

This Weekend's Meeting Between Trump and Xi Just Got a Lot More Interesting

President Donald Trump has been playing a high-stakes game of political chess with his Chinese counterpart for weeks leading up to this weekend's first-ever meeting between the two men, but over the weekend, the intensity got cranked up even more.

Xi Jinping, the Chinese president, began the political gamesmanship by insisting that he not stay at Mar-a-Lago, which many have begun dubbing the "Southern White House," because he acknowledged the optics of being seen around such luxury would not play well back in his home country. Not only that, but there will be no press availability at the president's Florida resort.

Trump ensured there would be plenty to discuss Friday when his administration announced a new round of economic sanctions against foreign nationals acting as agents to North Korea. Among them is a Chinese businessman who has helped the Hermit Kingdom circumvent previously existing sanctions.

North Korea already appeared to be a major discussion point, giving Kim Jong-un's recent provocations relative to North Korea's nuclear missile program. Another issue that was bound to come up was foreign trade.

During the 2016 presidential race, Trump accused China of engaging in deceptive trade negotiations, of stealing U.S. intellectual property, and of manipulating its currency to further exacerbate America's trade deficit with the country. China, on the other hand, has been desperate to horn its way into trade alliances—such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership—to more easily get its products sold in America.

The U.S. president acted on this issue, as well, signing a new executive order aimed at “establishing enhanced collection and enforcement of antidumping and countervailing duties and violations of trade and customs laws.” In other words, it’s going to attempt to cut off the primary means that Chinese goods are shipped into the U.S., unless those Chinese companies start playing by the rules.

The order states:

Importers that unlawfully evade anti-dumping and countervailing duties expose United States employers to unfair competition and deprive the Federal Government of lawful revenue. As of May 2015, \$2.3 billion in anti-dumping and countervailing duties owed to the Government remained uncollected, often from importers that lack assets located in the United States. It is therefore the policy of the United States to impose appropriate bonding requirements, based on risk assessments, on entries of articles subject to anti-dumping and countervailing duties, when necessary to protect the revenue of the United States.

Prior to the White House announcing the two new moves, Trump was already predicting the meeting would be “very tough.” But Americans just might get a very public display of *The Art of the Deal* in action—which has triggered the interest of another major player in Asia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin wants to meet with Trump as soon as possible, one of his chief advisers, Dmitry Peskov, said during an interview with ABC’s *This Week with George Stephanopoulos* on Sunday. Just moments before, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley claimed there was “no love” in the relationship, and that there was a lot of mistrust of Putin in the Trump administration.

Typically, it would be “too soon” to arrange a “plus one” in negotiations like those planned for this weekend at Mar-a-

Lago, but if there's anything President Trump has proven in the past 75 days, it's that anything can happen. {eo}