

INSIGHTS

EU's 'Three-Supplier Rule' Doesn't Add Up

Clear Voice 

By GONG Qian & ZHANG Mengran

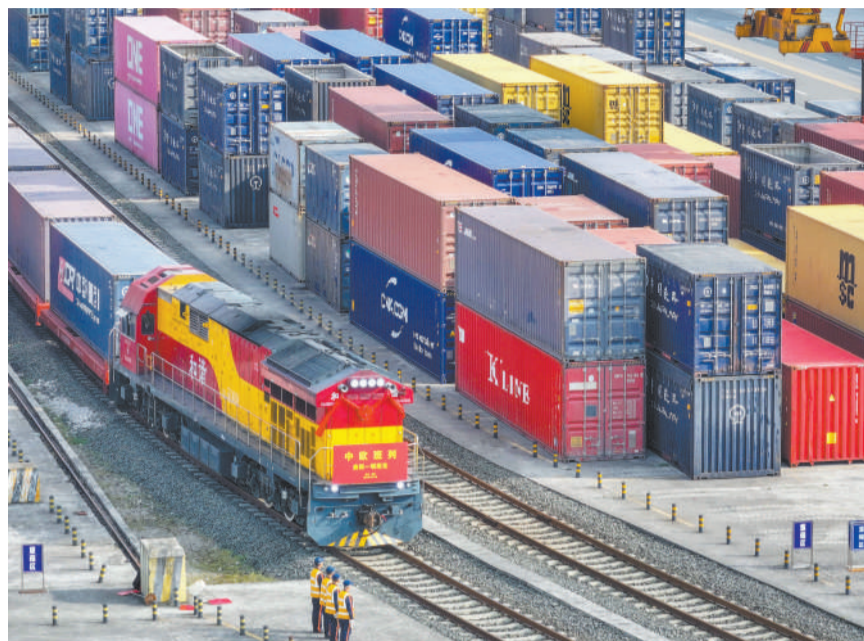
The *Financial Times* (FT) recently reported that the European Union (EU) is drafting a "three-supplier rule." Under the new rule, companies would be limited to buying about 30 percent to 40 percent of components from a single supplier and source the rest from at least three different countries.

As the rule could be tabled at the EU leaders' summit as early as June, this is clearly another in a long list of EU's "de-risking" moves from its go-to play-book.

Previously, the EU's Critical Raw Materials Act set a 65 percent cap on sourcing from any single non-EU country. The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, ostensibly a climate tool, effectively serves as a trade barrier, with a Chinese subcontractor excluded from the Lisbon Metro project. Now, the "three-supplier rule" therefore seeks to extend this administrative intervention from raw materials and infrastructure to the entire manufacturing sector.

In essence, this is blatant protectionism cloaked in "supply chain security" and yet another example of the politicization and securitization of economic and trade issues.

Europe's reliance on Chinese supply is the result of market competition. A report by EuroToday on May 18 explained that, "Many supply chains have been built around China not only because of cost, but because Chinese suppliers often combine scale, technical capacity, logistics networks and processing infrastructure that alternative suppliers cannot immediately match." According to a 2026 report by the European Court



A China-Europe freight train departs from Guiyang International Land Port in southwest China's Guizhou province, February 15, 2026. (PHOTO: VCG)

of Auditors, China provides 97 percent and 71 percent of the EU's magnesium and gallium, respectively.

These figures reflect China's decades of industrial accumulation and technological iteration. The EU's attempt to use administrative mandates to sever market division is like cutting the feet to fit the shoes, a solution that doesn't fit it.

Supplier selection should ideally strike a comprehensive balance between cost, quality and efficiency. However, political motives are distorting market choices. This undermines the Most-Favored-Nation and national treatment principles that China legally enjoys under the WTO. China has repeatedly expressed its firm stance on various occasions, pointing out that such practices violate fundamental WTO principles.

The demonstration effect is alarming: if all countries impose discriminatory barriers under the banner of "security,"

the multilateral trading system risks collapse. While claiming to champion multilateralism, the EU is dismantling the very platform it helped build.

When all is said and done, Europe will bear the consequences. Forcing companies to diversify procurement will directly elevate costs. While multinational giants might absorb the burden of managing multiple supply chains, small and medium-sized enterprises — which constitute the vast majority of European businesses — lack substantial financial reserves and bargaining power. For them, the "three-supplier rule" could be a matter of survival.

As reported in the financial analysis platform InvestingLive on May 19, "Companies currently running concentrated supply arrangements will face meaningful compliance costs and margin pressure, as they build out diversified supplier networks, potentially pushing up input costs across European

manufacturing at an already difficult moment."

Ironically, while many companies appear to source from India or Vietnam, the raw materials still largely come from China. This simply lengthens and increases the cost of their supply chain, without reducing their dependence on China. The European Commission has acknowledged that efforts to diversify critical raw materials are progressing slowly, and imports from some strategic partners have actually declined.

Spending more money and taking longer routes only to maintain the same dependence — this is the true cost of the EU's "de-risking" strategy. Yet, EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic is planning to impose punitive tariffs on Chinese chemical products and machinery. Caught between a rock and a hard place, European manufacturing is left with very little breathing room.

The "three-supplier rule" is a slippery slope. China possesses the world's most comprehensive manufacturing system, while Europe boasts advanced technologies, renowned brands and abundant capital. The two sides are naturally complementary and mutually dependent.

The real threat to Europe's security has never been high-quality, affordable Chinese products, but rather artificially manufactured antagonism and estrangement. Last month, Sefcovic signed a memorandum of understanding on critical minerals with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. In this rush to form alliances, is Europe truly enhancing its resilience, or merely riding on the back of someone else's success?

Cooperation brings mutual benefit, while confrontation leads to mutual harm — a timeless truism. Supply chain security can never be achieved through administrative decoupling; true security lies solely in open cooperation.

Voice of the World

China's Global Recognition Grows Day by Day

Edited by QI Liming

Recently, China's diplomatic momentum has been on a steady rising trajectory. From major Western powers to global South nations, and from neighboring countries to transoceanic partners, the frequency of China's diplomatic engagements knows no bounds. The country's cooperation has become indispensable on the world stage, and the advantages it provides have emerged as a valuable and scarce public good in today's international community.

Pillar of global stability

Toomas Hanso, junior researcher at the Estonian think-tank International Center for Defense and Security, said that trips to Beijing by U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian leader Vladimir Putin illustrate the extent of China's growing role and influence in global affairs, according to Estonian public broadcaster ERR News.

According to an analysis by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), leaders of nine major European, Indo-Pacific and North American allies have visited Beijing since 2025: Australia, Canada, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, South Korea, Spain and the UK.

CFR analyzed press releases from the Chinese foreign ministry for each of the nine leaders' meetings, and several themes emerged: trade and business agreements, green energy commitments, increasing interest in technological and artificial intelligence (AI) cooperation, all of which underscored global governance and increased people-to-people ties.

When commenting on the summit meeting between the U.S. and Chinese leaders, Lyle Goldstein, international affairs scholar of Brown University in the United States, pointed out that in the current situation of regional and global instability, the U.S. and China are not rivals but rather have many common interests and goals. Cooperation between the two countries is of vital importance for "avoiding the global economy from losing control and falling off the cliff."

Jack Shanahan, senior fellow, Institute for America, China, and the Future of Global Affairs, said on the Johns Hopkins University website that regarding AI more broadly, the China-U.S. leaders' summit reinforced how rapidly AI has moved from a secondary issue in the bilateral relationship to a central strategic concern. Given the current state of the relationship, even limited government-to-government AI discussions will represent a constructive and welcome step.

Graham Webster, research scholar at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, said that one of the most important factors in assessing the China-U.S. leaders' meeting is the expectation that they will meet as many as three more times in 2026. The establishment of "boards" of trade and investment, so far, appears to reflect the agreement to continue talking.

Global popularity increasing

According to a *Politico* poll of Canadian, German, French and British nationals, the respondents prefer to depend on China over the United States, and say their country should move closer to China — a sentiment strongest among young people.

Jim Huay Neo, managing director and member of the managing board at the World Economic Forum, said that currently, the world is undergoing multiple transformations. Against the backdrop of rising trade protectionism and the continued uncertainty in global economic recovery, China is promoting high-quality development in various fields such as supply chains, trade and investment flows, innovation and technological breakthroughs, employment and skills training. Through practical actions of opening up, China is empowering global development and bringing greater benefits to international cooperation.

Felix Dapare Dakora, former president of the African Academy of Sciences, and an international academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said that the wave of innovation in China has repeatedly captured the attention of the entire world. "I look forward to further deepening cooperation with the Chinese scientific research team in areas such as seed industry innovation, tropical crop research and agricultural technology promotion. We will bring more scientific research achievements to the agricultural personnel in Africa and China, and continuously enhance the agricultural production capabilities of both sides, making greater contributions to global sustainable development," he said.

Meanwhile, Silvia Pozzi, Italian sinologist, and professor of Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca, said that Italy and China are both ancient civilizations. There are many commonalities in their cultures. The dissemination of Chinese culture in Italy has advantages. "I hope that my work can help more Italian readers overcome the language barrier and gain a comprehensive understanding of a vibrant and colorful China," she said.

Basic Science Funding Ignites Sci-tech Innovation

Opinion

Edited by QI Liming

Funding for China's Young Scientists Fund (Category C) is set to increase by over 50 percent year on year, with an expected addition of 12,000 projects. This move, announced by the National Natural Science Foundation of China on May 13, will provide a continuous pipeline of reserve skilled personnel for basic research.

According to Patrick Cramer, president of Germany's Max Planck Society, a leading research body in Europe, rapid changes in geopolitics have brought "massive changes in the global flow of talent," something which he devotes a lot of thought to, he said during an interview in Shenzhen in April.

"One trigger is the new administration in the United States [which has] changed visa regulations, science funding and, for example, attacked Earth system science — [meaning] certain fields of research have become difficult," he said.

"But there is another trigger — the rise of China. There is more money in China, so China is building more institutions and there are more academic jobs available," Cramer said.

According to *Science* magazine, in May the U.S. National Science Board (NSB) was putting the finishing touches to a two-page report on China already having raced ahead of the U.S. in key scientific fields.

According to the NSB report, in 2000 China ranked fourth in global research spending, accounting for five percent of the world total. The U.S. outpaced the European Union (EU)'s 27

countries by a margin of 39 percent to 24 percent, and Japan was third at 15 percent. In 2010, the U.S. still had a comfortable lead, but China had overtaken Japan for third place. By 2024, China had nosed ahead of the U.S. — spending 1.03 trillion USD to 1.01 trillion USD for the U.S. — with each claiming roughly 30 percent of the world total and the EU a distant third.

As Caroline Wagner, professor of Public Affairs, the Ohio State University, wrote in an article for the U.S. news outlet *The Conversation*, China's rapid rise in science has hit a milestone. According to a March 2026 report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, China's investment in research and development has matched and even surpassed that of the United States by purchasing power.

Wagner said that she has tracked

China's rise across every major database for more than a decade, and China has achieved sci-tech milestones in many aspects. "These are not isolated data points. They mark a structural shift in where the world's scientific frontier is being built," she added. China's ascent is good news. More knowledge, generated by more researchers across more institutions, expands the global pool of discovery from which everyone can draw. The world benefits when science thrives.

Cramer added that Europe had lessons to learn from China. "China is showing you how to organize people to cooperate to do big building projects, big bridges and big engineering projects." The philosophy of the Max Planck Society was more important than ever — for science to be "the voice of reason in a rapidly changing world," he said.

Wearable Robot Helps SMA Kids to Stand

Hi-Tech

By GONG Qian & CAO Xiuying

Children with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) type II can now stand on their own, thanks to the assistance of a wearable robot weighing just 0.96kg.

Chinese researchers have achieved a breakthrough in spinal neuromotor rehabilitation, offering a novel therapeutic approach for SMA, a complex and rare disease. The findings were recently published in *Nature*.

Clinical trials showed that after six

weeks of robot-assisted training, six children with SMA type II, aged six to 10 years, gained the ability to perform sit-to-stand movements and demonstrated significantly improved quadriceps muscle strength, alongside enhanced femoral nerve conduction.

Children with SMA generally experience progressive muscle degeneration and weakness, with many struggling to independently perform the sit-to-stand movement throughout their lives.

Currently, available medications can only slow disease progression but cannot reverse it. Conventional lower-extremity assistive robots are designed to actively assist gait. However, for

children with SMA type II, who need enhanced muscle activation to sustain neural function, such support may further weaken already frail muscles and hinder long-term neuromuscular adaptations.

Meanwhile, conventional isokinetic resistance training devices are bulky and costly, with their minimum resistance still too high for children to tolerate.

To address this challenge, a team led by Associate Professor Feng Yanggang from Beihang University, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Peking University Third Hospital, designed this portable wearable isokinetic resis-

tance training robot.

It ensures that muscles generate maximum tension throughout the entire range of joint motion under safe conditions, thereby achieving optimal training outcomes.

Integrated with a gamified human-computer interface, children complete high-intensity training through interactive level-based games.

This represents a completely new training paradigm distinct from conventional wearable robots, Feng said. Instead of relying on external assistance for short-term recovery, it stimulates physical potential by actively increasing movement difficulty.



People attend the 2026 "Poetry Connects the World" Global Celebration of Classical Chinese Poetry at the All-Russia Exhibition Centre in Moscow, Russia, May 26, 2026. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

Unleashing 6G Connectivity by 2030

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For urban governance, it will support digital twin cities, enabling real-time monitoring and management of transport, energy and environment.

Additionally, 6G's integrated sensing and communication capabilities will provide sub-meter positioning for drones and ensure stable emergency communication during disasters, boosting low-altitude economy and public safety.

Enabling holographic communication, immersive entertainment, and wide-area interconnection of multi-

agent intelligent systems are areas where 6G will impact daily public life. "In the future, users could have holographic interactions with distant family," Shao said.

More significantly, 6G is intended to evolve into an intelligent-agent communication network, where robots, smart devices and digital assistants collaborate on tasks like home care or travel planning.

As standards, technologies and applications fall into place, a new era of intelligent connectivity blending the virtual and physical worlds is on our doorstep.