Trump’s China visit, BRICS Foreign Ministers’ meeting and PM Modi’s UAE visit

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US President Donald Trump’s China visit (May 12- May 15) came amidst the continuing uncertainty in West Asia and a significant downward trend in US-China ties in recent years -- due to tariff wars as well as differences between both countries on key geopolitical issues especially Taiwan and the US-Iran conflict. The US President had visited China -- in 2017 -- during his previous tenure.

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Before the beginning of the summit between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, the latter said that US and China have a responsibility in ensuring global stability and pointed to

the need for cooperation. He also raised a question regarding whether the US and China could the normal argument that a rising power and an established super-power will inevitably clash.

While commenting on the talks, Xi had said that both sides were able to establish '.. a new bilateral relationship or rather a constructive, strategic, stable relationship'

Trump while commenting on the talks described them as 'incredible'.

No real convergence between Xi and Trump on important issues?

Trump who has been critical of China said,'I have such respect for China, the job you've done. You're a great leader,'

Significantly, Xi did reiterate the point that mishandling of the Taiwan issue could lead to conflict between both countries. US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio stated that the US stand on Taiwan had not changed significantly. Trump's remarks in an interview -- to Fox News -- that a pending $14 billion arms deal to Taiwan is a 'negotiating chip' with China surprised both his close advisors as well as Taiwan. In the same interview, Trump said that he was '..not looking to have somebody go independent' while referring to Taiwan. In response, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te said that Taiwan will not give up its sovereignty.

Both leaders agreed that the Strait of Hormuz should be opened. Trump also stated that Xi had categorically stated that Beijing would not provide military assistance to Iran and said that both sides felt 'similar' about Iran. According to reports, China has contradicted Trump's statements and said that it supports Iran's stand on the Strait of Hormuz and recognizes the latter's control.

The imposition of tariffs by US on China has led to a downward spiral in the bilateral relationship especially trade ties. China had stopped purchase of US agricultural products and US manufacturers had lost access to China's rare earth minerals. In October 2025, both sides had reached a deal whereby China had agreed to resume purchase of US agricultural commodities and removed the duty on rare earth minerals.

While Trump said that China agreed to purchase 200 Boeing planes this led to a drop in Boeing Shares. No significant breakthrough, which many expected, was achieved between both sides in the context of trade ties. In a media interview, US Trade representative, Jamieson Greer said that significant progress had been made in talks between both sides. He said that the US and China would be setting up a 'board for trade' for dealing with sensitive trade issues. Greer also said that China had agreed to resume. The White House also announced that China had agreed to purchase an estimated $ 17 billion worth of agricultural commodities from the US.

BRICS Foreign Ministers' meeting ends without a joint statement

A meeting of BRICS Foreign Ministers was held in Delhi (May 14-15). India currently holds the BRICS Presidency. The meeting came amidst the uncertainty in West Asia, with global oil markets and the economy having been hit by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Before the beginning of the meeting, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi had said that Iran would welcome India playing a pro-active role in ending the conflict.

While the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi could not attend due to Donald Trump's China visit those who amongst those who attended were – Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi and Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held talks with Lavrov and Araghchi on the sidelines of the meet.

While commenting on his meeting with Lavrov on X, Jaishankar said that several issues pertaining to the relationship including '..trade and investment, energy and connectivity, science and technology, as well as facilitating mobility of skills and talent,' were discussed.

The External Affairs Minister while commenting on his meeting with Araghchi said that the situation in West Asia was discussed along with other important issues.

A national statement read by S Jaishankar underscored the consequences of the US-Iran conflict.

Said the statement published by Ministry of External Affairs:

'The conflict in West Asia merits particular attention. Continuing tensions, risks to maritime traffic, and disruptions to energy infrastructure highlight the fragility of the situation. Safe and unimpeded maritime flows through international waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea, remain vital for global economic well-being'

Jaishankar also highlighted other conflicts in the region. The External Affairs Minister also while alluding to US sanctions on Russia and Iran criticised 'unilateral sanctions'.

Iran's Foreign Minister called on other members to condemn the attacks by US and Israel. He said that Iran was a victim of '.. illegal expansionism and warmongering'. He also called upon BRICS to resist 'western hegemony' clearly alluding to the US.

Araghchi and Khalifa bin Shaheen Al Marar -- Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UAE -- had sparred at the meeting.

While addressing a press conference following the meeting, Araghchi made three important points. First, that Iran had 'no trust' in the US and that Tehran wanted to give diplomacy a

chance. Second, that India could play a more important role in bringing about peace in West Asia. Third, that the Strait of Hormuz was only closed to vessels of countries which were in war with Iran. As expected, the meeting ended without a joint statement due to differences over the situation in West Asia. India issued a Chair's statement

Key takeaways from PM Modi's UAE visit

PM Modi embarked on a five-nation tour (May 15-20). Modi's first stop was UAE. The PM who met with the UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in a post on X described the visit to UAE as highly productive

Agreements were signed in several areas including: defence, strategic petroleum reserves , long term LNG supply and shipping.

According to an official statement, the defence agreement included 'defence industrial collaboration…maritime security, cyber defence, secure communications and information exchange'

UAE's Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) will store up to 30 million barrels of crude oil in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserve in Vaishakhapatnam. Agreements between both sides were also signed via which ADNOC will supply LPG and LNG to India. UAE also committed to investing $5 billion in India's infrastructure sector and RBL Bank and Samman Capital.

During his visit to Netherlands, in an interaction with the Indian diaspora, PM Modi said,'..the achievements of past decades could be wiped away'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Trump-Xi meeting was unable to achieve anything significant. As mentioned earlier, differences persist over important economic and geopolitical issues. The BRICS Foreign Affairs' meeting in Delhi was important, but differences between members especially UAE and Iran which are involved in the conflict prevented a joint statement. PM Modi's UAE visit indicated the growing convergence between India and UAE and the agreement on strategic petroleum reserves is especially important in the current situation.

(Disclaimer: The views expressed above are the author's own and do not reflect those of DNA)

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