

Collaboration over control: the right path for the US in a connected world

Beijing, Beijing Shi May 14, 2025 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - China and the US announced a joint statement on Monday after a two-day high-level meeting on economic and trade affairs, releasing a series of tariff modification measures. The two sides have also agreed to establish an economic and trade consultation mechanism amid the trade war. As Beijing and Washington take steps to ease tensions, a more fundamental question arises: Why does the US quest for "Make America Great Again" necessitate cooperation with China? The Global Times has invited American scholars to explore this issue, discussing new possible pathways for the US to chart a course that boosts its own interests while scouting opportunities for mutually beneficial development with China. This is the tenth piece of the "Wisdom on China&US" series.

Whether the US is losing its economic and political influence globally may be a matter of perspective for some, but the deteriorating global economic situation is a fact. Critics point to problems like wealth gaps, political divisions and social tensions at home, as well as global concerns over the future of the US dollar and foreign policy choices. While these challenges are real, the best path forward for America lies in adapting to global changes and working with other nations - not antagonizing them.

The US economy has struggled with the effects of outsourcing factories to countries with cheaper labor. While this kept consumer prices low, it hurt manufacturing hubs and middle-class jobs, widening inequality. Politically, the country has become deeply divided, with leaders often prioritizing quick wins over long-term solutions. Issues such as crumbling infrastructure and expensive healthcare have weakened the US competitiveness. At the same time, a focus on individualism over community has left society feeling fractured.

One advantage America has historically had is the US dollar's role as the world's primary currency. This status allowed Washington to borrow money easily and at comparatively lower rates. However, easy credit at low rates has resulted in huge debts and a dollar whose strength makes it difficult to compete globally. Additionally, the overuse of dollar-backed sanctions - in essence, weaponizing the dollar - has pushed some countries to explore alternatives, like trading in euros or cryptocurrencies. It hasn't helped that past US interventions in other nations' affairs have damaged trust, making even some allies question American leadership. Meanwhile, rising powers like China and regional trade groups, such as ASEAN, the African Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), are reshaping the global economy and moving away from a US-centered system.

Rather than fearing these changes, the US can turn them into opportunities by collaborating with others. While the dollar will remain important, relying less on a single currency could reduce risks for everyone, including the US. For example, if oil were priced in multiple currencies instead of just dollars, sudden economic shocks, such as inflation, would be less damaging. By working with resource-rich and manufacturing nations to create fairer trade rules - based on value, whether primary (for example, resources) or additive (for example, processing and manufacturing) - the US could make global markets more predictable, lowering costs for American businesses and consumers.

As a top-tier resource and manufacturing country, the US holds substantial advantages that position it for a bright future. These advantages, which have historically attracted some of the world's best and brightest, have driven American innovation and opportunity.

Nowhere are the fruits of innovation and opportunity more apparent than in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). They are dynamic and powerful untapped economic forces in the world today. Unlocking their potential is only now becoming possible because of the digital revolution. Technology allows even small US companies to sell worldwide. Mature logistics systems, e-commerce platforms like Amazon, digital payment apps and tools like blockchain (which securely tracks transactions) can help small businesses overcome hurdles such as shipping, banking, advertising, distribution costs and language barriers - as seen with companies like Temu and Shein. Investing in these technologies - and ensuring they're safe and fair - could unlock huge growth for American entrepreneurs. For instance, a family-owned Ohio pottery shop could use Instagram ads to reach customers in Europe, while smart contracts ensure they get paid on time.

Countries need to be on the same side of the table, not arguing across it. Problems like climate change and future pandemics are shared and require collective action. By embracing these realities, the US can lead in rebuilding the trust required to address these issues. Admitting that no single country "runs the world" and showing respect for allies' needs will strengthen partnerships. For example, joint investments in clean energy with Europe or disaster-response plans with Southeast Asia would create jobs at home while making the world safer. A stable global economy means more customers for US goods, from Iowa soybeans to Silicon Valley software.

The US faces real challenges, but doubling down on isolationism or dominance isn't the answer. Instead, the US should lead by listening, building systems and trust, internally and externally, to strengthen its economy at home and abroad while relying on new digital tools to unlock economic drivers like SMEs. Cooperating with other nations is a sign of strength and leadership. Fair global systems and empowered small businesses benefit all, like a rising tide. Through cooperation and innovation, the US can secure its prosperity and influence in a world where success depends on collaboration, not control. After all, in a connected world, helping others grow isn't just generous - it's the smart thing to do.

As we speak, the first steps have been taken. The talks in Switzerland have agreed on a framework that will be discussed over the next 90 days. Meanwhile, tariffs on both sides are down as the realities became too apparent to ignore. China has taken on the role of the adult in the room, signaling that the only path to resolving America's and the World's issues is through respectful dialogue with China and the other multi-polar regional players.

The author, Einar Tangen, is a senior fellow at Beijing-based think tank Taihe Institute and the founder of Asia Narratives. opinion@globaltimes.com.cn

This article first appeared in the Global Times:

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202505/1333965.shtml>

Media Contact

Global Times

*****@globaltimes.com.cn

Source : Global Times

[See on IssueWire](#)