

The Outcomes of Trump's Visit to China

(Translated)

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US President Donald Trump's visit to China garnered widespread media attention and dominated headlines, accompanied by impressive ceremonial displays. However, the practical results of the visit only became clear after some time, and appear to be quite limited compared to the expectations surrounding it.

On Friday, May 15, 2026, following the conclusion of his visit, Trump declared that personal relationships between leaders played a key role in resolving major issues between the United States and China and in concluding deals between the two sides. "You're a great leader. Sometimes people don't like me saying it, but I say it anyway, because it's true. I only say the truth ... It's an honour to be your friend," Trump said before promising that "the relationship between China and the USA is going to be better than ever before." Trump thus focused more on the personal and public relations aspect, than on the practical and official aspects.

Trump cited the fact that trade between the two countries was very strong, noting that China would increase its purchases of American soybeans, thus supporting American farmers. He also mentioned that Chinese President Xi Jinping had committed to buying 200 American aircraft from Boeing, a deal that could increase to 750 if Boeing and General Electric do a good job—meaning if the Boeing planes used General Electric engines.

However, despite all the media hype surrounding this supposed success, Trump did not reveal any details or a timeline for the Chinese purchases of soybeans and aircraft. The story of China's purchase of these aircraft was known before the summit; the news is old and not a result of the summit itself. This suggests that these purchases are merely promises, not guaranteed purchase agreements, as evidenced by the statement of Yue Su, principle economist for China at the Economist Intelligence Unit, who said that both sides made their promises.

Regarding Taiwan, Trump said he discussed it at length with Xi, claiming he did not believe there was a conflict over the island. He clarified that he made no commitments regarding Taiwan during his talks with the Chinese president, leaving the door slightly ajar by saying he had not yet agreed to supply Taiwan with weapons. He added, he "might or might not," but emphasized that it would be a "good bargaining chip," indicating that no agreement was reached on this crucial issue and no serious discussion took place.

As for Iran, the Chinese official stated that there are limits to what China can realistically do. The Iranian regime is trying to survive and will prioritize its own interests and agenda above all else. In other words, China did not commit to pressuring Iran, nor did it work to extract concessions for the United States.

For his part, the Chinese president explained to Trump the importance of bringing China onto America's international stage, citing the view of the Greek Thucydides, in his book "The History of the Peloponnesian War," regarding the decades long, bloody

conflict between Sparta and Athens. He asked, “Can China and the United States transcend the so-called ‘Thucydides Trap’ and forge a new paradigm for major-power relations?” The narration the Chinese president used as a cautionary proverb, tells of how Sparta, the strongest power at the time, underestimated the rising power of Athens, leading to a protracted conflict in which both sides faced huge losses. The message here is that America should not underestimate China’s power and must engage with it internationally on an equal footing, otherwise it will fall into Thucydides’ Trap.

Thus, we find that sensitive and important issues, whether political, such as multipolarity, Taiwan, or Iran, or economic and technological, such as trade disputes, high-tech exports, and facilitating the transit of rare earth minerals, do not appear to have achieved any tangible breakthroughs. The visit was overshadowed by a halo of formal protocol that obscured the substance of the agreements, and the true nature of the negotiations that took place between the two sides.

It is clear that the trade and technology aspects dominated the visit, as evidenced by Trump’s large economic and technology delegation, which included business leaders and representatives from major American companies operating in the financial, business, technology, energy, agricultural, and industrial sectors. Among those who participated in the meeting were Boeing CEO Kelly Orberg, Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, and prominent business figures such as Apple CEO Tim Cook and Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

These companies aim to reap substantial profits from securing contracts with a major country like China, the world’s second-largest economy, and the largest manufacturer and exporter of most goods globally. They are well aware of the importance and vast size of the Chinese market, its immense economic capabilities, and its overall influence on global markets and supply chains.

American companies also understand China’s pressing need to leverage its technological superiority to develop its own technological capabilities. This would be achieved by lifting US restrictions on the export of advanced American chips and equipment to China. In other words, if an agreement is reached to lift these restrictions in exchange for China facilitating the flow of Rare Earth Elements (REEs), which the US lacks for its critical industries, this would represent a successful negotiation for them.

In any case, this visit has broken the deadlock that has characterized relations between the two countries for the past decade, achieving a form of strategic stability between the two major powers in a world rife with conflict.