



### ‘Sports event economy’ fuels consumption

Multiple Chinese cities have recently intensively held sports events, with analysts saying the surge is expected to translate into consumption growth 11

### Why Chinese para athletes achieved historic feat

The Chinese Paralympic athletes demonstrated a spirit of self-respect, confidence, and resilience at the just concluded Milan-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games 15

### 15th Five-Year Plan blueprint a global ‘opportunity list’

This installment of “Decoding the Book of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China” explores how the blueprint outlined in the 15th Five-Year Plan can be translated into an “opportunity list” shared with the world 8-9

#### Smart marine platform



Geng Hai 1 marine ranch complex is pictured off the coast of Yantai, East China's Shandong Province on March 17, 2026. It serves as multifunctional intelligent ecological marine ranch platform for fishing, recreation, and scientific and technological research and development. Photo: VCG

### China calls for Afghanistan-Pakistan talks, ceasefire

By Shen Sheng

Amid turmoil in the Middle East, including a Hormuz blockage that drives up global oil prices, China is taking concrete actions to help neighboring countries to secure peace, stability, and development.

On Monday local time, the United Nation Security Council adopted a China-penned resolution extending the mandate of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for three months. Meanwhile, Yue Xiaoyong, China's Special Envoy for Afghan Affairs, traveled between Afghanistan and Pakistan to conduct shuttle diplomacy, urging both sides to exercise restraint and to achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible, earning appreciation from both countries. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Tuesday also called for Afghanistan and Pakistan to engage in face-to-face talks at the earliest date, and achieve a ceasefire.

Analysts said China's diplomatic practice, which does not carve out spheres of influence or stir up bloc confrontation in its neighborhood but instead fosters stability and prosperity, is among the scarcest and most trustworthy public goods in today's turbulent world.

In an explanation of vote on the UN Security Council draft resolution extending the mandate of the UNAMA, China's permanent representative to the United Nations Fu Cong said China commends the efforts made by UNAMA and supports it in better fulfilling its mandate.

“As the penholder of the Resolution, China thanks Council members for their support and cooperation,”

### ▶ Linking Iran war with China serves no one's interest: expert US denies Trump visit is tied to whether China assists in Hormuz

By Zhao Yusha

A Financial Times report, which hinted that US President Donald Trump threatened he might postpone his China visit if Beijing does not help the US reopen the Strait of Hormuz, has drawn immediate denials from multiple senior US officials.

Analysts said the swift, coordinated pushback suggests that Washington is wary of tying the Middle East conflict to its relationship with China, recognizing that further strain would not serve US interests at a time of escalating tensions.

In an interview with CNBC's Brian Sullivan in Paris, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bes-

sent said “if the meetings are delayed, it wouldn't be delayed because the president demanded that China police the Straits of Hormuz.”

When the reporter said that “there was a report out to that effect this morning,” Bessent replied, “That's completely false.” “If the meeting for some reason is rescheduled, it would

be rescheduled because of logistics. The president wants to remain in DC to coordinate the war effort and that, you know, traveling abroad at a time like this may not be optimal,” Bessent noted.

Bessent's remarks came after the Financial Times published its interview with

## ▶ Permission granted



The India-flagged LPG carrier *Nanda Devi* arrives at Vadinar Port in Gujarat, India, on March 17, 2026. Iran granted permission for the vessel to transit the Strait of Hormuz. Photo: VCG

# Cold response shows 'growing divide between US and allies'

▶ US, from Page 1

the US president, saying that Trump was expecting China to help unblock the Strait of Hormuz before he travels to Beijing at the end of this month.

Jumping on the Financial Times report, some foreign media outlets, such as the BBC, started to hype that "Trump told the Financial Times that he might postpone the meeting if China did not help unblock the Strait of Hormuz – a critical waterway for the Gulf's energy shipments." The New York Times also followed the false narrative, saying "President Trump warned that he could postpone a meeting set to begin in just over two weeks if China refuses to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz."

When asked in the Oval Office on Monday afternoon if his trip to China was still on, Trump said, "I don't know, we're working on that right now." "We're speaking to China. I'd love to, but because of the war, I want to be here. I have to be here, I feel," Trump said. "And so, we've requested that we delay it a month or so," Trump said, according to CNBC.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt likewise said on Monday that changing the dates of Trump's trip to Beijing is "really just a matter of the timing" and the president is primarily focused on the war with Iran.

Hours after Washington's categorical rejections to false reports, a spokesperson of China's Foreign Ministry also commented on the matter.

In response to a question from a Global Times reporter, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said on Tuesday that China has noted

that the US side has already publicly clarified the inaccurate media reports by stating that the reports are completely false and emphasizing that the visit is unrelated to the issue of shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

Lin said that China and the US have maintained communication over President Trump's visit to China, without providing more details.

## Misleading rhetoric

The Financial Times and other Western media reports leave readers with an impression that Trump is pressuring China to help the US reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which is misleading, said Li Haidong, a professor at China Foreign Affairs University. The framing reflects what he describes as attempts to shift responsibility for the US-Israel conflict with Iran onto Beijing, while stoking further hostility between the two countries, Li told the Global Times.

Subsequent clarifications from US officials suggest Washington does not intend to link China-US relations to its strikes on Iran, Li said. Washington understands the importance of its relationship with China and knows that dragging it into the Middle East conflict would serve neither country's interests, he said.

The Diplomat published an article earlier this month headlined "Why China Won't Help Iran," claiming that "Beijing cares about the oil, not the regime."

Absurd claims from Western media such as "China remains idle on Iran" or "China could emerge as a winner" represent yet another attempt to shift blame and redirect attention, according to an opinion published by the People's Daily.

The Western media are simply applying an outdated alliance-based framework to China's partnership-based, non-aligned approach, and cling to the theory that weapons and wars can solve everything, said Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University.

Amid the current tensions surrounding Iran, some Western media narratives have amplified the so-called "China factor." These narratives reflect Western media's unease over China's influence in the Middle East, as they try to frame China-US relations as inherently confrontational and to escalate the perceived confrontation without giving consideration to the consequence, Liu said.

## 'Not our war'

Trump on Monday complained that US allies are reluctant to answer his call to join a White House-proposed multinational mission to escort oil tankers through the strait.

"We've protected them from horrible outside sources, and they weren't that enthusiastic. And the level of enthusiasm matters to me," Trump said at a press conference.

Chinese analysts said the US' call for help in the Strait of Hormuz has drawn little action from allies, but instead shown the world the growing divide between Washington and its allies.

"What does... Donald Trump expect a handful or two handfuls of European frigates to do in the Strait of Hormuz that the powerful US Navy cannot do?" Germany's defense minister Boris Pistorius said on Monday, Reuters reported. "This is not our war. We have not started it."

## China's diplomacy 'a rare, trustworthy public good' in turbulent world

▶ China, from Page 1

Fu said, per Xinhua.

He said the resolution reiterates deep concerns over the economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and emphasizes the need to strengthen humanitarian assistance and support Afghanistan's development needs. "We call on traditional donors, particularly those countries that bear historical responsibility toward Afghanistan, to resume and increase their aid to Afghanistan as soon as possible."

## Shuttle diplomacy

From March 7 to 14, Special Envoy Yue Xiaoyong visited both Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan, he met separately with Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi and Minister of Industry and Commerce Nooruddin Azizi. In Pakistan, he held talks with Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch and Mohammad Sadiq, Islamabad's special envoy for Afghanistan, urging both sides to remain calm, reach a ceasefire as soon as possible, and resolve differences through dialogue. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan expressed appreciation for China's mediation efforts and said they are willing to address the issue through political and diplomatic channels.

Qian Feng, director of the Research Department at National Strategy Institute of Tsinghua University, said that faced with the dual challenges of turmoil in the Middle East and lingering issues in Afghanistan, China has not chosen to inflame tensions, stand by as a bystander, or resort to military intervention. Instead, China has continued to promote dialogue and negotiation over confrontation through the UN platform and regional diplomacy, reflecting a diplomatic philosophy that prioritizes talks over force.

"Such an approach represents one of the scarcest and most trustworthy public goods in today's turbulent world and global governance system," Qian stressed.

The Taliban in Afghanistan claim that a Pakistani military airstrike on a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul killed over 400 people and injured 250 others, CBS News reported Tuesday.

Pakistan rejected the claim as false and said it "precisely targeted military installations and terrorist support infrastructure" on Monday night, according to Reuters.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian stated at Tuesday's regular press conference that China hopes that both Afghanistan and Pakistan will remain calm and exercise restraint, engage in face-to-face talks at the earliest date, and achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible.

Zhu Yongbiao, director of the Center for Afghanistan Studies at Lanzhou University, said that Afghanistan faces a range of complex difficulties, including domestic development constraints, tensions with neighboring countries, international sanctions and non-traditional security threats. These multifaceted challenges make external mediation particularly necessary.

"As a common neighbor of both Afghanistan and Pakistan, China has established a trilateral coordination mechanism with the two countries, which provides a solid foundation for mediating tensions between Kabul and Islamabad," Zhu said. He also recalled that China has previously played a constructive role in facilitating dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, helping ease tensions and promote the development of bilateral relations, while consistently supporting both countries through concrete actions.

