GENEVA — Top envoys from the U.S. and China huddled in closed-door talks in Geneva on Tuesday to discuss ways to ensure that emerging artificial intelligence technologies don't become existential risks.

The talks, which Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping agreed to launch in last 2023, [*are meant*](https://apnews.com/article/artificial-intelligence-china-united-states-biden-xi-geneva-a0be57e1fe1cc573118af7fccbf1597e) to open up bilateral dialogue between the world’s two biggest economies — and increasingly, geopolitical rivals — on a fast-moving technology that already has consequences for trade, lifestyles, culture, ***politics***, national security and defense and much more.

U.S. technology experts say the meeting — led on the American side by high-level White House and State Department officials — could offer a glimpse into Beijing’s thinking about AI amid a generally tight-lipped Chinese approach to the technology.

Co-founder Jason Glassberg of Casaba Security in Redmond, Washington, an expert on new and emerging threats posed by AI, handicapped the meeting as a get-to-know-you that will likely yield few concrete results, but get the two sides talking.

“What’s most important right now is that both sides realize they each have a lot to lose if AI becomes weaponized or abused,” Glassberg said in an e-mail. “All parties involved are equally at risk. Right now, one of the biggest areas of risk is with deepfakes, particularly for use in disinformation campaigns.”

“This is just as big of a risk for the PRC as it is for the U.S. government,” he added, referring to the People’s Republic of China.

“It’s vitally important that the United States and China begin frank discussions about how to improve AI safety," said Paul Scharre, an AI expert at the Center for New American Security think tank. "The stakes are high and the consequences for AI-related accidents could be severe. "

He noted that the United States pledged in 2022 to always maintain a human in the loop for nuclear weapons use. But China's military has not done the same.

“Ensuring strict human control over nuclear weapons seems a low bar to clear for agreement on military AI,” said Scharre, author of “Four Battlegrounds: Power in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.” "As the world’s leading economic, military, and technological powers, agreement between the United States and China on how to manage AI risks could help set the stage for other nations to follow suit.”

It was not immediately clear why the meeting was taking place in Geneva, though the internationally-minded Swiss city bills itself as a hub of diplomacy and U.N. and international institutions.

The Geneva-based International Telecommunications Union — a U.N. agency currently headed by American Doreen Bodgan-Martin and previously run by China’s Houlin Zhao — is set to host its annual “AI for Good” conference in the city later this month.

The meeting is the first under an intergovernmental dialogue on AI agreed upon during [*a multi-faceted meeting*](https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-xi-jinping-takeaways-c8384d40661a32aa276ec8ca97f35003) between Xi and Biden in San Francisco six months ago.

The U.S. government has sought to set some guardrails around the technology while fostering its growth, seeking a possible boon for economic output and jobs.

Western experts have suggested that China’s government, meanwhile, has in part kept a lid on AI applications because of its real or potential applications for military and surveillance activities under the ruling Communist Party.

U.S. officials suggested they would lay out ways to mitigate possible risks from the technology by creating voluntary commitments with the sector’s leading companies and requiring safety tests of AI products.