

China demonstrates remarkable ability to set a long-term vision and actually execute it

GT: You once said that the West misunderstands China because of fear and a reluctance to learn. How can China's development path speak for itself in ways that challenge Western assumptions about governance and development?

Nair: I first argued this point quite some time ago. Today, however, I think it is a case of deliberately not wanting to understand and refusing to learn. Their existing narrative is used to embellish a sense of superiority that only the Western political system, methods of managing the economy and its social contract can create prosperity and a well-functioning society.

China's development model has challenged all of that, and in doing so, it has forged its own path to development and the uplifting of its people. China's development path has spoken for itself and spoken to the world.

GT: In the face of increasing global challenges, such as geopolitical conflicts and supply chain volatility, how does China's 15th Five-Year Plan demonstrate resilience by using long-term planning to counter short-term disruptions?

Nair: It is worth noting that although many geopolitical crises may appear short-term, their ramifications are significant and long-lasting. I think the greatest way China has demonstrated resilience through its 15th Five-Year Plan and its development path is by committing to non-interference in the sovereign affairs of other countries and avoiding involvement in hot wars, despite disagreements with other powers. In other words, China is fully concentrated on developing itself, and, by virtue of that, is also helping the world by acting as a stabilizing force.

Another key takeaway is the emphasis on self-reliance. It is very clear that the plan is essentially a reflection of the Chinese government's strategic aim to focus on technological growth and self-reliance so as to respond effectively to increasing challenges abroad. When war or other disruptions occur outside China, the country can ensure energy security and food sufficiency. This approach is embodied in China's Five-Year Plan and will serve the country well.

GT: What aspects of China's 15th Five-Year Plan do you pay particular attention to?

Nair: What I see from the plan is its prioritization of social well-being, especially in rural areas. The plan emphasizes rural and regional development. In my view, rural development is the future, not just for China, but for

Editor's Note:

2026 marks the commencement of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), a pivotal phase in the nation's medium to long-term development. A successful venture starts with a good plan and with clear goals set. At this critical juncture, where a profound restructuring of the global order converges with a tipping point in the technological revolution, China's five-year plan is poised to inject momentum and certainty into global development, charting a steady course for the new journey ahead.

In its "New Blueprint, New Opportunities" series, the Global Times (GT) invites Nobel laureates in economics, former central bank governors, core decision-makers of international organizations and renowned

much of the poorer countries of the world. We cannot all live in big cities. We cannot all work in factories. We cannot all be crowded together. The world needs to shift toward a more decentralized population distribution framework. China is leading the world in this kind of thinking.

China has urbanized significantly over the last 30 years, trained many engineers and builders, built beautiful cities, and cleaned up the environment a lot. But at the same time, it also recognizes that rural development and the hinterland are, in many ways, the center of everything – because that's where our food and our natural resources come from.

China fortunately sees rural development as a strategic pillar, focusing on improving infrastructure, digital access, education and healthcare in the countryside while also protecting local culture and the environment. This isn't just about catching up with cities; it's about creating a different, more balanced and sustainable way of life. China is demonstrating that modernization and rural vitality can and must go hand-in-hand.

GT: One of your research areas is resources and generational fairness. From a long-term perspective, how does the 15th Five-Year Plan serve as a solid basis for the sustainable development of China beyond 2030?

Nair: Many problems in the world today stem from unsustainable growth and short-term thinking. That is because we have embraced a model of economic growth that uses resources as though there is no tomorrow. Our generation, with all the technology we have, could easily deplete many resources and destroy opportunities for the next generation if we do not change course. This is unfair.

economists from countries with diverse civilizations, different economic systems and stages of development to deeply analyze how the 15th Five-Year Plan will reshape the underlying logic of China's interaction with the world and to explore the "anchor of certainty" and "new paradigm of development" this plan offers to a turbulent world.

In the seventh installment of the series, GT reporter Wang Wenwen spoke to Chandran Nair (Nair), founder and CEO of the Global Institute For Tomorrow, an independent pan-Asian think tank based in Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur, and a member of the Global Agenda Council on Governance for Sustainability and Experts Forum of the World Economic Forum.

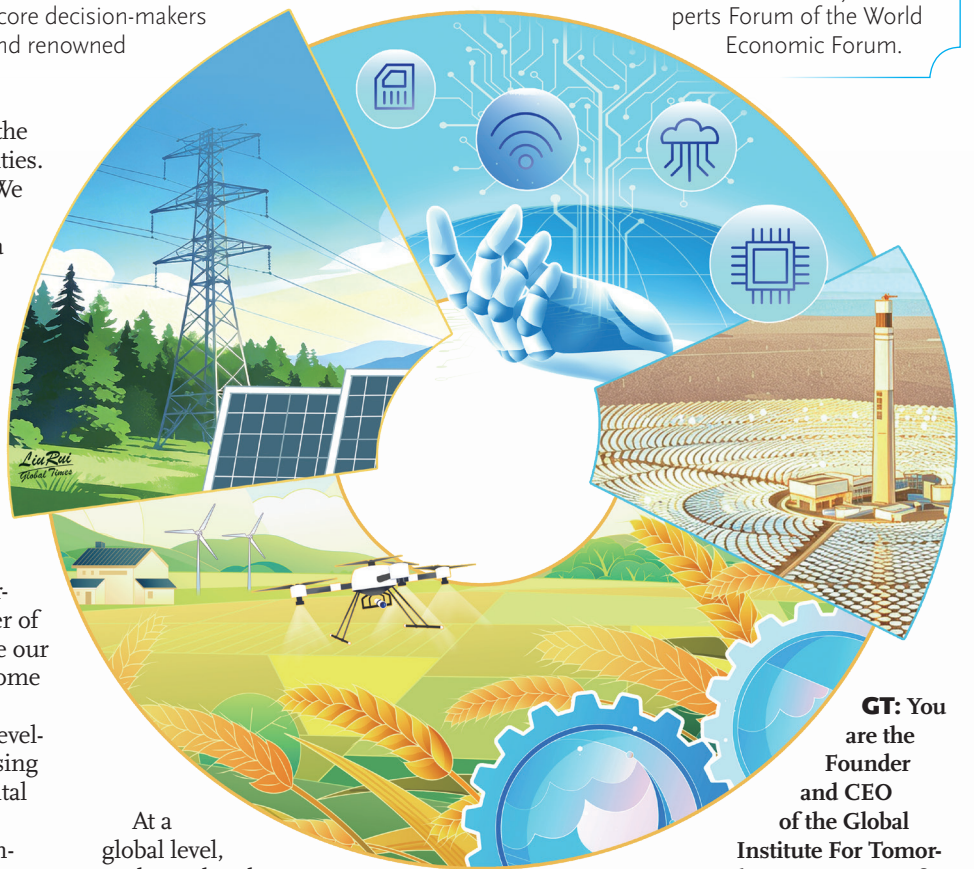


Illustration: Liu Rui/GT

At a global level, we have already done this in many areas. We have destroyed much of the biosphere through pollution and over-exploitation. We say we must boost consumption, but if we do so without checks and balances, we will essentially be supporting an unsustainable extractive model.

Sustainable development is difficult and needs superior management skills and governance skills to provide for a population of 1.4 billion while achieving intergenerational fairness. In recent years, China has begun to promote high-quality development, which is also embedded in its 15th Five-Year Plan. This concept of development should ensure that we implement policies which guarantee we don't use everything up and that we develop in a sustainable way. This will help create a solid institutional and policy foundation for China to grow without jeopardizing the rights and opportunities of future generations.

In that sense, the 15th Five-Year Plan is not only about 2030; it is about building a sustainable, fair and livable China for 2040, 2050 and beyond. If China gets this right, it will also have positive impacts on the world.

GT: You are the Founder and CEO of the Global Institute For Tomorrow. What is your vision for a "global tomorrow"? What is China's role in this context?

Nair: For me, a "global tomorrow" is one in which a majority of countries have attained a good degree of self-sufficiency by working with their respective neighbors and others. This will be based on upholding peace while focusing on high-quality development.

We need to redefine simple metrics like GDP to ensure we are creating fair, equitable and sustainable societies. We need to develop a growing consciousness among people about the world we live in and the need for cooperation, not competition.

It's clear that the world is looking to China for its leadership on this front. So far, China has demonstrated something remarkable that other countries have not been able to achieve: the ability to set a long-term vision and actually execute it. That is why, in my view, the "global tomorrow" will be significantly shaped by China's choices today.



Chandran Nair
Photo: Courtesy of Nair

