

# Press review – May 12-18, 2025

## Slide 1 – title

## Slide 2 – US-China tariff agreement

The US and China have agreed a truce to lower import taxes on goods being traded between the two countries. The agreement marks a major de-escalation of the trade war between the world's two biggest economies, which has sent shockwaves impacting countless other countries. The deal involves both nations cancelling some tariffs altogether and suspending others for 90 days, by 14 May. The result is that additional US tariffs on Chinese imports - that's the extra tariffs imposed in this recent stand-off - will fall to from 145% to 30%, while recently-hiked Chinese tariffs on some US imports will fall from 125% to 10%.

Some context: What goods do the US and China trade with each other? In 2024, the biggest category of goods exported from the US to China were soybeans – primarily used to feed China's estimated 440 million pigs. The US also sent pharmaceuticals and petroleum. Meanwhile, China exported large volumes of electronics, computers and toys. The biggest category of US imports from China is smartphones, accounting for 9% of the total. A large proportion of these smartphones, Apple iPhones, are made in China. However, the US buys much more from China (\$440bn) than it sells to it (\$145bn), which is something Trump has long been unhappy with.

## Slide 3 – Trump's tour of Gulf States

President Trump on Friday concluded a three-nation Middle East tour marked by pomp, opulent receptions and announcements of business deals with wealthy Persian Gulf states.

Mr. Trump met with business leaders in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, before boarding Air Force One for the flight back to the United States. Earlier this week, he visited Saudi Arabia and Qatar on the first major international visit of his second term.

Here are three takeaways from Mr. Trump's trip:

He broke the diplomatic ice with Syria. Mr. Trump spoke with Syria's new president, Ahmed al-Shara, on Wednesday in an extraordinary meeting that reversed longstanding U.S. policies toward the country and Mr. al-Shara. A former militant who once led a branch of Al Qaeda, Mr. al-Shara came to power as the head of the rebel alliance that ousted the former dictator Bashar al-Assad in December. A day earlier, Mr. Trump had announced that he would lift U.S. sanctions on Syria, which would offer a significant economic lifeline to Mr. al-Shara as he tries to rebuild a country devastated by years of civil war. His unexpected announcement drew enthusiastic applause from a crowd of dignitaries in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia/

Big deals were announced, but details were lacking. The White House has said Mr. Trump's visit resulted in deals worth hundreds of billions of dollars for U.S. companies, including a large order from Qatar for Boeing passenger jets.

Trump pointed to progress in Iran talks. Mr. Trump brought up nuclear negotiations with Iran on several occasions. On Tuesday in Saudi Arabia, Mr. Trump said he was offering Tehran "a much better path toward a far better and more hopeful future," while insisting the United States would not allow Tehran to develop a nuclear weapon.

## Slides 4-5-6 – A controversy

In what may be the most valuable gift ever extended to the USA from a foreign government, the Trump administration is preparing to accept a super luxury Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet from the royal family of Qatar -- a gift that is to be available for use by President Trump as the new Air Force One until shortly before he leaves office, at which time ownership of the plane will be transferred to the Trump presidential library foundation. In a social media post Trump confirmed his administration was preparing to accept the aircraft, calling it a "very public and transparent transaction" with the Defense Department.

Top Democrats in the US Senate are pushing for a vote on the floor of the chamber censuring Trump's reported plan to accept the \$400m luxury jet from the royal family of Qatar. Four Democratic members of the Senate foreign relations committee said on Monday that they would press for a vote later this week. They said that elected officials, including the president, were not allowed to accept large gifts from foreign governments unless authorized to do so by Congress. Cory Booker from New Jersey, Brian Schatz from Hawaii, Chris Coons from Delaware and Chris Murphy from Connecticut cast the reported gift of the Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet as a clear conflict of interest and a serious threat to national security. "Air Force One is more than just a plane – it's a symbol of the presidency and of the United States itself," the senators said in a joint statement. "No one should use public service for personal gain through foreign gifts."

## **Slide 7 - Trump signed an Executive Order Aiming to Lower Prescription Drug Costs by up to 90%**

In signing an executive order aimed at reducing U.S. drug prices, President Donald Trump said some prices would be cut in half or more “almost immediately.” But the order is light on details of how the plan would be implemented.

Trump said during a May 12 press conference that his administration would pursue a “most favored nation” drug pricing strategy, in which pharmaceutical companies selling drugs in the U.S. would be required to match the lowest price paid by other developed countries.

“Some prescription drug and pharmaceutical prices will be reduced almost immediately, by 50% to 80% to 90%,” Trump said. “Big Pharma will either abide by this principle voluntarily, or we’ll use the power of the federal government to ensure that we are paying the same price as other countries.”

The issue: Prescription drugs are pricier in the U.S. than in other countries. On average, prices in the U.S. are 2.78 times higher compared with 33 other developed countries from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, based on 2022 data. The gap is bigger when comparing brand-name drugs, which on average are 4.22 times pricier in the U.S. before adjusting for discounts by manufacturers.

## **Slide 8 – Trump’s controversial decision to give Afrikaners refugee status**

A group of 49 white South Africans departed their homeland on Sunday May 11 for the United States on a private charter plane having been offered refugee status by the Trump administration. They are the first Afrikaners – a white minority group in South Africa – to be relocated after Trump issued an executive order in February accusing South Africa’s Black-led government of racial discrimination against them and announcing a program to offer them relocation to the US.

The South African government said it is “completely false” that Afrikaners are being persecuted.

The Trump administration has fast-tracked their applications while pausing other refugee programs, halting arrivals from Afghanistan, Iraq, most of sub-Saharan Africa and other countries in a move being challenged in court. Refugee groups have questioned why the white South Africans are being prioritized ahead of people from countries wracked by war and natural disasters.

The Trump Administration says the South African government is pursuing racist, anti-white policies through affirmative action laws and a new land expropriation law it says targets Afrikaners’ land. The South African government says those claims are based on misinformation and there is no racism against Afrikaners and no land has been expropriated, although the contentious law has been passed and is the focus of criticism in South Africa.

*Why this decision by Trump?* As the Financial Times columnist Simon Kuper pointed out last year, several of the most influential voices around Trump “are fiftysomething white men with formative experiences in apartheid South Africa”. “Elon Musk lived in apartheid South Africa until he was 17. David Sacks, the venture capitalist who has become a fundraiser for Donald Trump and a troll of Ukraine, left aged five, and grew up in a South African diaspora family in Tennessee. Peter Thiel spent years of childhood in South Africa and Namibia, where his father was involved in uranium mining as part of the apartheid regime’s clandestine drive to acquire nuclear weapons,” Kuper wrote.

Context: There are around 2.7 million Afrikaners among South Africa’s population of 62 million, which is more than 80% Black. They are only one part of the country’s white minority.

Many in South Africa are puzzled by claims that Afrikaners are persecuted and meet the requirements to be relocated as refugees.

They are part of South Africa’s everyday multiracial life, with many successful business leaders and some serving in government as cabinet ministers and deputy ministers. Their language is widely spoken and recognized as an official language, and churches and other institutions reflecting Afrikaner culture hold prominence in almost every city and town.

The Trump administration has criticized South Africa on several fronts. Trump’s February executive order cut all US funding to South Africa over what it said was its anti-white stance and also accused it of pursuing an anti-American foreign policy. It cited South Africa’s ties with Iran and its move to lodge a genocide case against US ally Israel over the war in Gaza as examples of it taking “aggressive positions towards the United States

### **Slides 9-10 - The Menendez brothers are one step closer to freedom**

Lyle and Erik Menendez, who have spent more than three decades in prison for fatally shooting their parents in their Beverly Hills mansion, were resentenced on Tuesday, moving one step closer to potential freedom.

After a day-long hearing, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Michael Jesic reduced their sentences from life in prison without parole to 50 years to life. This makes them eligible for parole under California's youthful offender law because they committed the murders before they were 26.

The brothers were found guilty in 1996 of murdering their parents, Kitty and José Menendez, in 1989 — when Erik was 18 and Lyle was 21. The brothers maintained that the killings were in self-defense, saying they had been sexually abused by their father and feared for their lives.

While there has long been a small but vocal group of supporters defending the Menendez brothers, a Netflix documentary and docudrama brought renewed attention — and sympathy — to the brothers' case last year. Their defense has also claimed there is new evidence bolstering their sexual abuse claims.

The brothers' fate now rests with state parole officials and California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has the power to either veto or grant them clemency. According to the DA's office, the state parole board is already scheduled to hold a hearing on June 13 "as part of a separate bid by the brothers for parole."

### **Slide 11 - A Mexican Navy sailing ship on a good will tour drifted directly into the underside of the Brooklyn Bridge on Saturday night, smashing its masts and rigging and killing two crew members.**

There were 277 people on board the ship, the Cuauhtémoc, at the time of the crash, and everyone is believed to be accounted for, a New York Fire Department official said.

Mayor Eric Adams said in a social media post after midnight that two people had died, and that the ship had lost power before the crash.

President Claudia Sheinbaum of Mexico said on social media that the deceased were crew members on the Cuauhtémoc.

At least 22 others were injured in the crash, including 11 who were in critical condition and nine in stable condition, the Mexican Navy said in a statement.

the Cuauhtémoc was apparently headed in the wrong direction, never intending to sail under the Brooklyn Bridge, said a spokesman for the city's Office of Emergency Management.

### **Slides 12-13 – Ceasefire in the INDIA/PAKISTAN conflict over KASHMIR**

On April 22, militants shot and killed 26 people, mostly tourists from different parts of India, near Pahalgam, Kashmir. Seventeen others were wounded. It was one of the worst terror attacks on Indian civilians in decades.

Almost immediately afterward, Indian officials suggested that Pakistan had been involved. Mr. Modi, the prime minister, vowed severe punishment for the attackers and those giving them safe haven, though he did not explicitly mention Pakistan. Pakistan swiftly denied involvement and said it was "ready to cooperate" with any international inquiry into the terrorist attack.

India's retaliatory move came quickly as it struck sites in Pakistan and on Pakistan's side of Kashmir.

The conflict escalated for days until May 10, when the two countries announced a ceasefire, bringing an end to four days of military conflict.

BUT the situation remains precarious. Ceasefire violations have been reported. Punitive non-military actions taken by both countries, following the 22 April terror attack in Pahalgam in which 26 civilians were killed, remain in place. These include the suspension of visa services, closure of air space, a ban on bilateral trade, and closure of the Attari-Wagah border crossing. Most significantly, the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) remains in abeyance after New Delhi suspended the agreement.

Yet, good news: on May 16, "it has been decided to continue the confidence-building measures so as to reduce the alertness level. As the situation develops further, we shall intimate you," the Indian Army said in a statement.

## Slides 14-15 – Istanbul talks (Russia/Ukraine war)

After days of confusion and theatrics, direct peace talks between Ukrainian and Russian negotiators took place on Friday in Istanbul for the first time since the start of the war, resulting in an agreement to conduct what would be the largest prisoner swap of the conflict.

After the negotiations, which lasted an hour and 40 minutes, the leaders of the Ukrainian and Russian delegations confirmed in news briefings that they had agreed to exchange 1,000 prisoners each soon.

But the two sides failed to broker a temporary cease-fire that Kyiv has sought or a meeting between their two leaders, demonstrating how far apart the warring parties remained on steps toward ending the conflict.

During the talks, the Russian team told the Ukrainians that, to achieve the cease-fire they are seeking, Kyiv should withdraw entirely from the four regions in east Ukraine that Moscow annexed in late 2022, according to a Turkish official familiar with the discussions. Ukraine still controls vast swaths of that land, including two regional capitals.

Such demands — which Russian officials also made during meetings with American negotiators this year — have fed fears that Moscow is being unrealistic in talks and called into question whether President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who has said he is winning on the battlefield, is, in fact, prepared to end the war.

## Slides 16-20 – Starmer's immigration plan

The Home Office has released its much-trailed policy paper on immigration, which Keir Starmer has promised will lead to the numbers of people arriving in the UK falling “significantly” by the end of this parliament. Here is what it sets out and the measures the government is taking.

1. Net migration will fall

2. Tightening up the skilled visa route. One of the key changes is to tighten up the rules on which qualifications people need to get a skilled work visa. Currently, these need to be at least at the level of what is known as regulated qualifications framework (RQF) 3, roughly equivalent to A-levels. This will be changed to RQF6, which is degree level. Skilled worker visas will still be issued for jobs assessed at RQF3-5 but only on a time-limited basis and if the government's migration advisory committee deems that there is a shortage of domestic staff.

3. Social care visas. These would already be affected by the changes to skilled visas, but more specifically the white paper promises to end all overseas recruitment for social care work – although there will be a “transition period” until 2028 where visas can be extended and overseas nationals already in the country can switch to a social care job.

4. Student visas: tougher targets for the percentage of visas granted and the proportion of students who enrol and then complete their course.

5. Language requirements. These will be made generally more rigorous and there will be new requirements for people to show progression in their English proficiency over time if they apply for visa extensions or settlement. As part of this, all adult dependants who come with arriving workers or students will need to show at least basic English skills, and to progress.

6. Longer wait for settlement. Under the changed rules, people will need to have been in the UK for at least 10 years, rather than the current five, before they can seek settlement, also known as indefinite leave to remain.

7. Offences and deportation. A number of measures in the paper relate to making it easier to remove arrivals who have committed crimes, particularly if they are on short-term visas. Currently, only those who are jailed for a year or more are considered for deportation. This will now be an option for all offences, particularly sexual offences.

8. Higher fees. One specific in the document is a 32% increase in the so-called immigration skills charge, paid by employers (barring certain professions such as research scientists) when they take on someone from overseas via a skilled visa or similar route. The paper says this has not been increased since 2017, so the rise is in line with inflation.

9. E-identity cards. To better monitor arrivals and have improved measuring of numbers, a new electronic identity system for overseas nationals will replace the current system of biometric residence permit cards.

**Blunder:** During a Downing Street press conference before the publication of the immigration white paper, the PM said ““Nations depend on rules, fair rules. Sometimes they are written down, often they are not, but either way, they give shape to our values, guide us towards our rights, of course, but also our responsibilities, the obligations we owe to each other. In a diverse nation like ours, and I celebrate that, these rules become even

more important. Without them, we risk becoming **an island of strangers**, not a nation that walks forward together."

Starmer was accused of echoing far right with 'island of strangers'. The rhetoric was likened by some critics to the language of Enoch Powell, and the prime minister was accused of pandering to the populist right by insisting he intended to "take back control of our borders" and end a "squalid chapter" of rising inward migration. Some politicians claimed that his words had echoed Powell's notorious "rivers of blood" speech, which imagined a future multicultural Britain where the white population "found themselves made strangers in their own country".

Enoch Powell (1912-1998): former conservative politician (former MP and Minister of Health from 1960 to 1963) who is remembered particularly for his views on British immigration. In 1968, Powell attracted attention nationwide for his "Rivers of Blood" speech, in which he criticised immigration to the UK, and especially rapid influx from the Commonwealth. He opposed the anti-discrimination Race Relations Bill (which ultimately became law).