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The Accelerating World

AN Gang

The world is accelerating—that much is clear at the close of 2025.

Over the past year, we have witnessed an acceleration in nearly all major shifts in international relations.

The restructuring of the international landscape is accelerating. The unipolar world has come to an end, and a multipolar one is emerging with force. Multipolarization has become a widely shared consensus, with an increasing number of countries aligning themselves behind this trend. As other major countries rise, even the US has had to acknowledge that its hegemonic dominance is increasingly “challenged by the multipolarity.” While the US comes to terms with its declining hegemony, China has strengthened its strategic confidence and signaled its intention to play a leading role in global governance. In 2025, there was broad global recognition that China-US strategic competition forms the core dynamic shaping the evolving international order. Many believe that before the world fully enters a multipolar era, the international order will first pass through a transitional phase defined by “bipolar” characteristics. Meanwhile, as the Global South shifts from the “global weak” to the “global majority” in a real sense, securing its support has become a key “battleground” of major-country competition for global influence.

The escalation of major-country competition is accelerating, with China and the US at the center stage. During the global tariff war initiated by the Trump administration, China stood firm alone fought back decisively. This marked the end of a long-held psychological inertia and the beginning of a new phase in which China competes with the US as a genuine equal and defends its legitimate rights and interests. In 2025, a historic turning point occurred, where the China-US strategic relations evolved from the long-held pattern of “a strong US and a weak China” to one of broadly balanced competition. Importantly, escalation does not necessarily imply greater intensity. At the height of the US-Soviet Cold War, the possibility of a hot war was held in check by the nuclear threat of mutually assured destruction. Today’s China-US competition is not a new Cold War, but a form of strategic competition at a higher level and on a broader scale. As both countries recognize that the other possesses effective means of deterrence and counterbalance—and that uncontrolled relationship deterioration serves neither side—their bilateral relations are demonstrating greater stability as the competition deepens. This mutual understanding also strengthens both countries’ willingness to seek a rational basis for coexistence under a new balance of power.



The US's strategic adjustment is accelerating. Beneath the seemingly chaotic swings of the Trump administration's foreign policy lies a clear strategic logic: an abrupt shift from a combined offensive-defensive posture to one that uses defense as offense. The latest *US National Security Strategy* has abandoned the ambition of all-encompassing global leadership and instead emphasizes prioritizing US interests, limiting overseas intervention, consolidating its position in the Western Hemisphere, and relying on allies to contain the “potentially hostile power” in the Indo-Pacific region. On the strategic competition with China, although the document avoided overly targeted positioning or explicit verbal attacks, the underlying essence remained unchanged. It has doubled down the “ultimate bet” on the economic battlefield and emphasized the need to ideally “prevent – and in practice, prepare for – military conflict through strength.” Concurrent with the release of Trump's second-term National Security Strategy, the US military launched an army force structure reform, drastically adjusting its overseas military deployments and command structure to concentrate resources in the Indo-Pacific.

The reconfiguration of global economic rules is accelerating. The decade-long trend of “de-globalization” and “anti-globalization” has evolved into a proactive dismantling of global markets and supply chains, driven by different actors for different reasons. This process has been defined by three main threads. First, the US's “global reciprocal tariffs” have the global flow of goods, capital and value, accelerating the shift toward localized or regionalized industrial and supply chains. Second, having failed to build “China-free” supply chains, the US now stresses “de-risking,” including restructuring rare earth supply chains, a move echoed by Europe, Japan, Australia, and parts of the Global South. Third, the Western countries have been shaken by China's robust full-spectrum manufacturing capacity, realizing they can no longer balance Chinese imports through exports alone. Desperate to revive their own manufacturing sectors, they have yet to find an effective way forward. Essentially, the restructuring of global economic rules is a tug-of-war between two forces: defenders of economic globalization against those advocating selective decoupling to bolster their own economic security and war preparedness. These two forces are not neatly divided into blocs; many countries are hedging risks by keeping a foot in both camps.

The resurgence of geopolitics is accelerating. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has evolved into a war of attrition. Europe is determined to side with Ukraine to the end, seeking to eliminate the “Russian threat” once and for all, while the US is eager to shed this burden and pivot to the Indo-Pacific. Israel's reckless pursuit of absolute security through “endless wars” and a fragile Gaza ceasefire agreement foreshadow larger-scale conflicts ahead. In South Asia, Pakistan's assertive posture in the latest India-Pakistan conflict has reshaped the “balance of terror” on the subcontinent, which had tilted heavily in India's favor, significantly eroding India's strategic standing. In Southeast Asia, the centuries-old feuds between Cambodia and

Thailand have reignited under new historical conditions, shattering the illusion of ASEAN harmony. The perennial question re-emerges: when a country's internal problems spill over and inflict external damage, what response mechanisms should exist, and how should regional rules be constructed? The uncomfortable truth is that regardless of shifts in the balance of power or causal relationships, all directly involved actors in regional flashpoints are trapped in geopolitical predicaments, thereby remaining "prisoners of geography."

Technological iteration and industrial restructuring are accelerating. The fourth industrial revolution, driven by "intelligence + green" technologies and led by the China-US "dual core," is reshaping global industrial layouts, economic and financial systems, and each country's economic, political, military strength and social fabric. From China's "15th Five-Year Plan" to the US's "Stargate Project" and "Genesis Mission," the EU's "AI Continental Action Plan," major countries are racing to gain new footholds and restructure global supply chains. The expectation that artificial general intelligence (AGI) may emerge within the next five to ten years serves as a constant reminder: today's global tech race is not a marathon but a 100-meter sprint, where the starting gun signals an all-out dash for the finish line. Those who win will become the dominant providers of products, services, experience, and values in the world that follows.

The collapse of Western narratives is also accelerating. Western countries are grappling with a concentrated exposure of deep internal problems: political division, income inequality, rising populism, sluggish economies and hollowed-out manufacturing. This systemic crisis has shattered the myth of democracy and the "Washington Consensus." Transatlantic rifts are deepening; core conflicts are being unilaterally defined by the Trump administration as a clash of values; and the collective security system is undergoing a fundamental rethink of priorities and cooperation models. Western countries other than the US are increasingly pursuing strategic autonomy and balance by identifying themselves as "middle powers" and "countries in the intermediate zone." Meanwhile, China's modernization success and growing influence in the Global South are undermining the West's moral superiority and institutional confidence, wearing away the foundation of years of carefully constructed anti-China narratives.

"Acceleration" is visible in other dimensions as well. Many small and medium-sized countries, losing faith in the US's willingness and ability to provide security guarantees, are stepping up efforts to develop autonomous security capabilities, including nuclear weapons. Japan is moving faster down the path of right-wing militarism, pushing Self-Defense Forces reforms, tying the so-called "Taiwan contingency" to the right of collective self-defense, and repeatedly testing the constraints of its post-war pacifist constitution. At the same time, non-state actors are increasingly acquiring dangerous weapons and technologies and carrying out cyberattacks, producing more instances of small actors challenging major countries. The international nuclear non-proliferation regime and the global security architecture are being dismantled at an ever



faster pace, while a new global security governance structure is far from being established.

If you have even seen the dramatic ice run on the Yellow River, you will know that for a river jammed by drifting ice, a spring thaw can be far more dangerous than a summer flood. Today's world has reached such a dangerous juncture: tensions are building across regions, colliding and overlapping, forming a vast barrier lake in the upper reaches of the international order. The risk of dam breaking is mounting by the day. Will the world slide into the pre-war disorder of the 1930s? Or drift toward a “new Cold War” characterized by bloc confrontation and systemic decoupling? For all major countries, the skillful management of these tensions has become equally vital.

China is undoubtedly one of the key forces driving global acceleration. As its capabilities steadily grow and its competitors become preoccupied with their own challenges, China is more consciously than ever working to shape both its surrounding environment and the global future. Yet, gaps often exist between intention and practical capacity, and between original vision and external perception. The faster China rises as a global influencer, the more important it becomes to remain grounded. Should China succumb to “power transition” narratives and frame its foreign engagement around competition for global leadership? Should it be drawn in by the resurfacing “G2” rhetoric, embrace major country determinism, and pursue “co-governance in a bipolar world?” Or should it stay committed to the ideal and path of building a community with a shared future for mankind? The answer is self-evident, but must be proven through action.

The turbulence of times inspires new thinking. The decline of the West begins with the decline of Europe, and Europeans, gripped by anxiety, are searching for answers. Among the rising voices in European thought, Finnish President Alexander Stubb published an article titled *The West's Last Chance: How to Build a New Global Order Before It's Too Late* in *Foreign Affairs* on December 2, 2025. He argued that the liberal, rules-based order that emerged after the end of World War II is now dying, a new multipolar order characterized by the coexistence of competition and cooperation is taking shape, and a triangular contest between “the global West, the global East, and the global South” is underway. Over the next decade, the world may face three scenarios: persistent chaos, order collapse, or rebalancing. The new order will be determined by the decisions made by political leaders in both large and small states. Only by embracing multilateralism and pursuing reform and cooperation can we prevent the escalation of conflicts and build a just and durable new order.

For China, Europe and the Global South, upholding multilateralism to prevent multipolar disorder is the greatest common denominator in their approach to international order. China must articulate clearer positions and match them with concrete actions to convince the world that cooperation with China under balanced multipolarity—not disorder driven by multipolar competition—is the right path forward.

In April 2025, the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries clarified the significance of neighborhood diplomacy in the new era in advancing development and prosperity, safeguarding national security, managing overall diplomacy, and promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. It emphasized the need to view neighboring regions through a global perspective, reinforcing the global significance of neighborhood diplomacy. At present, China is facing a severe test: the concentration of flashpoints in its neighborhood risks the formation of a “ring of conflicts.” In its neighborhood, China must act not only as a provider of prosperity, but also as a builder of peace. Only by succeeding in both fronts can China truly earn global trust.

As the risks of global disorder and imbalance grow amid hegemonic decline, power vacuums and governance failures, the international community believes that the opportunities emerging from a shifting world order – in global governance, geopolitics, the realignment of the “intermediate zone,” and industrial layout – are tilting in China’s favor. More than ever before, China needs to help the world understand what it stands for and what role it is playing. And more than at any time in the past, China needs to show the world what it is doing. In this sense, strategic dialogue is indispensable, even with the most distrustful adversaries. International communication must intensify, even as anti-China narratives begin to lose their footing.



Three Eyes of the Storm: From Extreme Brinkmanship to a Cold Equilibrium

WANG Congyue

History never advances at a constant pace. It often accelerates abruptly at critical junctures, only to slam on the brakes when pressure builds to its limits. Looking back at 2025, global politics did not usher in a new era of passion. Instead, after several consecutive years of high-intensity confrontation, it was compelled to press the “deceleration button.”

If 2022 marked the systemic loosening of the existing international order, and 2024 was the peak of multiple overlapping conflicts with risks spilling over comprehensively, then 2025 constituted a decisive “inflection point.” In this year, the three major storm eyes of global geopolitics—China-U.S. relations, the Middle East situation, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict—almost simultaneously approached their respective limits of endurance.

This “inflection point” did not stem from an awakening of conscience or the dissipation of hatred. Rather, it was driven by far more austere constraints: the limits of economic resilience, the limits of military mobilization capacity, and the limits of domestic political tolerance. In 2025, the world executed a perilous emergency brake at the cliff’s edge, retreating from ideological fervor to the harsh realism of geopolitics. It was not a year of peace, but it was the critical year when conflicts began to turn toward an “endgame logic.”

China-U.S. Relations: A Painful Stress Test and the Emergence of Compelled Stability

In 2025, China-U.S. relations unfolded as a highly symmetrical and escalating “game of chicken.”

With the Trump administration returning to the White House, Washington swiftly resumed and intensified economic pressure on China. The comprehensive high-tariff measures announced at the beginning of the year attempted to rapidly reshape the power balance between China and the U.S. through a “tariff shockwave,” a logic continuing the path dependence from 2018: forcing Chinese concessions on structural issues by inflicting short-term economic pain.

However, China in 2025 was no longer the China of seven years prior. Facing “Trade War 2.0,” China did not choose avoidance or delay. Instead, it implemented highly targeted, intensity-controlled, yet profoundly consequential reciprocal countermeasures. Export controls on

critical minerals, heavy rare earths, high-performance magnets, and other sectors directly targeted the upstream supply chains of America's advanced manufacturing, defense industrial base, and clean energy industries. This round of countermeasures was not an emotional reaction, but a clear release of strategic signaling: China-U.S. competition had escalated from market access issues to confrontations at the level of industrial security and national capability. By mid-year, both sides were simultaneously under significant domestic pressure. The U.S. faced resurgent inflation, soaring corporate costs, a tight labor market, and frequent warnings about defense supply chains; China confronted tests including pressure on export enterprise profits, insufficient domestic demand, sluggish consumption, and a further tightening external environment.

The true "inflection point" emerged when both sides simultaneously realized that further escalation would lead to "mutually assured economic damage." When the benefit curve of the game turned decidedly negative, rationality began to return.

The China-U.S. leaders' meeting in October and the phone call between the heads of state in November were less a handshake for peace and more a confirmation of red lines. After completing the test of maximum pressure, both sides chose to temporarily freeze the intensity of confrontation. This was not reconciliation, but a kind of "forced stability" based on parity of strength and risk assessment. This stability is cold; it is no longer built on the illusion of returning to an "engagement" policy, but on the realistic recognition that "neither can devour the other."

Thus, in 2025, China and the U.S. established a new mode of coexistence: continuing competition in irreconcilable areas, maintaining communication in the face of unbearable risks; no longer fantasizing about comprehensive decoupling, nor expecting to mutually shape one another.

The Middle East Situation: "Critical Loss-Cutting" Amid the Ruins

If what we see in the China-U.S. contest is a balance of power, then in the Middle East, we see the systemic exhaustion of power.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2025, after nearly two years of bloody stalemate, entered a clear phase of diminishing marginal returns. The Netanyahu government's strategic objective of achieving "absolute security" through military means lost feasibility both politically and militarily, mired in the quagmire of the Gaza battlefield and under persistent northern front pressure.

The key variable in 2025 came from a clear shift in U.S. Middle East strategy. The Trump administration abandoned gradual mediation, adopting instead a highly transactional, coercive intervention path: setting clear red lines for Israeli military operations; offering upgraded security and technology cooperation to regional states like Saudi Arabia; and sending



unambiguous deterrence signals to Iran and its proxies. This approach was not elegant, but it produced practical effects at a time when all parties were exhausted.

The fundamental reason a phased ceasefire could be rapidly reached was that both conflicting parties simultaneously hit their limits of endurance. Domestic political and humanitarian pressures created a strong “loss-cutting” motive for both Israel and Hamas. In Israel, securing the release of captives had become an overriding core demand; on the Hamas side, diminished military capability combined with governance pressure created an urgent need for a breathing space through a ceasefire. The current ceasefire framework achieved a minimum level of interest exchange on key issues like prisoner swaps, security de-escalation, and humanitarian access, providing realistic feasibility for a short-term truce.

Therefore, this ceasefire resembles more a “critical loss-cutting” measure as the conflict hit its political and military limits after high-intensity confrontation, rather than an institutional solution leading to lasting peace. While the ceasefire can be implemented in phases, unresolved issues like Israel’s domestic political fractures and the contest over Hamas’s status mean that whether this inflection point can be crossed towards long-term stability still depends on subsequent multi-party bargaining and the continued role of external constraints.

The Russia-Ukraine Conflict: From War of Attrition to Endgame Bargaining

For the European continent, 2025 was the year of thoroughly abandoning illusions. The Russia-Ukraine conflict entered a phase of high solidification. The frontlines stagnated for the long term, and the war degenerated into a classic war of attrition.

The Trump administration’s involvement in this issue carried distinct realist characteristics: forcing both sides of the conflict to reassess the benefits of war through pressure applied bilaterally. For Kyiv, aid was no longer unlimited; for Moscow, the cost of refusing negotiations increased significantly. The “28-point Russia-Ukraine Peace Proposal” suddenly unveiled by Trump before Thanksgiving was not a genuine peace plan in the true sense, but a political document highly reflective of transactional politics logic, using maximum pressure to create negotiating leverage.

The reason this proposal caused such an international uproar lies precisely in the fact that the Russia-Ukraine conflict itself was approaching multiple “inflection points.” Ukraine was nearing its limits in terms of population, military mobilization, and economic endurance. Persisting on the idealistic path of “total victory” risked losing its most crucial external support. While Russia maintained offensive momentum, its battlefield progress was inefficient, with massive losses in personnel and materiel. Coupled with intensifying sanctions, the marginal benefits of the war were clearly diminishing, also creating a need for a face-saving “off-ramp.”

It was against this backdrop of bilateral pressure that the “28-point Proposal,” though extreme and crude, became the catalyst forcing the “endgame discussion” to surface. Employing a “TACO” (Trump Always Chickens Out) strategy—first setting a high initial asking price, then leaving room for maneuver—Trump forced all parties to face a brutal reality: the war was not indefinitely sustainable, and politics must re-intervene in military affairs. The subsequent constant revision of terms and repeated extensions of deadlines also confirmed that the plan more of a tool than a final blueprint.

Europe’s collective backlash highlighted another “inflection point”—the Russia-Ukraine conflict was no longer just a battlefield issue, but a fundamental test concerning Europe’s security architecture and political agency. A U.S.-Russia endgame shaped directly, bypassing Europe, would mean Europe’s structural loss of voice in its own security affairs.

Overall, the “28-point Proposal” marks not the arrival of peace, but the critical inflection point when the Russia-Ukraine conflict shifted from “unlimited attrition” to an “endgame gambit.” Regardless of how the final settlement is adjusted, the war’s optional space is rapidly shrinking. Realism is irreversibly overwhelming idealism. The endgame is no longer a question of “if it will come,” but “at what cost it will come.”

The Year of Inflection: Reshaping Reality from Uncontrolled Confrontation to “Cold Peace”

2025 was not an inspiring year; it was filled with calculation, deterrence, and compromise. Yet it was immensely important because it signaled that the chaotic, ever-spillover, near-uncontrollable confrontation of recent years had finally collided with the boundaries of reality. 2025 was an inflection point because ideological fervor began to recede systematically, and geopolitical realism regained dominance. The U.S. and China tested the limits of great-power rivalry and economic warfare; Israel and Palestine tested the limits of resolving hatred by force; Russia and Ukraine tested the boundaries of shifting geopolitical plates.

The world did not collapse in 2025—but it irrevocably changed. Before this year, the international system was in decline; after this, it will seek a new, cold equilibrium at a lower level. For any major power, having passed through the inflection point of 2025, the task ahead is no longer blind confrontation, but how to manage this hard-won “cold peace” under new rules and constraints.



Resilience and a New Configuration in China–U.S. Relations Amid Gathering Storms

DA Wei

China–U.S. relations in 2025 appear as a “condensed” and “accelerated” version of the previous seven years. In April, under the banner of “reciprocity,” the Trump administration imposed steep tariffs on more than 100 countries and regions, including China. By late September, it had further escalated export controls targeting China. On both occasions, China responded with firm countermeasures. At one point, each side threatened to raise tariffs to over 100 percent, underscoring the unprecedented intensity of economic and trade frictions. It was highly unusual for bilateral relations to experience two major disruptions within less than a year. Yet each episode lasted only about a month. The economic and trade consultations in Geneva in May and the meeting between the two heads of state in Busan, Republic of Korea, in late October facilitated a temporary de-escalation. The speed with which stability was restored was also without precedent.

A Recurrent Cycle of Volatility

China–U.S. relations had already endured three much longer periods of tension over seven years prior to 2025. From March 2018, when the Trump administration launched a trade war against China, to January 2020, when the two countries reached the Phase One economic and trade agreement, bilateral relations underwent 22 months of strain. Shortly after the agreement was concluded, however, the COVID-19 pandemic spread worldwide, sending China–U.S. relations into another sharp downturn. The change of U.S. administration brought little improvement. This second period of turbulence lasted 35 months, until the Bali meeting between the two presidents in November 2022. Stability proved short-lived: the “balloon incident” of February 2023 triggered a third disruption, which subsided nine months later following the San Francisco summit in November 2023.

Over the past eight years, China–U.S. relations weathered five major episodes of volatility under both the forceful Republican administration of Donald Trump and the experienced Democratic administration of Joe Biden. Yet each time, relations ultimately returned to stability. This recurring cycle reveals a remarkable resilience amid turbulent conditions. The profound importance of a stable China–U.S. relationship—for both countries and for the world—has consistently driven the two sides back toward equilibrium after each round of difficulty.

Toward a Turning Point

While demonstrating resilience, China–U.S. relations in 2025 also exhibit two significant new developments. These emerging dynamics may create the conditions for the emergence of a genuinely new model of major-country relations.

On the U.S. side, despite tactical disarray, the Trump administration’s global strategy reveals a coherent and profound transformation: The United States is fundamentally readjusting its economic and security relationships with the world, shifting from post–Cold War liberal internationalism toward nationalism. The liberal international order established after the Cold War—grounded in absolute U.S. strength—has been eroding. The “Liberation Day” tariffs announced on April 2, 2025, exemplify the unmistakable turn to nationalism in U.S. economic policy. The United States has abandoned the “Washington Consensus,” which prioritized economic—especially financial—efficiency above all, and now emphasizes that economic policy must serve the political objective of rebuilding the American middle class and revitalizing U.S. manufacturing.

At the same time, the United States is fundamentally recalibrating its security strategy, as it is no longer willing to bear a disproportionate share of the costs to sustain its global alliance system or tolerate free-riding by its partners, a shift evident in changes in its relations with Europe, Russia, and India. The strategic community advocating such transformation has moved from the margins to the mainstream over the past decade—a trend likely to endure for a considerable period.

Only by placing U.S. policy toward China within this broader context can we accurately grasp its distinctive features and trajectory. In short, changes in U.S. policy toward China over the past decade stem not only from Washington’s reluctance to see a competitor surpass it, but also from the sweeping transformation of its overall foreign strategy. As the principal architect and guardian of the post–Cold War order, the United States, through its strategic pivot, signals the inevitable disintegration of that very order. All countries—including the United States and China—must rebalance their relationships within an emerging new order, rather than clinging nostalgically to the past or harboring mutual resentment.

On the Chinese side, sustained improvements in economic, technological, military, and soft power capabilities, together with the experience and psychological preparedness accumulated since 2018, have enabled China to act with a high degree of confidence and resolve in its dealing with the United States over the past year, yielding substantial results. In response to the trade war, China stands as the only major country to have adopted reciprocal countermeasures without compromise; as a result, newly imposed U.S. tariffs on China rank only at a mid-range level among U.S. trading partners. In September, in response to tightened U.S. export restrictions, China strengthened its rare-earth export controls, forming an effective deterrent to the Trump administration.



It can be said that the two countries now stand in a position of relative parity for the first time since the trade war began in 2018. By analogy with the nuclear doctrine of “mutually assured destruction” in strategic security, China and the United States have, for the first time in the economic sphere, arrived at a relationship of “mutually assured disruption”: each possesses the capacity to inflict serious disturbances on the other’s economy and supply chains. Just as nuclear deterrence prevented the U.S.–Soviet Cold War from escalating into direct conflict, this form of economic mutual disruption may help prevent bilateral trade tensions from spiraling out of control.

This new equilibrium within a resilient relationship may mark a turning point after eight years of deteriorating ties: The two countries are likely to compete in an environment of greater parity in capabilities and enhanced strategic autonomy. If managed prudently, both sides may be able to moderate the intensity of confrontation and competition, adopt a more measured perspective toward each other and their respective strategic adjustments, and ultimately achieve peaceful coexistence. This is a realistic objective for the remainder of President Trump’s term. In 2026, multiple meetings between the two heads of state are anticipated, which would provide essential strategic guidance and powerful impetus for exploring a sustainable framework of coexistence in a new era.

Transatlantic Relations: From “Friction” to “Drift”

SUN Chenghao

The transatlantic relationship is no stranger to storms. Disagreements over nuclear strategy during the Cold War, the rift following the Iraq War, and the frictions over defense spending and trade during Trump’s first term have all tested the alliance. What has been different since 2025, however, is that U.S.-Europe relations are no longer merely quarrels over specific issues, but increasingly resemble a broader directional drift. The institutions are still functioning, the banners are still flying, but the wind has changed direction. The transatlantic alliance is being pushed off its old course by a subtle yet persistent current.

This drift is reflected in Washington’s shifting view of Europe. The transatlantic relationship once resembled a jointly built bridge, with American global leadership on one side and European institutional norms on the other. Now, however, this structure increasingly resembles a toll road. The United States emphasizes costs, returns, and conditions, while Europe worries that the terms of access could be rewritten at any moment. The foundational logic of the relationship is shifting from a community of allies toward conditional cooperation, and from institutional ties toward more transactional arrangements.

The drift is also evident in Europe’s changing mindset. Europe still views the United States as an indispensable security provider, yet increasingly also as a source of strategic uncertainty. However, Europe’s expectations of Washington have, to some extent, been managed by Trump. As long as Trump remains willing to devote attention to the Russia-Ukraine issue, many in Europe consider this “better than being completely abandoned”. This sense of relief does not amount to trust; rather, it reflects a form of self-reassurance in the face of growing anxiety.

Drift does not mean an immediate rupture in transatlantic relations. Rather, it suggests that the alliance is entering a more precarious phase: even if it appears superficially stable, its core is gradually weakening as the two sides no longer share a basic consensus on what constitutes order, what constitutes a threat, and what constitutes responsibility. From this perspective, the transatlantic relationship since 2025 stands at a critical juncture.

A Document and a Conflict: The Implications of U.S. Policy Adjustment Toward Europe

To understand the core changes in Trump’s second-term policy toward Europe, two developments provide particularly revealing entry points: the National Security Strategy released by the White House in December 2025 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. More



importantly, these are not separate developments but mutually reinforcing dynamics. The strategic document reveals the Trump administration's worldview and strategic priorities, while its approach to managing the conflict demonstrates in practice its mediation style and its broader effort to shape the behavior of its allies.

Although not exclusively focused on Europe, the Europe-related section of the National Security Strategy sent shockwaves through European strategic circles. The reason lies in its redefinition of Europe in an ideological and civilizational narrative tone—an “enhanced version” of U.S. Vice President Vance's remarks at the Munich Security Conference in February 2025. The political impact of such language goes far beyond traditional disputes over burden-sharing. It is tantamount to downgrading Europe from a strategic partner to a subject of diagnosis.

From the Trump administration's perspective, Europe is no longer a stable pillar but a continent grappling with demographic shifts, migration challenges, constrained public debate, and identity crises. These factors underpin a more troubling conclusion: that some European countries may, in the future, no longer possess the capacity to serve as reliable U.S. allies. At the same time, the document not only criticizes Europe sharply but also appears to take sides within Europe's domestic political landscape. It expresses optimism about the growing influence of so-called “patriotic parties” in Europe and signals support for the strengthening of right-wing forces within Europe—moves widely perceived by European strategists as U.S. interference in European domestic affairs.

In summary, this document goes beyond criticizing what Europe does or does not do; it addresses what Europe “is” and what Europe “should become.” When an alliance becomes framed in terms of cultural identity and ideological loyalty, irreversible cracks begin to appear in what was once a stable institutional partnership.

If the National Security Strategy reshaped the narrative, the Trump administration's handling of the Russia-Ukraine conflict reshaped the rules. European trust in the United States was severely eroded by the way the peace proposal was advanced. Following the publication of the “28-Point Peace Plan,” anxieties across Europe quickly intensified, with some voices even discussing measures such as selling U.S. Treasury bonds or adjusting the management of frozen Russian assets to increase leverage and strengthen Europe's negotiating position.

More importantly, Europe's unease stems not from any single clause itself, but from the lack of participation and consultation with European allies in key U.S. decisions regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Europe had long treated Trump as a “manageable variable,” forcing smiles and attempting to accommodate him after each round of criticism. But this strategy increasingly resembles watching the same film on repeat, with the same plot unfolding from beginning to end. Trump's approach to the Russia-Ukraine issue is not without its own logic; his priority has consistently been to push for an end to the conflict, removing obstacles to a

normalization of U.S.-Russia relations. Europe's core concern now is that Washington may not define "peace" with European security as its central priority.

Viewed together, this document and this conflict reveal the deeper logic of the Trump administration's Europe policy: the alliance is no longer treated as a community of shared identity but increasingly as a contract open to renegotiation. For Washington, Europe is both an important strategic asset and a potential source of costs. As U.S. strategic resources shift toward domestic priorities and other regional challenges, Washington is increasingly inclined to assess its relationship with Europe through a cost-benefit lens. This also signals a downgrading of U.S. strategic expectations for Europe—no longer viewing it as an indispensable alliance partner, but as a partner whose value must be recalculated in terms of costs, risks, and returns.

Europe's Dilemma: Divided Opinions and Collective Anxiety

Faced with Washington's "redefinition," Europe has not remained silent, but its responses are diverse and often divergent. Broadly speaking, they can be grouped into three camps: the Pragmatists, the Normativists, and the Trump Supporters.

The core logic of the Pragmatists is risk management. This camp believes that amid multiple external threats, the United States remains Europe's most important security partner. Therefore, cooperation should be preserved while Europe gradually adjusts through increased defense investment and greater economic diversification, all while avoiding a transatlantic trade war and preventing the Ukraine conflict from spilling over into broader instability. The Pragmatists are not blind to Washington's problems, but they fear the consequences of a diminished U.S. presence even more. They are Europe's version of a "realist fire brigade"—they may not be able to repair the infrastructure, but they must first prevent the fire from spreading, especially from burning the bridge across the Atlantic.

The Normativists are concerned less with short-term security gaps than with the structural costs of a changing alliance paradigm. When the United States links security commitments to issues such as trade, technology, and digital regulation, demanding concessions in a transactional manner, Europe risks losing autonomy on the international stage, while its internal democratic institutions and social cohesion may also come under strain. For the Normativists, the greatest danger is not a U.S. withdrawal but a U.S. presence in form rather than in spirit—one that continuously seeks to reshape Europe or even obstruct European integration.

The Trump Supporters are concentrated among some European populist and right-wing forces. They welcome the sovereignty narrative of "America First," seeing it as an opportunity to break free from the constraints of EU supranational institutions and pursue so-called strategic independence. However, divisions exist even within this camp: some are willing to accept



costly cooperation in exchange for security guarantees, while others advocate a more radical form of decoupling. When the National Security Strategy openly expressed optimism about European “patriotic parties,” this transatlantic resonance among right-wing forces became more likely to amplify Europe’s internal political fragmentation, thereby weakening the EU’s overall capacity for collective action.

The coexistence of these three camps has produced a state of collective anxiety in Europe: fear of abandonment yet concern about being reshaped; a desire for autonomy yet apprehension that autonomy means bearing greater responsibility; an intention to maintain unity yet constant pressure from internal political divisions. As a result, Europe often resorts to what might be called a strategy of “procrastinated self-help”—first securing U.S. engagement at critical moments, and only then gradually discussing greater autonomy through policy papers and budget debates. While such tactics may prove effective in the short term, the adjustment costs that Europe will ultimately have to bear are likely to grow over time.

Transatlantic Relations at a Crisis Point: Is China the Winner?

The transatlantic relationship has indeed reached a critical juncture. For Europe, America’s transformation represents both pressure and opportunity. It forces Europe to rethink the true meaning of strategic autonomy. This is not merely about increasing defense spending or building military capabilities, but about developing the political and strategic capacity to safeguard its own interests amid fluctuations in U.S.-Russia and U.S.-China relations, thereby reducing dependence on any single external power. If Europe can seize the opportunities embedded in this crisis and forge a more unified strategic objective, then even if the United States fundamentally repositions itself toward Europe, the continent’s role in the international system could ultimately rise. Conversely, if Europe remains unable to address its internal political and strategic divisions, its position in future great-power relations risks becoming further marginalized.

Nevertheless, changes in transatlantic relations will not automatically translate into strategic dividends for China. What is more likely is the emergence of three overlapping consequences. First, space for China-Europe cooperation may open up, but it will become more conditional. As Europe searches for external balancing options amid growing uncertainty, opportunities for cooperation indeed exist in areas such as climate governance, energy transition, and other fields of global governance. However, Europe’s China policy remains closely tied to U.S. security and technology frameworks. As a result, cooperation may become more negotiable but harder to implement—capable of progress yet vulnerable to reversal.

Second, Europe’s mindset toward China is becoming more cautious and anxious. The drift in U.S.-Europe relations amplifies Europe’s strategic uncertainty, making it more sensitive on China-related issues. Europe worries about being pressured by Washington to take sides, while

also fearing a narrowing of its own strategic room for maneuver. This anxiety can easily lead to policy vacillation, increasing uncertainty in China-Europe relations.

Third, China will need to deal with a more fragmented Europe. Washington's preference for certain political forces within Europe—particularly its favorable assessment of right-wing movements—may reinforce Europe's internal political divisions. For China, this means that Europe as a strategic actor will become increasingly difficult to treat as a single coherent whole. It will require understanding not only the institutional rules and narratives at the EU level, but also the differentiated political dynamics emerging across member states.

Therefore, against the backdrop of a transatlantic relationship at a critical juncture, China needs to deepen its understanding of Europe's political and strategic ecosystem in order to reduce the risk of miscalculation. In areas where cooperation is possible, China should emphasize predictability and practical implementation, avoiding initiatives that begin with high expectations but yield limited results. At the same time, it must leave room for potential policy reversals in Europe and the spillover effects of transatlantic pressure. In other words, what China faces is not a suddenly opened door, but something closer to a forked path. Each route may be passable, but all require sharper judgment and greater strategic patience.



The Eurasian Chessboard: Holding Their Breath for the "Match Point"

SONG Bo

In 2025, the Eurasian region remained anchored in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This war, like a colossal vortex, generated several "peripheral eddies" around it. Yet no matter how complex the dynamics grew, the opposing sides in the conflict essentially believed they had reached the "match point" in this brutal contest. Though weakened, each side, like swimmers nearing the shore, held their breath determined to secure ultimate victory.

Russia: A Year of Holding Breath to Reach the Shore

Russia exerted the greatest effort in holding its breath. In a comparison of 2024 and 2025, Russia's frontline troop levels remained largely unchanged, with the contact line stabilizing between 2,000 and 3,000 kilometers. However, the active combat zone shrank dramatically from its 2024 level to around 800 kilometers.

Russia's military and fiscal toll in the conflict was immense. In 2025, the Russian government began requiring local administrations and state-owned enterprises to shoulder more costs for compensating fallen soldiers' families. New taxes were also levied to offset fiscal shortfalls. The "growth-through-war" wartime economic model, dominant for the prior two years, began showing signs of stalling. In 2025, massive state investments in the military and defense industries no longer yielded rapid economic growth. Key indicators of economic vitality—such as railway freight turnover and electricity generation—declined markedly. High inflation, a legacy of two years of overheated growth, trapped Russia in a dilemma between curbing price rises and sustaining expansion, while domestic financial markets exhibited severe turbulence.

From Moscow's strategic perspective, these challenges did not undermine Russia's resolve to continue the war. Evidently, while Russia faced even greater constraints, its adversaries—Ukraine and Europe—were in far graver straits. Compared to the previous two years, Russia's operational freedom had actually increased. Moscow was no longer concerned about U.S. arms deliveries to Kyiv; it observed a sharp decline in Ukrainian rear-area attacks due to reduced U.S. intelligence sharing, and it was no longer concerned about the emergence of a "second front" akin to Kursk, backed by U.S.-European intelligence and military support.

For Russian troops on the front, the primary challenge is simplified to: how to break through

Ukraine's resilient defenses. From Russia's standpoint, as a power with three times Ukraine's population and multiple times its comprehensive national strength, the eventual outcome—Russia accumulating sufficient force to "overwhelm" Ukraine—was foreseeable. Thus, regardless of signals from Donald Trump, Russia adhered to its core position: a ceasefire was conditional upon Ukrainian withdrawal from territories Russia sought to seize. For Russia, the conflict's logic in 2025 had crystallized: persist to achieve military victory, or persist until Ukraine and Europe were compelled to concede.

Ukraine and Europe: A Year of Holding Breath for a Turning Point

Starting in November 2024, Ukraine and EU states backing it fell into anxiety. Trump's unambiguous anti-Ukraine stance and explicit rejection of aid for Kyiv placed unprecedented pressure on Ukraine's diplomatic corps since the crisis began.

Yet Ukraine did not succumb. The Zelenskyy government made multiple attempts to "deflect" Trump's policy. Immediately after his election, Kyiv—seeking to accommodate the new mercantilist administration—voluntarily offered access to its mineral resources as a bargaining chip to secure continued U.S. aid. While both U.S. parties wielded Ukraine as a political tool, despite being at the center of the crisis, Ukraine maintained strategic restraint. When Zelenskyy visited the White House amid accusations of ingratitude, he repeatedly expressed gratitude to Trump and the United States.

Regrettably, although Trump's policy stance has shown some wavering—even at one point supporting Ukraine's launching of larger-scale strikes against Russian energy infrastructure—his administration, acting in its own and America's interests, fundamentally restructured the U.S.-Ukraine cooperation framework within the conflict. Over the past three years, a key reason Ukraine has been able to sustain itself on the battlefield was the aid architecture established by the Biden administration, characterized by "U.S. military assistance and EU financial support." Under Trump's sweeping adjustments, U.S. aid to Ukraine shifted from grants to sales, and the annual Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) assistance, which had averaged over \$10 billion during the Biden administration—disappeared entirely. The United States even voluntarily withdrew from the Ramstein Coordination Group, the core mechanism responsible for coordinating military aid to Ukraine. Against this backdrop of significantly diminished military assistance, Ukraine's military activity markedly declined in 2025. Ukraine could only barely hold its ground in the fiercest combat zone around Pokrovsk (known as Krasnoarmiisk under Russian occupation), while its capacity to counter Russian infiltration offensives from Sumy, Kherson, and Kharkiv proved weak, and it launched virtually no strategic counteroffensives comparable to the Kursk operation.

In 2025, the EU faced unprecedented pressure over Ukraine aid. Early-year interactions between EU leaders and Trump yielded no sympathy for Kyiv's position. Yet pro-Russian



European leaders like Orbán failed to seize the agenda, and the EU maintained its "united aid" image globally. However, compared to the prior three years, Europe—historically occupying the moral high ground—came under sustained and targeted criticism from Trump's administration. First, Vice President Vance accused Europe of insufficient support; then Trump publicly ignored European leaders at Zelenskyy's reception. After the Russia-U.S. Alaska summit, Trump highlighted Europe's continued energy purchases from Russia.

Under relentless U.S. criticism, Europe became Ukraine's primary benefactor. The UK and Germany assumed the Ramstein military aid mechanism abandoned by Washington; the EU, while continuing financial transfers, allocated substantial funds to purchase U.S. equipment to replenish Ukraine's battlefield losses. European states also engaged in serious land and naval confrontations with Russian forces.

As European nations assumed the role of the Atlantic system's frontline for the first time since the Cold War, their deep-seated weaknesses were magnified: lack of unity and centralized decision-making; military-industrial capacity far behind Russia's (relying on South Korea and Southeast Asia to compensate for production gaps); and an economy unable to recover due to reluctance to disengage from confrontation with China, leaving fiscal capacity stretched thin. Lacking capability, Europe spent most of 2025 as a "critic," issuing remonstrances to the U.S., Russia, China, and India—hoping global public opinion would attract more external support. The strategy backfired.

As 2025 concluded, European states sought to fully expropriate Russian assets in Europe to offset future aid pressures. Belgium, the largest holder of such assets, opposed the move fiercely. In 2026, Europe's steadfast commitment to arming Ukraine and resisting Russia seemed destined to erode amid these fractious disputes.

Under Trump's pressure, Ukraine and Europe entered their most difficult phase. Yet elites in both remained hopeful for 2026. Amid adverse developments, Ukraine gained one positive note: despite drastically reduced military aid, its forces withstood major Russian offensives, limiting Russia's net territorial expansion to under 5,000 square kilometers for the year. Ukraine's frontline resilience matched Russia's endurance throughout the conflict. This inspired a new strategy among Ukraine's backers: "protract the conflict to await change." Ukrainian and European leaders grew increasingly perfunctory in echoing Trump. Within a week of Trump's 28-point plan—largely sacrificing Ukrainian interests—the EU and Ukraine publicly endorsed it before swiftly revising it into a 19-point plan clearly contradicting Russian demands. These diplomatic maneuvers signaled that Ukraine and Europe now pinned their hopes on 2026, anticipating that U.S. midterm elections or Russia's eventual exhaustion might turn the tide.

The South Caucasus and Central Asia: A Year of Deep Breaths

In 2025, the South Caucasus remained distant from geopolitical conflagration but unexpectedly became a showcase for Trump's "peace diplomacy." Through assertive intervention in post-conflict reconstruction between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the U.S. securitized regional infrastructure projects through the "Trump Corridor" initiative, a move that effectively sidelined local governance structures and granted Trump and his associates preferential rights to the profits. In Azerbaijan-Armenia relations, the U.S. was effectively the sole variable. Baku had concluded its major military operations by 2024, while Yerevan's domestic politics stabilized, moving away from a confrontational posture. The region's perennial anxiety—Turkey's expanding influence and potential Azerbaijani military action—persisted. Yet all three South Caucasus states prioritized avoiding domestic social unrest over new geopolitical confrontations. In foreign policy, whether Georgia responding to EU accusations of pro-Russian tilt or Azerbaijan's diplomatic dispute with Russia over the downing of a civilian airliner, these states took deep breaths, stopping short of provoking fresh conflicts.

Central Asian states presented both similarities and differences. Like the South Caucasus, they remained deeply economically integrated with Russia. As Russia's economy showed signs of recovery in 2025, Central Asian countries maintained high growth rates but faced a deteriorating foreign trade environment due to Ukraine's deep strikes against Russian energy infrastructure. Consequently, their criticism of Moscow softened compared to prior years. Initially neglecting Central Asia, the Trump administration—alongside Europe and India—turned attention to the region after "critical minerals" became central to Sino-American competition, drawn by its abundant resources and metallurgical capabilities. Central Asian states embarked on an era of collective "C5+X framework" diplomacy, achieving substantial results with the U.S., Europe, India, and China.

Unlike the South Caucasus, Central Asia shares land borders with China (the world's second-largest economy), maintains friendly ties with the U.S., Europe, and India, and retains traditional links with Russia. This unique position made Central Asia one of the few regions under limited pressure to choose sides in great-power competition. In 2025, Central Asian states launched multiple long-term development projects, signaling that their "deep breath" was an enduring nature.



China–EU Relations at The Historical Turning Point — While Europe Waits for Yesterday

SHI Yan

In 2025, significant events such as the return of Trump and his tariff policies, the tensions in EU-US relations, and the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and the EU did not lead to a substantive improvement in China-EU relations. This conclusion is based on two key indicators: the political trust between the two sides remains unhealed, and no joint initiatives or consensus on a shared vision that aligns with their identities as “two major powers, two major markets, two major civilizations” have been released. In other words, while China-EU relations in 2025 did not continue to deviate significantly from their course, they have not returned to their previous status, instead constantly deteriorated with a pragmatic mindset.

Mutual political trust between China and the EU remains fragile. Two major negative factors continue to impact the relationship in 2025. First, Europe remains unwilling to accept China’s position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the China-Russia relationship. Second, European policy towards China still cannot be independent from the US, and Europe was even ready to sacrifice China’s interests and the China-EU relationship to retain US security commitments. The trust deficit determines that the bilateral relations can only stagnate at a low level.

China-EU economic and trade relations are experiencing deeper fragmentation and confrontation, with trade frictions spilling over from trade and FDI to supply chains. In response to the rising competitiveness of Chinese manufacturing, the EU has employed various policy tools, including launching in-depth investigations under the Foreign Subsidies Regulation (FSR). The EU anti-subsidy case concerning Chinese battery electric vehicles (EVs), in essence, demonstrates the multi-dimensional divergences between China and the EU in terms of economic models, industrial ecosystems, regulatory standards, and government-market relationship. The deeper cause lies in the differing industrial efficiencies resulting from the internal reform efficiencies of China and the EU. Although the case reached a key consensus in early 2026, replacing tariffs with “general guidance on price undertaking,” the two sides have yet to find a solution to address structural differences. In the future, any internationally competitive products from China, such as robots and AI applications, may be viewed as “over-capacity.” In 2025, China’s trade surplus reached a historic high, further prompting the EU to plan China-EU economic cooperation with the goal of addressing “trade imbalances.” Dutch state intervention in Nexperia typifies Europe’s anxiety about supply chain security and the political risks of Chinese investment in Europe, which reflects the negative

impact of political trust deficit on the bilateral business.

The erosion of political trust between China and the EU, coupled with intensifying economic competition, continued in 2025 to trap EU–China relations within the policy narratives of “systemic rivalry” and “de-risking.” German Foreign Minister Wadepuhl’s remarks in Japan outlining “three prohibitions” violated China’s territorial sovereignty, further pushing China–Germany relations towards geopolitical confrontation. Although leaders from European countries such as Spain and France paid high-profile visits to China in 2025 and achieved substantial outcomes, the diplomatic relationship on China–EU level saw no substantive improvement. On 6 May, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that China and the European Parliament would simultaneously and comprehensively lift restrictions on mutual exchanges. However, no further news emerged regarding the resumption of the ratification process of the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI).

Amid mounting internal and external pressures, the EU has increasingly adopted pragmatism as the guiding principle in managing relations with China and handling great-power relations more broadly. This is reflected in two main aspects.

First, the transactional approach to relations with great powers. Anticipating that Trump’s return would bring renewed tariff pressures, the EU at one point sent positive signals towards China. In January 2025 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that the EU “must engage constructively with China to find solutions that serve the interests of both sides.” However, as the Russia–Ukraine conflict dragged on, Europe quickly yielded under deepening security dependence on the United States and the heavy pressure of Trump’s tariffs, even attempting to deflect tensions elsewhere. High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Kaja Kallas remarked that Europe and the United States should work together to address China, rather than target one another.

Second, the “results-oriented” approach to engagement with China. China and the EU once framed their relations around “partnership,” with a shared vision anchored in the global agenda. In 2003, China–EU relations were elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. In 2013, the two sides issued the EU–China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, and in 2014, they proposed building four partnerships for peace, growth, reform, and civilisation. During the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2015, leaders on both sides expressed their commitment to advancing these four partnerships. Yet by the 50th anniversary in 2025, the notion of “partnership” had largely disappeared from the EU’s narrative on China, replaced by the designation of China as a “systemic rival.” In the lead-up to the 2025 China–EU Summit, the EU repeatedly conveyed negative signals, including barring Chinese firms from bidding on EU medical procurement projects valued at over €5 million, placing two Chinese financial institutions on its Russia sanctions list, and unilaterally announcing at the



end of June the cancellation of the China–EU High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue, stating that “dialogue is meaningful only if substantive progress is made on trade issues.” Against this backdrop, the summit itself was shortened to a single day.

The deterioration of China–EU bilateral relations will inevitably undermine multilateral cooperation and the global agenda. As two major economic powers and the United States’ most important trading partners, China and the EU should have joined forces to address Trump’s tariff policies. Instead, the EU opted for an opportunistic approach, leaving China and the EU to act separately rather than in concert.

The two sides had once demonstrated shared ambition in tackling climate change. In 2005, China and the EU issued a Joint Declaration on Climate Change and established a climate partnership. In 2015, they released the EU–China Joint Statement on Climate Change in Brussels, pledging to jointly confront global climate challenges. The 2025 China–EU Summit coincided with both the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations and the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement. Although the two sides ultimately issued a Joint Statement of the China–EU Leaders on Climate Change, the EU had shown limited enthusiasm prior to the summit about signing such a declaration.

If China and the EU cannot reach a consensus at the strategic level, bilateral relations will remain trapped in specific disputes and divergences. Regrettably, fundamental differences persist between the two sides in their understanding of the direction of change in the international order.

In 2025, the international order accelerated its transformation on top of the shifts of the past decade. Trump’s second term is acting as an “accelerator” pushing the US to a historical inflection point. The international order formed in the 1990s—ideologically anchored in neoliberalism and structurally supported by US hegemony—has effectively disintegrated. Under Trump, the United States has actively undermined the current international order, while the Russia–Ukraine conflict has imposed another profound shock on it from a different aspect. China rose within the previous order but has always maintained its own principles regarding international governance and has consistently harboured reservations about Western neoliberalism.

Faced with a world in flux, Europe, by contrast, continues to defend a neoliberal order that has even been abandoned by its original founder. The multilateralism to which Europe remains attached is one embedded in a US-led framework and underpinned by American hegemony. In seeking to preserve this order, Europe has now become the only major region simultaneously strained in its relations with the United States, Russia, and China. From a traditional perspective, Europe understandably holds complicated views about China’s rise and its political and economic model. At the beginning of 2026, the Greenland issue may serve as an external wake-up call for Europe, while the rise of right-wing populism may act

as an internal catalyst. Not only is the international order at a turning point, but Europe's own position in the world is also undergoing profound redefinition. As US hegemony mutates and the neoliberal order it once sustained rapidly recedes into history, Europe must search for a new order grounded in present realities.

Although "peaceful co-existence" between China and the US could be seen as a goal beneficial to both sides and the rest of the world, the mission of China–EU relations extends far beyond that. This is not only because, in essence, China and the EU do not have any fundamental geopolitical rivalry or power competition, but also because both are proponents of globalisation and multipolarity. As two important actors shaping these trends and as stakeholders in the global agenda, China and the EU must focus on cooperation and development, set an example for major-power and regional bilateral relations, and forge a genuine consensus on multilateralism. Only then can they secure their place in the emerging order and establish a more constructive and stable relationship.



Inflection Point in an Era of Distrust: Where are China–U.S. AI Relations Headed?

XIAO Qian

Looking back at China–U.S. technology relations in 2025, artificial intelligence undoubtedly stands out as one of the most emblematic keywords. It is both the central driving force of a new technological revolution and the most sensitive and volatile variable in contemporary great-power competition. The evolving dynamics surrounding AI are reshaping the structural trajectory of China–U.S. relations, while casting a long shadow over global technology governance and international security.

Yet when viewed over a longer time horizon, the past decade tells a more complex story. For much of this period, China and the United States maintained a highly interactive relationship in the field of AI. During the early surge of deep learning, researchers from both countries were consistently present at the same leading international conferences, engaging in professional exchanges on algorithms, safety, and ethics. At the corporate level, firms competed and collaborated within a relatively open technological ecosystem. Early consensus around principles such as “human-centered AI,” “mitigating algorithmic bias,” and “maintaining meaningful human control” gradually emerged from precisely this kind of international epistemic community.

However, this trajectory—once not inherently zero-sum—has undergone a marked shift in recent years.

The changing status of AI is first reflected in the evolution of U.S. policy narratives. As technological capabilities have advanced and application scenarios have expanded, the U.S. conceptual framework for AI has gradually moved from viewing it as a “next-generation general-purpose technology” to defining it as a “core technology of national competition”, and ultimately elevating it a national security priority.

During the Trump administration, official U.S. documents explicitly called for “winning the AI race,” framing AI as a core technology that would determine future national security, military superiority, and economic competitiveness. This formulation itself signaled that AI had been formally incorporated into the main arena of geopolitical rivalry. Technological issues were no longer confined to questions of efficiency and innovation; they were re-coded as security concerns bearing directly on national power. This shift was not a short-term tactical adjustment, but a structural turn that has continued to shape policy to this day. The “securitization” of artificial intelligence is profoundly transforming the underlying logic of

China–U.S. relations.

Against this backdrop, the erosion of trust has become the most immediate constraint on cooperation. In discussions of AI governance, the term “trust” is frequently invoked—trust in machines, trust in human–machine collaboration, and trust in people who design and deploy AI systems. Trust is both the most fundamental element and the most valuable resource. Yet in international relations, trust is never a purely emotional variable; it is institutional and structural in nature. What China and the United States currently face in the field of artificial intelligence is a classic condition of “trust deficit.”

On the one hand, the United States has increasingly interpreted China’s AI development through the lens of institutional rivalry and strategic confrontation, viewing it as a potential systemic challenge. On the other hand, China widely perceives the U.S.-led AI framework as an exclusive system of rules and technological alliances, and believes that behind its security-oriented narrative lies a strategic intent to contain China’s development.

The intrinsic characteristics of AI further amplify this mistrust. As a highly complex, opaque, and rapidly evolving technological system, AI makes intentions difficult to verify and risks difficult to assess. What this generates is not merely concern over technical accidents, but fear of strategic miscalculation.

Within such a structure of mutual suspicion, even when both sides share substantial common ground on certain risks—such as the danger of loss of control in military applications of AI, the misuse of generative models, or vulnerabilities of critical infrastructure—these shared concerns rarely translate into practical cooperation. Any cooperative initiative is first weighed on a political scale: does it advantage the other side? In other words, the issue is not whether China and the United States understand the risks posed by AI, but whether they trust each other to act with relative restraint and responsibility.

It is important to note that there are significant cognitive differences between China and the United States regarding the very notion of trust. In Western traditions of security governance, trust is often understood as something that can be gradually built through rules, mechanisms, and transparency. In China’s diplomatic and security culture, by contrast, trust is more commonly viewed as a precondition for cooperation rather than its natural byproduct. From the Chinese perspective, advancing institutionalized cooperation in technologically sensitive domains under conditions of profound distrust is often seen as carrying risks that outweigh potential benefits.

Yet the distinctive nature of AI is quietly reshaping this logic. Unlike traditional technologies, AI is characterized by high uncertainty, low predictability, and rapid diffusion. Once systems move beyond control, their spillover risks frequently transcend borders, alliances, and institutional divides. In this sense, limited cooperation in the AI domain is less about building broad strategic trust and more about seeking a shared understanding of risk.



Under current conditions, expecting China and the United States to achieve “strategic mutual trust” in AI is unrealistic. A more feasible path would be to promote limited cooperation that is risk-oriented and technically focused. Such cooperation would not presuppose value convergence or institutional integration; rather, it would concentrate on issue areas that are relatively low in political sensitivity yet high in global public relevance. These might include information exchange on AI system failures and accidents; baseline safety principles for high-risk AI applications; technical discussions on model misuse and abuse; communication channels in times of crisis, and risk notification within international multilateral platforms. The purpose of such cooperation would not be to eliminate competition, but to prevent competition from spiraling out of control; not to establish trust, but to reduce the probability of miscalculation.

At present, global AI governance is exhibiting pronounced trends of fragmentation. Some countries are accelerating rule consolidation through alliance mechanisms, excluding many others—including China—from rule-making processes. This structural exclusivity is undermining the overall effectiveness of global risk governance.

As political theorist John Herz argued in his theory of the “security dilemma,” when countries stop cooperating out of fear, they often end up making everyone less secure. In today’s environment, if China and the United States were to abandon all cooperation on AI, it would not make either side safer—instead, it could increase the risk of broader instability. Historical experience repeatedly demonstrates that within highly competitive international systems, even minimal communication and cooperation can function as an important mechanism of strategic restraint and confidence building.

At the beginning of 2026, we are compelled to raise what appears to be a simple yet increasingly urgent question: in an era marked by profound distrust, does meaningful China–U.S. cooperation on AI remain possible? This is not an abstract exercise in idealism. It is a practical challenge with direct implications for global technological risk management, international security, and our shared future. The answer may depend less on grand political declarations than on a more sober recognition: what ultimately determines the prospects for cooperation is not technological capability alone, but whether both sides are willing, even in an environment of deep distrust, to preserve a minimal space for rationality, in order to avoid unintended escalation or loss of control.

Standing at this historical inflection point, China and the United States may find it difficult to become partners in the field of AI. Yet they share a responsibility to ensure they do not become joint contributors to systemic—or even existential—risk. Such a choice may not resolve all differences, but it could serve as one of the few stabilizers still worth attempting in an uncertain age.

Four Questions, No Answers: Observations on Global AI Development and Governance

Dong Ting

2025 announced itself early. In January, China's DeepSeek released its R1 model, trained for roughly \$5.6 billion yet rivaling OpenAI's flagship, which cost over a hundred million to build. Nvidia shed nearly \$600 billion in market value in a single day, the largest one-day corporate wipeout in history. In February, the Paris AI Action Summit was supposed to carry forward two years of international cooperation on AI safety. Instead, the United States and the United Kingdom refused to sign the final declaration. U.S. Vice President Vance told the room plainly: "...Excessive regulation of the AI sector could kill a transformative industry just as it's taking off." A realization began to set in that hardware supremacy might not be the trump card everyone assumed, and that international consensus on safety governance might not be as solid as it appeared. Then came the questions. Where is the technology actually heading? Will the investments ever pay off? Who gets to write the rules? Are the great powers destined for confrontation? Every core assumption was suddenly in doubt, yet none was conclusively confirmed or refuted. The world spent the rest of the year searching for answers, only to arrive, at the very end, just short of finding them.

Start with the technology. True believers in scaling laws remain unshaken in their formula for acceleration: more data, more compute, continuous refinement of algorithms and architectures. Large models have reached near-perfection in multimodal recognition and generation. Their reasoning is evolving from fast intuition toward deliberate, systematic thinking, demonstrating formidable capabilities in complex tasks like coding and mathematics. Yet as models grow more powerful, they also grow more opaque. 2025 was supposed to be the "Year of the Agent." Reality was less obliging. The shortfall wasn't entirely about capability, since some demonstrations were genuinely impressive, but about reliability. We can get these systems to do more, but we cannot explain why they succeed, nor guarantee they will succeed again. At NeurIPS in December, researchers from OpenAI, Google, and Amazon openly questioned the prevailing paradigm. The phrase "jagged intelligence" surfaced repeatedly, describing models that perform brilliantly on some tasks while stumbling inexplicably on others, their capability curves not rising smoothly but zigzagging through unpredictable leaps. Neither camp has persuaded the other. But at the very least, it is now clear that the road ahead forks in more than one direction.

Capital did not wait for the path to become clear, it went all in. In 2025, AI investment reached staggering proportions. OpenAI launched a trillion-dollar investment initiative, a sum exceeding the GDP of all but G20 countries. Microsoft committed \$80 billion to



infrastructure; Amazon planned over \$100 billion; Google earmarked \$75 billion; Meta raised its capital spending twice within the year to \$72 billion. By some estimates, AI companies will need \$2 trillion in annual revenue by 2030 to justify current investment levels, yet projections suggest actual revenue could fall short by \$800 billion a year. Consider that OpenAI's projected 2025 revenue is roughly \$12.7 billion. The world's most highly valued startup is generating revenue equal to just 2.5% of its valuation. More telling still is the circular nature of these capital flows. Nvidia invests in OpenAI; OpenAI's data centers are packed with Nvidia chips. Oracle spends \$40 billion on Nvidia hardware to supply compute for OpenAI; Oracle is also a partner in OpenAI's "Stargate" project. Microsoft has poured \$13 billion into OpenAI; OpenAI is Microsoft's largest cloud customer. Then there are SoftBank, Amazon, Anthropic, and CoreWeave, each company's investment becoming another's revenue, money circulating within the same closed loop. Yet today's picture cannot be reduced to a dot-com-style "bubble." The bets are on infrastructure, not fleeting ideas, and market demand is real and growing fast. Anthropic's enterprise market share leapt from 12% to 32% in a single year; over 90% of Fortune 500 companies now use OpenAI products, up from a negligible share just two years ago. The funding pipeline has not broken. SoftBank led a \$40 billion round for OpenAI at year's end, and infrastructure deals continue to close. The "bubble or revolution" debate is quietly morphing into a practical accounting question: when does growth turn into profit? That moment has not yet arrived.

Capital can embrace risk, governance must manage it. But what to regulate and how remains deeply contested, with everyone writing their own answer in a different grammar. Early in the year, the EU's AI Act took effect, adopting a risk-tiered approach with differentiated compliance requirements. By November, the Digital Omnibus Act acknowledged that implementation had proven harder than expected: complex compliance demands were imposing unbearable burdens on small and medium enterprises, while large corporations converted costs into competitive moats. The Trump administration's position was unambiguous: America must win. In January, an executive order revoked the Biden-era AI safety governance framework, reframing AI development as a national competitiveness priority. The AI Action Plan released in July was wall-to-wall "accelerate innovation," "deregulate," and "global dominance." By year's end, another executive order signaled that state-level regulations conflicting with federal policy could be preempted. China's governance follows a distinctive logic of balancing development and security. In February, the China AI Safety and Development Association (CnAISDA) debuted at the Paris AI Action Summit, placing China among the handful of countries with dedicated AI safety institutions. In September, new labeling rules for AI-generated content came into force, requiring both explicit and implicit marking of all generated text, images, audio, and video. In November, three national standards for generative AI safety took effect, covering data security and service security in comprehensive detail. The three governance models have not yet fully diverged, but where a viable mechanism for bridging them might lie, no one can say for now.

Divergent regulatory paths are only the surface story. What is more confounding is that throughout the year, export controls, technological decoupling, and securitization narratives kept ratcheting up confrontation. What, exactly, is the great-power competition over AI actually for? If it is about technological capability, DeepSeek has already shown that gaps can be partially offset by algorithmic efficiency, and its latest V3.2 model achieved the highest scores among open-source models on agentic benchmarks. If it is about market share, a UNDP report shows that nearly 70% of the population in high-income economies uses AI tools, while in low-income countries the figure is under 10%. Demand across the Global South is far from saturated, market competition cannot be zero-sum. If it is about standard-setting, hardware does require unified standards for interoperability, but in the software domain where AI primarily operates, standards lack the same binding force. At year's end, a joint declaration by ISO, IEC, and ITU in Seoul pledged to build inclusive international standards. In the future, different AI systems can achieve interoperability through compliance rather than exclusionary competition. The real contest, then, may be over competing visions of what international order AI should be embedded in. How should “safe,” “responsible,” and “beneficial” be defined? Whose governance narrative wins broader acceptance? At this year's World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai, China released our Action Plan for Global AI Governance, explicitly framing AI as an international public good and writing capacity building, infrastructure, and standards consensus into the framework, because for most countries, the barrier to development and adoption is not a lack of models but a lack of infrastructure, talent, and transferable governance experience. The meeting between the Chinese and American leaders in Busan this year affirmed promising prospects for AI cooperation. Cooperation is not merely desirable, it is necessary. AI may pose unprecedented existential risks to humanity, a point on which top researchers worldwide have reached broad agreement. Yet the logic of great-power competition makes collective action agonizingly difficult. Safety dialogues are read as leaking advantages; shared frameworks are denounced as concessions to rivals. Even where common interests are obvious, all sides keep sliding into spirals of mutual suspicion. Left unchecked, the ultimate winner of this competitive logic may be risk itself.

2025 offered no answers. But perhaps its significance lies in having placed the questions where they can no longer be avoided. Unresolved does not mean static. It means all forces are in play, only the direction of their resultant has yet to emerge. Or perhaps these questions themselves are the wrong ones. In the ages of steam, electricity, and telecommunications, humanity knew clearly what it wanted and simply needed better tools to deliver more power, brighter light, and tighter connections. AI is different. It does not merely help us solve problems, it is beginning to shape which problems we believe are worth solving. When the tool starts participating in defining the goal, every old question about the tool must be asked anew.

Will the new year bring answers? Almost certainly not. But if we can recognize that even the questions themselves need reexamining, then these zero answers become a fifth question in their own right. A good question has always been worth more than a bad answer.



Engineering Practice Leads Transformations in Production

Technological Innovation Drives the Reshaping of the Global Landscape

XU Jialun

In 2025, the world stands at a historic crossroads. It is a turning year in which profound transformations are occurring simultaneously in three dimensions: technological innovation, geopolitics, and the international order.

At the technological level, revolutions represented by generative artificial intelligence, humanoid robots, and quantum technologies have moved from incubation into a stage of breakthrough. This indicates that productivity driven by technology, as well as the global industrial competition landscape, is about to undergo fundamental restructuring.

At the geopolitical level, the strategic focus of the United States has shifted markedly toward the Western Hemisphere. Its 2025 National Security Strategy signals the end of the era of “global hegemony.” This strategic retrenchment is producing increasing strategic ambiguity and power vacuums on a global scale, compelling regional actors to accelerate their pursuit of “strategic autonomy.” As a result, the global geopolitical landscape has entered a new phase of structural realignment.

At the level of international order, the traditional Western-centered order represented by the G7 is gradually declining. At the same time, forces from the Global South, represented by BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), are actively building and expanding new multilateral cooperation platforms, promoting the evolution of international rules toward greater diversity and fairness. For these reasons, 2025 has become a turning point: technological revolution is redefining the foundations of national strength, strategic adjustments by major powers are reshaping patterns of power competition, and the interaction between old and emerging orders is bringing the world to the threshold of a more multipolar, regionalized, and uncertain structure.

President Xi has pointed out, “Every major breakthrough in engineering science and technology gives rise to profound changes in social productive forces and advances human civilization to a new and higher stage.” The present era is one in which scientific and technological progress is transforming human production and daily life with unprecedented strength and speed. Opportunities and challenges coexist. Against the backdrop of changes

unseen in a century, technological innovation and engineering practice have become particularly important.

First, a new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation is deepening. Emerging technologies represented by artificial intelligence continue to push the boundaries of human cognition, and technological innovation has entered an unprecedentedly active period. Second, technological revolution and great-power competition are increasingly intertwined. High-technology sectors have become the forefront and primary arena of major-power competition, and countries are accelerating their deployment in new fields and strategic tracks. Third, China's economic and social development has entered a new stage of modernization, in which transformations in quality, efficiency, and growth drivers constitute the central theme. In this process, natural sciences, engineering, and social sciences are undergoing substantial integration. A series of major breakthroughs in frontier science and technology—both ongoing and forthcoming—are accelerating systemic transformations in technology and industrial forms, fostering new industries, new models, and new drivers of growth, while also exerting significant influence on the international order.

I. Engineering Practice: Laying the Foundations for a New Configuration

The global advancement of China's engineering practice reflects its commitment to peaceful development and win-win cooperation. It has had positive and far-reaching effects on regional economic integration and shared global development. Engineering practice is also an important component of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and its geopolitical impact is multidimensional and systemic.

Through international cooperation platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has implemented a number of major infrastructure, energy, and transportation projects. These projects have improved infrastructure conditions and industrial development capacity in participating countries, promoted employment and livelihood improvement, and injected new momentum into global economic growth.

From a geoeconomic perspective, China's engineering practice has promoted connectivity and strengthened economic linkages among regions in Asia, Africa, and Europe, forming closer cooperation networks along industrial and supply chains. This contributes to the building of an open world economy and creates opportunities for shared development.

The year 2025 is a significant year for China's engineering practice. In the energy sector, a number of major projects have been launched. On February 26, 2025, the "Qaidam Golmud East Desert Base Power Project" commenced construction in Golmud, Haixi Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. With a total investment of approximately RMB 80 billion, the project adopts an integrated development model combining wind, solar,



thermal power, and energy storage. It brings together photovoltaic power generation, wind power, clean coal power, electrochemical energy storage, and solar thermal power. It represents a typical case of the integrated model of “desert management + new energy development.”

On September 16, 2025, the “Southeast Tibet to Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area ±800 kV Ultra-High Voltage Direct Current Transmission Project” was officially launched across Guangdong, Tibet, Yunnan, and Guangxi. The project has a transmission length of 2,681 kilometers and a rated capacity of 10 million kilowatts. It is scheduled to be fully operational in 2029 and is expected to transmit more than 43 billion kWh of clean electricity annually to the Greater Bay Area, equivalent to replacing approximately 12 million tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by about 33 million tons. With a total investment of approximately RMB 53.2 billion, it will become the world’s most powerful and technologically advanced flexible UHVDC transmission project.

On July 19, 2025, construction began on the “Lower Yarlung Tsangpo River Hydropower Project.” This major project is expected to take ten years to complete, with a total investment of approximately RMB 1.2 trillion.

The implementation of these energy projects not only directly stimulates upstream and downstream industries such as construction machinery, building materials, and energy equipment, creating substantial employment opportunities and providing support for economic growth, but also lays a new foundation for China’s relations with countries in Central and South Asia.

In transportation manufacturing, the Fuxing CR450 Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) is undergoing operational assessment. Its designed top speed exceeds 450 kilometers per hour, providing further possibilities for future Eurasian connectivity. In 2025, the domestically developed 16.66-meter super-large-diameter slurry shield tunneling machine “Cangyuan” was officially put into operation, becoming the largest-diameter shield machine manufactured in China to date.

China has also contributed to transportation infrastructure in other countries. In Bangladesh, Chinese enterprises undertook the construction of the country’s largest railway project. In Uzbekistan, China constructed the 19.2-kilometer Kamchik Tunnel on the Angren–Pap Railway, known as the longest tunnel in Central Asia. These achievements indicate a clear enhancement of China’s global competitiveness in transportation and high-end equipment manufacturing.

China’s engineering practice adheres to the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. It does not attach political conditions and respects each country’s chosen development path. This provides a new model for international development cooperation, contributes to the democratization of international relations, and promotes the building of a more equitable and rational global governance system.

Today, engineering practice has undertaken responsibilities including the reconstruction of strategic corridors, the transformation of development paradigms, the innovation of governance models, and the reshaping of regional order. In the future, China will continue to promote international engineering cooperation guided by high standards, livelihood improvement, and sustainability, and contribute further to building a global community with a shared future. These practices demonstrate that China's development provides opportunities for the world, and that China remains a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of the international order.

II. Technological Innovation: Reshaping the Strategic Landscape

In the field of technological innovation, China has entered a key transitional stage, from quantitative accumulation to qualitative improvement, and from isolated breakthroughs to enhancement of systemic capability. In certain frontier areas, it has begun to move in parallel with or ahead of the international level.

In information technology, China has made forward-looking deployments in information infrastructure with notable results. Communication technologies and broadband equipment research and development have entered the ranks of international advanced levels. Upgrades of fixed broadband, LTE, and IPv6 have been completed. China has built the world's largest fiber-optic and 4G networks in terms of scale. The speed and scale of 5G construction rank first globally, and China has become one of the global leaders in 5G standards and technology. In the field of quantum information, China has moved from following and running in parallel to leading in selected areas. The superconducting quantum computing prototype "Zuchongzhi-2" and the photonic quantum computing prototype "Jiuzhang-2" demonstrated quantum computational advantage.

In the energy sector, China has established a relatively complete energy industrial system with high development efficiency. The level of resource exploration, extraction, and comprehensive utilization continues to improve. A diversified energy supply system including coal, oil, gas, nuclear power, new energy, and renewable energy has taken shape. In hydrogen energy, certain technologies such as photocatalytic and biomass hydrogen production are at an internationally leading level. In nuclear energy, research and development of fourth-generation reactors, including sodium-cooled fast reactors and high-temperature gas-cooled reactors, is at the forefront globally. Ultra-high voltage direct current transmission and flexible DC transmission technologies are internationally leading. Oil and gas development has formed a distinctive technological system reaching advanced international standards.

In materials science, China has established a comprehensive industrial system with strong production capacity. Development of new materials is advancing rapidly. Frontier areas such as quantum materials, graphene, nanomaterials, and metamaterials are internationally



competitive. The production and application level of advanced foundational materials, including high-performance composite fibers, composite materials, and lithium–aluminum alloys for large aircraft, has improved significantly. Overall, China is at a transitional stage from self-sufficiency in low- and mid-end products toward independent research and development and import substitution in mid- to high-end products.

In the space and marine sectors, China’s international competitiveness, influence, and discourse power continue to rise. With missions such as Chang’e-5 and Tianwen-1, China’s overall space capability has entered the ranks of advanced countries. The commissioning of the manned submersible “Fendouzhe” and polar icebreakers has filled equipment gaps. China is also the only country in the world where aquaculture output exceeds capture fisheries production.

In agriculture, grain production has steadily reached new levels and remains at a high plateau. Comprehensive mechanization of crop cultivation, planting, and harvesting exceeds 70 percent. The intensity of cultivated land use has declined further, and green agricultural development shows strong momentum. Invention patent output in agricultural basic frontier research ranks first globally.

In healthcare, the equalization level of basic public health services has steadily improved. The improvement in medical quality and accessibility has been among the fastest globally. Independent innovation capacity in infectious disease prevention and control has reached advanced international levels. Foundational research and development capability in biomedicine and medical devices continues to improve, and innovative drug development capacity has entered the global second tier. Information technology has rapidly supported the development of smart healthcare and significantly improved service efficiency.

By 2025, China’s technological innovation has become an important variable in reshaping global geopolitics. Chinese technology enterprises have achieved continued breakthroughs in semiconductor manufacturing, marking a shift in core technological competition from “catch-up” toward “strategic balancing.” China has also actively participated in shaping governance frameworks for the intelligent era and released the Global Artificial Intelligence Governance Action Plan at the international level, indicating a transition in certain areas from rule acceptance toward rule participation and formulation. In addition, by leveraging rare earth resources as a strategic instrument, China has demonstrated asymmetric influence in supply chain competition.

This turning point is reflected not only in the strengthening of technological capacity, but also in participation in shaping development paths, governance rules, and technical standards. China’s technological innovation thus involves interaction at the level of development models, governance approaches, and the future evolution of the international order.

Looking toward 2026, the interaction among technological innovation, engineering practice, and international order will show deeper integration as well as tension. On the one hand, fields such as information technology, energy, and high-end manufacturing will accelerate the transition from laboratory breakthroughs to industrial applications. On the other hand, the focus of engineering practice will increasingly shift from addressing single complex problems to constructing cross-domain resilient systems, and will become more closely embedded in geostrategic considerations. Although 2026 may not produce a clearly defined new international order, the integration of technological development, engineering systems, and international politics will further deepen, outlining the initial contours of a more multipolar international structure.

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND STRATEGY, TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY(CISS)

Established on November 7, 2018, the Center for International Security and Strategy (CISS) of Tsinghua University is a think tank in the field of international security and strategy. CISS has two objectives: one is to follow the changes in global dynamics, offering policy suggestions for decision-making through researches on topics of international order, international relations, and security and strategic studies while conveying rational and professional messages to the society; and the other is to elucidate and disseminate China's perspectives and policy propositions through various forms of international exchanges and cooperation, to enhance the international community's understanding of China, and to improve Tsinghua's global influence in the fields of international relations and strategic studies.

CISS consists of research divisions including the Research Project on the US and Europe, the Research Project on Global Governance, the Research Project on Eurasia, and the Research Project on Artificial Intelligence Governance, sets up "China Forum", a sub-brand committed to international communication, organizes "CISS Youth" Research Exchange Program across top universities at home and abroad, and guides Tsinghua University Student Association of International and Strategic Studies (SAISS) and the Tsinghua University Student Association of China-U.S. People-to-People Exchange.





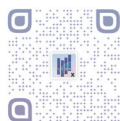
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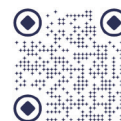
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