Heritage Foundation’s “The Trump–Xi Summit” *Background*, briefly assesses nine potential outcomes from the Trump–Xi summit and specifies which of these outcomes would advance U.S. interests and which should be avoided.

FAVORABLE OUTCOMES

Several actions or agreements that could be considered during the summit in Beijing would advance U.S. interests without compromising national security or weakening the United States.

Favorable Outcome #1: China maintains pauses on export controls.

Recommendation: The United States should insist that the pause in implementation of China’s rare earth export controls remain in place and push for it to be extended indefinitely. At the same time, the United States must move aggressively to create alternative critical mineral supply chains and technology supply chains through the U.S. State Department’s Pax Silica initiative.

Favorable Outcome #2: China continues to grant market access to U.S. agricultural products.

Recommendation: The United States should continue to advocate for sustained, reliable access to Chinese agricultural markets for American farmers, but it should not offer strategic concessions to maintain that access. As Chinese purchases continue, U.S. producers should attempt to diversify markets to mitigate potential risk from future arbitrary Chinese reductions in purchases.

Favorable Outcome #3: China agrees to reduce material support for Iran.

Recommendation: The United States should not give China a pass on Beijing providing material support for Iran. The Trump Administration should make it clear that it will impose additional tariffs, sanctions, and punitive measures if China’s support for Iran continues.

Favorable Outcome #4: China commits to releasing political and religious prisoners.

Recommendation: The United States should request that China release unjustly detained or convicted prisoners. President Trump could request this from General Secretary Xi as an act of good faith, offer prisoner exchanges, or link requests to some sort of incentive package. Notable examples include Jimmy Lai, Gulshan Abbas, and Pastor Ezra Jin.

Favorable Outcome #5: China improves cooperation with U.S. immigration enforcement.

Recommendation: The United States should elevate immigration policy as a priority topic.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <https://report.heritage.org/fs284>

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Specifically, the United States should raise concerns about Chinese visa manipulation, particularly students on visas who engage in illegal activities, and continue to deport Chinese citizens who have entered the United States illegally without a legitimate and verifiable asylum claim back to China.

UNFAVORABLE OUTCOMES

At least four other potential outcomes, however, would *not* advance America's best interests.

Unfavorable Outcome #1: The United States slows, pauses, or rolls back export controls.

Recommendation: The United States should not supercharge China's AI capabilities or permit the sale of higher-end U.S. chips to China. The United States should not weaken current export controls administered by the Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), including maintaining Chinese firms on the Entity List and other relevant export control designations.

Unfavorable Outcome #2: The United States shifts closer to China's position on Taiwan.

Recommendation: The United States should not shift its Taiwan policy to appease General Secretary Xi. Thus far, President Trump has largely maintained the U.S. policy of "strategic ambiguity" while providing Taiwan with new arms sales and signaling that America has the capability and willpower to defend Taiwan if ordered.

Unfavorable Outcome #3: The United States reduces tariffs on China.

Recommendation: The United States should not agree to lower tariffs on Chinese imports at this time. Thus far, China has engaged only in episodic rather than permanent crackdowns on fentanyl precursor exports and provided only tactical cooperation instead of long-term, constant cooperation with the United States.

Unfavorable Outcome #4: The United States allows Chinese automobiles or automobile technology to enter U.S. markets.

Recommendation: The United States should not permit major Chinese investments in the U.S. automobile market or the introduction of Chinese automobiles into the United States. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick stated that "we're not going to have them here" and that any Chinese investments would "not [be in] cars."