XI WARNS TRUMP ON TAIWAN AT SUPERPOWER SUMMIT

BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping warned his USA counterpart Donald Trump that missteps on Taiwan could push their two countries into "conflict", a stark opening salvo as they met in Beijing yesterday at a superpower summit.

Trump arrived in China with accolades for his host, calling Xi a "great leader" and "friend" and extending an invitation to visit the White House in September.


Donald Trump (left) with Xi Jinping

TAIWAN QUESTION

Beyond the pomp as he welcomed Trump, Xi in less effusive tones said the two sides "should be partners and not rivals" and highlighted the issue of Taiwan, which Beijing says is its territory, straight off the bat. "The Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations," Xi said, according to remarks published by Chinese state media shortly after the start of the talks, which lasted two hours and 15 minutes.

"If mishandled, the two nations could collide or even come into conflict, pushing the entire China-US relationship into a highly perilous situation," Xi added.

TRUMP'S RECEPTION IN CHINA

Trump's trip to Beijing is the first by a US president in nearly a decade, with the grand reception belying a roster of unresolved trade and geopolitical tensions between the two countries.

Xi greeted Trump with a red-carpet welcome at the opulent Great Hall of the People, with military band fanfare, a 21-gun salute and a host of schoolchildren jumping and chanting "welcome!".

Seemingly enjoying the ceremony, Trump said "the relationship between China and the USA is going to be better than ever before".

Xi instead referenced a political theory about the risks of war when a rising power rivals a ruling one, inspired by an ancient Greek historian.

"Can China and the United States transcend the so-called 'Thucydides Trap' and forge a new paradigm for major-power relations?" Xi asked.

LONG-STANDING HURDLES

At a state banquet in the evening, the Chinese leader insisted it was possible.

"Achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and making America great again can totally go hand in hand and advance the wellbeing of the whole world," Xi said, in reference to Trump's MAGA movement.

But there are longstanding hurdles in the relationship to overcome, with Taiwan looming large.

The United States recognises only Beijing but under US law is required to provide weapons to the self-ruled democracy for its defence. China has sworn to take the island and has not ruled out using force, ramping up military pressure in recent years.

AFP

BLUNT LANGUAGE

Adam Ni, editor of newsletter China Neican, told AFP that while Xi's "blunt language" was not uncommon in party state media, it was unusual coming from the leader himself.

China has been "signalling a desire for US compromise on Taiwan", the National University of Singapore's Chong Ja Ian told AFP. Xi's demand could suggest "they see some opportunity to convince Trump", he said.

Trump did not comment to reporters on Taiwan on Thursday, but US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told CNBC the president would say more "in the coming days".

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