COMMENT

Editorials

Wielding tariffs to impose law of the jungle blindly ignores benefits of mutual respect

The transatlantic partnership, long regarded as the backbone of the global economic order, is at a perilous crossroads. Last week's threat by US President Donald Trump to impose a 50 percent tariff on European goods has drawn pushback from Brussels.

After the US president released a blunt social media post claiming the European Union was exploiting the United States in trade agreements and describing Brussels as "being very difficult to deal with", EU officials and member state representatives responded with a firm line, warning that such coercive tactics could derail critical trade talks and ignite an avoidable economic conflict.

The threat to implement the tariff on June 1 clearly shows the US president is intensifying his tariff tactics in his second term, as highlighted by his threat to hit Apple with a 25 percent tariff on its iPhones unless they are manufactured in the US.

Expounding on the latest tariff proposals, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a Fox News interview that the tariffs are not all about trade per se, he said that one of the US' greatest vulnerabilities is external production, especially in semiconductors, "so we would like to have Apple help us make the semiconductor supply chain more secure".

Experts have pointed out, however, that moving iPhone production back to the US is as unrealistic as a fairy tale. As Apple CEO Tim Cook recently said, "People think we're in China for low labor cost. We're not. China stopped being the low-labor cost country many years ago." He said that Apple's supply chain decisions are rooted in the reality that no country in the world offers the same level of manufacturing talent, scalability and coordination as China.

The European response to the tariff threat has been unusually forceful and unified. Valdis Dombrovskis, European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, declared that "trade relations must be rooted in mutual respect, not ultimatums", asserting Brussels' willingness to engage constructively but refusing to capitulate to unilateral demands.

Apart from hurting its global trading relations, the adverse impact of the US trade war is also having a negative impact on US consumers who are bearing the brunt of the high costs as retailers have issued warnings that they will not, as Trump has suggested, "eat" the additional costs caused by the import taxes. US retailers such as Walmart, Mattel and Best Buy have announced that they will raise prices because of Trump's tariffs.

Trump's approach reflects a transactional style of diplomacy — one that prioritizes pressure over partnership and short-term posturing over long-term stability. Yet as EU leaders have made clear, this strategy risks far more than stalled negotiations: it threatens the integrity of a relationship that has underpinned global prosperity for decades. The US demands unilateral concessions from the EU to widen market access for American businesses, while Europe seeks a balanced agreement that upholds mutual interests and shared rules.

The planned visit of EU lawmakers to Washington offers an opportunity to reset negotiations. But only if the US recognizes that Europe cannot — and will not — sacrifice regulatory sovereignty or its social-market model to accommodate US companies, nor its trade relations with China at the behest of the US. The EU too will be required to demonstrate pragmatic flexibility, particularly in areas such as the digital trade and critical minerals, where alignment could unlock growth.

But the fundamental difference is the EU's emphasis on "reciprocity" in trade talks underscores its broader strategy of preserving the rules-based international order. By contrast, Washington's zero-sum tactics risk fragmenting the very system that has amplified US influence for decades.

The US president's trade policies have already triggered rounds of significant global market volatility and fueled concerns about a potential recession. It is high time Washington woke up to the truth that unilateralism and tariff coercion will only bring back the "law of the jungle" and make everyone a victim, including itself.

Instead of being a boost for US companies, the "beauty" of tariffs is misleading, as they have entrenched the inefficiencies and diminished the competitiveness of US manufacturers.

In an interconnected global economy, resorting to protectionism is not a way to show strength, but rather a sign of shortsightedness and self-isolation.

Harvard displaying 'guts, vision and backbone'

Trying to crack the hard nut of the disobedient Harvard is part of the Donald Trump administration's broader systematic campaign to compel universities, law firms, news media, courts and other institutions that value their independence to align with its agenda.

In announcing on Thursday the termination of Harvard's Student and Exchange Visitor Program certification, effective starting in the 2025-2026 academic year, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, without providing evidence, accused the university of fostering violence, antisemitism, and coordinating with China. It signals the US administration's de facto purge of any element in US society it deems to be opposing its agenda.

Earlier last week, some US lawmakers wrote to Harvard President Alan Garber, asking the school to explain its ties to the Chinese government and military.

But the baseless China-related allegations only serve to expose the Republican administration is trying to distract public attention from the true cause, which is its attempts to muffle opposition to its biased Middle East policies.

As Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said, China has always opposed the politicization of educational cooperation and opposed unwarranted attacks and smears against China.

Harvard's strong opposition to the administration's decision is understandable. The most prominent private academic and cultural institution that was founded in 1636, 140 years earlier than the founding of the US, and a cradle of eight US presidents, firmly believes that at this juncture it is obliged to not only take a stand in defense of its own principles of academic freedom and independence, but also as the conscience of the country.

"With the stroke of a pen, the government has sought to erase a quarter of Harvard's student body, international students who contribute significantly to the university and its mission," Harvard said in statement.

In a complaint filed in the Boston federal court on Friday, Harvard called the revocation a "blatant violation" of the US Constitution and other federal laws, that had an "immediate and devastating effect" on the university and more than 7,000 visa holders.

It is good to see that the court responded to Harvard's appeal positively and promptly. A US district judge, Allison Burroughs, issued a temporary restraining order the same day, freezing the administration's policy that aims to revoke Harvard's ability to enroll foreign students.

But the court's move has ratcheted up the White House's efforts to have all institutions conform with the president's policies, including attacking the judge himself.

In a statement, White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said, "unelected judges have no right to stop the Trump Administration from exercising their rightful control over immigration policy and national security policy".

There will be an injunction hearing on Thursday, a court filing showed. That will be a critical moment that determines whether Harvard can withstand the ongoing wave of attacks.

After some other institutions caved in to the administration's pressure, the legal dispute between Harvard and the Republican administration represents the culmination of the struggle between the two contending forces of liberalism and conservatism in the divided US society.

The US president used the first service academy commencement address of his second term on Saturday to laud graduating West Point cadets for their accomplishments and career choice. But, amid the legal brawl with the most prestigious university of the country, that West Point speech was apparently a beat-around-the-bush call to the younger generation of Americans indicating to them what kind of person the Republican administration would like them to become.

"This is a time of incredible change and we do not need an officer corps of careerists and yes men. We need patriots with guts and vision and backbone," Trump said.

But the administration should be reminded that the "guts, vision and backbone" it calls for to realize its MAGA objective is being demonstrated by Harvard now.

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huixin Dongjie Chaoyang District, Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
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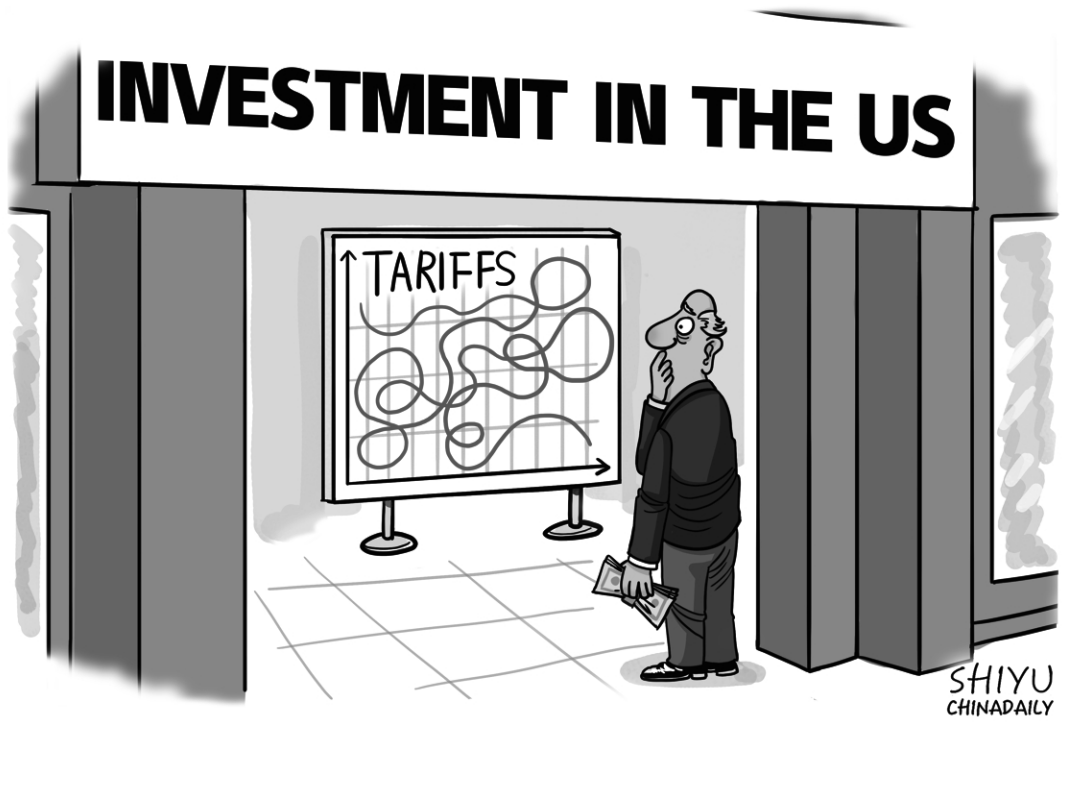
China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailyasia.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254(0)70 436 2812 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Shi Yu



Opinion Line

China-ASEAN-GCC summit quiet development revolution

Against the backdrop of the rising unilateralism, protectionism and turmoil in the world, the contemporary value of the Bandung Spirit has become more prominent. Chinese Premier Li Qiang reinforced this enduring principle during his address at the Indonesia-China Business Reception 2025 on Saturday, ahead of his participation in the ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations)-GCC (the Gulf Cooperation Council)-China Summit in Malaysia from Monday to Wednesday. His message echoed the same vital truth that guided nations seven decades ago: true progress comes through solidarity forged in dialogue, development achieved through cooperation, and prosperity.

Premier Li emphasized that China and Indonesia have consistently adhered to the Bandung Spirit, engaging in comprehensive and pragmatic cooperation. China-Indonesia cooperation has reached a new level, with bilateral trade expanding in scale and quality.

Li highlighted that China's technological advancements in AI, robotics, and biomedicine are driving innovation across industries and providing new opportunities for global collaboration. Moreover, China's push for high-end, intelligent, and green manufacturing upgrades presents significant opportunities for joint supply chain development.

The world stands at a crossroads. Geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and zero-sum mentalities threaten to unravel decades of economic progress.

China's commitment to this vision is evident in its engagement with ASEAN and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Rather than imposing dominance, Beijing champions consultation, whether in bridging infrastructure gaps, stabilizing trade or fostering green innovation. For example, China and ASEAN jointly announced on Tuesday the official conclusion of talks for the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area. It encompasses both existing fields under the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement and emerging sectors with significant potential for cooperation, including the digital economy, green economy, supply chain connectivity, trade facilitation.

In December 2022, the first China-GCC summit was held in Saudi Arabia. China pledged to work with GCC countries to prioritize cooperation in energy, finance and investment, innovation, science and technology, aerospace, as well as language and cultural fields.

China and GCC countries are natural partners of cooperation with strong economic complementarities, as China has a vast consumer market and a complete industrial system, while the GCC, with rich energy resources, is embracing diversified economic development.

The inaugural ASEAN-GCC-China Summit marks a pivotal moment in South-South cooperation, bringing together three major economic forces of the Global South. What makes this partnership unique is its rejection of bloc confrontation in favor of pragmatic synergy.

The ASEAN-GCC-China partnership embodies a quiet revolution in international relations: one where development is not dictated but co-created, where growth is not extracted but multiplied. Amid the complex global landscape, this trilateral dialogue carries profound significance as the three parties explore pathways toward greater solidarity, cooperative development and shared prosperity while advancing cross-regional collaboration.

China stands ready to deepen substantive cooperation with ASEAN and GCC nations across multiple domains, capitalizing on the three sides' complementary strengths to deliver tangible mutual benefits. Just as a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said, "We are committed to strengthening the multilateral trade framework and protecting the collective interests of developing nations in pursuit of common development goals."

— ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

'Gladiatorial show' undermines integrity of sports

The "Enhanced Games", which will hold its inaugural competition for May 2026 in Las Vegas, with swimming, athletics and weightlifting on the agenda, is nothing but part of the US-backed publicity campaign against the World Anti-Doping Agency amid high tensions between the United States Anti-Doping Agency and the global anti-doping body.

The "Enhanced Games" is meant to be the first event of its kind to support so-called performance-enhancing drugs and not follow the rules of the WADA, according to its founder.

Founded by London-based Australian businessman Aron D'Souza, the event would allow athletes to use "performance-enhancing substances" without being subject to drug tests. According to D'Souza, athletes are entitled to do what they wish with their own bodies, and the International Olympic Committee is "corrupt" and not paying them enough.

Last year, at a conference in Oxford on human enhancement, D'Souza told a crowd of scientists, athletes and investors: "Every great moment in history begins somewhere." The Economist calls him the "brash" brain behind the "doping Olympics", who wants to push forward "human evolution".

It is no coincidence that the initiative was first proposed by the organization bearing the same name of the Games headed by the businessman in December 2024, shortly after the conflict between WADA and USADA over some suspected doping scandals of US athletes was made public, which prompted a bipartisan group of US lawmakers looking for reforms at WADA to reintroduce a bill that would give the White House permanent authority to withhold money from the global drug-fighting agency.

But it was not until the inauguration of the Republican administration that the organization claimed it had secured enough funding for the initiative that had met with fierce opposition from anti-doping agencies worldwide, except USADA, and the international sports community.

In February, the US president's son said that his venture fund 1789 Capital would be involved in an investment round, saying "The Enhanced Games represent the future — real competition, real freedom, and real records being smashed."

The US leader's open endorsement of the initiative proved a turning point accelerating its transformation from an idea into reality. And some athletes have already started taking drugs regularly to enhance their performance for the competition. Australian swimmer and Olympic medalist James Magnussen said in February 2024 that he intends to come out of retirement to compete in the games.

WADA condemned the "Enhanced Games" as "dangerous and irresponsible" on Thursday, a day after the organization announced its inaugural 2026 event in the US.

WADA warns athletes and support personnel who wish to participate in sport regulated by the World Anti-Doping Code, that if they were to take part in the "Enhanced Games", they would risk committing anti-doping rule violations.

"They would also put their reputations on the line, as they would risk forever being associated with doping," WADA said in a statement.

That should be a common voice of all the sensible minds on the matter. As the China Anti-Doping Agency said in a statement on the Games, the global sports community should maintain a consistent position and firmly oppose any attempt to portray doping as so-called scientific advancements.

The "Enhanced Games" is a gimmick where opposition to any attempt to portray doping as so-called scientific advancements and speculators collude to scratch each other's back at the cost of sportsmanship, athletes' health and public integrity.

The muted mouth of USADA over the Games exposes its weakness in the face of powerful interest groups and wealthy sponsors. As China Anti-Doping Agency urged in its statement, the USADA is obliged to abide by the World Anti-Doping Code and international standards, take resolute measures to boycott the event, and maintain the stability, consistency and development of the global anti-doping governance system.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY