

US-China relations

Xi Jinping tells Joe Biden he will work with Donald Trump to manage US-China ties

Leaders meet on sidelines of Apec summit in Peru as Beijing prepares for new administration in Washington



US President Joe Biden, left, and Chinese leader Xi Jinping before a bilateral meeting on Saturday in Lima, Peru © Leah Millis/AP

Demetri Sevastopulo in Washington and **Joe Daniels** in Lima NOVEMBER 16 2024

China's President Xi Jinping has told his US counterpart Joe Biden that Beijing was prepared to work with Donald Trump's incoming administration to manage differences in the turbulent US-China relationship.

The Chinese and US presidents met at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Lima, Peru on Saturday, in what is expected to be their final meeting as leaders before Biden's term ends in January. In his opening remarks before their private meeting, Xi said the [US-China relationship](#) had seen "ups and downs" over the past four years but had remained largely "stable".

"China is ready to work with the new US administration to maintain communication, expand co-operation, and manage differences . . . for the benefit of the two peoples," Xi told Biden.

Biden said the US-China relationship was the most important "alliance" in the world, before correcting himself and saying it was the "most important relationship".

Repeating one of his stock phrases when meeting Xi, Biden added: "Our two countries cannot let any of this competition veer into conflict . . . Over the past four years I think we've proven it's possible to have this relationship."

Relations between the US and China plummeted over the past four years, reaching their lowest level in decades after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in 2022 and a [Chinese spy balloon](#) flew over the US last year. Relations have since stabilised, but the superpowers remain at odds over many issues.



Xi Jinping was front and centre in the Apec summit group photo on Saturday, next to Peru's President Dina Boluarte. The leaders wore traditional Peruvian vicuña wool scarves © Leah Millis/Reuters

US national security adviser Jake Sullivan said the leaders had a “candid” exchange about co-operation, including on [counter-narcotics](#), but also covered areas of significant divergence, such as China’s support for Russia’s defence industrial base.

Sullivan said Biden and Xi had reached an important agreement on “the need to maintain human control over the decision to use nuclear weapons”, which he said was the first time that China had made such a pledge.

“We’ve generated something meaningful today,” Sullivan said. “It is not the end of the line, but it’s the start of something that we hope can be carried forward.”

In its readout of the meeting, China’s foreign ministry said the leaders “stressed the need to maintain human control over the decision to use nuclear weapons”.

Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the German Marshall Fund, said the agreement was “very important” and signalled a recognition in Beijing that “active measures should be taken bilaterally to control dangerous security risks”.

“It is also the first agreement ever signed by the US and China involving nuclear

...the most agreement ever signed by the US and China on buying nuclear weapons,” said Glaser. “Hopefully, it will be followed by others.”

The meeting in Lima was the third in person between Biden and Xi as leaders, and their first since the Apec forum in San Francisco last year, where they [agreed to put a “floor”](#) under strained ties.

It also came two months before Trump will begin a second term as US president. In recent days, the president-elect has named officials with [tough stances on China](#) for top positions, including Florida congressman Mike Waltz as national security adviser and Florida senator Marco Rubio as secretary of state.

Trump also threatened to impose tariffs of more than 60 per cent on all Chinese exports during the campaign.

Experts are waiting to see whether Elon Musk — who [has become close to Trump](#) and who produces and sells Tesla cars in China — will urge the president to take a softer approach towards Beijing.

Xi repeated his mantra that China wanted to work with the US, adding: “major country competition should not be the underlying logic of the times”.

He also pushed back against the idea of decoupling and US measures to deny China access to advanced semiconductor-related technologies, which is known as the “small yard, high fence” policy.

“‘Small yard, high fences’ is not what a major country should pursue,” Xi told Biden.

Sullivan said the export controls were narrowly targeted at high-end technologies related to US national security concerns.

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