

Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn
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HOST: On the line now, Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn, international corporate strategist and investment banker with years of experience in China. He is also the author of *"How China's Leaders Think."* Dr. Kuhn, all we've got to go on at the moment is a statement issued after the summit, in which both countries agreed to commit to phase down production and usage of super greenhouse gases. Is that all they've achieved, do you think?

KUHN: I think history will look back on this summit as one of the most important summits in Sino-American history because it has been the opportunity for both presidents, at important times in their respective leaderships, to come together, to get to know one another as individuals. I've known Xi Jinping for many years, and he's a confident, serious person who speaks what he really thinks, and he has looked forward to this opportunity, one-on-one, with the American president. President Xi, although just elected president by the National People's Congress in March, in fact has been building his leadership for over five years, specifically since last November, when he was named head of the party. But, it was very critical, first, that Xi build up his credibility with his own people domestically and establish an independent foreign policy. His first trip was to Russia. He has certainly been a nationalist, with the claims in the East and South China seas, so he comes into this summit strong, with great support among the Chinese people. It's important for Xi to be able, then, to speak to the American president in a confident way, knowing he has solidified his power after a very short period of time, exceeding most people's expectations -- and, therefore, that is the critical point. There are a lot of specific issues we can talk about, but that one-on-one relationship is what will set the agenda for the future.

HOST: Okay, well let's talk generalities and ask whether President Xi's pursuit of the Chinese dream is compatible with President Obama's preservation of the American dream?

KUHN: The two 'dreams' are very different; each has to be looked at in its own historical context. The Chinese dream is more collective than the American dream, which is more individual. China looks upon 150 years of humiliation and oppression -- invasion by Western powers and then, certainly, by Japan; some tumultuous decades in the early years of the People's Republic due to extreme leftist ideology. Three-plus decades now of reform, but still an enormous number of problems, when you know China: the social imbalances, the pollution, the corruption -- all of these things are tremendously powerful issues. Healthcare is just rudimentary in China, so the people are very much domestically focused. And yet, there is this grand nationalistic vision that they have, the pride of Chinese civilization and culture. So you have to combine all those elements together, giving the domestic benefits of the growing economy, with the pride and respect and the patriotic feelings of the Chinese people. That's all part of the Chinese dream.

HOST: Dr. Kuhn, just very briefly and finally, as a result of this summit, do you see a situation now where President Obama is going to be able to pick up the phone and talk to President Xi if a problem arises between the two countries?

KUHN: I think so, and that's the critical benefit of this summit. We can look at the confrontational issues: cyber-security, America's pivot to Asia, the territorial claims, human rights. And then the issues on which China and the US are compatible, but have different perspectives, like the North Korea nuclear program, Syria, Iran, climate control. There are whole series of these kinds of issues. But the most important thing is that the two presidents now know each other as human beings -- each one at a point in their leadership career where they really can have impact. Each has put some of the domestic issues behind them so they can look to the future, both to deal with problems and, more importantly, to work together. Today, as you saw, was fully focused on the economy. So, at least half the time is directly focused on economic issues, because that's what drives the standard of living and the tangible benefits to both peoples and indeed to the world.