Trump and Xi to meet amid global eruption of imperialist war

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12 May 2026

US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping will meet in Beijing this week amid a global rampage of imperialist war launched by Washington.

In the six months since their meeting on the margins of the APEC summit in South Korea, the United States has kidnapped the president of Venezuela, launched a war against Iran and blockaded the Strait of Hormuz, triggering a global energy and food crisis. China is the largest destination for oil exports from both Iran and Venezuela, and the wars Trump has launched against these countries are the opening clashes of a global conflict targeting China itself.

Amid the worldwide conflagration launched by Trump, the *New York Time*s led its Monday edition with an article titled, "As Trump Heads to Beijing, China Is 'Locked and Loaded' for a Fight."

In fact, it is Trump's White House that is "locked and loaded." For months, the US military has been blowing boats out of the water in the Caribbean and Pacific, massacring civilians on the claim that they were smuggling drugs, and seizing tankers in international waters on the pretext that they were carrying "sanctioned" oil. American forces have killed more than 3,000 Iranians, and on April 7 Trump threatened that "a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again."

Trump presides over a government in desperate crisis. He launched the Iran war believing that it would lead to a rapid overthrow of the Iranian government. Now, having failed to achieve his war aims, Trump is seeking Chinese assistance, one of the main purposes of the visit.

As Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Fox News on May 4, "So I would urge the Chinese to join us in supporting this international operation. We have absolute control of the strait. Let's see them step up with some diplomacy and get the Iranians to open the strait."

From the Chinese side, former *Global Times* editor Hu Xijin wrote, "If the US seeks to use this badly bungled war to harm China's interests, I believe China has many cards to play that would ensure the US gains far less than it loses." Gideon Rachman of the *Financial Times* commented, "The reality, however, is that it is Xi Jinping who 'has the cards'—to use a phrase that Trump likes."

In traveling to Beijing, Trump will bring with him a variety of carrots and sticks. On the carrot side, he has in tow a retinue of top CEOs and finance chiefs, including Tim Cook (Apple), Elon Musk (Tesla), Larry Fink (BlackRock), Stephen Schwarzman (Blackstone), David Solomon (Goldman Sachs), Jane Fraser (Citi), and executives from Boeing, Cargill, Meta, Micron, Qualcomm, Visa and Mastercard. Various deals will be proffered, beneficial to both sides.

Underlying everything, however, is the constant threat of a major escalation of economic and military action against Beijing.

The *Wall Street Journal* editorial board, speaking for dominant sections of finance capital, frames the Beijing summit as a test of whether Trump can be steered away from a "detente" that, in its view, risks conceding core strategic interests. While the White House "spin is a search for 'stability,'" the *Journal* warns that Trump's "personal" diplomacy and pursuit of deals could collide with what it describes as Xi's "anti-American purposes."

Most revealing is the *Journal's* larger strategic conclusion: It casts China as the "main financier and industrial base" for US adversaries and warns that the "second Trump Administration is searching for detente, and Mr. Trump is the chief dove." Any pause, it insists, is acceptable only as a breathing space for rearmament—explicitly urging "passing a $1.5 trillion defense budget to rearm." It warns bluntly: "Mr. Xi is playing a long game to overthrow the U.S. as the world's leading power."

The Trump–Xi summit takes place amid the basic strategic dilemma confronting the US ruling class: The protracted erosion of American economic supremacy, which Washington has sought to offset through ever more aggressive military force, has coincided with—and been intensified by—the continued growth of China.

The corporate media plays a central role in this turn, presenting China's economic and technological

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development, carried out through trade, investment and industrial expansion, and within the formal framework of the "free trade" rules the United States itself promoted for decades, as a physical threat that allegedly "justifies" coercion, blockade and war.

Years of escalating tariffs and technology bans have not strangled Chinese industry. They have instead imposed vast costs on American workers through higher prices and economic dislocation, while failing to alter the underlying trajectory. China's industrial position is demonstrated in the most concrete figures: The automaker BYD outsold Tesla globally in 2025 by more than 600,000 vehicles, shipping 2.26 million fully electric cars—kept out of the American market only through an extraordinary 247.5 percent tariff.

Chinese firms now ship roughly four out of every five humanoid robots produced worldwide, with Unitree alone aiming for 20,000 units this year after shipping 5,500 in 2025. The drone manufacturer DJI dominates the American consumer drone market and holds a commanding share of commercial drones internationally. In AI, open-source Chinese large language models have closed to within a benchmark point of America's "flagship" systems at a fraction of the cost.

But the publications of American imperialism never ask the obvious question: Why is China so rapidly approaching, and in some areas overtaking, the US economy? After all, the United States had a massive head start. In 1980, it accounted for about 25 percent of world GDP, while China's share was 2 percent.

For decades, American policy has been driven by one purpose: The engorgement of the ruling elite at any cost. American imperialism pursued a policy of financialization that enriched that class, presided over the destruction of US industry and waged wars across the world. The federal debt now approaches $40 trillion, fueled by American wars, militarism and the endless bailouts of the rich.

The *New York Times* noted Monday that "concerns about America's mounting debt load and its aggressive use of sanctions to cut adversaries off from the Western financial system have raised doubts about the safety of the dollar as the world's reserve currency."

The American oligarchy will not accept a diminished position in the world. Whatever the specific outcome of the summit, US imperialism is preparing for what Trump's actions this year have pointed toward—a war against China itself, for which the conflicts in Iran, Lebanon, Ukraine, Venezuela and the Caribbean are the laboratory, the rehearsal and the opening clashes.

The Democratic Party has criticized the Trump administration for being insufficiently concentrated on the confrontation with Beijing. Democratic Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, told Fox News Sunday that "President Trump is going into this meeting terribly weakened," adding: "There's a stalemate now. The Iranians are holding 20 percent of the world's oil at risk."

The Democrats' concern is not the criminality of the war, but that the debacle in the Middle East diverts resources and credibility from the central objective: escalating the conflict with China.

The Chinese bureaucracy offers no progressive way out. It is bound to the world capitalist market and to the defense of national state interests, and it has repeatedly sought an accommodation with imperialism—an accommodation that Washington is increasingly unwilling and unable to grant.

The crisis can be resolved only through the independent intervention of the international working class, uniting workers in the United States, China and throughout the world in a common struggle against war, dictatorship and the capitalist system that produces both.

Opening the International May Day Online Rally, WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North stated: "World war is not a future threat but a presently unfolding reality." The wars now under way, North continued, "are component parts of a continuous trajectory, driven by the same unresolved contradiction between the world economy and the nation-state system."

The global eruption of imperialist barbarism can be stopped only by the intervention of the international working class on the basis of a socialist program. The International Committee of the Fourth International, the Socialist Equality Parties and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees are building the organizations of that struggle worldwide.

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