Beijing Without Breakthroughs: What the Trump–Xi Summit Means for Investors

Published 22 May 2026

Aneeka Gupta
Director, Macroeconomic Research

Key Takeaways

- Stability, not a reset. The summit delivered de-escalation, not resolution. Structural fault lines across technology, supply chains and Taiwan remain fully intact.
- Critical minerals: the thesis is intact. No agreement on critical minerals reinforces the strategic imperative for Western supply chain diversification.
- Agricultural commitments are not agricultural conviction. Agricultural purchase commitments are politically motivated and reversible. The durable case for commodity exposure rests on food security, energy costs and climate risk, not trade diplomacy.

US President Trump concluded his May 13 to 15 visit to Beijing, the first by a sitting US president in nearly a decade, and markets were watching closely for signs of a structural reset in the world's most consequential bilateral relationship. What they got instead was managed stability: warm optics, directional language, and incremental commitments that fall well short of the breakthrough many had hoped for. For investors, the visit reinforces rather than resolves two of the most compelling structural themes in global markets right now: the fracturing of critical mineral supply chains and the growing strategic value of agricultural trade flows.

What the Summit Delivered

On the surface, the tone was constructive. Both presidents exchanged praise, Trump described the bilateral relationship as on track to become "better than ever", and Xi confirmed a return visit to the White House in September. The summit was focused on constructive strategic stability and a commitment to step up communications, language that deliberately signals de-escalation without committing to anything concrete.

The most tangible deliverables that emerged were in trade. China signalled openness to substantial purchases of soybeans, beef, energy products and Boeing aircraft. President Trump cited potential orders of 750 aircraft and GE engines. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent indicated that both sides are exploring tariff reductions beginning with around $30bn of non-critical trade. China also renewed import licences for hundreds of US beef plants, and discussions are under way on a "board of investment" to facilitate Chinese investment in non-sensitive US industries.

One stronger than expected outcome was on Iran: both sides explicitly agreed that Iran cannot acquire nuclear weapons, and that the Strait of Hormuz must remain open. Chinese officials signalled opposition to any tolls in the Strait and expressed interest in increasing US oil purchases to reduce reliance on that geopolitical chokepoint over time, a clearer convergence of interests than most observers anticipated.

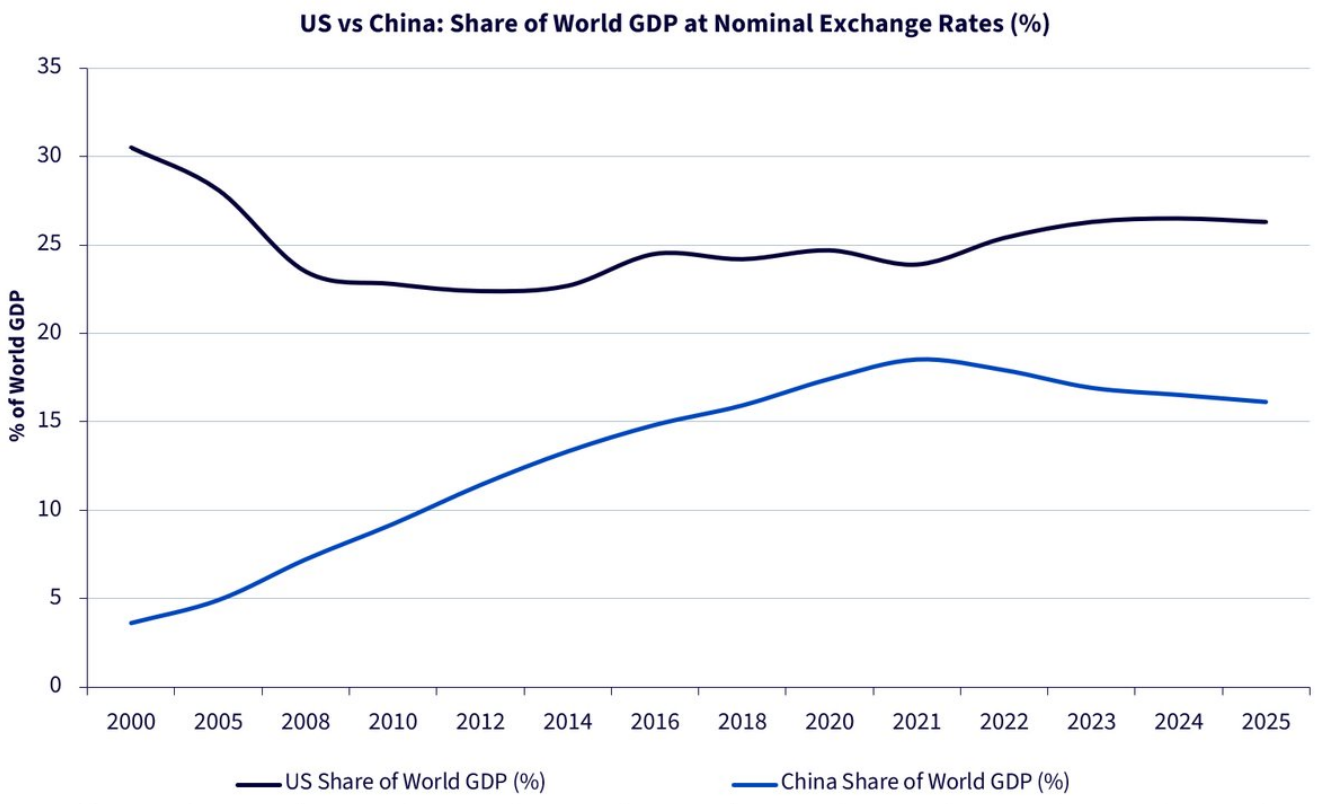
Why the Summit was a disappointment

Strip away the diplomatic theatre, and the structural tensions remain firmly intact. Technology policy which arguably was the most consequential dimension of the relationship, produced no meaningful progress. Earlier reports had suggested the US cleared around ten Chinese firms to buy Nvidia H200 AI chips, but Scott Bessent was explicit that there is no immediate news on expanded access to advanced semiconductors. That omission matters enormously as technology transfer and export controls are at the heart of the US-China rivalry, and the visit did nothing to resolve them.

Taiwan, meanwhile, hardened rather than softened. Xi described it as the "most important issue" anchoring the relationship and warned of "serious consequences" if mishandled. Trump said he made no commitments on Taiwan and that US policy has not changed. The asymmetry of stakes on this issue means it will continue to act as a ceiling on how far the relationship can normalise.

Perhaps most telling is the broader structural backdrop. China's share of global nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been declining since 2021, evident from the chart below, reversing three decades of catch up with the US.

Figure 1 – China is no longer catching up with the US



Source: WisdomTree, International Monetary Fund (IMF) as of 31 December 2025. **Historical performance is not an indication of future performance and any investments may go down in value.**

This is not simply a currency story: it reflects an inefficient use of resources, an industrial strategy optimised for military-technological parity with the US rather than domestic welfare.

In a nutshell, the Trump-Xi visit established a floor under the relationship but raised no ceiling. The bilateral reset investors were hoping for spanning across reopening technology flows, easing export controls or restoring investment confidence – did not materialise.

The summit's failure to resolve structural tensions is not just a geopolitical footnote, it has direct read-throughs to asset allocation, and two WisdomTree products sit squarely at the intersection of these themes.

The case for investing in Strategic Metals and Rare Earth Miners

The most glaring omission from the Beijing summit was any agreement on critical minerals. China maintains near-total dominance over the processing of rare earth elements and strategic metals, materials essential to electric vehicles, defence systems, renewable energy infrastructure, and semiconductor manufacturing. The absence of any framework agreement on mineral trade, export controls or supply chain access means the strategic imperative for Western governments and companies to diversify away from Chinese supply remains completely unaddressed.

This is precisely the environment in which the WisdomTree Strategic Metals and Rare Earth Miners UCITS ETF (Ticker: RARE) is designed to perform. The WisdomTree Strategic Metals and Rare Earths Miners UCITS ETF offers a targeted equity exposure by focusing on miners and related companies positioned across the strategic metals and rare earths ecosystem. This includes companies poised to benefit directly from Department of Defense critical minerals investment programmes, reshoring incentives, and the structural demand surge driven by the energy transition and the AI hardware cycle. The longer the geopolitical impasse persists without structural resolution, the more durable the investment case for diversified critical mineral exposure becomes. The Beijing summit, in this respect, was not a setback for RARE, it was a reaffirmation of the thesis.

The case for investing in Agricultural Commodities

China's purchase commitments on agricultural goods were among the more concrete deliverables to emerge from the summit, with Trade Representative Jamieson Greer indicating potential commitments to substantial purchases of soybeans and beef. But investors should be careful about reading this as a resolution of agricultural trade risk. Purchase commitments are politically motivated and historically volatile, they can be scaled back as quickly as they are made.

The structural case for agricultural commodity exposure is not dependent on the arc of US-China trade diplomacy. Global food security concerns, energy-linked input cost pressures (fertiliser, fuel) on the back of the Iran war, and climate-driven supply disruption remain powerful secular drivers. The WisdomTree Agriculture ETC (Ticker: AIGA) tracks the Bloomberg Agriculture Subindex Total Return (Ticker: BCOMAGTR Index) comprising futures on coffee, corn, cotton, soybeans, soybean oil, soybean meal, sugar, and wheat, captures this structural backdrop. It reflects the return on fully collateralised futures positions, quoted in USD. In an environment where geopolitical volatility can generate sharp and rapid moves in agricultural prices, the ETC offers an efficient way to build that exposure within a portfolio. In 2026, the WisdomTree Agriculture ETC (Ticker: AIGA) has attracted US$1.5bn in inflows, taking the assets under management to US$1.7bn (as of 20 May 2026) underscoring the growing institutional interest in diversified agricultural commodity exposure.

Conclusion

The Trump–Xi summit delivered what most seasoned observers expected: de-escalation without transformation. The diplomatic relationship has stabilised, but the structural fault lines — in technology, critical minerals, Taiwan, and industrial policy remain unchanged. For investors, the lesson is that geopolitical normalisation is not imminent, and portfolios that are positioned for a fragmented, multipolar world remain better placed than those betting on a bilateral reset. RARE and AIGA offer two complementary expressions of that view, one capturing the supply chain diversification imperative in strategic metals, the other providing durable exposure to the agricultural commodity complex in an era of persistent global uncertainty.

Important Risks Related to this Article

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Marketing communications issued in the European Economic Area ("EEA"): This document has been issued and approved by WisdomTree Ireland Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. **Marketing communications issued in jurisdictions outside of the EEA:** This document has been issued and approved by WisdomTree UK Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the United Kingdom Financial Conduct Authority. WisdomTree Ireland Limited and WisdomTree UK Limited are each referred to as "WisdomTree" (as applicable). Our Conflicts of Interest Policy and Inventory are available on request. This marketing communication is intended for all investors; however, the WisdomTree products described in this document and related materials may be restricted in certain jurisdictions and may only be available to particular categories of investors in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Where a product is not authorised or its distribution is restricted in your jurisdiction, it is the responsibility of any person or entity in possession of this information to inform themselves of, and comply with, all relevant restrictions. Before making any investment, investors should seek appropriate legal, regulatory, tax and investment advice to assess the suitability and implications of investing in these products. Information about WisdomTree products is available at wisdomtree.eu. WisdomTree does not offer investment advice tailored to individual circumstances. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance. Any historical performance included in this document may be based on back testing. Back testing is the process of evaluating an investment strategy by applying it to historical data to simulate what the performance of such strategy would have been. Back tested performance is purely hypothetical and is provided in this document solely for informational purposes. Back tested data does not represent actual performance and should not be interpreted as an indication of actual or future performance. The value of any investment may be affected by exchange rate movements. Any decision to invest should be based on the information contained in the appropriate prospectus and affer seeking independent investment, tax and legal advice. The content of this document does not constitute investment advice nor an offer for sale nor a solicitation of an offer to buy any product or make any investment.
An investment in exchange-traded products ("ETPs") is dependent on the performance of the underlying index, less costs, but it is not expected to match that performance precisely. ETPs involve numerous risks including among others, general market risks relating to the relevant underlying index, credit risks on the provider of index swaps utilised in the ETP, exchange rate risks, interest rate risks, inflationary risks, liquidity risks and legal and regulatory risks. The information contained in this document is not, and under no circumstances is to be construed as, an advertisement or any other step in furtherance of a public offering of shares in the United States or any province or territory thereof, where none of the issuers or their products are authorised or registered for distribution and where no prospectus of any of the issuers has been filed with any securities commission or regulatory authority. No document or information in this document should be taken, transmitted or distributed (directly or indirectly) into the United States. None of the issuers, nor any securities issued by them, have been or will be registered under the United States Securities Act of 1933 or the Investment Company Act of 1940 or qualified under any applicable state securities statutes. This document may contain independent market commentary

prepared by WisdomTree based on publicly available information. Although WisdomTree endeavours to ensure the accuracy of the content in this document, WisdomTree does not warrant or guarantee its accuracy or correctness. Any third party data providers used to source the information in this document make no warranties or representation of any kind relating to such data. Where WisdomTree has expressed its own opinions related to product or market activity, these views may change. Neither WisdomTree, nor any affiliate, nor any of their respective officers, directors, partners, or employees accepts any liability whatsoever for any direct or consequential loss arising from any use of this document or its contents. This document may contain forward looking statements including statements regarding our belief or current expectations with regards to the performance of certain assets classes and/or sectors. Forward looking statements are subject to certain risks, uncertainties and assumptions. There can be no assurance that such statements will be accurate and actual results could differ materially from those anticipated in such statements. WisdomTree strongly recommends that you do not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. WisdomTree Issuer ICAV Certain funds referred to in this document are issued by WisdomTree Issuer ICAV (“WT Issuer”). WT Issuer is an open-ended, umbrella-type Irish Collective Asset-management Vehicle with segregated liability between sub-funds and is authorised by the Central Bank of Ireland (“CBI”) as an Undertaking for Collective Investment in Transferable Securities (“UCITS”) under Irish law. Each fund is represented by a separate class of shares (the “Shares”) issued by WT Issuer.

The Fund is described in a Key Information Document (KID) or Key Investor Information Document (KIID) for UK investors, and the prospectus of WT Issuer (“WT Prospectus”). A copy of the WT Prospectus and the KID / KIID is available, for EEA/UK only, in English at www.wisdomtree.eu. Where required under national rules, the KID will also be available in the local language of the relevant EEA Member State. Investors should read the WT Prospectus before investing and should refer to the section of the WT Prospectus entitled 'Risk Factors' for further details of risks associated with an investment in the Shares. The summary of investor rights associated with an investment in the fund is available in English on WisdomTree Europe's website. WisdomTree Management Limited may decide to terminate the arrangements made for the marketing of its collective investment undertakings. In such circumstances, shareholders in the affected EEA Member State will be notified of this decision and will be provided with the opportunity to redeem their shareholding in the fund free of any charges or deductions for at least 30 working days from the date of such notification. Jersey ETCs The products discussed in this document are issued by WisdomTree Commodity Securities Limited (the "Issuer"). The Issuer is regulated by the Jersey Financial Services Commission. Investors should read the prospectus of the Issuer before investing and should refer to the section of the prospectus entitled 'Risk Factors' for further details of risks associated with an investment in the securities offered by the Issuer. WisdomTree Commodity Securities Limited

Securities issued by the Issuer are direct, limited recourse obligations of the relevant Issuer alone and are not obligations of or guaranteed by Citigroup Global Markets Limited (“CGML”), Citigroup Global Markets Holdings Inc. (“CGMH”), Merrill Lynch International ("MLI"), Bank of America Corporation ("BAC") or any of their affiliates. Each of CGML, CGMH, MLI and BAC disclaim all and any liability whether arising in tort, contract or otherwise which they might have in respect of this document or its contents otherwise arising in connection herewith.

Bloomberg® and the Bloomberg Commodity IndexesSM are service marks of Bloomberg Finance L.P. and its affiliates (collectively, “Bloomberg”) and have been licensed for use by the Issuer. Although the securities issued by the Issuer are based on the Bloomberg Commodity IndexesSM, neither Bloomberg nor UBS Securities LLC and its affiliates (collectively “UBS”) are affiliated with the Issuer and Bloomberg and UBS do not approve, endorse, review, or recommend such securities. Neither Bloomberg nor UBS guarantees the timeliness, accurateness, or completeness of any data or information relating to the Bloomberg Commodity IndexesSM and make no representation regarding the advisability of investing in such product(s). For Investors in Switzerland: This document constitutes an advertisement of the financial product(s) mentioned herein. The prospectus (in English only) and the key investor information documents (KID) (in German, French and Italian) are available from WisdomTree's website: https://www.wisdomtree.eu/en-ch/resource-library/prospectus-and-regulatory-reports

For WisdomTree UCITS products only: the representative and paying agent of the ETPs in Switzerland is Société Générale Paris, Zurich Branch, Talacker 50, PO Box 5070, 8021 Zurich, Switzerland. The prospectus, the key investor information documents (KIID), the articles of association and the annual and semi-annual reports of the sub-funds are available free of charge from the representative and paying agent. As regards distribution in Switzerland, the place of jurisdiction and performance is at the registered seat of the representative and paying agent. Some of the sub-funds referred to in this document may not have been registered with the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (“FINMA”). In Switzerland, such sub-funds that have not been registered with FINMA may only be available to Qualified Investors. For Investors in France: The information in this document is intended exclusively for professional investors (as defined under the MiFID) investing for their own account and this material may not in any way be distributed to the public. The distribution of the Prospectus and the offering, sale and delivery of Shares in other jurisdictions may be restricted by law. WT Issuer is a UCITS governed by Irish legislation, and approved by the Financial Regulatory as UCITS compliant with European regulations although may not have to comply with the same rules as those applicable to a similar product approved in France. The Fund has been registered for marketing in France by the Financial Markets Authority (Autorité des Marchés Financiers) and may be distributed to investors in France. Copies of all documents (i.e. the Prospectus, the Key Investor Information Document, any supplements or addenda thereto, the latest annual reports and the memorandum of incorporation and articles of association) are available in

France, free of charge at the French centralizing agent, Societe Generale at 29, Boulevard Haussmann, 75009, Paris, France. Any subscription for Shares of the Fund will be made on the basis of the terms of the prospectus and any supplements or addenda thereto.