

Politics

# Biden, Xi Seek Cooperation in Longer-Than-Expected Summit

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- ▶ U.S. president says leaders have a duty to avoid conflict
  - ▶ Xi calls Biden ‘old friend,’ looks to ‘build consensus’
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## BIDEN, XI CALL FOR COOPERATION AT VIRTUAL SUMMIT

WATCH: Biden and Xi spoke on the need for cooperation in their first face-to-face virtual summit.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping spoke of the need for cooperation in their first face-to-face summit, which went on longer than expected even though they announced no major breakthroughs.

The video conference lasted for more than three hours, with the two leaders covering a range of topics including trade, the status of Taiwan and human rights. A senior administration official afterward described the tone as respectful and open, with the conversation focused on action to manage the long-term competition between the world's biggest economies.

The U.S. made clear ahead of the meeting that there would be no specific outcomes from the meeting, and that appeared to be the case. China's official Xinhua News Agency said Xi's government agreed to adopt an upgraded fast track for U.S. executives to enter China, one of the only concrete deliverables announced after the talks.

In a statement after the summit, the White House said the leaders "discussed the complex nature of relations between our two countries and the importance of managing competition responsibly." Biden raised issues including human rights in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, China's "unfair trade and economic practices" and the U.S. commitment to Taiwan.

The statement added that they "discussed ways for the two sides to continue discussions on a number of areas, with President Biden underscoring the importance of substantive and concrete conversations."

Xi said he hoped Biden would "return U.S. policy toward China back to a rational and pragmatic path," Xinhua reported. CCTV reported that Xi said the earth is large enough to accommodate the development of both the U.S. and China, adding that both countries should "not engage in winners and losers."

### **'Burn Themselves'**

Still, Xi also warned that China would safeguard its own sovereignty, security, and development interests and said that those playing with fire around the Taiwan issue "would inevitably burn

themselves.”

“We are patient and we are willing to use our utmost sincerity and make the utmost effort to strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification,” Xinhua cited Xi as saying. “However, if ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces provoke and coerce, or even break through the red line, we will have to take drastic measures.”



Joe Biden meets with Xi Jinping during a virtual summit on Nov. 15. *Photographer: Sarah Silbiger/UPI/Bloomberg*

At the start of the meeting, Biden told Xi they had a responsibility to ensure that competition between the countries doesn’t veer into conflict. “It seems to me we need to establish some commonsense guardrails, to be clear and honest where we disagree, and work together where our interests intersect, especially on vital global issues like climate change,” the U.S. president said.

## ‘Old Friend’

Xi started his remarks by calling Biden an “old friend” while saying the U.S. and China “need to increase communication and cooperation.” The two nations should work to find effective

responses to global challenges including climate change and the pandemic, Xi said.

“China and the United States should respect each other, co-exist in peace, and pursue win-win cooperation,” Xi said, adding that they should work “to build consensus, take active steps and move China-U.S. relations forward in a positive direction.”

Investors were watching to see if the summit helps defuse tensions that have built up between the world’s two biggest economies over a wide range of issues, including tariffs, sanctions and human rights. As the summit got underway, the onshore yuan rose as much as 0.3% to approach the strongest level since 2018. The currency fluctuated within a tight range over the past month.

## U.S., China Seeking to Stabilize Ties With Biden-Xi Summit

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The White House had framed the discussion as Biden’s effort to set the terms of the relationship, with a particular focus on avoiding unintended conflict. Besides mentioning human rights and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, the president also planned to raise China’s non-market economic practices, such as industrial subsidies, though trade issues won’t dominate the conversation, U.S. officials said.

Xi came to the summit in a strong position politically, having cleared a major hurdle last week to securing a third term as Communist Party chief next year. The consolidation of power in China makes it only more pressing for Biden to engage Xi in a leader-to-leader conversation, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters on Monday.

The Biden administration consulted allies and partners before the meeting and continued coordination is expected afterward as well, Psaki said.

The White House argues that Biden is also coming to the summit with a strong hand, having earlier Tuesday signed into law the \$550 billion infrastructure bill that his administration says will boost America’s competitiveness with China.

– *With assistance by Jenny Leonard, Lucille Liu, Justin Sink, Wenjin Lv, Chester Yung, and Colum Murphy*

*(Updates with White House official from second paragraph)*

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