'Divorce is not an option' for US and China, Newsom says after Xi meeting

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3 minute read · Published 6:11 AM EDT, Thu October 26, 2023

CCTV

Chinese leader Xi Jinping met California Governor Gavin Newsom on Wednesday.

Hong Kong (CNN) — "Divorce is not an option" when it comes to the world's two largest economies, California Governor Gavin Newsom told CNN on Wednesday following his meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

In an interview with CNN’s Christiane Amanpour, Newsom said his meeting with Xi in Beijing had revived hope that the United States and China were at a turning point in their relations.

“We’ve got to turn down the heat. We’ve got to manage our strategic differences. We’ve got to reconcile our strategic red lines,” he said.

Newsom — the first US governor to meet with Xi in six years — is in China for a week-long visit to promote action on climate change. His trip comes as tensions between the two remain high, leading to export controls from both sides on critical technological supplies, such as semiconductors and the equipment needed to produce them.

“Obviously, that was brought up and there’s anxiety in that space,” Newsom said of the restrictions.

But Newsom said the fact that he was granted an audience by the country’s top leader was “indicative of a thawing.” The governor has also scheduled a slate of meetings with numerous other high-level Chinese officials, which indicates “that we’re entering, I hope, a new phase,” he added.

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In recent months, a series of top US officials have traveled to China, repeatedly stressing that they are not seeking to decouple from China. Instead, they have pointed to a need to “derisk,” or reduce its dependence from the world’s second biggest economy.

Newsom said he had reinforced the same message in his meetings with Chinese leaders. "Competition's good, it's healthy," he added. "But derisking is very different than decoupling … To me, it's nothing more than diversification."

According to Chinese state news agency Xinhua, Xi told Newsom on Wednesday that the achievements in the two countries' relations had not come easily and should therefore be cherished. Xi also expressed the hope that the governor's visit to China would help stabilize the broader relationship.

The trip already appears to have generated some goodwill, particularly after Newsom's visit to the southern Chinese metropolis of Shenzhen on Tuesday. The governor was seen cheerily taking a test ride in an autonomous SUV belonging to BYD, the top Chinese electric vehicle maker, during which he praised the company's technology and was quoted as saying "I want two," according to Chinese state media.


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His remarks were regarded "as a positive signal that at the level of the state governments, some people are willing to focus on practical cooperation, instead of the zero-sum geopolitical games," Chinese state-run tabloid Global Times wrote Wednesday.

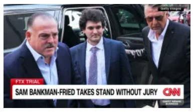
Newsom's administration has partnered with BYD in the past, with the automaker's US arm sending California millions of N95 masks in the early days of the Covid crisis, helping the state reopen, according to a previous statement from Newsom.

The governor said that while he saw the United States and China as "interdependent," China's ongoing economic slowdown had likely put more pressure on Beijing recently.

As the country navigates a property crisis and its post-pandemic reopening to the world, officials are "deeply mindful of" those challenges, "and I think that's also part of this desire to turn the page and to renew and reinvigorate our well-established relationship," he added.

China is California's biggest trading partner, with nearly $166 billion in two-way trade in 2022, according to official state data.

The US state has outsize economic heft, recording $3.6 trillion in gross domestic product in 2022. If it were a country, California "would be the fifth largest economy in the world," Newsom told CNN.



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