

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Consultative suggestions provide policymakers with essential inputs to finalize five-year plan

Economic policymaking is often judged by its outputs — growth rates, inflation prints, employment data. But the inputs matter just as much: the gathering of information, the weighing of trade-offs and the signaling of priorities. The fourth session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference opens on Wednesday in Beijing, providing the world with a window through which to view its deliberative process.

Over the past weekend, the Standing Committee of the 14th CPPCC National Committee finalized the agenda for the annual session of the country's top political advisory body, in which the participants will hear and deliberate the work report of the Standing Committee of the 14th CPPCC National Committee, review how last year's proposals were handled and sit in on the annual gathering of the National People's Congress to discuss the Government Work Report. In the process, they will examine the draft outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), a blueprint that will shape fiscal priorities, industrial policy, regional development and social reform.

The start of a new five-year plan marks a hinge moment in China's long-term economic and social trajectory. In such a year, its top political advisory body's consultative work takes on added weight. Concentrating deliberations on the forthcoming plan is about pooling expertise and building consensus around the to-do list in the country's modernization in a turbulent global environment.

The CPPCC National Committee's performance over the past year points to its efforts to embed professional knowledge into the planning process. In 2025, its more than 2,000 members submitted over 5,900 proposals; more than 1,400 members provided some 12,000 reports on socio-economic issues and public concerns; around 6,000 consultative and public welfare activities reached more than 4 million people nationwide. The scale reflects a structured endeavor to connect policy discussion with field research, grassroots realities and sectoral expertise.

Such groundwork matters because the economic landscape remains complex. China's GDP grew by 5 percent in 2025, a hard-earned outcome. At home, stimulating consumption, adjusting the real estate sector, managing demographic changes and remedying the local government debt problem continue to test policymakers. Growth targets cannot be divorced from employment, fiscal sustainability or the quality of expansion. Constructive debate on how to balance steady growth with productivity gains and fairer income distribution is indispensable as the new plan takes shape.

Strengthening technological capability presents

another priority. China's basic research still requires stronger systemic support. Decisions about resource allocation therefore carry long-term consequences. How to better support efforts to resolve critical bottleneck issues, and how to prompt more breakthroughs in emerging industries are among the questions demanding answers.

Releasing domestic demand is equally pressing. Increasing demand requires measures to support job creation, expand the middle-income group, strengthen social safety nets and improve public services such as childcare and eldercare. These measures are social policies, but they are also macroeconomic levers. A more secure household sector is a more confident spending sector.

Regional disparities and the urban-rural divide call for long-term actions. Despite the historic success in its fight against absolute poverty, gaps in income levels and access to public services remain. Addressing these imbalances is closely linked to investment strategy, labor mobility, consumption patterns and fiscal transfers. More targeted efforts to integrate rural vitalization with broader development goals are critical to promote social fairness and sustain domestic demand.

Across all these domains runs a common thread: sequencing. Policymakers must preserve short-term stability while advancing structural reforms that may yield benefits only over time. This is precisely where the top political advisory body drawing members from academia, business, industry and research institutions can play a distinctive role. Its value lies in aggregating specialized knowledge, stress-testing policy assumptions and feeding informed recommendations into the legislative and executive process.

The two sessions that open this week — the annual session of the NPC starts on Thursday — will attract global attention for good reason. In a world marked by the policy volatility of major economies and shifting geopolitical currents, China's five-year planning framework signals a commitment to continuity and long-term orientation. It fosters the confidence of predictability about the direction of the world's second-largest economy and its ability to anchor expectations as specific measures evolve.

The emphasis on professional consultation, reliable data, field research and engagement with public concerns underscores one of the underlying forces in China's policymaking approach: long-termism combined with down-to-earth pragmatism and well-formed flexibility. By refining its new five-year blueprint through broad-based deliberation, China is seeking not only to address its own structural challenges but also to project a measure of stability and certainty into an increasingly uncertain world.

## Ending war intermediate global concern

The hostilities initiated by the United States and Israel against Iran continue, with violence spreading across the region, impacting the Gulf oil trade and international shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. It is imperative that the US and Israel, whose actions clearly violate the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, immediately cease their aggression.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a series of telephone talks with his counterparts of different countries on Monday in which he stressed that countries must not be allowed to attack others at will, urging the international community to reject any act that violates international law to prevent the world from reverting to the law of the jungle.

Speaking with his counterparts from Iran, Oman and France, Wang called for an immediate ceasefire to avoid further escalation of tensions and prevent the conflict from spreading to the entire Middle East. As Wang stressed, all parties should make joint efforts to prevent further spillover of the conflict, avert an irreversible deterioration of the humanitarian situation and support Oman in continuing its mediation efforts.

The US-Israeli attacks on Iran and Iran's retaliatory strikes on Israel and US military bases in other Middle Eastern countries have resulted in a heavy loss of life, destruction of property and devastating consequences for international trade and global markets, as evidenced by the surge in oil prices and the retreat of equities. It is imperative that the hostilities end.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said in reply to a question on the situation of the Strait of Hormuz, energy security is crucial to the global economy, and the countries concerned have a responsibility to ensure a stable and unimpeded energy supply. China urges all parties to safeguard the safety of navigation in the strait, and prevent further impact on the global economy.

But the situation remains in an escalating spiral, because the stated goal of the US and Israel is regime change in Iran. Iran will continue to retaliate strongly to calm domestic grief and seek vengeance for the assassination of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. This will lead to a protracted war that serves no party's interest.

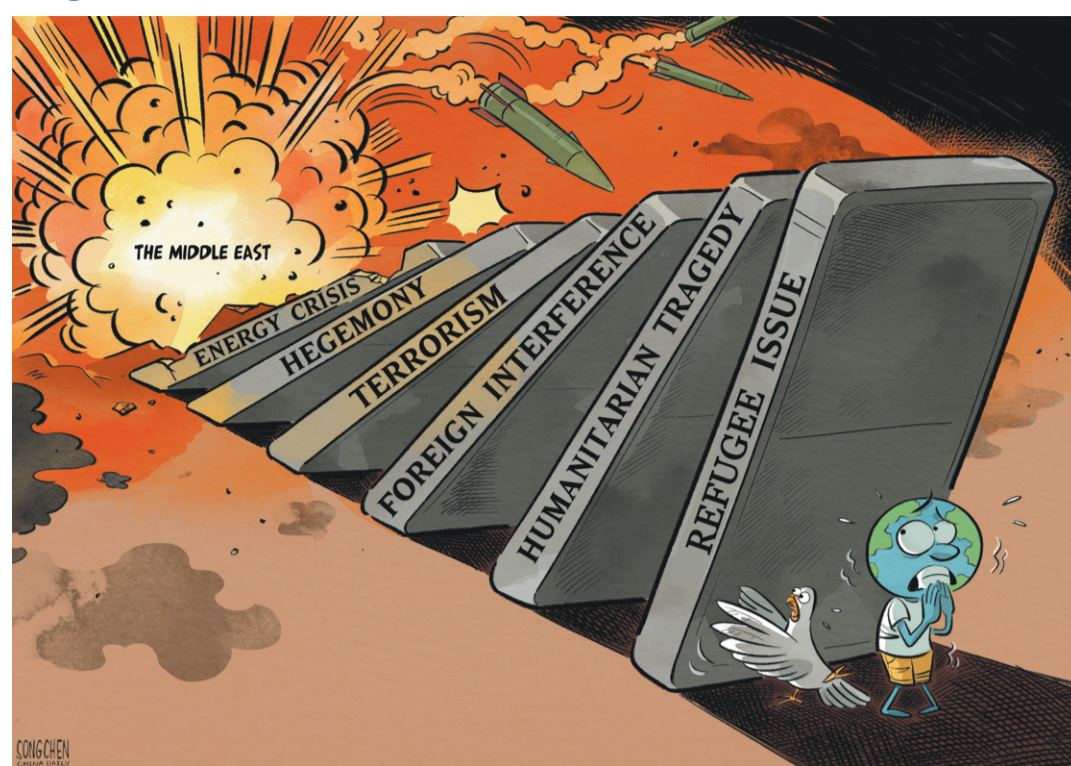
Under these circumstances, China has urged both sides to return to the negotiating table to cease the hostilities through dialogue. This approach aligns with the international consensus that sustainable peace can only be achieved through dialogue and negotiation. China's call for restraint and dialogue reflects its commitment to maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East.

Washington should heed the calls and concerns of the international community and the widespread domestic opposition to its military action against Iran. Opinion polls conducted by Reuters and CNN indicate that the majority of US citizens polled oppose the US attacks on Iran. The lack of congressional authorization for the attacks, a legal requirement for the US to wage war, has also sparked domestic criticism.

History has repeatedly shown that war and aggression only lead to destruction and suffering. The current situation underscores the urgent need for all parties involved to exercise restraint and prioritize diplomatic engagement over military confrontation.

With US President Donald Trump warning that the war against Iran could go on for weeks, the potential for the situation to spiral out of control and spread further will only increase. The international community must recognize the gravity of the situation and work collectively to bring an end to the fighting, ensuring that the path forward is guided by responsible diplomacy, respect for sovereignty and adherence to international law.

Song Chen



## Opinion Line

## UK's scapegoating sanctions of Chinese entities ill-advised

If economics teaches anything, it is that policy inconsistency carries a price. The United Kingdom's decision to impose a new round of sanctions on Chinese enterprises under what it calls "Russia-related" grounds is such a case in point.

The UK sanctions on Chinese entities over the Ukraine crisis are unilateral moves lacking basis in international law and without authorization from the United Nations. The sanctions weaken the very "rules-based system" and the "international law" the UK professes to defend. No wonder a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce expressed the country's resolute opposition to the move.

The UK's ridiculous "justification" for the move rests on China being an "enabler" of Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine. China implements dual-use materials export controls strictly in accordance with the law. The normal commercial exchanges between China and Russia should not be subject to the UK's policy. On the contrary, the UK's broad-brush penalties on Chinese entities are more like geopolitical signaling.

The deeper issue is Europe's own security predicament. Multiple European studies have documented how decades of underinvestment have left Europe structurally dependent on the United States to build a defense umbrella. The Ukraine crisis did not create this imbalance; it exposed it.

Groundlessly scapegoating China diverts attention from a harder truth: Europe's security architecture has long been subcontracted to Washington. As debates in Berlin, Paris and Brussels increasingly acknowledge, strategic

autonomy cannot be built on slogans. It requires resources, unity and institutional reform. Sanctioning Chinese companies will not solve Europe's credibility gap; it may, however, deepen economic fragmentation at a moment when growth is already fragile.

As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reiterated at the Munich Security Conference last month, the regional issues, including the Ukraine crisis, should be resolved through dialogue and consultation. Beijing is not a party to the conflict and has dispatched special envoys to facilitate talks. As Wang said, Europe should not be "on the menu" but "at the table". The conflict is on European soil; a durable settlement requires European actions.

Europe has every right — and responsibility — to help establish a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture of its own. Yet, building such an architecture means stepping up to the plate to address root causes, not increasing the length of sanctions lists.

During his visit to China in January, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer agreed to pursue a long-term and consistent comprehensive strategic partnership with China featuring mutual respect, high-level engagement and expanded cooperation in trade, investment, finance and climate. China remains one of UK's largest trading partners, with bilateral trade in goods and services running into tens of billions of pounds annually — supporting jobs, investment and supply chains across the UK. Those are not abstract figures. They reflect complementarity.

Starmer's visit highlighted to the UK the importance of tapping Chi-

na's stability and growth potential for the UK's economic renewal.

Against that backdrop, the new sanctions look like a reverse swing, something Starmer vowed to avoid before his China trip. Consistency in foreign policy is a prerequisite for credibility. If the UK promises a "long-term and consistent" approach in January but reaches for unilateral arbitrary penalties in March, mutual trust will naturally erode. Investors notice. So do diplomats.

China, for its part, has signaled it will take necessary measures to safeguard the legitimate rights of its enterprises. What would serve both is a sober reassessment in London: Are these sanctions grounded in solid evidence and international legitimacy? Or are they a symbolic gesture designed to demonstrate "toughness" while sidestepping Europe's internal strategic debate?

The UK has historically taken pride in its pragmatic statecraft. In a turbulent world, pragmatism means distinguishing between real security threats and rhetorical constructs. And it means realizing that win-win cooperation — with differences properly managed through dialogue — can be a stabilizing force rather than a vulnerability.

The Starmer government should approach differences through consultation rather than confrontation. It should revoke the unilateral sanctions on Chinese entities. Above all, it should resist the temptation to peddle convenient fallacies about China's "role" in the Ukraine crisis to obscure Europe's own overdue reckoning with its security future. Strategic maturity demands nothing less.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Standards for humanoids will better regulate their use

**Editor's note:** The technical committee for humanoid robots and embodied intelligence standardization under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology released a standards system for humanoid robots and embodied artificial intelligence on Saturday. The six-part system is China's first top-level framework covering the entire industry chain of humanoid robots. Liang Liang, secretary-general of the committee, and Jiang Lei, its vice-chair, spoke to China Central Television about the objectives of the standards system and the prospects of humanoid robots being used in everyday tasks. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

The newly issued standards system aims to unify technical specifications and evaluation criteria throughout the industry. This will help reduce the cost of collaboration and adaptation across the industry chain and promote large-scale, generalized development of components. It is also hoped that the system of standards will guide research and development resources to focus on core areas and help avoid low-level and redundant R&D.

Humanoid robots and embodied intelligence technologies are being iterated rapidly. The technologies involved include computing, materials, hardware and software. In such a fast evolving field, there is an urgent need to formulate unified standards for the industry. Most pressing is the need for safety standards.

Ensuring humanoid robots can be used safely, as well as cybersecurity and data security, should be given top priority. This necessitates having standards governing the management of their batteries and the safety and reliability of the hardware, such

as rules relating to when the robots can make decisions on their own and when humans should intervene. In all these aspects, standards are urgently required. When safety standards are introduced, public trust in humanoid robots is likely to increase, accelerating the application of robots.

The committee will take the lead in developing some core standards concerning key components, data and models.

It is recommended that the public embrace emerging technologies and humanoid robot products, while refraining from having overly high expectations in the short term. People should use the products in a gradual and step-by-step manner to form good usage habits and promote the implementation of related applications. The committee will develop standards for the application of humanoid robots in each scenario based on user feedback and the pace of product iteration.

People have already witnessed the rapid development of humanoid

robots: they can do backflips, parkour and even perform tasks that ordinary humans cannot. Yet they need to become more reliable to share more of the work of humans.

Notably, humanoid robots can play a significant role in "3D scenarios" — dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs that people are unwilling to perform.

People have been talking about the Spring Festival Gala show, which featured performances of humanoid robots. Some ask whether the robots are ready to work in ordinary households, since they have demonstrated such strong capabilities.

However, several challenges need to be overcome for humanoid robots to enter more real-world scenarios. Bottlenecks exist in data technology, computing power, the generalization ability of models and the development of components such as dexterous hands and electronic skin. If these bottlenecks are not addressed effectively, it will be difficult for humanoid robots to operate in ordinary households.

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