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*Original Research Article*

# Trump-Xi Beijing Summit 2026: Recalibrating Sino-US Regional Cooperation and Reshaping the Emerging International Order

Miao Di, Mohd Ikbal Mohd Huda* & Sharifah Nursyahidah Syed Annuar

Research Centre for History, Politics, and International Affairs, Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, UKM, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

**Corresponding Author:* ibahuda@ukm.edu.my

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**Abstract.** The Trump-Xi Beijing Summit held in 2026 represents one of the most significant diplomatic engagements in the contemporary evolution of Sino-US relations. Following several years of escalating trade disputes, technological competition, strategic rivalry, and geopolitical tensions, the summit provided an opportunity for both governments to stabilize bilateral relations while managing growing competition within an increasingly fragmented international system. Rather than signaling a return to comprehensive strategic cooperation, the summit reflected a pragmatic attempt by both sides to establish mechanisms for managing competition, reducing the risks of economic disruption, and preserving limited areas of cooperation in issues of mutual interest. This article examines how the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit influences regional cooperation between China and the United States and evaluates its broader implications for the evolving international order. Rather than replacing globalization, this emerging order reflects a process of differentiated globalization in which economic openness increasingly varies according to national security priorities and technological sensitivities. The findings contribute to ongoing debates concerning great-power competition, international political economy, regional governance, and the future trajectory of the global order.

***Keyword.*** Sino-US relations; Trump-Xi summit; managed interdependence; differentiated globalization; strategic regionalism

## Introduction

The relationship between China and the United States has become the defining bilateral relationship shaping the twenty-first century international political economy. As the world's two largest economies and most influential geopolitical actors, their interactions extend well beyond bilateral trade to influence global supply chains, technological innovation, regional security, financial governance, climate cooperation, and international institutions. Since the outbreak of the Sino-US trade war in 2018, bilateral relations have experienced sustained deterioration as both countries expanded competition beyond tariffs into investment restrictions, export controls, technological competition, industrial policy, cyber-security, and geopolitical influence. Consequently, the bilateral relationship has evolved from one primarily characterized by economic engagement to one increasingly defined by strategic competition.

The return of President Donald Trump to the White House further intensified international attention toward the future trajectory of Sino-US relations. During Trump's previous administration, trade tariffs, technology sanctions against Chinese firms, stricter investment screening, and efforts to restructure global supply chains significantly altered bilateral economic relations. Meanwhile, China responded by accelerating domestic technological innovation, strengthening regional cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), expanding participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), deepening cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and promoting greater economic diversification across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. These developments demonstrated that strategic rivalry increasingly extended beyond bilateral relations into regional and global governance.

Against this background, the Trump-Xi Beijing Summit held in 2026 attracted considerable international attention because it represented the first high-level bilateral summit following a prolonged period of heightened geopolitical tensions. The Trump-Xi Beijing Summit held on 13-15 May 2026 represented one of the most consequential diplomatic engagements in Sino-US relations since the outbreak of the trade war in 2018. Unlike the 2017 state visit, which occurred during a period when economic engagement remained the dominant feature of bilateral relations, the 2026 summit took place within a substantially different strategic environment characterized by prolonged tariff disputes, technology restrictions, supply-chain restructuring, intensified geopolitical rivalry, and increasing competition over regional and global leadership. Although substantial disagreements remained regarding technology controls, Taiwan, the South China Sea, human rights, and industrial subsidies, both governments acknowledged the necessity of maintaining dialogue to reduce the risks associated with strategic competition.

Rather than seeking comprehensive reconciliation, the summit focused on stabilizing bilateral relations through expanded diplomatic communication, renewed economic consultations, limited trade facilitation, investment confidence-building measures, agricultural cooperation, and continued dialogue on global issues such as climate change, artificial intelligence governance, and international financial stability.The significance of the summit extends far beyond bilateral diplomacy. For Asia-Pacific states, particularly ASEAN members, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and emerging economies participating in both Chinese and American economic initiatives, the summit offers greater strategic certainty by reducing the immediate risk of uncontrolled confrontation between the two major powers. For regional organizations, improved communication between Beijing and Washington may create opportunities to strengthen multilateral cooperation while preserving strategic autonomy. At the same time, the summit demonstrates that regional institutions increasingly function as platforms through which middle powers balance relations between competing great powers rather than aligning exclusively with one side.

At the global level, the summit reflects broader transformations occurring within the international political economy. Contemporary globalization is no longer characterized by uniformly expanding economic integration. Instead, governments increasingly differentiate between sectors considered strategically sensitive and those where economic cooperation remains beneficial. Semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, advanced telecommunications, cybersecurity, and critical minerals have become central components of national security policy, while trade in consumer goods, financial services, agriculture, and many manufacturing sectors continues to exhibit substantial international integration. Consequently, globalization has become increasingly selective, resulting in a more fragmented yet interconnected global economy.

Although the summit produced no comprehensive agreement resolving long-standing disputes, several practical outcomes emerged. Both governments reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining high-level diplomatic communication, expanding economic dialogue, and reducing unnecessary disruptions to bilateral trade. Discussions included agricultural purchases, investment confidence, export controls, rare-earth supply, and broader commercial cooperation. China emphasized the importance of strategic stability, mutual respect, and opposition to unilateral containment policies, while the United States focused on trade imbalances, market access, intellectual property protection, and economic reciprocity. Importantly, neither side abandoned its core strategic positions regarding Taiwan, technology controls, or national security, indicating that the summit represented a process of relationship stabilization rather than policy convergence.

From an International Political Economy perspective, the Beijing Summit illustrates a transition from confrontation toward institutionalized competition management. Instead of attempting to restore the engagement model that characterized much of the Post-Cold War period, both governments accepted that strategic rivalry would remain a long-term feature of bilateral relations. Their objective therefore shifted from eliminating competition to managing it through structured diplomatic dialogue, selective economic cooperation, and crisis-prevention mechanisms. This development reflects the broader evolution of the international system toward a more complex form of great power interaction characterized by simultaneous competition and cooperation.

Despite extensive scholarship examining Sino-US strategic competition, several important research gaps remain. First, existing studies often analyse trade disputes, technological competition, regional cooperation, or geopolitical rivalry independently, without fully examining their interconnections. Second, much of the current literature focuses on conflict escalation while giving comparatively limited attention to mechanisms through which rival powers manage long-term competition without complete disengagement. Third, although summit diplomacy has received considerable attention within international relations, relatively few studies examine how high-level diplomatic engagements influence regional institutional development and the restructuring of international order under conditions of strategic rivalry.

This article seeks to address these gaps by examining two interrelated research questions. First, how does the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit influence regional cooperation between China and the United States across the Asia-Pacific region? Second, what implications does the summit have for the transformation of the contemporary international order? By integrating empirical developments with theoretical perspectives from International Political Economy, realism, regionalism, and complex interdependence, the article argues that the summit represents the institutionalization of a new pattern of managed strategic competition rather than either renewed liberal engagement or complete geopolitical decoupling.

## Methodology

*Research Design*

This study uses a qualitative single-case design to examine the consequences of the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit for regional cooperation between China and the US and for the changing international order. Since the summit is a contemporary diplomatic event situated within a complex geopolitical context in which political, economic, technological, and security issues are closely intertwined, a qualitative case study is particularly appropriate. Rather than trying to demonstrate causal linkages by statistical analysis, the study aims to explore in depth how high level summit diplomacy affects interstate relations, the development of regional institutions and changes in global governance.

The research adopts an interpretivist epistemological stance, assuming that international political events are socially and politically created through diplomatic exchanges, official narratives, institutional conduct and policy reactions. In this context, the importance of the Trump-Xi Beijing Summit cannot be fully appreciated by focusing on quantitative economic indicators or policy outcomes. Instead, the summit is seen as a strategic diplomatic process where both governments convey policy intentions, manage strategic competition and influence expectations of regional and international actors. Therefore, the research is directed towards understanding the meanings, policy goals and institutional implications contained in diplomatic contacts, rather than seeking to find universal causal principles.

The study adopts a single-case study technique since the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit is an essential case in the development of contemporary Sino-US relations. According to Yin (2018), case study research is suitable for studying current occurrences that the researcher cannot control and in which the distinction between the phenomena and the context is not clear-cut. The same applies to the summit, whose significance extends beyond bilateral diplomacy to encompass regional economic cooperation, strategic competition, technical governance, and the larger reconfiguration of the international political economy. This salient situation provides an opportunity to explore how summit diplomacy operates in an era of extended great power rivalry.

Process tracing is also the major analytical approach of the research. Process tracing helps the researcher to track the steps of events and causal mechanisms from diplomatic engagement to later political and economic outcomes. The approach looks at the role of diplomatic conversation in making incremental institutional reforms, establishing confidence and changing strategic behaviour, rather than seeing summit diplomacy as a guarantee of changes in policy. Particular emphasis is placed on the development of the bilateral discussions in the run-up to the summit, the negotiations that took place during the summit and the policy developments that took place immediately following the summit. This historical method allows the study to show how diplomatic interaction helps to manage strategic competition rather than merely reporting the outcomes of the summit.

Secondly, the study employs a comparative policy analysis viewpoint to compare the respective policy positions of China and the United States. The paper contrasts government policy declarations, trade policies, technology rules, regional cooperation plans and diplomatic endeavors to find areas of policy convergence and divergence. A comparison of the approaches taken by the two countries offers a more fair perspective of the summit and avoids depending just on the narrative offered by either side. This comparative lens also allows for an assessment of how both countries simultaneously pursue cooperation in specific policy areas and maintain strategic competition in others.

Methodological triangulation also informs the research. The study incorporates information from international organizations, academic literature, think-tank studies, economic data, and documentary evidence from government agencies in addition to official government declarations. By using a variety of evidence sources, the researcher can cross-validate significant findings and lessen the possibility of political bias. Because official narratives frequently highlight political accomplishments while downplaying ongoing points of contention, this triangulation technique is especially crucial when examining current diplomatic developments.

Finally, the research adopts an explanatory qualitative design rather than a purely descriptive approach. The objective is not simply to document the events surrounding the Beijing Summit but to explain how summit diplomacy contributes to broader structural changes within regional cooperation and the international order. The case study therefore serves as an empirical foundation for developing the three analytical concepts proposed in this article Managed Interdependence, Differentiated Globalization, and Strategic Regionalism, which together provide a more comprehensive theoretical explanation of contemporary Sino-US relations than existing International Political Economy frameworks alone.

*Analytical Approach*

The study employs qualitative content analysis as the primary analytical technique for interpreting the documentary evidence collected from governmental publications, international organizations, academic literature, and policy reports. Qualitative content analysis enables systematic examination of textual materials by identifying recurring themes, concepts, policy priorities, and institutional developments relevant to Sino-US relations. Unlike purely descriptive document review, this approach allows the researcher to examine how official discourse, policy decisions, and institutional responses collectively reveal broader patterns of strategic interaction between China and the United States.

The analytical process consists of three sequential stages. The first stage involves data organization and thematic coding, in which all documentary sources are systematically reviewed and classified according to major analytical themes. These themes include strategic competition, economic cooperation, technological governance, regional cooperation, diplomatic engagement, security issues, globalization, and international governance. Through this coding process, the researcher identifies recurring policy priorities, areas of convergence and divergence, and evolving patterns of bilateral interaction. The thematic organization of the evidence provides a structured foundation for subsequent analysis while ensuring that the interpretation remains consistent across different categories of documentary sources. The second stage involves comparative policy analysis, in which coded evidence is systematically compared across Chinese and American policy documents, institutional reports, and regional initiatives to identify patterns of convergence and divergence.

The third step entails theory development through analytical interpretation. The empirical data are explained through an integrated framework that incorporates realism, complex interdependence, regionalism, and international political economy. Existing theories shed light on various aspects of Sino-US relations; nevertheless, they are unable to explain the cohabitation of strategic rivalry, selective economic cooperation, and institutional adaptation witnessed during the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit. As a result, empirical evidence is employed not only to illustrate existing ideas, but also to refine and extend them by introducing three complementary analytical concepts.

The concept of Managed Interdependence is derived from the observation that both governments continue to preserve significant economic interaction while selectively restricting activities considered strategically sensitive. Differentiated Globalization emerges from evidence showing that globalization is increasingly uneven across sectors, with advanced technologies subject to stricter national security regulation while many traditional sectors remain internationally integrated. Strategic Regionalism is developed from the observation that regional institutions increasingly perform geopolitical functions by strengthening economic resilience, enhancing institutional flexibility, and providing middle powers with strategic autonomy under conditions of intensified great-power competition.

Throughout the analytical process, the study applies the principle of analytical triangulation by comparing official government documents with independent evidence from international organizations, policy institutes, academic scholarship, and observable economic developments. Statements concerning trade, investment, technology cooperation, and regional governance are cross-checked against reports published by organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, ASEAN Secretariat, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), together with policy analyses produced by leading research institutions. This triangulation reduces the risk of relying exclusively on official political narratives and enhances the credibility of the findings.

Recognizing that the summit represents a recent diplomatic event, the analysis does not claim to establish definitive long-term causal effects. Instead, it adopts a process-oriented analytical perspective, viewing the summit as part of an evolving sequence of diplomatic interactions whose broader consequences will continue to unfold over time. Accordingly, the study evaluates immediate policy developments and institutional responses while identifying potential indicators for future longitudinal research. This approach enables the article to provide a rigorous qualitative explanation of the summit’s significance while acknowledging the limitations inherent in analyzing an ongoing geopolitical process.

*Theoretical Framework*

This article adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining realism, complex interdependence, regionalism, and international political economy. Rather than treating these theories as competing explanations, they are understood as complementary perspectives that collectively explain the evolving dynamics of Sino-US relations following the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit. Realism provides the foundation for understanding why strategic competition persists despite extensive economic integration. States continue to prioritize national security, technological leadership, and relative power in an increasingly uncertain international environment. The summit therefore should not be interpreted as signalling the end of strategic rivalry but rather as an effort to manage competition more effectively while reducing the risks of unintended escalation.

Complex interdependence complements realism by explaining why complete decoupling remains economically costly and politically unrealistic. Despite growing competition, China and the United States remain deeply interconnected through trade, investment, finance, multinational production networks, and global supply chains. The continued importance of these economic linkages encourages both governments to preserve selected areas of cooperation while protecting strategically important industries.

Building upon these theoretical foundations, this article proposes three interconnected analytical concepts. The first is Managed Interdependence, referring to a condition in which rival powers deliberately regulate economic relationships to minimize strategic vulnerabilities while preserving mutually beneficial cooperation. Unlike liberal theories that anticipate expanding cooperation or decoupling theories that predict economic separation, Managed Interdependence recognizes that competition and cooperation increasingly coexist within the same bilateral relationship.

The second concept is Differentiated Globalization, which argues that globalization is becoming increasingly sector-specific rather than uniformly expanding or contracting. Strategic industries including semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, cybersecurity, and critical minerals are becoming progressively securitized, whereas trade in many consumer products, services, finance, and regional production networks remains highly integrated. Consequently, globalization is not disappearing but evolving into a differentiated system characterized by varying degrees of openness according to strategic sensitivity.

The third concept introduced in this article is Strategic Regionalism. Traditional regionalism primarily explains regional institutions as mechanisms for promoting economic integration and collective development. However, under conditions of intensified great power competition, regional organizations increasingly perform strategic functions by enhancing economic resilience, diversifying diplomatic partnerships, reducing dependence on single markets, and providing institutional flexibility for middle powers. Strategic Regionalism therefore explains why initiatives such as the BRI, RCEP, ASEAN-led mechanisms, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework have become increasingly important components of broader geopolitical competition while simultaneously preserving opportunities for regional cooperation.

Together, these three concepts provide a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding how the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit contributes to the recalibration of Sino-US regional cooperation and the gradual restructuring of the contemporary international order. They also offer a broader theoretical contribution to International Political Economy by demonstrating that twenty-first-century great-power competition is characterized not by complete confrontation or unrestricted cooperation, but by the simultaneous management of strategic rivalry and economic interdependence.

Although realism, liberal institutionalism, complex interdependence and contemporary International Political Economy provide valuable explanations of Sino-US relations, none fully captures the coexistence of strategic rivalry, selective economic cooperation and institutional adaptation observed following the 2026 Trump–Xi Beijing Summit. Accordingly, this study introduces three complementary analytical concepts.

Managed interdependence differs from Keohane and Nye's concept of complex interdependence of complex interdependence in that it emphasizes purposeful political management of economic ties in the context of strategic rivalry. Whereas complex interdependence posits that wide economic links limit conflict, Managed Interdependence contends that governments increasingly manage, restrict, and selectively sustain interdependence based on national security concerns. Economic interdependence therefore becomes a strategically controlled resource rather than an independent force that encourages collaboration.

Differentiated globalization builds on previous arguments about decoupling, de-risking, and slowbalization by suggesting that globalization is neither uniformly growing or receding. Instead, various sectors experience varying levels of openness based on their strategic value. Sensitive industries such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence and critical minerals are increasingly subject to national security regulation, whereas trade in consumer goods, services and many manufacturing sectors continues to exhibit substantial global integration. The concept therefore explains simultaneous fragmentation and integration within the contemporary international economy.

Strategic regionalism expands on current regionalism literature by claiming that regional organizations are increasingly performing both geopolitical and economic tasks. Traditional regionalism focuses on trade liberalization and economic integration, whereas Strategic Regionalism describes how institutions like ASEAN, RCEP, AIIB, and IPEF have evolved into mechanisms for states to diversify strategic partnerships, strengthen economic resilience, and maintain diplomatic autonomy in the face of intensifying great-power competition. Collectively, these ideas form an integrated framework for examining how strategic rivalry and economic interdependence coexist in an emerging multipolar international order.

## The Findings

### *Impact on Sino-US Regional Cooperation*

One of the most significant consequences of the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit lies in its influence on regional cooperation throughout the Asia-Pacific. The summit did not fundamentally alter strategic competition; however, it reduced uncertainty by creating greater predictability in bilateral interactions. This reduction in uncertainty is particularly important for regional states, many of which maintain extensive economic relationships with China while simultaneously relying upon the United States for security cooperation.

Consequently, improved communication between Beijing and Washington provides regional governments with greater strategic flexibility and reduces concerns regarding rapid escalation between the two major powers.

For ASEAN member states, the summit reinforces the importance of maintaining strategic neutrality. Rather than forcing regional countries to choose between competing geopolitical blocs, improved Sino-US dialogue creates additional diplomatic space for ASEAN to continue its long-standing strategy of hedging. ASEAN institutions may therefore strengthen their central role in facilitating regional dialogue, promoting economic integration, and supporting multilateral cooperation while preserving the principle of strategic autonomy. This outcome is consistent with ASEAN's broader objective of maintaining an open and inclusive regional architecture despite increasing great-power competition.

The summit also influences China's regional cooperation strategy. During recent years, China has accelerated regional economic integration through the Belt and Road Initiative, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and various bilateral infrastructure agreements. These initiatives have enabled China to diversify external markets, strengthen regional production networks, and reduce excessive dependence on the United States. Following the summit, these initiatives are unlikely to diminish; instead, they may increasingly complement renewed bilateral dialogue by demonstrating that regional cooperation and strategic competition are not mutually exclusive. China is therefore expected to continue expanding regional partnerships while simultaneously maintaining stable diplomatic communication with Washington.

From the American perspective, the summit may contribute to recalibrating regional economic engagement rather than abandoning Indo-Pacific initiatives. The United States continues to promote supply-chain resilience, technological cooperation, and high-standard economic governance through frameworks such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. However, improved bilateral communication reduces the likelihood that regional initiatives will be interpreted exclusively as mechanisms for containing China. Instead, regional institutions may increasingly function as platforms for establishing common standards in digital trade, cybersecurity, clean energy, infrastructure financing, and emerging technologies.

Middle powers such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, and Singapore also benefit from the summit's stabilizing effects. These countries have consistently advocated predictable relations between China and the United States because prolonged confrontation generates significant economic uncertainty and complicates regional strategic planning. Improved diplomatic communication reduces market volatility, strengthens investor confidence, and creates greater opportunities for trilateral and multilateral cooperation in areas including climate change, energy transition, public health, maritime security, and disaster relief.

Nevertheless, the summit does not eliminate strategic competition. Regional cooperation will continue to operate within an environment characterized by competing institutional frameworks. Chinese initiatives, including the BRI and RCEP, will continue to coexist alongside American-led arrangements such as the Indo-Pacific Strategy and IPEF. Consequently, regional cooperation is increasingly characterized by institutional pluralism rather than institutional replacement. States are expected to participate simultaneously in multiple regional arrangements according to their respective economic and strategic interests.

These developments support the concept of “Strategic Regionalism” advanced in this study. Regional institutions increasingly perform functions extending beyond traditional economic integration. They now enhance economic resilience, diversify diplomatic partnerships, strengthen technological cooperation, and provide strategic flexibility under conditions of intensified great-power competition. The Beijing Summit therefore reinforces rather than weakens the strategic importance of regional organizations within the evolving international political economy.

### *Economic, Technological, Diplomatic, and Security Cooperation*

Economically, the Trump-Xi Beijing Summit represents a pragmatic effort to stabilize bilateral commercial relations without reversing broader strategic competition. Both governments recognized that prolonged tariff escalation and supply-chain disruptions impose substantial costs not only upon domestic economies but also upon global production networks. Accordingly, discussions focused on expanding agricultural trade, encouraging investment confidence, facilitating selected commercial exchanges, and maintaining dialogue concerning future tariff arrangements. Reported commitments to expand Chinese purchases of American agricultural products and continued consultation on trade and investment illustrate a shared interest in preserving mutually beneficial economic relations despite persistent strategic disagreements.

Rather than restoring comprehensive economic engagement, however, the summit institutionalized a more selective pattern of economic cooperation. Strategic sectors associated with national security remain subject to government intervention, whereas less sensitive sectors continue to benefit from market-based cooperation. This selective approach reflects a broader transition toward managed economic interdependence in which economic efficiency is increasingly balanced against strategic resilience.

Technology remains the principal arena of strategic competition between China and the United States. During the summit, neither government fundamentally altered its respective policies concerning semiconductor export controls, artificial intelligence, advanced computing, or critical technologies. Nevertheless, continued diplomatic dialogue reduced uncertainty surrounding future regulatory measures and created opportunities for technical consultations regarding emerging technologies.

The summit also highlighted growing international recognition that certain technological challenges, including artificial intelligence governance, cybersecurity, digital standards, and cross-border data management, cannot be effectively addressed through unilateral policies alone. Although competition in technological leadership will continue, selective cooperation in establishing international standards may gradually emerge where mutual interests converge. Consequently, technological relations following the summit are characterized by simultaneous competition in innovation and limited cooperation in governance.

Diplomatically, the summit restored the importance of sustained high-level communication as a mechanism for managing strategic rivalry. One of its most significant achievements was not the resolution of disputes but the re-establishment of institutionalized dialogue across multiple policy areas. Expanded diplomatic communication reduces the probability of miscalculation during periods of heightened tension while creating opportunities for cooperation on global challenges including climate change, public health, financial stability, and humanitarian crises.

The summit further demonstrated that summit diplomacy remains an essential instrument for maintaining strategic stability between major powers. In an increasingly multipolar international system, regular leader-level engagement provides an important mechanism for crisis prevention even when fundamental policy disagreements remain unresolved. Security cooperation remains the most challenging dimension of the bilateral relationship. Fundamental disagreements concerning Taiwan, freedom of navigation, military modernization, and regional alliances continue to shape strategic interactions between the two countries. The summit produced no major breakthroughs on these issues, and both governments reaffirmed their existing strategic positions.

Nevertheless, the summit contributes to regional security by strengthening communication mechanisms designed to prevent accidental escalation. Confidence-building measures, expanded military communication, and continued diplomatic consultation reduce the risks associated with crisis mismanagement. Rather than resolving geopolitical competition, these mechanisms seek to ensure that competition remains bounded by established diplomatic norms and institutional dialogue.

Taken together, the economic, technological, diplomatic, and security outcomes of the Beijing Summit demonstrate the emergence of a new model of bilateral interaction. Neither comprehensive engagement nor complete decoupling adequately explains contemporary Sino-US relations. Instead, the evidence indicates the consolidation of Managed Interdependence, in which strategic competition coexists with selective cooperation across multiple policy domains. This pattern not only shapes the future trajectory of Sino-US regional cooperation but also establishes an important foundation for understanding the evolving architecture of the international political economy.

Given that the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit is a relatively recent diplomatic event, its long-term consequences cannot yet be adequately assessed through longitudinal analysis. Diplomatic summits frequently affect international politics through incremental institutional adaptation rather than instant policy change. As a result, the stabilizing effects observed in this study should be seen as a dynamic process reflected in changes in diplomatic behavior, economic contacts, and regional institutional reactions, rather than as final conclusions.

As a result, the current study concentrates on the observable short-term developments that occurred following the summit, while acknowledging that the broader implications will emerge over time.

At the bilateral level, the effectiveness of the summit may also be reflected in observable policy developments between China and the United States. These include the continuation of high-level diplomatic dialogues, the establishment of new consultation mechanisms, adjustments to tariff policies, limited relaxation or clarification of export-control measures, renewed commercial exchanges, and expanded cooperation in areas such as agriculture, climate governance, and financial stability. While these developments do not necessarily signify the resolution of strategic rivalry, they provide measurable evidence of efforts to institutional competition management and reduce the likelihood of policy escalation. Financial market responses, investor confidence indices, and multinational corporate investment decisions may further serve as indirect indicators of whether the summit has contributed to improving expectations regarding the stability of bilateral relations.

Trump-Xi summit achieve the new position called Constructive Strategic Stability in Sino-US Relations, maintain stable economic and trade relations, expand pragmatic cooperation in various fields, properly address each other's concerns, strengthen communication and coordination on international and regional issues, and provide strategic guidance for the future three years and even longer of China US relations. The constructive strategic stable relationship between China and the United States should be a positive and cooperative one, a benign and competitive one, a normal and controllable one with differences, and a sustainable and peaceful one. The constructive strategic stable relationship between China and the United States is not a slogan, but rather an action taken in the same direction. The constructive strategic stability relationship between China and the United States has rich connotations. Firstly, it is necessary to take cooperation as the tone, expand the scope of cooperation, and enlarge the cake of common interests between China and the United States. Secondly, it is necessary to control competition, prevent it from becoming vicious, and prevent it from evolving into confrontation. Thirdly, it is to control differences. The differences between China and the United States will exist for a long time, and the key is to control them to prevent them from escalating into crises and conflicts. Fourthly, it is necessary to maintain peace between China and the United States. Only when the two major powers of China and the United States maintain peace can they maintain peace and stability in the world and the region. This is the rich connotation of constructive strategic stability relationship, which not only conforms to the interests of China and the United States, but also to the common interests of world peace and stability, development and prosperity.

The three words constructive, strategic, and stable are a whole. Constructive is the approach and attitude towards China-US relations,strategic determines the height and perspective of why China US relations are important, and stability is the goal and bottom line of China US relations. There are some specific examples: in economic and trade cooperation area, establish trade council and investment council, expand two-way trade, and solve market access issues; in international affairs collaboration, maintaining communication and cooperation on global issues such as the Middle East, Ukraine, and AI Governance. And for crisis management mechanism, utilizing political, diplomatic and military communication channels to prevent friction from escalating into conflict.

### *Impact on the International Order*

The 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit represents an important turning point in the evolution of the contemporary international order because it demonstrates that great-power competition is increasingly being managed through institutional dialogue rather than unrestricted confrontation. Although the summit did not eliminate the fundamental strategic differences between China and the United States, it established a framework for managing competition within an increasingly interconnected global economy. Consequently, the significance of the summit extends well beyond bilateral relations and influences broader patterns of international governance, regional cooperation, economic globalization, and geopolitical stability.

One of the most important implications of the summit is its contribution to the transition from a predominantly unipolar international system toward a more pluralistic and multipolar order. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has occupied a dominant position within the liberal international order, supported by institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and a network of strategic alliances. If diplomatic engagement encourages greater collaboration within multilateral forums such as the G20, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and emerging discussions on artificial intelligence governance and digital standards, this would suggest that the summit has helped preserve channels of international cooperation despite continuing geopolitical competition. Such developments would support the argument advanced in this study that strategic rivalry and selective cooperation increasingly coexist within the contemporary international system rather than representing mutually exclusive alternatives. However, China's rapid economic growth, technological advancement, and expanding diplomatic influence have gradually reshaped the global distribution of power. The Beijing Summit illustrates that neither China nor the United States possesses sufficient capability to unilaterally determine the rules governing international politics and economics. Instead, both powers increasingly recognize the necessity of coexistence within an international system characterized by multiple centers of influence and overlapping institutional arrangements.

The summit also demonstrates that the emerging international order is becoming increasingly characterized by institutional pluralism rather than institutional replacement. During the past decade, China has expanded its participation in global governance through institutions such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). One important dimension through which the summit's impact may be assessed is the strategic behaviour of ASEAN and other regional middle powers. ASEAN has consistently pursued a policy of strategic autonomy by maintaining constructive relations with both China and the United States while avoiding exclusive alignment with either major power. If the summit succeeds in reducing bilateral tensions, one would expect ASEAN member states to continue strengthening ASEAN-centred multilateral institutions, deepen participation in regional initiatives such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and promote greater cooperation through ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Such developments would suggest that reduced geopolitical uncertainty provides regional governments with greater diplomatic flexibility and reinforces ASEAN’s central role within the evolving regional architecture. Meanwhile, the United States has strengthened cooperation with allies through the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), the Quad, and other regional partnerships. Rather than replacing one institutional architecture with another, these arrangements increasingly coexist and interact, creating a more diversified and flexible governance structure. The Beijing Summit reinforces this trend by encouraging dialogue between competing institutional frameworks instead of promoting exclusive geopolitical blocs.

Another significant implication concerns the transformation of globalization itself. Earlier phases of globalization were largely driven by market liberalization, expanding production networks, and increasing economic openness. However, the findings of this study suggest that the summit reflects a transition toward a new phase of globalization in which national security considerations play a more prominent role in shaping economic policy. Strategic industries-including semiconductors, artificial intelligence, advanced computing, telecommunications infrastructure, biotechnology, and critical minerals are increasingly regulated through export controls, investment screening, industrial policies, and technological standards. At the same time, many sectors of international trade, investment, finance, tourism, and services continue to experience substantial global integration. Consequently, the summit illustrates that globalization is not ending but becoming increasingly differentiated according to strategic priorities. This supports the concept of “Differentiated Globalization”, whereby varying levels of openness coexist across different sectors of the global economy.

The Differentiated Globalization concept is created in this paper as a theoretical framework for explaining the coexistence of strategic competition and continuous economic integration, but its broader scholarly value hinges on its empirical applicability. Future study might operationalize Differentiated Globalization by considering the degree of openness and limitation in different sectors of the world economy. Rather from seeing globalization as a single, uniform process, the concept holds that states are increasingly distinguishing between areas that are considered strategically sensitive and those that are still commercially profitable. Therefore, in empirical study, it is important to look for sectoral differences in trade, investment, technological governance and institutional collaboration, instead of the aggregate indices of globalization.

One way to operationalise the concept is to develop multidimensional measures that capture both economic openness and strategic constraint. At the economic level, scholars might compare changes in the volume of bilateral trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) flows, cross-border integration of supply chains, and international financial transactions in different industries. Strategic sectors are different from non-strategic sectors like agriculture, consumer goods, tourism, financial services, education and healthcare. Strategic sectors include semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, critical minerals, telecommunications infrastructure and advanced manufacturing. More important would be empirical evidence that globalization is becoming more differentiated, not just expanding or declining uniformly, with a substantial gap between various industries.

A second factor involves the regulatory environment of international economic cooperation. Researchers can see how often and how widely big economies take up export controls, investment screening, technological sanctions, industrial subsidy programs, data governance regulations and national security legislation. These policy instruments give measurable measures of the extent of the increasing integration of national security considerations into the economic policymaking of governments. Meanwhile, ongoing engagement in multilateral trade agreements, regional economic alliances, international financial institutions, and global governance initiatives could be indicative of prolonged international collaboration. This combined analysis of the two variables can therefore be used by scholars to differentiate between selective economic decoupling in important industries and ongoing globalization in less sensitive sectors.

The Beijing Summit contributes to greater stability within the international political economy by reducing uncertainty surrounding future Sino-US relations. Financial markets, multinational corporations, and regional economies generally benefit from greater predictability in bilateral diplomatic relations because uncertainty significantly increases investment risks, disrupts supply chains, and reduces economic confidence. Although strategic competition remains a defining feature of bilateral relations, regular diplomatic engagement lowers the probability of sudden policy escalation and contributes to a more stable international business environment. The summit therefore demonstrates that strategic competition does not necessarily preclude economic cooperation or institutional dialogue.

Furthermore, the summit has important implications for global governance. Contemporary global challenges, including climate change, public health, energy security, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence governance, and financial stability cannot be effectively addressed through unilateral action by any single country. The summit acknowledges that despite continuing strategic rivalry, China and the United States remain indispensable participants in addressing transnational challenges. Consequently, selective cooperation in multilateral institutions may become increasingly important even as geopolitical competition continues in other domains. This development reflects a broader shift from universal cooperation toward issue-specific coalitions in which major powers collaborate where interests converge while continuing to compete elsewhere.

The analytical paradigm of differentiated globalization can be applied comparatively outside the Sino-U.S. relationship to other regions and significant power interactions. Future studies could examine, for instance, the de-risking strategy of the European Union with respect to China, Japan’s diversification of semiconductor supply chains, India’s industrial and digital policies or the technological competition between the United States and the European Union in emerging technologies. The use of comparative case studies would also allow researchers to evaluate whether sector-specific globalization is a grand structural revolution of the international political economy or a phenomenon particular to the Sino-US strategic struggle. Such comparisons also help to sharpen the notion and assess its explanatory value in diverse geopolitical and institutional settings.

For middle powers and developing countries, the summit creates opportunities to exercise greater strategic autonomy within the evolving international order. Rather than choosing exclusively between China and the United States, many countries increasingly pursue diversified foreign policies that maximize economic opportunities while minimizing geopolitical risks. ASEAN member states, Gulf countries, African economies, and Latin American partners have increasingly adopted such strategies. The summit reinforces this trend by reducing immediate concerns regarding direct confrontation between the two largest economies and providing greater diplomatic space for regional actors to participate simultaneously in multiple institutional arrangements.

Most importantly, the Beijing Summit illustrates that the future international order is unlikely to resemble either the liberal unipolar order of the Post-Cold War era or a fully fragmented bipolar system. Instead, the evidence suggests the gradual emergence of a hybrid international order characterized by strategic competition, institutional pluralism, selective economic integration, and managed geopolitical rivalry. This evolving order requires new analytical frameworks capable of explaining how cooperation and competition increasingly coexist within the same international system. Future quantitative research could focus on the construction of a Differentiated Globalization Index (DGI) that will provide a systematic measure of the idea. Such an indicator might incorporate various variables including trade openness, openness to investment, regulation of technology, dependence in supply chains, institutional participation, and the extent of constraints on national security. Higher scores would imply economies that are still integrating internationally, but with selective regulatory constraints, while lower scores would reflect deeper economic fragmentation and strategic decoupling. Future research might combine quantitative indicators with qualitative process tracing and comparative policy analysis to examine how Differentiated Globalization unfolds over time and across different regional contexts. This would enhance the empirical relevance of the notion and would make for broader comparative research on the transition of the contemporary international political economy.

## Discussion

The findings of this study generate important policy implications for China, the United States, regional institutions, and the broader international community. Given that strategic competition is likely to remain a defining characteristic of Sino-US relations over the coming decades, policymakers should prioritize mechanisms that enhance stability, reduce strategic uncertainty, and strengthen institutional cooperation without expecting complete policy convergence.

For China, the summit reinforces the importance of continuing economic reform while enhancing the transparency and sustainability of regional cooperation initiatives. As China expands the Belt and Road Initiative and strengthens cooperation through RCEP, AIIB, and other multilateral institutions, improving project governance, debt sustainability assessments, environmental standards, and public transparency will enhance international confidence and reduce concerns regarding geopolitical competition. Furthermore, China should continue promoting innovation in advanced manufacturing, green technologies, digital infrastructure, and artificial intelligence while simultaneously expanding cooperation with neighbouring countries in scientific research, education, and technological development. Such policies would strengthen China's regional leadership through mutually beneficial economic development rather than geopolitical confrontation.

For the United States, the findings suggest that comprehensive economic decoupling is unlikely to achieve sustainable long-term strategic objectives. Although national security concerns justify targeted restrictions in certain critical technologies, excessive reliance on tariffs, export controls, and unilateral economic sanctions may generate unintended consequences, including supply-chain disruptions, increased production costs, and accelerated technological self-sufficiency among competitors. Instead, the United States should pursue a balanced strategy combining technological competitiveness, domestic innovation, alliance coordination, and selective engagement with China in areas of shared global interest. Continued investment in research and development, education, infrastructure modernization, and emerging technologies remains essential for maintaining long-term competitiveness.

Regional organizations also have an increasingly important role in managing strategic competition. ASEAN should continue strengthening its centrality within Asia-Pacific regional architecture by promoting inclusive multilateral dialogue and preserving strategic neutrality. Similarly, RCEP should expand cooperation in digital trade, green finance, cross-border investment, supply-chain resilience, and customs modernization. Greater coordination between ASEAN, RCEP, AIIB, and other regional organizations could reduce institutional fragmentation while promoting sustainable regional development.

At the global level, reforms of international governance institutions are increasingly necessary. The World Trade Organization should accelerate reform of its dispute settlement mechanism, modernize rules governing digital trade and industrial subsidies, and develop clearer procedures for resolving disputes involving emerging technologies. Simultaneously, greater international cooperation is required to establish common standards governing artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital commerce, cross-border data flows, and critical technology exports. Without stronger multilateral governance mechanisms, technological competition may generate increasing regulatory fragmentation and reduce global innovation efficiency.

The summit further highlights the importance of institutionalizing crisis-management mechanisms between China and the United States. Regular leader-level meetings, ministerial dialogues, military communication channels, and technical consultations should become permanent components of bilateral relations. Such mechanisms would reduce the risks of accidental escalation while enabling both governments to manage disagreements more effectively. Although these measures cannot eliminate strategic rivalry, they significantly enhance strategic stability by improving communication during periods of heightened tension. Nevertheless, caution should be exercised when interpreting these empirical indicators. Numerous external factors including global economic conditions, regional security crises, domestic political developments, and technological competition may also influence trade flows, investment decisions, and diplomatic behaviour independently of the summit itself. For this reason, the present study does not claim that all subsequent developments are direct consequences of the Trump-Xi Beijing Summit. Instead, the summit is interpreted as one important diplomatic mechanism that may facilitate greater strategic stability by reducing uncertainty, institutionalising dialogue, and creating conditions that support continued regional cooperation. Future research employing longitudinal datasets, comparative case studies, and quantitative methods will be necessary to determine the durability and magnitude of these effects over a longer time horizon.

Finally, policymakers should recognize that the emerging international order increasingly requires cooperative leadership rather than hegemonic dominance. The complexity of contemporary global challenges- including climate change, pandemics, food security, financial instability, and technological governance- demands collaborative approaches involving multiple major powers, regional organizations, private industries, and international institutions. The 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit demonstrates that constructive engagement remains possible even under conditions of strategic competition, offering an important model for future great power diplomacy.

## Conclusion

This article has examined the implications of the 2026 Trump-Xi Beijing Summit for Sino-US regional cooperation and the evolving international order. The analysis demonstrates that the summit represents neither a return to the engagement strategy that characterized earlier phases of bilateral relations nor a decisive movement toward complete economic decoupling. Instead, it reflects a pragmatic recognition by both governments that long-term strategic competition must be managed through sustained diplomatic dialogue, selective economic cooperation, and institutionalized crisis management.

The findings indicate that the summit contributes positively to regional cooperation by reducing strategic uncertainty throughout the Asia-Pacific while encouraging continued development of regional institutions such as ASEAN, RCEP, and other multilateral frameworks. Rather than diminishing regional cooperation, strategic competition has increased the importance of regional institutions as mechanisms for strengthening economic resilience, diversifying partnerships, and preserving strategic autonomy. Consequently, regional cooperation has become both an economic and a geopolitical instrument within the contemporary international system At the global level, the summit illustrates the continuing transformation of the international order from a predominantly liberal and unipolar system toward a more pluralistic and multipolar structure characterized by institutional diversity, overlapping governance arrangements, and differentiated patterns of globalization. Economic integration continues to exist alongside strategic competition, demonstrating that globalization is evolving rather than disappearing. The future international system is therefore likely to be defined by coexistence between cooperation and competition rather than the complete dominance of either.

The principal theoretical contribution of this article is the development of an integrated analytical framework combining Managed Interdependence, Differentiated Globalization, and Strategic Regionalism.

Together, these concepts explain how great powers increasingly regulate economic interdependence while maintaining selective cooperation and strategic rivalry. Unlike traditional liberal theories emphasizing expanding cooperation or realist perspectives predicting inevitable confrontation, this framework demonstrates that contemporary international relations are characterized by the simultaneous management of competition and interdependence.

Ultimately, the future trajectory of Sino-US relations will depend less on whether competition continues than on how effectively both governments manage that competition through institutional dialogue, responsible diplomacy, and multilateral cooperation. The Beijing Summit demonstrates that strategic rivalry and constructive engagement are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they increasingly coexist within an evolving international order where economic interdependence, technological competition, and regional cooperation jointly shape the future of global governance. As such, the summit represents not the conclusion of Sino-US strategic competition but the beginning of a more structured and institutionalized phase of great-power relations that will continue to influence regional stability and the international political economy for years to come.

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