



RCAS Commentary

Xi's Washington Visit and the Global Order

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About RCAS

香港亞洲研究中心| The Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies (RCAS) is a nonprofit research organization focusing on Asian affairs. It is a newly established institution founded in February 2022 by Dr. Nian Peng in Haikou and subsequently moved to Hong Kong in September 2023. We currently have an international research team with nearly 100 resident/nonresident researchers from China and other countries.

RCAS aims to become a leading research institute and think tank on Asian affairs in the Indo-Pacific region. To date, RCAS has conducted research programs on maritime disputes in the South China Sea (SCS), China's relations with the Indo-Pacific states, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), terrorism/counterterrorism in the Afg-Pak region, and so on. It is committed to promoting maritime cooperation, regional integration, and regional peace in the Indo-Pacific region at large.

RCAS has published nearly ten books in Chinese and English and more than 20 papers in SSCI/SCOPUS/CSSCI-indexed journals. Recent English publications include *Populism, Nationalism and South China Sea Dispute: Chinese and Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2022); *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Contemporary Developments and Dynamics* (London: Routledge, 2022); *Crossing the Himalayas: Buddhist Ties, Regional Integration and Great-Power Rivalry* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *The Reshaping of China-Southeast Asia Relations in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *Territorial Disputes, The Role of Leaders and The Impact of Quad: A Triangular Explanation of China-India Border Escalations* (2023); *Managing the South China Sea Dispute: Multilateral and Bilateral Approaches* (2022); *China-Pakistan Cooperation on Afghanistan: Assessing Key Interests and Implementing Strategies* (2022); *Hedging Against the Dragon: Myanmar's Tangled Relations with China since 1988* (2021); and *China-Pakistan Conventional Arms Trade: An Appraisal of Supplier's and Recipient's Motives* (2020).

RCAS has also published hundreds of articles, and its researchers have been interviewed in various local and international media outlets, such as *The Diplomat* in the United States, *East Asian Forum (EAF)* in Australia, *Bangkok Post* in Thailand, *Jakarta Post* in Indonesia, *Lian He Zao Bao*, *Think China* in Singapore, *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, *China-US Focus* in Hong Kong, *CGTN*, *Global Times*, *World Affairs* in China. RCAS researchers have actively participated in international conferences or study visits in the United States, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia, and other places.

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China-U.S. relations have become crucial in the 21st-century international system. Both are economic and technological powers, permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and strong players in Asia and beyond. They influence global trade and investment, strategic stability, international peace, global technological innovation and climate governance. In this context, President Xi Jinping's recent state visit to Washington is more than just a formal nicety.



▲ Xi attends welcome ceremony held by Trump-China Tibetannnet.

In fact, the visit came at a time when competition and cooperation are uneasy bedfellows in China-U.S. relations. Trade rivalry, technological challenges, Taiwan, artificial intelligence, supply-chain security and the conflict with Iran have been major challenges. Yet Donald Trump met personally with Xi at Joint Base Andrews and will also host a state reception to highlight the importance of the U.S.-China relationship. The airport welcome was symbolic and underscored the value of diplomacy and high-level interaction even amid strategic rivalry.

China-U.S. relations and cooperation will be pivotal this year. It's uncommon for a leader to travel to the other's country with such a brief interval. Xi's trip to Washington follows Trump's visit to China this year and is part of an effort to maintain strong ties

between the leaders of the world's two largest economies. The Chinese path forward is a relationship of "strategic stability" characterized by cooperation, differences that can be negotiated and competition that appears now and then.

Both China and the U.S. are great countries, and their people have made enormous contributions to science, culture, economic development and human civilization. Their relationship should not, therefore, be a zero-sum game. The success of either country should not require the failure of the other. The important thing is that major power competition does not have to be bad or unwieldy. The bigger matter is how competition plays out, what the rules and constraints are and how to avoid conflict when there are disagreements.

Competition is something neither China nor the U.S. should fear, Xi said. Rather, competition should be healthy, regulated and aimed at improvement, not confrontation. It should be more about making progress and innovating than trying to outdo the other side at any cost. It's true that difference exist, but Beijing offers a model that could help prevent rivalries from becoming destabilizing. So, the Washington summit is not the end of an agreement to be tied down for just for now; it is the beginning of a path that can prevent bilateral flashpoints from escalating.

Analysts, however, say there are few encouraging prospects for further improvement, given the high degree of mistrust. The summit's usefulness may therefore depend on the ability to create mechanisms for conflict resolution and ongoing communication beyond the visit's political symbolism.

China and the U.S. don't need to reach consensus on all issues to maintain a stable relationship. Both governments need to consider the ramifications of miscalculation. When the military is involved, responses are often difficult to manage economically and politically. Strategic responsibility means keeping communication channels open, clarifying red lines, avoiding unnecessary escalation and ensuring that legitimate national security concerns are not confused with policies that intensify comprehensive confrontation. Hence, the principle of no conflict and no confrontation is important; it doesn't mean that all conflicts will just go away. In this context, it helps ensure peaceful competition, crisis communication and diplomatic engagement. The two countries will have to learn to differ without viewing differences as threats to their respective survival.

Washington's discussions on trade and economic relations have remained unchanged. The economies are closely intertwined in various aspects, including supply chains, consumer markets, investment, manufacturing and technological production. But the escalation of trade wars and the introduction of tariffs and restrictions on strategic goods have introduced uncertainty both within companies and in other nations that depend on international trade. This isn't a tariff pact; it's an economic alliance. It will be transparent, based on reliable commitments and predictable commercial rules and

processes to resolve disputes. Both sides have the right to protect national security and key industries, but haphazard restrictions can further disrupt international supply chains. Fragmentation could also affect developing countries by raising costs, limiting investment options and increasing the difficulty of using technology and markets.

Artificial Intelligence has become a significant problem in the China-U.S. relationship. Both countries boast powerful technology and compete for a leading role in developing AI and high-performance computing. But AI also raises concerns about safety, privacy, autonomous systems, cybersecurity, jobs and the future of human decision-making.

President Xi has stressed the need to engage in dialogue and cooperation on the risks and opportunities of AI technology, indicating that the two countries can tackle the issue in ways that align with their respective strengths, rather than treating it only as a security threat. He also emphasized human control, a people-centered approach and preventing the misuse and abuse of AI. One of the most important areas for positive interaction and collaboration can be here. Although their politics, regulatory systems and technological agendas differ, China and the United States both face the dilemma of how to ensure that new technologies help people. Potential risks from technological innovations can be addressed through AI safety, crisis communication, risk assessment and international standards.

Meanwhile, cooperation will not be easy. Both sides want to maintain their technological leverage, and China's interest lies in becoming more self-reliant and more influential in technology worldwide.

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About Author



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