

OPINION: UPCOMING PLENUM P.25 | FEATURES: SUPPLIERS PREPARE FOR PARIS OLYMPICS P.34

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Cover Photo: Members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee pose for photos in traditional attire before the opening of the top political advisory body's annual full session in Beijing on March 4 (XINHUA)

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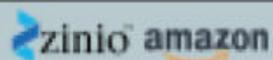
The enduring charm of Beijing's Central Axis

FORUM

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EDITOR'S DESK

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Out of Many, One

Fifty-six ethnicities, one nation. This phrase captures the diversity and unity of China, a multiethnic nation of 1.4 billion people. Besides the Han, who make up some 91 percent of the population, 55 other ethnic groups, collectively known as ethnic minorities, call the country home.

Their population ranges from 19.6 million for the Zhuang, the largest, to 3,544 for the Tatar, the smallest, according to the 2020 national census. Most Zhuang people live in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, whereas the Tatar inhabit the north of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

The ethnic groups were identified based on field research after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. Their ancestors have coexisted on this land since antiquity. When the Qin Dynasty unified the country for the first time in 221 B.C., it brought today's Guangxi and Yunnan Province, where there are relatively large ethnic minority populations, under its jurisdiction.

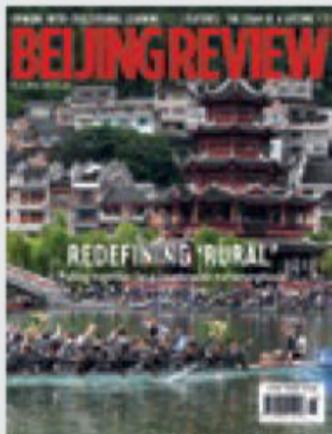
In the long course of history, there were times when different ethnic groups interacted in peace and times when they fought for dominance. Several ethnic minority groups succeeded in seizing the throne to found dynasties, such as the Yuan (1279-1368) led by Mongolians and the Qing (1644-1911)

led by Manchu people.

All this is evidence that all ethnic groups are builders of the Chinese territory, writers of the Chinese history and creators of the Chinese culture. There is no reason whatsoever to equate the Chinese nation solely with the Han people and the Chinese culture solely with the Han culture. Despite varying in customs, the 56 ethnic groups identify themselves as part of the Chinese nation, making China a community based on shared culture and civilization rather than on race.

President Xi Jinping has reiterated the importance of creating a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation. He has called for more exchanges and interactions among different ethnic groups to help them remain closely united and work jointly for common prosperity and development. During China's campaign to eliminate absolute poverty, which concluded in late 2020, the government saw to it that no ethnic group was left behind.

It is important to study China's ethnic groups in the broader context of the Chinese culture. Understanding the Chinese civilization requires taking into account all of these groups. Diversity and unity are two sides of the same coin. **BR**



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TAKE-OFF TIME!

Crew members of Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy hospital ship *Peace Ark* wave goodbye at a port in Zhoushan, Zhejiang Province, on June 16.

The vessel set sail for Mission Harmony-2024 that same day. It will visit 13 countries, including the Seychelles, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique and Sri Lanka, and provide medical services to locals there. It will also make port calls to France and Greece.

This is the *Peace Ark's* 10th Mission Harmony since its commissioning in 2008. The maritime hospital carries 100 personnel and features 17 clinical departments and five auxiliary diagnostic departments.

The vessel is China's first domestically designed and constructed standard ocean-going hospital ship. It has so far visited 45 countries and regions, providing medical services to over 290,000 people.



YU-HUI

In the Loop

High-speed train G8388 crosses the Dashengguan Yangtze River Bridge in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, on June 15. On the same day, the Yangtze River Delta, an economically vibrant region in east China, launched its first railway loop line, connecting the metropolis of Shanghai with major cities in the regional cluster.

Book Fair

The 30th Beijing International Book Fair (BIBF) commenced in Beijing on June 19, drawing a wider participation of foreign exhibitors compared with last year.

With an expanded exhibition area of 55,000 square meters this year, the five-day event gathered around 1,600 exhibitors from 71 countries and regions, showcasing 220,000 Chinese and foreign publications to visitors, according to the organizers.

The fair saw an increase of 150 overseas participants compared to the previous year, featuring 1,050 exhibitors from abroad, accounting for 66 percent of the total participants.

Compared to 2023, this year's event welcomed 15 new participating countries, including Azerbaijan, Qatar, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Nigeria.

More than 20 countries, including France, Germany and Italy, hosted national booths. Saudi Arabia was this year's

Country of Honor.

The BIBF, established in 1986, is one of the world's largest book fairs and serves as a major platform for copyright exchange, facilitating the trading of publications from China and abroad, including print books and multimedia works.

Cyber Abuse Regulation

China has taken further steps to foster a sound online environment and protect the public's interests with the release of a new set of rules targeting cyberspace violence, which will take effect on August 1.

The regulations, jointly issued by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the National Radio and Television Administration, will provide strong support to tackling cyberbullying, as the issue has sparked nationwide concern, the CAC noted in a statement on June 14.

The document defines online violence as illegal or harmful content targeting individuals, including insults, rumors, defamation and discrimination.

It proposes establishing and improving mechanisms to address violent online information, clarifying that cyberinformation service providers shall take primary responsibility for managing online content.

The rules further underscore personal information protection, as well as the monitoring of and early warning against potential online abuse.

The new directions, building upon existing laws and regulations such as those on cybersecurity and personal information protection, will further strengthen China's cyberviolence governance system, the CAC said.

The regulation has 34 articles divided into seven chapters. The CAC in July 2023 published a draft version to solicit public opinion.

Fighting Drought

Chinese authorities have earmarked 443 million yuan (\$61.1 million) in disaster relief funds to assist drought control and agricultural production in a broad swath of the country.

The funds will be used to support drought prevention and control work in the provinces of Hebei, Shanxi, Jiangsu, Anhui, Shandong, Henan, and Shaanxi, according to a statement released on the Ministry of Finance's official website on June 18.

Sweltering heat has baked parts of China, resulting in soil moisture loss and negatively affecting seed sowing and crop growth in summer, according to the statement.

The ministry said the allocated funds will be used to support anti-drought measures in disaster-affected regions such as replenishing soil moisture, replanting new crops and applying fertilizer.

These efforts will facilitate crop planting in summer and lay the groundwork for a bumper harvest in autumn, the ministry added.

Water Resources Conservation

China has witnessed remarkable progress in water management over the past decade, recording great achievements in water resources conservation and intensive use, and improvements in flood and drought prevention, the Ministry of Water Resources said on June 18.

Total water use in China has been kept below 610 billion cubic meters per year over the past decade. Over the past decade, the water supply capacity of newly-added water conservancy projects has amounted to about 200 billion cubic meters, three times that of the previous decade, according to Chen Min, Vice Minister of Water

Resources.

Chen also noted that China's flood control and drought resistance capabilities have improved as a whole thanks to strengthened early-warning measures, and improved flood control projects.

Meanwhile, China has made strides in ensuring water security for rural residents over the past decade, increasing tap water accessibility in China's rural areas to 90 percent.

Social Worker Qualification

Nearly 1.89 million people signed up for this year's social worker vocational qualification exam, held from June 15 to 16, according to official data.

The number saw a year-on-year increase of 26 percent, hitting a new high, according to the social work department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

The professional qualifications of social workers are divided into three levels: assistant social worker, social worker and senior social worker.

Currently, 1.16 million people in China have obtained professional social work qualifications. They work in areas such as child welfare, senior care services and social assistance, becoming an important force in

grassroots governance.

Childcare Services

China will increase its supply and quality of childcare services through multiple channels, and establish a comprehensive interagency regulatory mechanism for the sector, according to the National Health Commission (NHC).

Kindergartens in China generally enroll children aged 3 to 6, and childcare services are designed to take in those under the age of 3. The country has nearly 30 million children below the age of 3.

A survey has found that over 30 percent of families with children under 3 are in urgent need of childcare services, NHC official Yang Wenzhuang said on June 15 at a ceremony in Changsha, Hunan Province, to kick off a month-long national childcare services publicity campaign.

Yang added that adequate child care services will help improve the national fertility rate, ensure employment among women, and benefit infant and toddler development.

During this year's publicity campaign, the NHC will organize a series of promotional events nationwide to increase awareness of childcare services



On the Floor!

Dancers perform at the second Guozhuang dance contest (final) in Lhasa, capital of Xizang Autonomous Region, on June 14. The Guozhuang, which means "singing and dancing in a circle," is a traditional Tibetan dance.

and encourage localities to establish such services based on local conditions.

Pet-Friendly Flight

China's Shanghai on June 14 welcomed a group of pet owners returning from an overseas trip aboard a special flight that allowed them to travel in the same cabin with their dogs.

The flight carried 60 passengers and 18 dogs from Bangkok, Thailand, to Shanghai's Pudong

International Airport.

It marked the conclusion of China's first chartered flights for an overseas group tour.

Customs officials at the airport said they had streamlined procedures for the arrival of the pets, including allowing them to skip quarantine periods if they passed on-site checks.

Officials said the flight would blaze a trail for future special international flights for pet owners, with demand for such services on the rise thanks to rising pet ownership levels in Chinese cities.



'Tis the Season

A host promotes wild mushrooms via livestream at a market in Kunming, Yunnan Province, on June 17. The peak harvest season for wild edible fungi, a popular seasonal delicacy in Yunnan, has arrived.

Charging Infrastructure

China has established a vehicle charging infrastructure network that boasts the world's largest number of installations, the most extensive services, and the most diverse range of options, according to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the country's top economic planner.

As of the end of May, China had installed 9.92 million chargers throughout the country, marking a significant 56-percent year-on-year expansion, Li Chao, an official from the NDRC, told a press conference on June 18.

Among them, public charging facilities totaled 3.05 million units, surging 46 percent year on year, while the number of private charging facilities climbed 61 percent to about 6.87 million units, according to Li.

This impressive growth aligns with the flourishing new-energy vehicle (NEV) sector in China, which is the world's

largest market for NEVs. Both production and sales figures are experiencing rapid growth.

The term NEV is used to designate automobiles that are fully or predominantly powered by electric energy, which include plug-in vehicles, battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and fuel cell electric vehicles.

The country aims to add 3,000 charging piles and 5,000 charging parking spaces in highway service areas this year, Li added.

Anti-Dumping Probe

On June 17, China launched an anti-dumping investigation into certain pork and pig byproducts imported from the European Union (EU), according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The investigation has been launched in response to an application submitted by the China Animal Agriculture Association on behalf of the domestic

industry, the ministry said in a statement.

The application has met all the conditions for filing an anti-dumping probe, according to the ministry.

The probe will look into certain pork and pig byproducts originating from the EU from January 1 to December 31, 2023.

It will also investigate any damage done to related Chinese industries from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2023.

The probe is expected to end before June 17, 2025, but may be extended for half a year under special circumstances.

Forex Settlement Deficit

China's commercial banks saw a net foreign exchange (forex) settlement deficit of 113.3 billion yuan (\$15.6 billion) in May, according to the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE).

In yuan terms, forex purchases by banks stood at 1.2505

trillion yuan (\$172.3 billion), while sales reached about 1.3638 trillion yuan (\$187.9 billion), SAFE data showed.

China's forex market was generally stable in May, sustaining a balanced flow of cross-border capital, said Wang Chunying, deputy head and spokesperson of the administration.

Wang added that market expectations remained stable that month, with rational and orderly forex transactions and a notably narrowed forex settlement deficit. This indicated that the supply and demand situation in the forex market further improved.

In May, the net inflow of funds under the goods trade category increased 76 percent month on month and 23 percent year on year, continuing to underpin cross-border capital flows, Wang said.

The net capital inflow into China's domestic bond market also remained at a high level, she said.

In May, the net purchase

NUMBERS



of domestic bonds by foreign investors stood at \$32 billion, an increase of 86 percent month on month.

China's forex market has the solid foundations to maintain stable operations, bolstered by the country's consolidated economic recovery and the market's growing resilience, Wang said.

Industrial Output

China's value-added industrial output, an important economic indicator, went up 5.6 percent year on year in May, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed.

The industrial output measures the activity of enterprises each with an annual main business turnover of at least 20 million yuan (\$2.8 million).

On a monthly basis, the entire industrial output edged up 0.3 percent in May from the previous month. During the January-May period, it rose 6.2 percent year on year.

Commenting on the data, NBS spokesperson Liu Aihua

told a press conference on June 17 that "90 percent of regions, 80 percent of industries and nearly 60 percent of products registered increases [in output] from a year ago."

As the major growth driver, the equipment manufacturing sector contributed 2.6 percentage points of the entire industrial output growth, Liu noted, adding that services also picked up pace with the production index reporting a faster 4.8-percent increase.

Retail Sales

China's retail sales of consumer goods, a major indicator of the country's consumption strength, climbed 4.1 percent year on year in the first five months of this year, according to NBS data.

Retail sales during the period topped 19.52 trillion yuan (\$2.7 trillion), according to data from the NBS.

Online retail sales jumped 12.4 percent year on year to nearly 5.77 trillion yuan (\$795.2 billion) in the January-May period, with online retail sales of

physical goods expanding 11.5 percent and accounting for 24.7 percent of the total retail sales of consumer goods.

In May alone, retail sales of consumer goods expanded 3.7 percent year on year to top 3.92 trillion yuan (\$540.3 billion), the data showed. Meanwhile, retail sales excluding automobiles went up 4.7 percent to over 3.53 trillion yuan (\$486.5 billion).

Retail sales in rural areas expanded 4.1 percent year on year to 510 billion yuan (\$70.3 billion) in May, while that in urban areas increased 3.7 percent to over 3.41 trillion yuan (\$470 billion).

In May, retail sales of goods rose 3.6 percent from a year ago to more than 3.49 trillion yuan (\$481 billion), while food and beverage industry revenue hit 427.4 billion yuan (\$58.9 billion), an increase of 5 percent year on year.

Private Businesses

The number of private business entities in China had reached

180.45 million by the end of May this year, accounting for 96.4 percent of the country's total business entities, according to the State Administration for Market Regulation.

This proportion was up from the 95.5 percent registered in 2019, the administration said, adding that China is now home to nearly 55.18 million private companies and over 125.27 million self-employed businesses.

China's private sector has played a key role in boosting the country's hi-tech and emerging industries.

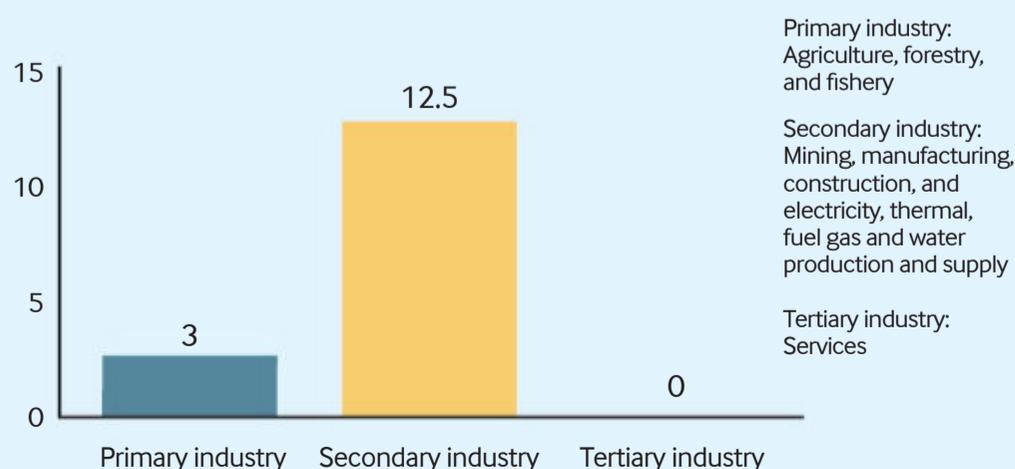
For example, private businesses currently account for 96.1 percent of the total manufacturing companies in China, up from 95.9 percent in 2019.

The share of private businesses in the scientific research and technical services sector has risen from 91.9 percent in 2019 to the current 94.4 percent.

Earlier this year, China announced that it had started drafting a law concerning the promotion of its private economy.

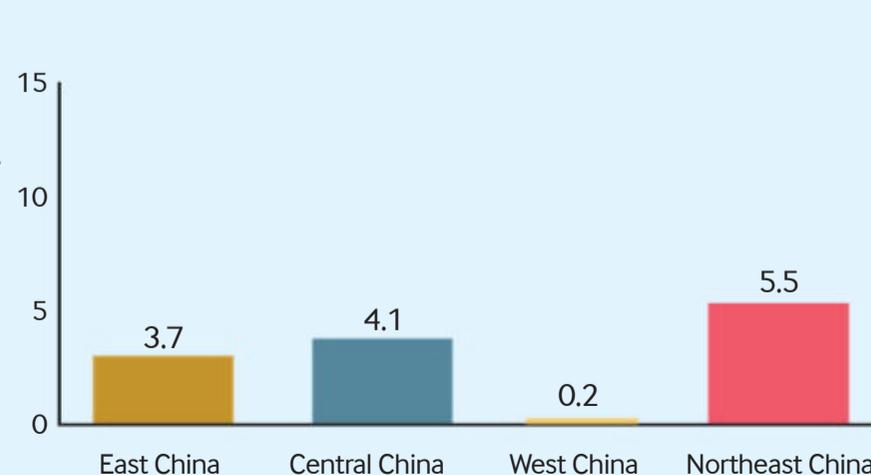
Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Sector

January-May (% y.o.y.)



Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Region

January-May (% y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

THIS WEEK WORLD



GERMANY

Abdülkerim Bardakcı (center) of Türkiye vies for the ball with Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (second, right) of Georgia during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group F match between the two countries in Dortmund on June 18



UNITED STATES

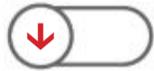
Firefighters work to control a wildfire in Gorman, 100 km north of Los Angeles, California, on June 16. The wildfire has since burned about 6,500 hectares, forcing at least 1,200 people to evacuate



SINGAPORE

Workers clean up an oil spill on Tanjong beach on Sentosa Island on June 16. A Netherlands-flagged dredger collided with a Singapore-flagged bunker vessel at the Pasir Panjang Terminal near Sentosa and led to a spill on June 14





MALAWI

Members of the defense force carry the casket of the late Vice President Saulos Chilima, who died in an air crash, during his funeral in Lilongwe on June 16



DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Russian President Vladimir Putin is welcomed by top leader Kim Jong Un upon his arrival at an airport in Pyongyang on June 19



KUWAIT

A power outage in Hawalli Governorate on June 19. Multiple areas faced power cuts as scorching temperatures pushed the electricity grid past its limits during peak hours



↓ REELECTED CHAIRMAN OF CHINA UNICOM

Chen Zhongyue has been reelected as chairman of the eighth board of directors of China United Network Communications Group (China Unicom), one of the country's big three telecommunications providers.

Chen has extensive experience in management and the telecommunications industry. He joined Beijing-based China Unicom in January 2021 as an executive director. Before that, he served in several posts at China Telecommunications Corp. Ltd., another leading Chinese telecommunications company, including as its executive vice president.

Born in 1971, Chen began his professional career in 1990 after graduating from Shanghai Post and Telecommunications School with a major in international mail and telecommunications services. Chen attained a master's degree in economics at Zhejiang University in 1998 and another in business administration for senior executives at Xiamen University in 2011.



Setting Boundaries for AI

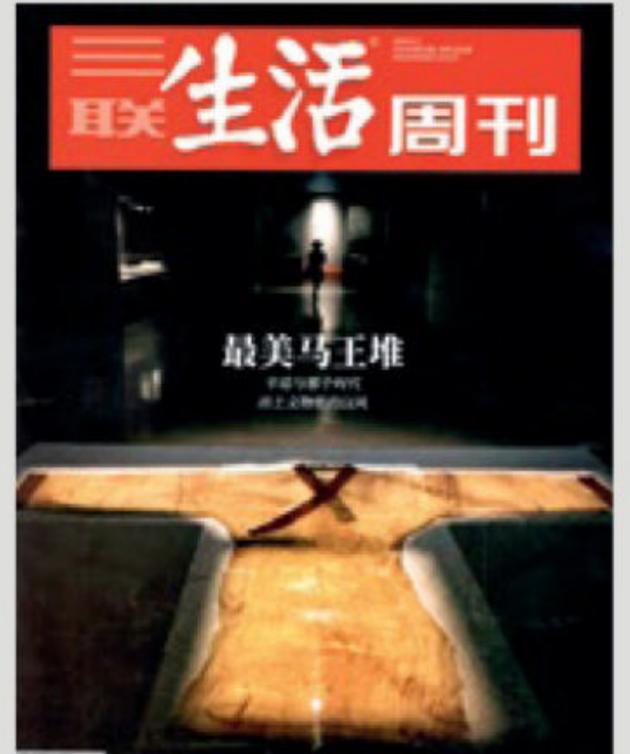
People's Daily Overseas Edition
June 17

As the variety of applications for artificial intelligence (AI) increases, so do the opportunities for this technology to be misused. In the field of education, AI is now being misused to complete homework, with students not only asking AI to answer questions, but to complete entire essays and other lengthy tasks.

Using AI as a ghostwriter deprives students of the experience of the learning process, in which they are supposed to

read critically, review, consolidate and express themselves in writing. Encountering difficulties in learning is inevitable and the ultimate goal of the process is to overcome these difficulties and make acquiring knowledge part of one's own life experience.

For this reason, AI must be kept within certain boundaries. It can assist teachers in efficiently finishing repetitive tasks such as homework grading and students in quickly retrieving and compressing background information, but not to do all homework for students.



Han Dynasty Time Capsule

Lifeweek
June 3

This year is the 50th anniversary of the excavation of the Mawangdui Tomb, which dates back to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). The excavation of the tomb, located on the eastern outskirts of Changsha, Hunan Province, lasted from 1972 to 1974. Usually, tombs dating back to the Han Dynasty are favorites of grave robbers, but Tomb 1 of Mawangdui was discovered

“Air pollution has enormous implications for health. We know that improving air quality and global public health is practical and achievable.”

Elena Craft, President of the Health Effects Institute, as the institute jointly released a report with the UN Children's Fund on June 19, revealing air pollution accounted for 8.1 million deaths globally in 2021

“Young innovative chefs worldwide, like young farmers, are underestimated and not visible to the public enough. It is important to support them in making contributions to sustainable development.”

Glindys Virginia Luciano, an expert from the European organization EIT Food, as the World Food Forum on June 19 announced a week of activities in restaurants worldwide, calling for less food waste and more support for young chefs

intact. More importantly, the tomb chamber was sealed by special white paste mud, leaving the artifacts inside almost complete, unscathed by time. The discovery of the well-preserved female corpse shocked the world at the time, and the identity of the corpse was confirmed: Xin Zhui. With global attention focused on Changsha, Tombs 2 and 3 of Mawangdui were excavated one by one. Tomb 2 was the tomb of her husband Li Cang, Marquis of Dai in the Changsha State in the early Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 8). The corpse in Tomb 3 is thought to be her son.

Among the many unearthed burial articles are exquisite textiles and lacquerware, utensils containing various delicacies and silk books covering astronomy, geography, philosophy, medicine, and other topics. No Han tombs had ever been preserved so well before this excavation. Mawangdui reflects all aspects of life over 2,000 years ago, like a life manual for that time, unfolding in front of people in the 20th century.

Today, researchers are still unraveling the mysteries of this treasure house. All of the cultural relics unearthed from the tombs are kept in the Hunan Museum. In late 2017, the museum recreated the pit of Tomb 1 in the same size as the original one, attracting swarms of visitors to the museum.

Call for 'Climbing Companions'

News.chengdu.cn
June 11

Recently, a mother paid 518 yuan (\$71) to hire a college student majoring in sports to carry her 3-year-old daughter to the top of Mount Tai in Shandong Province, sparking debate online.

The student did not feel particularly exhausted when reaching the summit. During their climb, he left the toddler's mother and her group far behind and even stopped several times to wait for them. According to the

mother, the student and her daughter climbed to the top within two hours and waited for her there for half an hour. Reading her account, netizens could not help worrying about the safety of the ascent, particularly with the young child being entrusted to a total stranger. They suggested the mother, or other parents who are interested in following her lead, supervise the process.

The college student has since been contacted by dozens of people who need a "climbing companion." If there is really a demand for the business, services must be regulated and standardized to ensure safety and the rights of both tourists and the climbing companion by signing agreements.

↓ RENOWNED DIRECTOR TO ADAPT *THE THREE-BODY PROBLEM*

Zhang Yimou, one of China's most prominent and prolific directors, is set to try his hand at sci-fi, as the director of a film adaptation of *The Three-Body Problem*.

A key figure of China's fifth generation of filmmakers, Zhang is beloved by film buffs at home and abroad for his films such as *Raise the Red Lantern*, *Hero* and *Full River Red*. He also masterminded the pageantry of the opening and closing ceremonies at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Summer Games and the 2022 Beijing Olympic Winter Games.

The Three-Body Problem, Hugo Award winner Liu Cixin's masterpiece, has been translated into more than 30 languages. It was previously adapted into animation, radio dramas and television series, including this year's big-budget take by Netflix, which has become a global hit.



"It will hurt our cooperation with China. It will hurt ourselves. So it's a tragedy for the German car industry."

Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer, Director of the Center for Automotive Research in Bochum, Germany, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, warning the EU will damage their business by imposing additional tariffs on electric vehicles made in China

"When a country is small, it can grow fast, but as it becomes larger, it is impossible to maintain the same speed. China has recognized this and has transitioned from high-speed growth to high-quality development."

Pablo Machado, Business Management President of paper pulp giant Suzano Asia, in a recent interview with Xinhua



COVER STORY

INCLUSIVENESS NURTURES DIVERSITY

Exchange of ethnic culture brings stability and prosperity in a multiethnic country

By Lu Yan



A tourist dressed in a distinctive ethnic costume poses for photos at Dongfengyun Town in Mile, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture of Yunnan Province in southwest China, on June 13. The town is a popular tourist attraction built with the main theme of culture and art

In a captivating video that has swept across Chinese social media in recent weeks, a middle-aged dancer moves with masculine energy, his bold and graceful gestures expressing the untamed spirit of the Mongolian grasslands. This leading performer is Jiang Tiehong, the 56-year-old dean of the College of Dance at Minzu University of China based in Beijing. Jiang is the fifth-generation lead of this iconic dance piece *Keep Galloping*. Many netizens commented that he epitomizes

the idea of the “tough man with a gentle heart.”

Born into a family of dancers in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, Jiang, a member of China’s Korean ethnicity, grew up in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, immersed in the rich cultural tapestry of the region. It was there that his father, a renowned dancer and choreographer, instilled in him a deep appreciation for the rhythmic, full-bodied movements of Mongolian folk dance.

Keep Galloping, created in the early 1980s, was a landmark work that drew inspiration from the spirited movements of Mongolian horse people. The dance captured the boundless energy and aspirations of China in transition since the initiation of reform and opening up in 1978.

“*Keep Galloping* has not only provided the spiritual nourishment that people sought during that transformative era, but also inspired generation after generation to forge ahead,” Jiang said. As the dance’s torch-bearer, he has dedicated himself to preserving its essential Mongolian character while continuously refining and evolving the piece. “We must preserve the original cultural flavors and build upon them to better express the essence of national identity through dance.”

As the video of Jiang’s performance spreads online, more people are discovering the power of this dance. Many netizens expressed in the comment section of his video their admiration for the artist, as well as for the charm of ethnic dances and culture.

“Helping more people understand the profundity and richness of Chinese ethnic culture is a truly meaningful endeavor,” Jiang added.

A multiethnic country

About 3,000 ethnic groups live in over 200 countries and regions in today’s world. The overwhelming majority of countries are inhabited by multiethnic groups. China is one of them.

China has 56 ethnic groups. The Han ethnic group has the largest population, accounting for 91.11 percent of the total, according to the seventh national census, conducted in 2020. The populations of the other 55 ethnic groups are relatively small, and so they are customarily referred to as ethnic minorities.

The Han Chinese population grew by 4.93 percent between 2010 and 2020, while the population of the ethnic minorities collectively grew by 10.26 percent. During that period, the ethnic minority ►►

population's proportion of the total increased by 0.4 percentage points. The populations of the ethnic groups vary greatly in number. Some have a population of several million, while some only have several thousand.

Some of China's ethnic groups inhabit vast areas, while others live in individual compact communities in small areas or side by side with other groups. In some cases, minority peoples can be found living in compact communities in areas inhabited mainly by Han people, while in other cases the situation is the other way round. Many minority peoples have part of their population living in one or more compact communities and the rest are scattered across the country.

China's Ethnic Policy and Common Prosperity and Development of All Ethnic Groups, a white paper published by the Information Office of the State Council, the country's highest state administrative organ, in September 2009, detailed the diverse origins and development of China's ethnic groups and the local conditions that had shaped them.

Some 4,000 to 5,000 years ago, five major ethnic groups—the Huaxia, Dongyi, Nanman, Xirong and Beidi—emerged on what is now the Chinese territory. Through continuous migration, living together, intermarriage and exchange, the five ethnic groups gradually became integrated into one, from which new ethnic groups continually sprang up. Some of the latter remain distinct to this day, while others have disappeared in the course of history due to wars, deterioration of the ecological environment or loss of identity. Although the origins and histories of ethnic groups in China are different, the overall trend of their development is to form a unified, stable country with multiple ethnic groups.

“As exchanges and fusion among various ethnic groups deepened, the distribution pattern of living together and complementing each other increasingly solidified the relationship of interdependence and common development,” the white paper said.

All ethnic groups enjoy the freedom of religious belief, have the right to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and have the liberty to preserve or change their folkways and customs.

Over the years, the Chinese Government has adopted various methods to eliminate factors undermining the unity of all ethnic groups, and maintained this unity, striving to realize common prosperity and development through the concerted efforts of all ethnic groups.

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, most minority areas were economically and socially underdeveloped and lacked infrastructure. For

example, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region had no railway and Xizang Autonomous Region even had no highway. People of the ethnic minorities engaged mainly in traditional agriculture and herding.

The Constitution stipulates that “The state does its utmost to promote the common prosperity of all ethnic groups in the country.” Since the adoption of the reform and opening-up policy, the government has carried out several significant measures to quicken the advancement of the ethnic minorities and minority areas. With assistance from economically advanced parts of China and preferential policies, the ethnic minorities and minority areas have left behind stark poverty and backwardness and achieved tangible results in their economic and social progress.

From 2012 to 2022, the per-capita disposable income of urban residents in areas with large ethnic minority populations increased by an annual average of 7.7 percent, and that for rural residents increased by 10.2 percent, according to the National Ethnic Affairs Commission. Additionally, a large amount of infrastructure has been built in these areas, including railways and industrial parks.

“Helping people to improve their lives is the foundation of forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, because they can keenly feel the support from the country,” Pan Wei, chair professor of the faculty of social sciences and Director of the Institute of Global and Public Affairs at the University of Macao, said at a forum on June 12.

He noted that over the past decade, enhanced exchange and interaction have helped people from different ethnic groups in China learn more about one another and become more united. This has in turn brought greater stability and prosperity to the country.



Hezhe people wearing traditional costumes perform during a Hezhe cultural festival in Fuyuan, Heilongjiang Province in northeast China, on July 2, 2023

Unity in diversity

According to Pan Yue, head of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, the Chinese civilization has always been inclusive and never sought to replace diverse cultures with a single one. “In China, unity fosters diversity, and the diversity enriches the unity. And the process of collision and integration was not aimed at eliminating each other but at enhancing each other, resulting in the emergence of a more inclusive civilization,” Pan Yue said at the forum on June 12.

Pan also emphasized that efforts to protect the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups will be further stepped up in the future, contrary to claims from some in the West that such efforts are being weakened. “It’s the Chinese nation’s responsibility to protect ethnic languages and cultures that have always been inseparable parts of the Chinese civilization,” he said.

In addition to government initiatives, ethnic communities have also been proactive in sustaining their traditions at the grassroots level. Indigenous language education, folk festivals, and the passing down of artisanal skills from one generation to the next all contribute to the vibrant cultural mosaic that defines contemporary China. Social media and the Internet have further empowered minority groups to share their stories and connect with wider audiences through short videos, livestreams, photos and other media. For example, on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, hashtags related to ethnic culture have attracted hundreds of billions of views. Douyin has also launched incentive programs for livestream anchors who focus on promoting ethnic music and dance.

In recent years, there has been growing incorporation of traditional ethnic costumes and patterns into Chinese fashion. Designers have drawn inspiration from the vibrant textiles and intricate



A horsehead fiddle class at a primary school in Fuxin Mongolian Autonomous County, Liaoning Province in northeast China, on May 15. Fuxin has stepped up efforts in the protection and passing on of traditional Mongolian ethnic culture by offering students various lessons such as horsehead fiddle and Mongolian dance to help bring new vitality to traditional ethnic culture

embroidery of distinct ethnic attire, reinterpreting these cultural elements for contemporary apparel and accessories. Garments featuring bold geometric patterns, vibrant colors and ornate embellishments inspired by Tibetan, Miao, Dong and other ethnic minority styles have become highly sought-after, both domestically and internationally. This cross-pollination of traditional craftsmanship and modern fashion has not only elevated the visibility of China’s diverse cultural heritage, but also allowed these time-honored designs to transcend their regional roots and reach a wider audience.

With the embracing of ethnic fashion trends, the active preservation of festivals and traditions, and greater digital exposure, it has become very commonplace for both Chinese and international tourists to immerse themselves in these vibrant ethnic cultural experiences when traveling around the diverse regions of China. These experiences have now become an integral part of the China travel experience.

“We have been seeing a sales increase in our products,” Pu Xinyuan, a salesperson at a workshop featuring

Xilankapu, a type of brocade that is part of traditional Tujia ethnic culture, at a tourist resort in Chongqing, told *Beijing Review*. “Many tourists, especially young people, have bought them as souvenirs. Some even bought more online when they were back home and gave them to their friends.”

“The popularity of ethnic culture is benefiting the people of these ethnic groups as well, as it makes it possible for them to increase their incomes,” Pu added. “Take us as an example, the increased income of ethnic embroiderers and artists can ensure the sustained development of Tujia culture and Xilankapu, forming a virtuous cycle.” **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
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A CHINESE INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

By Zhu Lun

Roughly the size of Europe but home to around twice as many people, China is diverse not only in geography, but also in language, culture and ethnicity. Addressing domestic ethnic affairs in contemporary China is the country's system of regional ethnic autonomy. This system is administered through five autonomous regions, 30 autonomous prefectures and 120 autonomous counties or banners, which are collectively referred to as ethnic autonomous areas.

The origins of China's system of regional ethnic autonomy lie in the long history of exchange between its ethnicities, which differs greatly from that of Europe.

The European experience

The concept of national autonomy arose in Europe as a result of the interplay between the quest for national independence and the dominance of imperial rule.

Beginning with the Roman Empire, different linguistic and cultural groups in Europe have been classified using the term "peoples." In the 10th century, the term "nations" emerged in Latin-speaking areas, and was exclusively used to distinguish peoples born in different places. After the 15th century, the term "nation" gradually evolved into a concept with exclusive political implications, associated with independent countries.

In the later stages of the Enlightenment, to avoid ethnic conflicts, a proposal was made to define

"nation-states" based on the historically formed linguistic and cultural homogeneity of "peoples." At this time, the doctrine of "one people, one nation, one state" was considered by some Europeans to be a fundamental theory of nationalism.

However, this theory faced practical challenges. The establishment of some countries and empires in Europe generally became dominated by ruling classes of powerful ethnic groups, while relatively weaker ethnic groups found themselves in subordinate positions. For these ethnic groups, seeking their own autonomy within countries ruled by other ethnic groups became a fallback choice.

In the 19th century, nationalist political ideas and movements spread from Western Europe to Central and Eastern Europe. This shift prompted nations including Hungary to launch three consecutive wars of independence (in 1848, 1859 and 1866), driven by a desire to liberate themselves from the rule of the Austrian Habsburg Empire.

The challenge then became how to reconcile the contradiction between imperial rule and national independence. Drawing on nationalist theory, which posits that a nation develops from its people and manifests as an independent country, European intellectuals in the 1860s began using "nationalities" to refer to peoples who had not established independent countries. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was the first to officially adopt this concept.

In 1867, the Kingdom of Hungary and the Austrian Habsburg monarchy signed the *Ausgleich* (compromise), forming the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Austrian emperor also assumed the title of King of Hungary, but neither Austria nor Hungary was subordinate to the other, and each maintained power over their own respective peoples. This arrangement extended to the dozen or so other ethnic groups, or nationalities, within the empire, marking the origin of national autonomy in Europe. By examining the practice of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it can be seen that allocating a certain degree of political power to the ruling groups of various nationalities was carried out in exchange for their acceptance of the imperial order. This is the political backdrop of European national autonomy.

However, some ruling groups or dominant forces

of certain ethnicities were dissatisfied with the designation and status of "nationality" and constantly sought to mobilize their own peoples under the banner of "nations" to establish independent sovereign states, giving rise to ethnic separatism in Europe. It is these national independence movements that lead to the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and others, after World War I.

Around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, European colonial powers also began to offer degrees of this "autonomy" as a compromise to ease conflicts with their colonies. Countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand all experienced a period of "autonomy" before gaining independence.

It is because of a certain orientation against imperialism and colonialism during a specific historical period that national autonomy was endowed with a positive significance in European political culture.

China's approach

China's concept of regional ethnic autonomy stands in stark contrast to the European model of national autonomy.

The first distinction lies in the definitions of the entity practicing autonomy. China's system of regional ethnic autonomy integrates ethnic factors with natural and economic geography to establish its autonomous regions (provincial level), autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties/banners with different administrative levels. Each of these areas is home to a diverse mix of ethnic groups. Even

in relatively small autonomous counties, there may be as many as 20 or 30 ethnic groups. Moreover, in all ethnic autonomous areas, the Han ethnic group accounts for a certain proportion of the population, and in many places, it even constitutes the majority. Therefore, the autonomous entities or governing bodies naturally comprise people of multiple ethnic groups, rather than being exclusive to any single ethnic group.

It is worth noting that in China, the majority of these areas incorporate the names of one or more ethnic minority groups in their names, such as Guangxi (locality) Zhuang (ethnicity) Autonomous Region, and Dehong (locality) Dai and Jingpo (ethnicities) Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province. But this does not imply that these ethnic autonomous areas belong exclusively to one or a few specific minority ethnic groups.

The second difference lies in the definitions of “autonomy.” In Europe, national autonomy involves a negotiated division of political power between imperial dynasties and rulers of various ethnic groups, packaged as “ethnic political rights.” In China’s practice of regional ethnic autonomy, however, “autonomy” does not refer to the power of a particular ethnic ruling group or the political rights of a specific ethnic group. Instead, it refers to the functions and powers of the public authority in an ethnic autonomous area.

Third, there is a difference in the political systems that safeguard the management of ethnic autonomous areas. In countries practicing Western-style democracy, the establishment of an “ethnic party” is a common phenomenon. This inevitably leads to two situations. First, ethnic parties representing ethnicities with smaller populations may have little impact on national and local political decision making, as seen in some Latin American countries with indigenous



(Above left) A rally in Lhasa celebrating the founding of Xizang Autonomous Region on September 9, 1965; (below left) electoral staff offer ballot boxes for inspection before they are sealed at a village leadership election in Lhasa on October 29, 2014; Zhoigar, a Xizang deputy to the National People’s Congress (NPC), China’s top legislature, gives an interview during an NPC annual session in Beijing on March 11, 2018

ethnic parties or alliances. In such cases, the demands of ethnic minority groups not being met may lead to the escalation of conflicts. Second, in developed regions, ethnic parties representing larger populations, after gaining regional autonomy through the electoral process, often continually demand an expansion of autonomy and local power. This can also lead to an escalation of conflict, including launching “independence referendums” under the pretext of “ethnic democracy,” as observed in Quebec in Canada, Scotland in the United Kingdom and Catalonia in Spain.

China has established a comprehensive national political system and practices socialist people’s democracy. This system includes the system of people’s congresses and the system of Communist Party of China-led multiparty cooperation and political consultation. The administration of China’s ethnic autonomous areas operates within this national political system. On the one hand, it effectively ensures national unity, with ethnic autonomous areas implementing national policies. On the other hand, it can promptly address the legitimate interests and demands of various ethnic groups, while resisting the influence of extreme nationalism and ethnic separatism.

Fourth is the new concept regarding the political rights of ethnic minorities. Those advocating national autonomy invariably consider ethnic political rights to be one of the justifying reasons. Some even go so far as to regard autonomy based on ethnic political units as an embodiment of ethnic equality.

However, when it comes to the political rights of ethnic minorities, people need to break through conceptual constraints of the discourse on “national autonomy.” China’s system of regional ethnic autonomy and its practice undeniably represent a paradigm shift.

In contrast to the “national autonomy” discourse that involves territorial delineation, China’s system of regional ethnic autonomy allows people of all ethnic groups to jointly manage national and local affairs for their own and common interests and wellbeing. The joint management of national and local affairs by all ethnic groups is a new concept for governing multiethnic societies and a new perspective on ethnic political rights that surpasses the limitations of defining the political rights of ethnic minorities as national autonomy. **BR**

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CONTRASTING ETHNIC INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

By Ma Rong

Some Western scholars have criticized China's integration-oriented ethnic policies and compared them to the assimilation policies that the West used to implement. However, those familiar with the development of China's ethnic policies can assert that the country's promotion of ethnic integration does not seek to eliminate ethnic boundaries, erase ethnic differences or pursue "ethnic assimilation."

Instead, it is based on the conscious, voluntary and autonomous participation of all ethnic groups to share strengths, complement each other's weaknesses and benefit together. This approach not only conforms to historical patterns but also meets current needs.

What is 'assimilation?'

The theory of assimilation is an important concept in Western studies of ethnic relations. "Assimilation" is defined as "the process by which individuals or groups acquire the culture, language and customs of another group and eventually become indistinguishable from that group."

Looking back at history, the assimilation policies implemented by European and American colonizers toward indigenous peoples in Africa, North America and Oceania have indeed led to tragic social consequences.

During the early colonial period in North America, white settlers employed tactics involving military superiority and cultural assimilation in a bid to subjugate and displace Native American populations.

The settlers also introduced slavery, importing African slaves for labor. This began in the early colonial period and persisted until the abolition of slavery across the United States in 1865.

In the early 20th century, the U.S. Government adopted a "melting pot" policy for European immigrants, encouraging assimilation into mainstream society centered around Anglo-Protestant culture. This often led to the loss of original identities and marginalized racial and ethnic minorities.

At the same time, the U.S. Government implemented assimilation policies for Native American communities, attempting to eradicate their traditional cultures.

And in Canada, for instance, the residential school system operated from the 19th century to the 20th century was primarily run by churches with government support. Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities to attend these schools.

The curriculum in these schools often included English language education, religious indoctrination (primarily Christian teachings), vocational training and manual labor.

Lasting effects included cultural erosion, social disintegration and intergenerational trauma.

Differences

In 1989, Chinese scholar Fei Xiaotong published an article titled *The Pluralistic Pattern of the Chinese Nation*. In 1996, he reiterated his core viewpoints, underlining that the Chinese nation is a distinct entity rather than merely a collective term for the 56 ethnic groups in China. Throughout its historical development, the Chinese nation has featured a unique structural characteristic: an intrinsic "unity in diversity" framework.

The concept of "nation" in the West originated in modern times, and its historical basis and theoretical origins are vastly different from those in China.

Discussions about nation and nationalism in Chinese society mainly arose from the influence of Western knowledge systems and discursive concepts in modern times.

But it is inappropriate to simply apply Western theories when discussing national issues in the Chinese context.

Today, China emphasizes a "sense of community for the Chinese nation." Despite dynastic shifts and periods of division, the country's historical and cultural continuity spans several millennia, marking its significance in global history.

Continuity

Since the Qin and Han dynasties (221 B.C.-A.D. 220), China, with the Central Plains region as its core, has formed a political entity. Despite frequent changes in borders and occasional shifts in the dominant groups holding central power, a unified cosmology, a civilization system centered around Chinese cultures, and a social order promoting "unity in diversity" and "education for all without discrimination" have been its enduring features.

Despite the influence of belief systems such as Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism throughout history, Chinese civilization has always been characterized by its secular nature. This stands in stark contrast to many civilizations where religion serves as a core aspect, i.e., the ideological foundation of monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

In Chinese history, the ruling class and dominant political groups emerged from both the Han people in the Central Plains as well as peripheral ethnic groups. Despite the diversity of ethnic origins among those in power, they consistently



Students make *zongzi*, a traditional snack, in Rongshui Miao Autonomous County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on June 5 during an event celebrating the Dragon Boat Festival

upheld and perpetuated the Chinese cultural system and dynastic lineage.

This phenomenon, unique to Chinese civilization, stems from its cultural tradition, which does not include the exclusive racial and ethnic concepts often prevalent in Western societies.

The Chinese nation comprises not only the various ethnic groups within China today but also those historically inhabiting Chinese territories. Throughout Chinese history, whether it be the Han group in the Central Plains or the ethnic groups on the peripheries, they have collectively formed a mosaic of peoples from different regions and ethnic backgrounds within the East Asian ecological zone.

While the Han have historically been predominant in terms of political and cultural influence, other ethnic groups, such as the Mongolians, Tibetans, and many more, have also left their imprint on the cultural diversity and historical development of China.

The continuous integration among many ethnic groups in history has formed the strong cohesion of the Chinese nation.

Over the course of historical development, many groups within the Chinese nation have retained distinct characteristics that persist to this day.

Population migrations across regions and inter-ethnic marriages have contributed to differences in physical features, attire, language, religious beliefs and customs among these groups. While some ethnic differences are readily observable, others are subtle or nearly imperceptible.

A collective identity

In Chinese history, ethnic integration refers to the gradual convergence of ethnic groups through interaction, communication and mutual understanding, resulting in the blurring of ethnic boundaries.

This process has nurtured the emergence of a larger, more inclusive ethnic community characterized by extensive consensus and coherence across many facets of social life.

As a result, individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds have developed a strong collective identity and sense of belonging, sharing common values, cultural connections, and a psychological affiliation to a broader cultural space.

Since ancient times, interactions between agricultural and pastoral communities, driven by mutual dependence and facilitated by trade and commerce, have played a pivotal role in promoting ethnic integration.

Western perspectives often regard the exchange, communication and interaction among ethnic groups in China as a conquest between nation-states, equating Han people with Chinese and the Chinese nation. They tend to label the process of growing commonality among ethnic groups as “Hanization.” This perspective can lead to misconceptions, framing the discourse within the confines of assimilation and internal colonization. To truly understand China, Western scholars must adopt a more nuanced approach to their analysis. **BR**

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Rekindling Sino-U.S. Education Cooperation

By Denis Simon

Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent reply to a letter from Lamont Repollet, President of Kean University in New Jersey, the U.S., could not have occurred at a more opportune time.

Written against the backdrop of the 50,000-student initiative announced by President Xi during a visit to the United States in November 2023, the letter emphasized the importance of educational exchanges in building positive bilateral relations, and called on universities in both countries to strengthen cooperation in pursuing China-U.S. friendship.

That initiative, which involves an offer by the Chinese Government to host 50,000 American students over the course of five years, represents an attempt to rebuild some of the bridges that have been torn asunder by a combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and the souring of U.S.-China relations since the end of the Obama administration.

We can never forget the fact that educational exchanges and academic cooperation between the United States and China has been one of the foundational elements in the bilateral relationship. Student and scholar exchanges along with research collaboration between universities have yielded many positive results for both countries.

Substantial cooperation

Today, unlike the situation in the past, there is increasing parity between the United States and China in the fields of higher education and science and technology. As a result, we have finally reached a point where the concept of "mutual benefit" actually has some substantial meaning. A growing number of Chinese universities are now ranked among the top universities in the world; these academic institutions have a world-class faculty and a state-of-the-art infrastructure for learning and teaching as well as research.

China's progress, while viewed as a type of threat to the United States by a number of observers, actually provides a unique opportunity for broader collaboration to address some of the world's most pressing and seemingly intractable problems. In fact, it is safe to say that without close U.S.-China cooperation among universities, think tanks, and government labs, it is less likely that we will be able to address in any meaningful way the broad array of key global challenges like climate change, clean energy, food security and global health.

It is rather interesting that President Xi chose to make a major statement about the role of cooperation in higher education in his reply to the leader of an American university that is involved in a joint venture campus in Wenzhou, China. There are four official U.S.-China joint venture universities—Duke Kunshan, NYU Shanghai, Tianjin Julliard and Wenzhou-Kean.

In addition, there are dozens of other types of U.S.-China cooperation projects. The cooperation between Johns Hopkins University and Nanjing University that formed the Hopkins-Nanjing Center has proven to be a truly amazing project insofar as many diplomats and international business leaders from both countries actually received their formal graduate training at that center on the campus of Nanjing University. The University of Michigan and

Shanghai Jiao Tong University along with the University of Pittsburgh and Sichuan University, respectively, have formed joint degree programs in engineering that continue to produce a steady stream of highly qualified graduates.

Of course, the four actual joint venture universities are quite distinctive in many respects. Duke Kunshan and NYU Shanghai were both forged along the idea that a greater awareness of liberal arts education could help contribute to the long-term development of Chinese universities. Within the curriculum in these universities, students from China, the United States and many other countries live and learn together both inside and outside the classroom.

They develop a strong degree of cross-cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. One major aspect that is emphasized is global awareness—that students, wherever they are from, should not only know the history and culture of their own country, but also become more knowledgeable and aware of the history and culture of countries that are different from their own. Students also are taught skills in critical thinking and problem-solving as well as ethics so that they can better debate issues and hold discussions with their peers without ending in conflict or a major dispute. It is hoped that the experiences they have within the environment of the joint venture campuses will provide opportunities for a more harmonious future by building great trust derived from more in-depth appreciation of different cultural norms and values.

New momentum needed

President Xi is right to emphasize the importance of increased student and scholar mobility between the U.S. and China. Of course, there are some in the U.S. who see the rise of China as an excuse to de-link and



Participants in a China-U.S. youth exchange program visit a rare fish species protection center in Yichang, Hubei Province, on June 12

disengage. Frankly, that would be a major mistake with negative ramifications for both countries. If there are any lessons to be drawn from the recent period of tense relations, it is that people-to-people diplomacy is the best way to build trust and understanding.

Improvements in U.S.-China relations may necessarily have to occur from the bottom up rather than from the top down. Young people as well as university faculty and high school teachers need to have more chances to interact with one another so that they can exchange ideas and information in a positive-sum fashion. With more than 290,000 Chinese students in the United States and around 1,200 American students in China, there remains a great imbalance. That is why it is so important for Americans to respond in a positive way to the 50,000-student initiative.

On the Chinese side, the China Education Association for International Exchange has been assigned responsibility for coordinating the host institutions, but unfortunately, no counterpart organization has emerged in the U.S. As a result, while some modest progress has been made in mobilizing more U.S. students to visit China, it is clear a lot more could be done if there was an accountable

U.S. private or government agency involved to facilitate the flow of information to American colleges and universities. A failure to mobilize effectively on the U.S. side certainly will result in a serious lost opportunity.

So, this is why President Xi's letter is so important right now. While the two governments continue to try to resolve their numerous differences and another trade war already is in the making, there needs to be a new revitalization of the bilateral education relationship, including more university-to-university collaboration to offset the difficulties and perhaps soften the tensions in political and military relations.

A vibrant U.S.-China relationship is not just something nice to have, but it promises to be an element of vital strategic interest to both countries. The U.S. State Department needs to remove China from the "Level Three: Reconsider Travel" advisory—officially recommending U.S. citizens

reconsider their need to travel to China—so that student mobility can grow without the current constraints that sur-

round bilateral visits.

Chinese and American students with legitimate visas and educational purposes should not be impeded from pursuing their studies. Both governments must guarantee the personal safety and security of those participating in exchange programs and cooperative research projects. And most importantly, both governments must introduce greater clarity about the treatment of data and information so that students and scholars do not become caught up within the foreign policy and national security gamesmanship that is currently being played out.

While there will continue to be disagreements between Washington and Beijing, there is no good reason why student and scholarly exchanges cannot proceed ahead unimpededly so that we can chart a more peaceful, less antagonistic bilateral relationship in the coming years. **BR**

The author is a distinguished fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington, D.C., former Executive Vice Chancellor of Duke Kunshan University (2015-20) and former senior adviser for China affairs to the president of Duke University. This is an edited version of an opinion piece first published by Xinhua News Agency
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Blaxit: A Modern Exodus?

By Wu Wenjing & Zhou Li

Amid outbursts of racial violence, the term “Blaxit” gained prominence in the United States around 2016-17 through (social) media discourse, although its origins date back to earlier discussions in the 2000s. The word “Blaxit” describes the hypothetical or actual departure of African Americans, who make up 14 percent of the U.S. population, from the U.S. to other countries, particularly African nations, driven by aspirations for improved quality of life, job opportunities, favorable tax policies, and to escape racial discrimination.

The Report on Human Rights Violations in the United States in 2023, issued by China’s State Council Information office on May 29, highlighted the prevalence of the Blaxit trend in American society.

A growing number of black Americans dissatisfied with U.S. politics and racial discrimination are choosing to leave, including white-collar workers at large corporations, small business owners, families practicing Islam or Judaism and people from low-income communities. They have established new communities in countries including Portugal, Ghana, Colombia and Mexico.

Ghanaian President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo declared 2019 as “the Year of Return,” an initiative aimed at encouraging diasporan descendants of Africans who were captured and transported into the Americas as slaves in the 17th and 18th centuries to settle and invest in Africa (particularly in Ghana) by offering favorable immigration conditions. Since 2019, at least 1,500 African Americans have relocated to Ghana, with data from 2020 indicating that up to 5,000 American expatriates reside in the capital city of Accra.

According to an August 2023 report from the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan think tank based in Washington, D.C., 83 percent of black Americans thought the U.S. Government’s efforts to ensure racial equality were far from sufficient. Underlying the Blaxit trend are multiple

Blaxit’s primary driving forces are the desire to avoid racial discrimination and the aspiration for a living environment that offers respect, equality and safety

motivations and reasons, including seeking ancestral connections, exploring new economic opportunities, and reducing living costs.

However, Blaxit’s primary driving forces are the desire to avoid racial discrimination and the aspiration for a living environment that offers respect, equality and safety.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee has pointed out that racism in the U.S. persists in several forms, such as racial profiling and police violence, and the country’s ethnic minorities face structural racial discrimination.

Recent years have seen several incidents where police officers intentionally targeted black Americans and used excessive force resulting in deaths, including the cases of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Tyre Nichols.

According to a 2021 report released by the UN Human Rights Council, black Americans are three times more likely to be killed by police officers and 4.5 times more likely to be incarcerated compared to their Caucasian peers. Out of over 1,000 police killings annually, only

1 percent of the officers involved are charged.

Black Americans also face disparities and inequities in healthcare. Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that, for instance, out of every 100,000 pregnant or postpartum African American women, approximately 69.9 die, nearly three times the rate of their white counterparts. This disparity persists across different educational and income levels among black American women.

Black Americans to this day endure exclusion and unequal treatment in the workplace. And Blaxit has come to hold special meaning among African American staff at the White House, referring to their collective resignation a few years back.

According to U.S. political news portal Politico, in December 2021, the resignation of Symone Sanders, Vice President Kamala Harris’ senior advisor and chief spokesperson, marked the beginning of this wave of departures. Following her, many black American staff on Harris’ team also resigned. In total, around 21 African American employees resigned from the White House, citing a hostile work environment and a lack of promotion opportunities as their reasons for leaving.

The rise of Blaxit has prompted a reassessment of America’s enduring and self-proclaimed values of freedom and equality. Blaxit has unveiled considerable flaws in the U.S. protection of human rights, with domestic racial discrimination laying bare deep-seated issues in the country’s human rights approach.

Only through sincere efforts to rectify these problems can the U.S. embody its professed ideals of democracy, freedom, equality and justice. **BR**

Wu Wenjing is a researcher with the Human Rights Institute at Southwest University of Political Science and Law. Zhou Li is deputy director of the Human Rights Institute at Southwest University of Political Science and Law and deputy editor in chief of the *Journal of Human Rights Law*.
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Navigating New Market Reforms

By Lan Xinzhen

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) will convene in Beijing in July. The session will focus on further deepening reform and promoting Chinese modernization.

CPC Central Committee plenums, held at least once a year, are important in outlining the trajectory for China's political, economic and social development. The CPC National Congress and the Central Committee it elects are the highest leading bodies of China's governing Party, with the five-yearly congress setting the national agenda.

In 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee inaugurated China's reform and opening up. The third plenum of each CPC Central Committee has focused on reform and the economy ever since, lifting the country's economic and social development to higher levels. After decades of growth, China has not only met the basic needs of its people, but also become a moderately prosperous society. Known as *xiaokang* in Chinese, it is a concept to describe a state in which the population is neither rich nor poor, has sufficient living necessities and can pursue a better life.

The Third Plenary of the 11th CPC Central Committee, setting the stage for reform and opening up, was a turning point for China. This year's third plenum will also be of great significance. China has now set out on a course promoting national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization. In the face of complex international and domestic conditions, a new round of science and technology revolution and industrial transformation as well as people's upgraded expectations for life in a moderately prosperous society, the country must further push forward its reforms.

July's session will convene at a time when China's reform has entered a critical phase



fraught with challenges. "Easy" reforms have been implemented over the past few decades with positive results, propelling the rapid development of the Chinese economy and integrating it into the global economy. To further deepen the reform in an all-round way and promote Chinese modernization, today's China will have to grapple with tough problems as it seeks to improve its basic economic systems as well as oversee high-level opening up to the world. Institutional reforms must be carried out to attract foreign investment. An effective policy framework must be

put in place to drive emerging technologies and industries such as the digital economy, green development, artificial intelligence and biotechnology.

The report to the 20th CPC National Congress, delivered by President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, in October 2022, stated that China will build a unified national market, advance reforms for the market-based allocation of production factors and put in place a high-standard market system.

Since its reform and opening-up program began in 1978, the country has explored the building of a socialist market mechanism. The 14th CPC National Congress in 1992 vowed to establish a unified open market system as soon as possible; the 17th CPC National Congress in 2007 sought to accelerate the establishment of a unified, open, competitive and orderly market system; the 19th CPC National Congress in 2017 vowed to introduce a negative list for market access, a regulatory tool guiding investment by defining sectors where investment is limited or prohibited, sort through and do away with regulations and practices hindering the development of a unified market and fair competition, support the growth of private businesses and stimulate the vitality of different business entities.

Based on its predecessors, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee will make new institutional arrangements for market-oriented reforms.

A broader, more convenient and transparent Chinese market will be more appealing and contribute more to international investment, global trade development and the growth of the world economy. **BR**

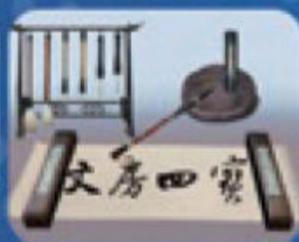
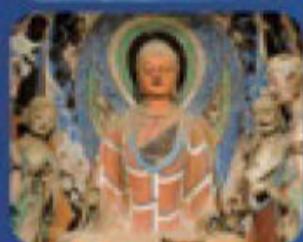
**The Third Plenary
Session of the 20th CPC
Central Committee will
make new institutional
arrangements for
market-oriented
reforms**

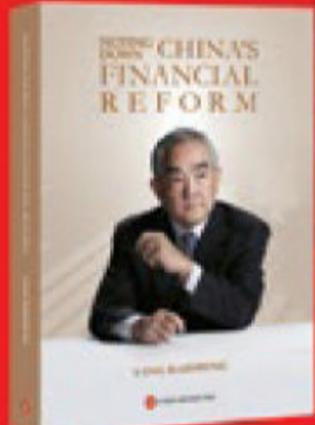
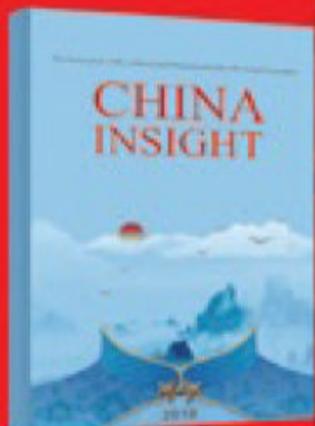
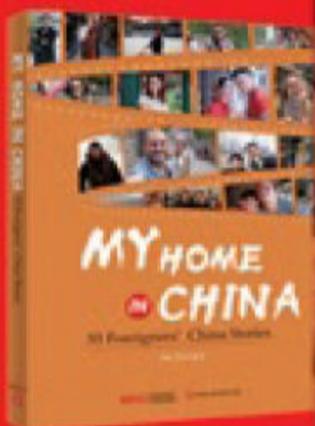
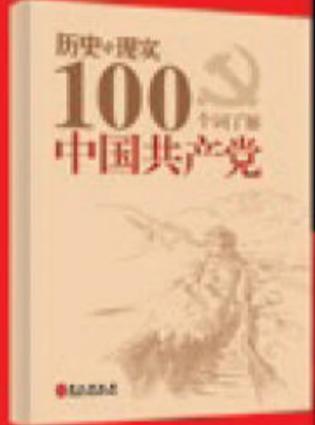
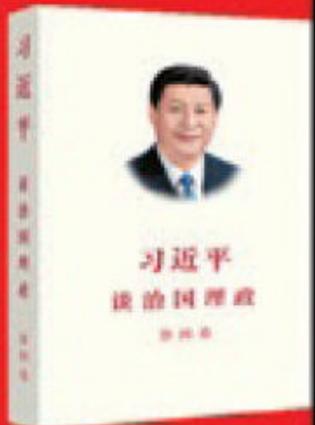
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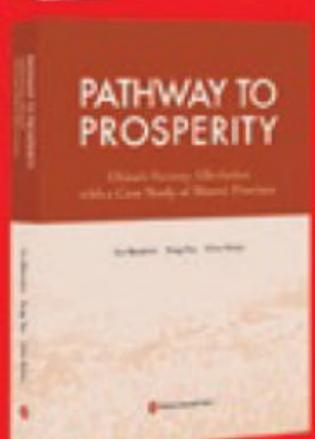
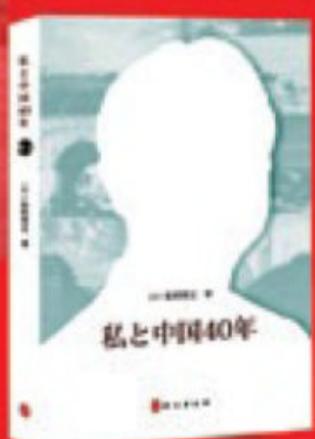
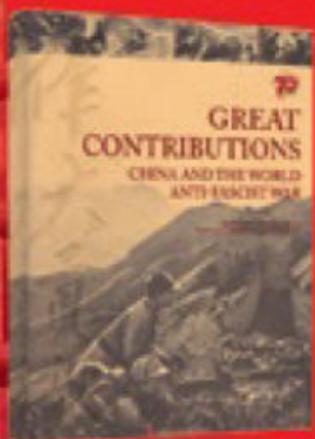
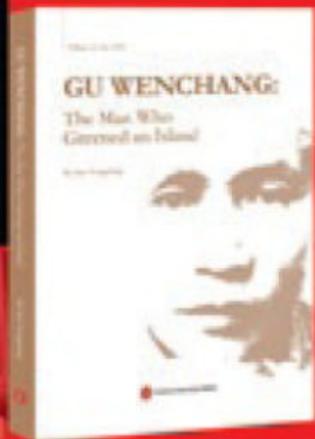




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Ties Gaining Fresh Momentum

Chinese Premier Li Qiang's productive visit to New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia By Li Wenhan

Chinese Premier Li Qiang paid official visits to New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia from June 13 to 20. The visits were the first by a Chinese premier to either Australia or New Zealand since 2017 and the first to Malaysia since 2015.

“From New Zealand to Australia to Malaysia, Li's weeklong trip connects the Asia-Pacific region, showcasing the strategic vision of China's diplomatic planning,” Chen Hong, Director of the Australian Studies Center of East China Normal University, told Chinese newspaper *Global Times*.

Consolidated relations

Li arrived in New Zealand on June 13 and met with New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in Wellington.

Li and Luxon agreed that the development of China-New Zealand relationship has achieved significant results. Both sides will continue to view and manage the relationship from a strategic and long-term perspective, expand bilateral trade and investment cooperation, deepen people-to-people exchange between the two countries, and work together to safeguard multilateralism and free trade to promote sustained, healthy and stable development of China-New Zealand relations.

After their meeting, the two leaders witnessed the signing of bilateral cooperation documents on trade in services, business environment, export of agricultural and food products to China, science and technology, patent examination and migratory bird protection.

China is New Zealand's largest trading partner, with two-way trade in goods and services worth \$23.2 billion in the year that ended in March 2024, according to New Zealand's statistics. The two countries signed a bilateral free trade agreement in 2008—China's first with a developed country.

According to a joint statement of outcomes of the China-New Zealand leaders' meeting, New Zealand noted China's application to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a free trade agreement

between 11 Asia-Pacific countries, and reiterated that CPTPP remains open to accession by economies that can satisfy the three Auckland Principles (high standards, a demonstrated pattern of compliance and consensus) to govern accession.

New Zealand noted the ongoing Accessions Working Group discussions in China's Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) accession progress, the joint statement also stated. China filed a formal application to join the DEPA, a new type of trade partnership agreement, in November 2021 and a working group was set up in August 2022 for negotiations on China's accession to the pact.

Stressing that China is willing to deepen cultural and people-to-people exchanges with New Zealand, Li said during his talks with Luxon that China will include New Zealand in the list of unilateral visa-free countries and expressed the hope for New Zealand to facilitate easier travel for Chinese people visiting the country.

“The relationship between China and New Zealand has been thriving since the establishment of diplomatic ties in December 1972,” Li Jianjun, Director of the Australian Studies Center at Beijing Foreign Studies University and Secretary General of the Chinese Association for Australian Studies, told *Beijing Review*.

“Both countries pursue independent foreign policies, support free trade and advocate for an open world economy. They both uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core and the international order underpinned by international law. Together, they tackle global challenges such as climate change. These shared commitments form the foundation of their enhanced communication and cooperation on regional and global issues,” he said.

Back on track

Li announced at Adelaide Zoo in Australia on June 16 that a new pair of giant pandas would be swapped for Wang Wang and Fu Ni, the beloved pandas who have resided there since 2009. He expressed gratitude for South Australia's care of the pandas and expressed his confidence the new pair would receive equal love and care from the people of Adelaide and Australia.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong thanked Li, highlighting the economic benefits, job opportunities and tourism boost the pandas bring, while also acknowledging the gesture of goodwill.

China and Australia's economies are highly complementary, fueling strong motivation and vast potential for cooperation, Ning Tuanhui, an assistant research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, told *Beijing Review*, adding that China's wish is for both countries to join hands to ensure win-win cooperation remains the foundation of the bilateral relations.

On June 17, Li and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese co-chaired the ninth China-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting and jointly attended a China-Australia CEO Roundtable Meeting.



Chinese Premier Li Qiang visits the Adelaide Zoo in Adelaide, Australia, on June 16

During the leaders' meeting, Li pointed out that the most important experience drawn from the past decade of development of China-Australia relations is that the two sides should "respect each other, seek common ground while shelving differences and engage in mutually-beneficial cooperation."

Multiple agreements on trade, education, climate change response and culture, among others, were signed following their meeting. They announced that the 10th Meeting of the Joint Science and Technology Commission, the eighth China-Australia High-Level Dialogue and the eighth China-Australia Ministerial Dialogue on Climate Change would all be held in Australia later this year.

China will also include Australia in its unilateral visa waiver program, and the two sides agreed to provide each other with reciprocal access to multiple-entry visas of up to three to five years' duration for tourism, business and visiting family members.

Li also visited winemakers in the famed Barossa region near Adelaide on June 16. The Chinese Ministry of Commerce announced in March the decision to cancel anti-dumping and anti-subsidy tariffs levied on Australian wine.

The proper settlement of some trade frictions between China and Australia recently proves that such disputes can be solved through pragmatic negotiation and good will, Chen said.

For 15 years in a row, China has been Australia's largest trading partner, export market and source of imports. Trade with China accounts for more than 30 percent of Australia's total foreign trade.

"The foundation of the China-Australia relationship is solid. There is no historical feud or territorial conflicts between the two countries. Instead, they boast geographical proximity and economic complementarity. Additionally, there is close engagement between their peoples," Ning said. "The focus should be on how to improve their relationship, rather than questioning whether they should work on it."

Closer bonds

In his statement upon arrival on Kuala Lumpur, capital of Malaysia, on the evening of June 18, Li called on both nations to view the jubilee celebrations of diplomatic ties

this year as a new starting point to forge a community with a shared future, a vision for their relationship endorsed by China and Malaysia last year.

Li had talks with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and met with Malaysia's King Ibrahim Iskandar, respectively, on June 19.

During talks with Anwar, Li emphasized that despite evolving international dynamics, both nations have consistently fostered sincere friendship, mutually beneficial cooperation, and mutual learning, steadily advancing their relationship.

The leaders agreed that "China and relevant ASEAN countries should independently and properly handle the South China Sea issue, manage disputes and differences, promote dialogue and cooperation, and stick to the general direction of bilateral settlement.

Li and Anwar witnessed the exchange of several cooperation documents covering the export of Malaysian agricultural commodities to China, the digital economy, green development, tourism, housing and urban development, higher education, science and technology.

On June 19, Li also attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) in Selangor's Gombak district, a flagship project of China-Malaysia cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The China-proposed initiative aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes. Malaysian authorities anticipate that construction of the 665-km railway will be completed by the end of 2026 and operation will begin in January 2027, forming a major transport link between the eastern and western coasts of the country.

China will make active efforts with Malaysia to explore ways to connect the ECRL with the China-Laos and China-Thailand railways to better advance the construction of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, thereby enhancing regional connectivity and deepening the development of the ASEAN Community, Li said.

Launched in 2017, the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor is a trade and logistics passage that was jointly built by provincial-level regions in west China and ASEAN countries. It is also one of the key projects under the BRI. **BR**

A Meeting of Mood Swings

Recapping the annual Group of Seven Summit in Italy By Ma Miaomiao

In Borgo Egnazia, a luxury resort near the town of Fasano in south Italy's Apulia Region, the Group of Seven (G7) Summit concluded on June 16, with members each having their own strategic considerations and the next steps remaining uncertain.

The summit brought together the leaders of its seven member countries—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as representatives of the European Union, i.e., European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

U.S. news portal Politico commented that “the gathering of G7 leaders in Italy looks more like the last supper than a display of Western power.”

The G7 prides itself as a group of the world's most developed economies and initially focused on the issue of economic governance, Cui Hongjian, a professor of international relations at the Academy of Regional and Global Governance at Beijing Foreign Studies University, told China News Service.

However, in recent years, the U.S. has been trying to turn the group into a tool serving its own geopolitical interests, which, coupled with the bloc's declining influence, are further dividing the members, he added.

On the decline

It “features arguably the weakest gathering of leaders the group has mustered for years. Most of the attendees are distracted by elections or domestic crises, disillusioned by years in office, or clinging desperately to power,” continued the Politico article.

During the 2024 European Parliament (EP) elections from June 6 to 9, where far-right parties made significant gains, German and French governing parties took a hit. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party saw its record low in votes, while French President Emmanuel Macron went on to dissolve his country's National Assembly, the lower house of the parliament, and take the risk of calling new elections after suffering losses to the far-right opposition.

In May, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

announced a snap general election for July 4, as his Conservative Party faces an uphill battle to extend its 14 years in power. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who has been involved in a series of scandals, will likely host next year's edition of the G7 Summit amid a difficult electoral campaign. His Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida, in the meantime, has seen his approval levels fall to a historical low of merely 16 percent.

On the U.S. side, 81-year-old President Joe Biden's son, Hunter Biden, was found guilty of three federal gun charges, barely two weeks before his father's first crucial debate with a resurgent Donald Trump in a presidential campaign that the Democrats are in serious danger of losing, according to the Politico article.

According to Alberto Bradanini, Chairman of the Contemporary China Study Center in Italy, the G7, and especially the U.S., perceives itself as being in decline. “A minority of nations represents no more than 10 percent of the world population, with stagnant economies and lower growth rates than emerging countries. Their pathological claims are more evident than ever,” he told Xinhua.

Leaders from some 10 other countries were invited to attend this year's summit, including emerging economies such as India, South Africa and Brazil.

“Inviting only a few of the BRICS (a group of emerging economies comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) countries to the G7 summit was a big mistake,” Vito Petrocelli, President of the Italy BRICS Institute, told Xinhua. “In this way, the West made it clear that it is interested in souring relations between BRICS countries rather than in real collaboration with them.”

The G7 members have realized that the development and rise of non-Western countries are hard to contain, and the West now can hardly represent the will of most countries in the world, but they still hope to “exert influence on the countries of the Global South and continue their so-called dominance and vested interests,” according to Cui.

The Global South refers to the nations of the world that are considered to have a relatively low level of economic and industrial development and are typically located to the south of more industrialized nations.

Although the G7 is striving to maintain its own vitality, and even hopes to play a leadership role in international affairs, its role is actually declining, and its vitality is also questionable, Cui added.

Rubber cheque

According to a joint communiqué released on June 14, after prolonged division on outlining an aid plan for Ukraine, the group has reached an agreement to use the interests from frozen Russian assets to finance around \$50 billion in loans for the country.

However, the specifics of the loan deal remain unclear and are expected to be finalized over subsequent months of negotiations.

Cui remarked that Europe and the U.S. hold different perspectives on the matter. “Europe hopes to strike a balance and avoid [potential] harm to its own interests. Given most of the frozen Russian assets are located in EU countries, any retaliatory



G7 leaders watch a skydiving performance at the Borgo Egnazia resort near the town of Fasano in Apulia Region, Italy, on June 13

measures by Russia will mostly affect Europe,” he said.

According to statistics from French international news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP), Western sanctions imposed on Russia after the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis froze about \$300 billion in assets belonging to the Russian central bank, with a large proportion situated in Europe.

So Europe has legitimate concerns regarding Ukraine’s ability to repay loans and the eventual return of these assets to Russia, Cui added.

Russian President Vladimir Putin denounced the loan deal as “theft” and vowed that it would not go unpunished.

Debate and disagreement

The G7’s joint communiqué emphasized “unity” and “solidarity” more than 10 times throughout the document, which had actually sparked intense debate and disagreement during its drafting process.

Another hot topic during the summit was the future of artificial intelligence (AI) governance. The G7 has vowed to promote “safe, secure and trustworthy AI” and step up efforts to enhance interoperability among AI governance approaches.

However, members thus far have very different views on how to do so. According to media reports, European countries favor tighter, hands-on regulations, whereas the U.S. votes for a more laissez-faire approach. The group seems to have postponed making definitive decisions on a rulebook regarding the topic until the next summit in Canada.

Abortion emerged as one of the key contentious issues among member states,

with France and Canada taking a progressive stance, while Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, who has led the country’s far-right Brothers of Italy political party since 2014—which won the European elections in Italy on June 9, advocated for a more conservative approach.

The previous edition of the G7 Summit in Japan stated the group’s commitment to ensuring safe and legal access to abortion, but this year’s communiqué did not mention the word “abortion” at all.

The U.S. and Canada in the Americas, as well as Japan in Asia, showed little interest in the issue of migration and refugees arriving in Europe, many of them from poor and war-torn African countries—a major concern of host Italy.

“Without any concrete action, the G7 in Italy amounts to no more than pointless platitudes,” David McNair, Executive Director of the U.S. non-governmental organization The ONE Campaign, which advocates for investment in Africa, said. **BR**

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Taking a Right Turn

Where is the EU headed in the next five years? By Li Wenhan

From June 6 to 9, voters from over two dozen European countries cast their ballots to elect lawmakers to the European Parliament for the next five years, with the largest political groups in the new European Parliament, the European Union's only directly elected institute, remaining those in the center-left and center-right.

The EU is an economic and political union between 27 European countries. Roughly 370 million eligible voters chose 720 parliamentary members, 15 more than the 2019 election, from member states.

But the results did reveal a shift to the right, with both center-right and far-right groups gaining more seats. This election outcome also delivered a domestic setback to the leaders of both France and Germany.

Political analysts believe a three-group majority of the center-right European People's Party (EPP), center-left Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&N) and liberal Renew Europe (RE) will continue to steer EU policy, but the shift will bring more uncertainty to its policies on immigration, green transition and aids to Ukraine. With 13 of the 27 EU leaders being from parties that belong to the EPP, the results were good news for EPP member Ursula von der Leyen, who seeks a second five-year term as president of the European Commission.

Retaining the majority

National political parties form alliances across the continent to create larger parliamentary groupings based on shared values and policy proposals. The European Parliament is the EU's legislative, supervisory, budgetary and advisory body, with elections held every five years.

Among the three major EU institutions—the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament—the parliament is the only body whose members are directly elected by ordinary voters.

In the recent election, mainstream establishments lost seats but still retained a majority. The

center-right EPP won 186 seats in the 720-member European Parliament, an increase of 10 seats from the previous term, and has been the leading party in every parliamentary election since 1999. The center-left S&N came in second, securing 135 seats, a decrease of four seats from the previous term; the centrist RE got 79 seats, a sharp reduction of 23 seats.

Despite the reduction in seats from 417 in 2019 to 400, the three-group majority still constitutes 56 percent of the total. According to Xinhua News Agency, the center-right and center-left forces will continue to dominate the European Parliament and its policies, ensuring no unexpected shift in its political direction.

When looking from a broader perspective, a comparison with the 2004 election reveals a clear swing.

That year, the three major political forces held 556 out of 732 seats, accounting for a 76-percent majority. Zhou Deyu, a columnist for Shanghai-based news portal Guancha.cn, observed that the political space for the center-right, center-left and liberals has been shrinking over time. Despite these groups retaining a majority, their influence is at risk of further decline, potentially pushing them into the minority.

Going right

Notably, right-wing and far-right parties increased their seats, while center-left and liberal parties saw a reduction in their representation. The European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), which includes Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy and Poland's Law and Justice Party, secured 73 seats, gaining four additional seats; the Identity and Democracy Party (ID) won 58 seats, an increase of nine seats. "These groups are often seen as populist



Voters cast their ballots in the European Parliament election at a polling station in Lille, France, on June 9

and far-right, with parties like Marine Le Pen's National Rally of France being affiliated with ID [at the European level]," said Zhou.

Altogether, far-right seats now account for over 20 percent of the total seats.

Jin Ling, a senior research fellow with and Director of the Department for European Studies under the China Institute of International Studies, explained that the rise of populist parties can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine crisis and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which have worsened Europe's security situation, hindered economic recovery, and increased the cost of living.

"Against this backdrop, issues including security, economy, immigration and the environment have become more prominent, with the public increasingly leaning toward protectionist sentiments," she said.

In Germany, the far-right Alternative for Germany party (AfG) took second place with 15.9 percent of the vote—ahead of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats, who garnered 13.9 percent in their worst-ever result.

In France, Le Pen's National Rally won more than 31 percent of the vote, defeating President Emmanuel Macron's centrist Renaissance party—which scored just 14.6 percent—and prompting his surprise move to dissolve the lower house of parliament and call a snap election—on June 30 for the first round and on July 7 for the second.

The French constitution stipulates that the president has the power to dissolve parliament. An analysis by French newspaper *Le Monde* on the election results pointed out that this reflects a "crisis of confidence" for the ruling party of the public.

And Macron's shock decision does offer the increasingly popular far-right a real shot at power. Amounting to a roll of the dice on his political future, this immediately sent the euro down, while French stocks and government bonds tumbled, news agency Reuters stated.

It added that if Macron fails to win majority, he would remain president for three more years and still be in charge of defense and foreign policy. But he would lose control over the domestic agenda, including economic policy, security, immigration and finances. This would in turn impact other policies, given Macron would need parliament's backing to finance any support as part of France's budget.



Ursula Von der Leyen, lead candidate of the European People's Party for the presidency of the European Commission, delivers a speech at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, on June 9

Up in the air

Once the new parliament is formed, it will determine a new president of the European Commission. The potential re-election of current President von der Leyen is in the spotlight. According to political news platform Politico, the election of the next president of the European Commission could take place on July 18.

The president of the European Commission is nominated by the European Council and requires a majority vote in the European Parliament to be confirmed. In 2014, the European Parliament introduced the "lead candidate," which stipulates that the European Council shall nominate the lead candidate of the largest party group in the European Parliament for president of the European Commission.

After the 2014 election, Jean-Claude Juncker, then lead candidate of the EPP, was elected president of the European Commission. However, after the 2019 election, the lead candidate, German Manfred Weber, faced opposition from several European countries. Consequently, the European Council nominated von der Leyen, another member of the EPP, and she secured her position with a majority vote.

Before this year's election, the European Parliament re-emphasized the importance of "lead candidate." Given von der Leyen is once again the lead candidate nominated by the EPP, the party's position as the largest group in the European Parliament and the increase in its number of seats have undoubtedly bolstered her bid for re-election.

Von der Leyen needs to secure 361 votes for a majority. In 2019, she survived with a margin of just nine votes after socialist and liberal members decided to vote against her.

The candidate for European Commission president must be approved by EU member states, especially major European powers like France and Germany, during the European Council's nomination process. Xinhua said leaders like Scholz and Macron may not support von der Leyen's re-election, favoring instead former President of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi. Hence, whether von der Leyen will secure a second term remains up in the air. **BR**

Merchandise Medals

Yiwu's small commodities in the Olympic playground By Yuan Yuan

If there's one place outside of France where the Olympic buzz is equally palpable, it's likely to be Yiwu, Zhejiang Province, in east China.

Known as the global capital of small commodities, Yiwu has become a main supplier of many of the items at major sports events worldwide. In Yiwu's markets, astute merchants, keenly attuned to the rhythms of global sports mega-events, sprang into action well ahead of time, ready to meet the soaring demand for everything from sportswear and souvenirs to the disposable cups used in stadiums...

Prepared for action

Lin Daolai, a merchant operating within Yiwu International Trade City (YITC)—China's largest wholesale market complex for small commodities—received an order last October for 1 million licensed Olympic bracelets. “We commenced production last December and managed to air-ship the first batch of 500,000 bracelets in February,” he told China News Service. “The remaining 500,000 were dispatched before May.”

Beyond bracelets, data from the Paris Olympic Organizing Committee indicates that 80 percent of the products based on the mascots for this year's Olympics are manufactured in China, with some being produced right in Yiwu.

However, licensed merchandise represents just a fraction of Yiwu's bustling sports event-related trade activities. One unnamed importer and exporter in Yiwu told *China Newsweek* that the majority of Yiwu merchants thrive on the demand for event-related peripheral products, such as cheering sticks, decorations, and toys.

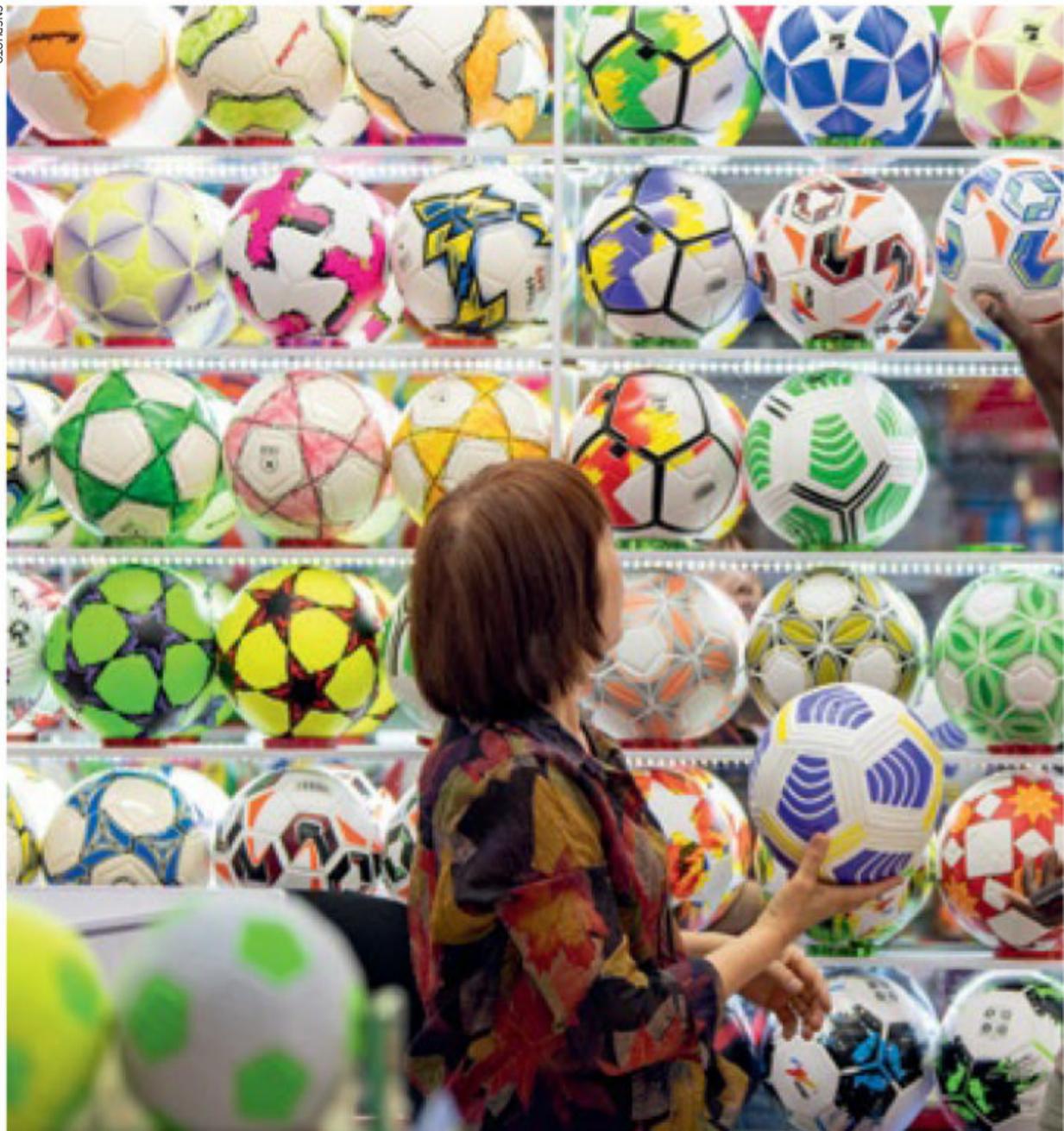
Within the expanse of YITC, over 800 businesses are dedicated to sporting goods and equipment, catering to both domestic and international sporting events. Recent statistics from Yiwu Customs reveal that in the first four months of this year, the value of exports of sporting goods and equipment from Yiwu surged to 3.1 billion yuan (\$427 million), a 45.6-percent

increase year on year. Notably, exports of sporting goods to France have risen by 70.5 percent year on year.

Since March, a considerable influx of international merchants has been observed at YITC, engaging in bulk purchases of jerseys, soccer balls, swimming goggles and other sports-related products. Given the two-month sea shipping time from Yiwu to France, the window for peak purchases has now concluded as the commencement of the Olympic Games approaches.

Wen Congjian, a merchant specializing in jerseys, noted a substantial uptick in orders preceding major international sports events. “This year has been exceptionally busy with the UEFA Euro 2024 and Copa América soccer tournaments and the Olympics lined up one after another,” he told *Zhejiang Daily*. “We've been in continuous operation since March and will maintain this pace until July.”

For the upcoming Paris Olympics, Wen has designed cheerleading uniforms for supporters of the French team, incorporating a deep blue color



palette with accents of the French flag adorning the cuffs and collar. Given that France is the host nation, these cheering outfits have surged in popularity and demand.

“We’ve already dispatched the bulk of the ordered products via sea freight. Currently, new orders are usually urgent requests, for which we will expedite the delivery through air shipping,” he said, adding that it is the final stage to fulfil orders related to the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Expanding horizons

The vibrant atmosphere in Yiwu extends beyond the realm of sporting goods. Guo Huiping, a seasoned merchant in Yiwu, specializing in event peripherals with a focus on exports, has introduced a new product this year to cater to the robust demand for cheering accessories—a flashing stick adorned in the colors of the French flag designed to last 10 hours.

During this bustling period ahead of the Paris Olympics, Guo’s store has seen a steady flow of long-standing clients from Asia and Europe, who often place substantial orders ranging from thousands to tens of thousands for these flashing sticks, as well as butterfly headbands and clips, and other event-themed products.

“Since the beginning of the year, we’ve been inundated with Olympics-related overseas orders,” she told *Zhejiang Daily*. In May, she welcomed

three to five groups of international merchants daily, with more high-profile clients scheduled for upcoming visits.

Zhou Tingting, another dynamic merchant in the area, has been



A merchant (right) selects soccer balls at Yiwu International Trade City in Yiwu, Zhejiang Province, on April 15

designing new Olympics-themed peripherals since last year. A particular hat designed by her team, inspired by the Gallic rooster and featuring the French tricolor has gained notable popularity among her clientele.

Liu Ruqun, who runs a jewelry store in Yiwu, has launched a captivating French series of earrings, skillfully integrating the red, white and blue hues of the French flag into her designs. This series boasts over a dozen distinct styles.

“We initially approached this as a trial, producing only a few hundred pairs per design. However, they sold out rapidly, prompting a wave of repeat orders,” Liu told *Zhejiang Daily*. With 24 years in the jewelry trade, traditionally focusing on vintage and China chic styles, she has this year broadened her offerings to include designs inspired by the Olympics, attracting European clients and a growing number of domestic buyers.

With the approaching of the Olympic Games, Liu anticipates an even more pronounced increase in orders. “We are continuously working on designing more jewelry pieces that incorporate Olympic themes, aiming to capitalize on the domestic market during the games,” she said.

Lao Guoling, Director of the E-commerce Research Center at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, sees vast potential in expanding the range of peripheral products beyond traditional offerings.

“The 2024 Paris Olympics will feature four new sports: breakdancing, skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing,” she told China Central Television, claiming that these sports, immensely popular among young people, open up extensive opportunities for innovation in peripheral products, extending beyond mere trophies and medals to include apparel, equipment and venue-related items.

Lao advises merchants in the small commodities sector to broaden their perspectives, explore new opportunities and focus on building brands rather than merely producing bulk products quickly. “This strategic shift could position them to better capitalize on the evolving demands of global markets,” she said. **BR**

From Fields to Facilities

Bridging the rural-urban senior care divide By Li Xiaoyang

Every day at noon, about 150 elderly villagers pour into the canteen of a rural community in Yiyuan County, Shandong Province in east China, for a nutritious lunch. The seniors pay a maximum of 2 yuan (\$0.27) for each meal, and those over 80 eat for free.

Community-based welfare canteens like this one usually cater to elderly whose children are off working in other regions where they have found better job opportunities. As of this year, over 200 rural community canteens cater to around 85,000 senior villagers in 446 villages in Yiyuan.

China's population has been aging rapidly in recent years. According to the Seventh National Population Census of China conducted in 2020, the population aged 60 and above exceeded 264 million, accounting for 18.7 percent of the country's total population. The proportion of people aged 60 and above in rural areas was 23.81 percent, 7.99 percentage points higher than in urban areas.

"In China, rural areas will need to manage the challenges that come with a rapidly aging population earlier than their urban counterparts. As the country is in a critical phase of demographic transformation, improving rural elderly care is a pressing issue," Yang Ge, an associate researcher with the Institute of Population and Labor Economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told *Beijing Review*.

Rural community canteens and other social services like healthcare have been launched and expanded to meet rural seniors' demands. On June 13, the Chinese authorities released a set of guidelines on improving elderly care services in rural areas. According to the guidelines, state-owned and private enterprises are both encouraged to manage senior care service facilities in rural areas.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), one of the authorities, said that the target is to improve the rural elderly care service system, and enhance coverage rate of related centers in townships by 60 percent by 2025.

Supporting seniors

Yang pointed out that the needs of senior citizens differ significantly between rural and urban areas, mainly due to the commonness of left-behind elderly in rural

regions resulting from rural-urban migration.

The rural elderly often live alone and work in agriculture. Many of them refuse to relocate to nursing homes, choosing instead to stay in remote areas where access to public services is often still limited.

In recent years, many new senior care services have emerged in rural areas. For instance, in 2008, China's first mutual-aid nursing home was established in Qiantun Village of Handan, Hebei Province in north China. This initiative laid the groundwork for the rural mutual-aid elderly care model found nationwide today.

China's mutual-aid care system, especially in the context of senior care, refers to a community-based scheme where local residents collectively provide support and services for senior citizens.

Undertakings such as the Qiantun nursing home are typically guided by the local government and backed by private investment. Rural community service centers operating under the mutual-aid system provide essential services for the elderly, supported by the active involvement of villagers and volunteers.

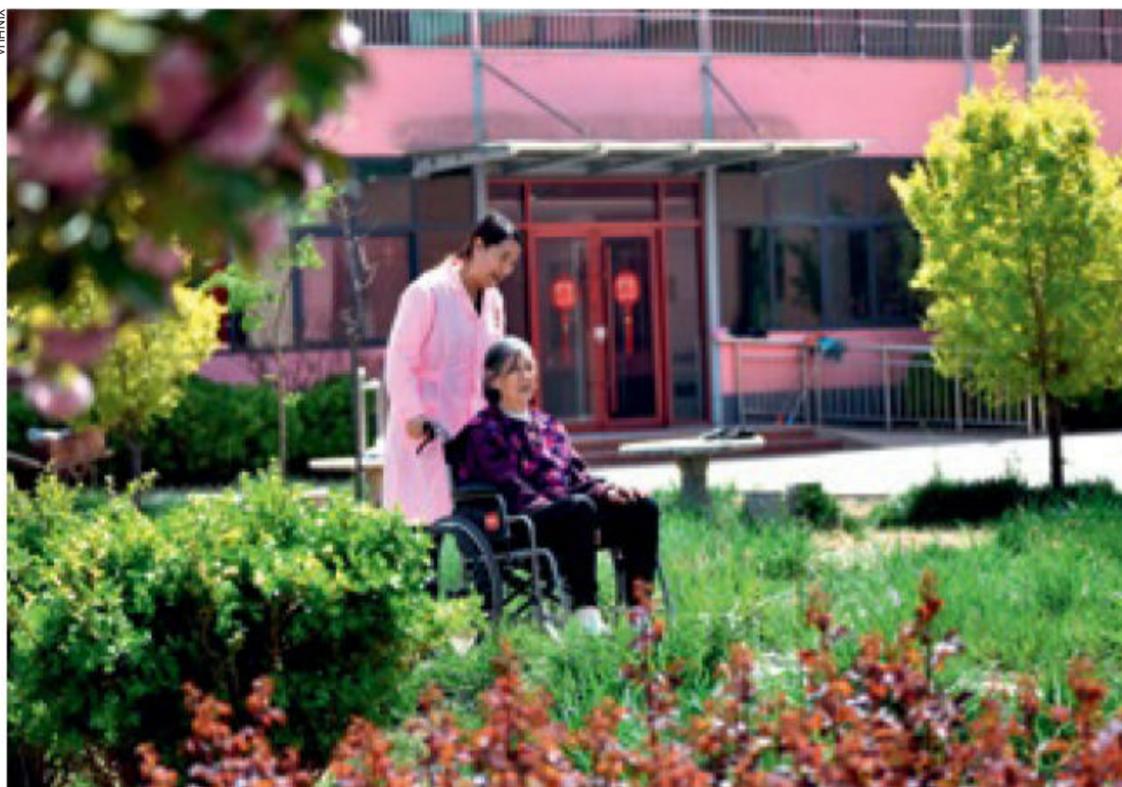
In Suqian, east China's Jiangsu Province, 63 mutual-aid elderly care stations have been set up in vacant houses as of this year. These stations cater to local senior citizens by offering daytime care, including recreational activities, and providing meals, all within a stone's throw of their homes.

"Mutual-aid elderly care modes are cost-effective, sustainable and flexible, meeting rural demand," Yang said.

As of this year, China has 16,000 rural elderly care nursing homes with over 1.68 million beds. Additionally, the country has around 145,000 mutual-aid elderly care facilities in rural areas. However, the MCA has acknowledged that the convenience and accessibility of these facilities need improvement.



Elderly people eat at a canteen for seniors in Shangquan Village of Jingmen, Hubei Province, on March 13



An employee accompanies a senior at an elderly care home in Sanyizhuang Village of Xingtai, Hebei Province, on April 16

Healthcare services for rural seniors are on the rise. In Lanshan District of Rizhao, east China's Shandong Province, elderly care service centers not only offer meals and entertainment, but also provide at-home healthcare services. These centers each receive annual subsidies totaling over 25,000 yuan (\$3,445) every year from local government.

To support seniors with disabilities who reside at home, several regions, including Shandong, have initiated plans to launch home-based services. For example, Yiyuan has around 2,600 seniors with disabilities or partial disabilities. The local government has recruited over 700 people to provide home-based services, including meal delivery, assistance with household chores and healthcare support.

Silver opportunities

In January, China's State Council, the highest administrative body, issued a document on promoting the silver economy, which focuses on providing products and services for the elderly. The document proposed new targeted measures across different sectors, including housing, transportation and healthcare.

As the country's silver economy has boomed in recent years, new trends are emerging in elderly care for senior urban residents. Some opt to relocate to rural areas and small cities for their retirement, rather than reside in urban senior care centers.

One example is Zhu Guomin, in his 80s, who in 2022 moved from Shanghai, where he had lived for over seven decades, back to his hometown in Yancheng, Jiangsu in 2022. After battling a severe illness, he decided to move into a local senior care center to alleviate the burden on his family, who had been taking care of him since he got sick. His decision was also influenced by the lower costs—compared to those in Shanghai.

“The senior care centers in cities are more like hotels, available but not livable,” Zhu told newspaper *The Economic Observer*. In Yancheng, he lives in a center far away from the urban hustle and bustle, where he chats with his peers, goes for walks and participates in organized activities.

As of late last year, the number of senior people from Tianjin and Beijing living in elderly care homes in neighboring Hebei had reached almost 5,000, and nearly 40,000

elderly residents from the two cities were residing across the province to enjoy their retirement, according to the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics.

In 2017, Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei implemented measures to facilitate the settlement of cross-regional medical bills. With one medical insurance card, local seniors are able to access medical services and receive reimbursement in any hospital inside the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

Similarly, Shanghai has introduced policies allowing local seniors residing in nursing homes in neighboring provinces to access its medical insurance system.

To attract more retirees to relocate to smaller cities, Yang suggested these lower-tier areas construct more comprehensive service systems, build senior-friendly communities, and improve healthcare facilities.

Tests and trials

Yang continued that rural areas should further develop senior care homes, mutual-aid centers and public senior canteens. The Chinese authorities should expand healthcare coverage to better support senior rural residents by creating more accessible medical insurance and pension plans, she added.

Despite growing demand, at-home elderly care and community services in rural areas remain insufficient. Persistent issues include inadequate funding, low trust among rural seniors and operational inconsistencies.

Funding shortages stem from a heavy reliance on subsidies from local governments for public services. Private investors are hesitant to invest in elderly care due to the limited consumption capacity of rural residents, Yang explained.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that in 2023, the per-capita disposable income of urban residents was 51,821 yuan (\$7,141), while that of rural residents stood at 21,691 yuan (\$2,989). As Yang indicated, there is plenty of room for improving rural residents' incomes before further promoting rural elderly care services.

“In addition to promoting nursing homes, the government should improve at-home care and services for the elderly in communities, especially medical treatment and healthcare, build infrastructure and introduce a database of left-behind elderly people in rural areas to provide better services for them,” Yang said. **BR**

Growing Together and Interactively

Young Chinese parents embrace active parenting styles By Zhang Yage

In the early 2010s, the hashtag “tiger parenting” swept through China’s online communities and media landscape. The term refers to an extremely strict approach of parents toward their children, especially regarding their academic achievement. At that time, many parents believed that grades were the most essential elements determining a student’s future, and a wave of extra classes on major subjects took over many regions, with millions of parents thrusting their kids into these classes after school and on weekends.

In recent years, however, parents are turning their attention toward children’s health, sporting abilities and aesthetics ideas, and tend to share experiences with their children in nature. These, and many other activities which academically minded parents had deemed useless, are on the rise, according to a report on young parents’ changing parenting styles, jointly published by Xinhua News Agency and Xiaohongshu, a popular lifestyle and e-commerce platform.

Drawing data from all child-related posts created on Xiaohongshu in 2023 by young parents, mostly born in the 1980s and 1990s, the report characterized today’s prevalent parenting style as “simple, natural, encouraging and relaxed.”

“During my wife’s pregnancy, I hoped my child would achieve something great and extraordinary,” Liu Chunlin, the 31-year-old father of a 1-year-old boy, told *Beijing Review*. “But now, I want him to be a happy and healthy ordinary person with integrity and honesty. Achievements are not that important.”

Companionship with participation

Liu said he believes young parents’ changing attitude to parenting comes from their expectation of their children primarily as companions, instead of as providers when they get old.

“I regard my son as my friend and companion,” Liu said. “I feel happy enough whenever he calls me daddy. This is the same for other parents in my social circle. We share the idea that the emotional gifts from our children are more valuable than any possible material returns.”

According to a report from the China Research Center for Children’s Industry, spending on children accounts for more than 40 percent of total consumption in approximately 80 percent of Chinese households. Of these expenses, parents’ top priorities are to promote parent-child relationships and make their children more well-rounded.

Liu aspires to be a reliable friend, a loving supporter and a patient listener to his son. “I’d like to work toward becoming a tender and amicable father, rather than a strict and silent one, and I am always there for my son after work,” he said

According to the Xinhua-Xiaohongshu report, one of the most distinctive features of the posts shared by young parents is the increasing participation of fathers in their children’s development. Posts under the topic “new daddy’s parenting experience”



Parents and children engage in a nature exploration activity in Miyun District, Beijing, in October 2022

gained more than 3 billion views last year, with *naiba*, literally milk daddy, Chinese netizens' nickname for novice fathers, sharing how they helped babies with burping and turning over, and played a role in changing diapers, reading stories and singing lullabies.

"I help my son with eating and swimming, playing with toys, and also read stories to him," Liu said, adding that he often devotes his whole weekend to these activities.

"Children who grow up in families with high levels of participation from fathers tend to have a clearer sense of purpose, more faith in their own competence and very distinctive personalities," Rao Juan, organizer of an extracurricular leisure activities studio in Beijing, told *Beijing Review*. "And therefore, in our offline outdoor activities to boost parent-child relationships, we assign some tasks that need to be completed by fathers and children together, such as hiking and exploring in mountains, agricultural activities in fields, and setting up camps and stoves using tools."

Healthy and natural

Young parents prefer taking their kids outdoors, especially into nature in places such as city parks and suburban areas. The report found more than 2.6 million parents had shared their experiences of walking with their children outside their homes in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 300 percent. Some parents were zealous about taking their children on city walks, the increasingly popular pastime of exploring city neighborhoods and urban areas on foot, while another 1.7 million parents shared experiences of enjoying exploring natural environments with their children.

The flocks of parents busily rushing their children to extracurricular classes are gradually being replaced by young parents spending hours walking with their children in urban and natural environments. Parents have even come up with a term for this activity, *liuwa*, which means "walk the kid."

Rao has observed the changing needs of her customers in recent years, and has been making adjustment to her services.

"Young parents are good at having fun, and they respect their children's needs and feelings," Rao said, adding that the widely praised activities in her studio involve fun, DIY, outdoor and sporting elements and allow participants to experience country life and natural scenes. These activities usually take place in suburban areas of Beijing and can be completed within 3 hours, catering to children's attention spans.

"The participants have a clear preference for athletic activities after COVID-19. I think parents are more aware of children's health after the pandemic, and they like to see their kids running around rather than sitting down for long periods now," Rao added.

Athletics aside, parents are showing an increasing demand for quality programs that nourish children's aesthetic sensibilities.

"There are a large number of parents of 4 or 5-year-olds, who are asking for 'relaxing, playful courses that can nurture aesthetic concepts'," Hu Chunxiu, who runs a private art education studio in Haidian District, Beijing, told *Beijing Review*.

"These parents are showing an increasing interest in participating in their children's aesthetic cultivation, accompanying them to visit museums, art galleries and exhibitions, often without utilitarian purposes. Instead, they regard these activities as a supplement to school education and a chance to fulfill their children's potential," Hu explained.

Hu said she is deeply impressed by parents' willingness to spend on their children's well-rounded development, which usually takes years to accomplish.

"Many of my students have attended my classes for over five years, and in some



COURTESY PHOTO

Participants in a parent-child activity create a mural in Chaoyang District, Beijing, on June 8

cases, 10 years," she explained. "I think aesthetic abilities are being emphasized by more parents, and they can fully appreciate how important it is for a person to discover, acknowledge and admire the beauty in our daily lives."

While loosening the restraints on children, parents are also placing higher requirements on themselves. The report found young parents are more willing to discuss with and learn from others about challenges in raising kids. There are over 3 million posts from parents on Xiaohongshu with the topic "What should I do in this case?" in 2023, ranging from issues about breast feeding to linguistic obstacles and communication skills. Their questions have been answered by around 5 million experience-sharing posts.

In addition to seeking help on social media platforms, other popular methods include turning to elder family members for advice and attending parenting classes.

"Some parents have come to me with questions about how to refuse their children's requests and how to appease their negative emotions. I shared a lot with them," Rao said. "I always tell new parents, as their child grows, they need to continue updating and enriching their parenting skills. This requires more effort but is better in the long run." **BR**

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Comments to zhangyage@cicamericas.com

The Master's Piece

How it took one artist more than a decade to complete a 500-meter long Chinese painting scroll By Kang Caiqi

What kind of artwork can grace the Great Hall of the People, a state building that functions as a meeting place for national-level events in China? The answer is the large mural *Magnificent China*, 18 meters long and 3.72 meters wide, located in the Golden Hall of this great hall. Its creator is a self-taught painter with no academic art training background. Not only that, this painter, named Zhong Kaitian, also has eight other works (including one calligraphy work) hanging in the hall.

Born in Kunming, Yunnan Province in southwest China, Zhong joined the People's Liberation Army at age 18 after graduating from high school, and was stationed in the Dai Autonomous Prefecture of Xishuangbanna, in the extreme south of Yunnan, bordering both Myanmar and Laos. This area is noted for the distinct cultures of its ethnic groups. "So I am very familiar with life along the southwestern border," Zhong told *Beijing Review*.

An amateur artist

In his second year of enlistment, the young soldier drew a picture just to participate in the art exhibition hosted by the military area command where he served. Unexpectedly, this small move caused a big wave at the exhibition and was highly praised by the then chairman of Yunnan Artists Association. Encouraged, he continued to paint and went on to become a well-known "warrior-painter" in the local area, and later was appointed art editor of the military area command's newspaper. Since then, he has

created many paintings, depicting the army and the people defending and developing the border areas together.

The many years of living in China's southwest border region enabled him to create images reflecting the life of Yunnan's ethnic groups and primitive local tribes. When his representative paintings *Entering the Awa Mountain* and *Awa Mountain Tribe* were exhibited overseas, Zhong was hailed by the American art world as "China's Paul Gauguin (1848–1903)," a French Post-Impressionist artist, world-famous for his paintings created in Tahiti. Zhong was invited by the University of Hawaii and the University of Georgia in the United States to teach a Chinese painting class there.

Over years of artistic creation, Zhong has gradually honed his own artistic style, one unadorned and solemn, majestic and heroic. "Instead of simple visual beauty, my works seek to express artistic conception and emotion. I want to really touch people's hearts with my works," Zhong told *Beijing Review*. "In my opinion, an artwork is the externalization of the creator's emotions. In other words, art is a way of expressing one's unique views on society and life. It is in the process of expression that one's own personal style forms. However, the personal style and the brushwork one refines should still evolve with the times," he explained, adding, "for example, I mainly paint Chinese paintings. Chinese paintings, especially freehand ink paintings and literati paintings, are the products of more than 3,000 years of farming culture and small peasant economy. Today, we are industrialized and even digitalized, so the brushwork should develop accordingly. How can I reflect the zeitgeist of the contemporary Chinese nation? How can I combine self-expression and eulogizing the times? These are the questions I contemplate when I paint."

His brushes have long faithfully recorded his surroundings—military life, the primitive tribes, the natural environment and the great rivers and mountains of the motherland.

Zhong's distinctive artistic style and understanding of artworks have won him ever more appreciation. He has been invited to paint for important venues such as the Ziguang Pavilion in Zhongnanhai, the Bayi Building of the Central Military Commission, the Foreign Affairs Hall of China's Ministry of National Defense and



Details of the painting *Zheng He's Voyages to the Western Oceans*



Zhong Kaitian (first right) explains the painting *Zheng He's Voyages to the Western Oceans* to visitors at the Overseas Chinese History Museum of China in Beijing on June 7

the Great Hall of the People. But even after reaching these heights of acclaim, he did not stop experimenting with art. Finally, he found a theme that could embody all his painting content and techniques—the history of the voyages of Chinese explorer Zheng He (1371–1433) to Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia and East Africa, a great tale in the history of world navigation that promoted civilizational exchange.

A true warrior

When creating the painting *Zheng He's Voyages to the Western Oceans*, Zhong specifically chose the original Chinese ancient long scroll painting method, supported by Western perspective, anatomy and chromatics. After 13 years of painstaking effort, the artist completed this masterpiece at the age of 81.

The painting is 500 meters long and 1.2 meters wide, consisting of three volumes and 18 chapters, with over 300 scenes and more than 17,000 characters with clear facial expressions, which panoramically reproduces the scene of Zheng's voyage more than 600 years ago. According to Zhong, the painting has achieved artistic breakthroughs in length, volume, time, scene and figure, and is currently the richest and longest painting in the world.

“It was not my original intention to make any breakthrough to become ‘unprecedented.’ The volume of this theme is so big. Existing painting techniques of both the East and the West could not reproduce the scenes as accurately as possible, so I had to

overcome one difficulty after another,” he said.

“For example, I managed to connect all the chapters so that the overall visual effect is not abrupt; and reasonably arrange a large number of people, vehicles, boats, and various plants and animals on one canvas,” he added.

Before Zhong even started sketching, he spent several years studying literatures about Zheng and his voyages. Following in the explorer's historical footsteps, he visited and investigated many countries and regions along the sea route. To improve the accuracy of the painting content, he also consulted experts at home and abroad to research this period of history. “It took me four years to write the manuscript, another four years to prepare more durable materials, two years to draw the small draft, and seven years to draw the large draft; all in all, it took me nine to 10 years to complete this painting. So, to say it took 13 years is an understatement,” Zhong told *Beijing Review*.

Now in his 80s, Zhong still paints every day. He has even begun to explore and innovate painting materials to enrich the expressiveness of Chinese painting and make it more modern to better reflect the contemporary era.

“I still carry forward the words the army once taught me: Life goes on, the fight goes on; life goes on, creation goes on; life goes on, innovation goes on; life goes on, the ascent goes on,” Zhong said. **BR**



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A Virtual World

A young Brazilian makes a place for himself in the video game industry

By Magdalena Rojas

At just 28, Heitor Santos has managed to make his way in an industry with a great prospect for future growth, serving as a link between Brazil, his country of origin, and China, where he currently resides.

Like many expats, Santos' connection with China developed gradually and, at first, with little idea of what the future would hold.

It all began when he was a senior-year student of biological sciences at the University of Pernambuco in the Brazilian city of Recife. The university had a special cooperation program with the Confucius Institute, giving students the opportunity to study Chinese for free for one year.

Confucius Institutes, named after ancient Chinese philosopher and educator Confucius (551-479 B.C.), serve as nonprofit public institutions to help people better understand China by teaching the Chinese language and culture at universities overseas.

"Learning languages, especially Asian languages, had always caught my attention," said Santos, who is from the historic town of Olinda in Pernambuco State, northeast Brazil.

So he enrolled in the course and quickly started researching the Chinese language and culture, fueled by his curiosity. He found himself enchanted by his first class, especially by his teacher's stories about his travels in China.

"I started to spend a lot of time learning Chinese, which was very rewarding," he said. At the same time, he began to participate in different Chinese-language competitions and extracurricular activities, like singing and dancing.

Santos explained one of the reasons that had led him to take his language studies so seriously was that he wanted to be able to better communicate with his teachers at the Confucius Institute. In class, they maintained a formal relationship between teachers and students, but outside of the classroom, they were friends. "I wanted to lift my language levels to speak directly to their hearts," he said.

"Working with aspiring content creators and established ones, talking to them, hearing their life stories and goals, helping them expand their social media presence, creating monetization opportunities... Seeing the impact I can have on their lives is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job."

—Heitor Santos, a Brazilian currently working for miHoYO, a Chinese video game development and publishing company

All of these experiences eventually motivated him to apply for a study abroad scholarship, so he arrived in Beijing in mid-2018. For Santos, Beijing was the most convenient option as his university in Brazil had a partnership with the Central University of Finance and Economics in the Chinese capital. Several Brazilian students had already gone there before him and their positive experiences inspired him to take the leap.

Home away from home

Santos, now residing in Shanghai, spent his first four years in China based in Beijing: three as a student and one employed at a company.

This distant place soon became a space of comfort. Beijing offers a deep sense of history and culture. Reflecting on the city, Santos remarked, "Walking through the *hutongs* (the city's typical narrow alleyways) or exploring the Summer Palace (an imperial garden created during the Qing Dynasty spanning from 1644 to 1911) offers an enriching connection with the past."

Many of his friends and acquaintances still reside in Beijing, adding an extra layer of familiarity.

One of his most memorable experiences as a student occurred in 2019, during the Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year. Santos had formed a close bond with his first Chinese teacher, who was still living in Brazil at the time. Even so, the teacher invited Santos and another student to celebrate the holiday in his hometown with his parents.

"It was such a special and unique opportunity that we accepted it immediately," he recalled. "We stayed at his parents' house for five days, had dinner together on Chinese New Year's Eve. In the days that followed, we even visited some of his other relatives and friends, which allowed us to learn first-hand about Chinese traditions and customs."

For the love of games

Santos currently works for miHoYO, a Chinese video game development and publishing company known for creating a wide range of products, including merchandise, music, comics, novels and animated series. But the love for



Heitor Santos poses for a photo against the backdrop of the Oriental Pearl Tower in Shanghai

video games goes back to his childhood.

“I started playing video games when I was 5 or 6,” he said. “I had a Super Nintendo and played a lot of classic games, like *Super Mario World*, *Mortal Kombat* and *Contra*. Later, I got a PlayStation One, which sparked my interest in role-playing games.”

Video games not only transported Santos to a virtual world inhabited by assorted characters, but also taught him some important life skills. “I would say that 80 percent of my English proficiency stems from playing video games. I learned by trying to understand game plots and interacting with online gaming communities.”

Santos joined miHoYO, valued at approximately \$7 billion, in June 2022. As part of his role managing content creators for Brazil and Latin America at large, he serves as a liaison between the company and these creators.

Most of them are avid miHoYo game enthusiasts, with whom he works to lift content quality and quantity. To achieve this, they maintain a detailed calendar and organize planning sessions to determine optimal content promotion strategies. For instance, when new characters are introduced, extensive online content like fan art, songs and cosplay are encouraged.

The video game industry is rapidly expanding in popularity and market value, projected to reach \$95.51 billion by 2029.

Santos sees great potential for the industry’s growth in Latin America for three reasons.

First, the increasing accessibility of mobile phones and the Internet is expanding the gaming audience.

Second, the rise of content creators in the continent reduces dependence on English-language content and fosters more direct engagement.

Third, esports’ soaring popularity, especially among Gen Zs, presents new growth opportunities, boosting community participation and attracting sponsors.

In daily life, the young Brazilian communicates with the content creators under his supervision, coordinates regional online content creation events and gathers feedback.

“Working with aspiring content creators and established ones, talking to them, hearing their life stories and goals, helping them expand their social media presence, creating monetization opportunities... Seeing the impact I can have on their lives is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job,” he said.

Though he misses many things about his native Brazil, especially his family and friends, the local cuisine and the more relaxed lifestyle, his experience and work have solidified his calling as a cultural bridge between two countries and two peoples. He intends to continue working in China, with a specific focus on the Brazilian market and, in turn, help close existing communication gaps.

“The tech-related opportunities in China, the area I am most familiar with, are virtually endless. Both my personal growth and professional evolution depend on how I can take advantage of them,” he concluded. **BR**

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A Modern Mosaic

A traditional Chinese painting exhibition at the Capital Museum highlights the enduring charm of Beijing's historic Central Axis through the lens of contemporary artists.

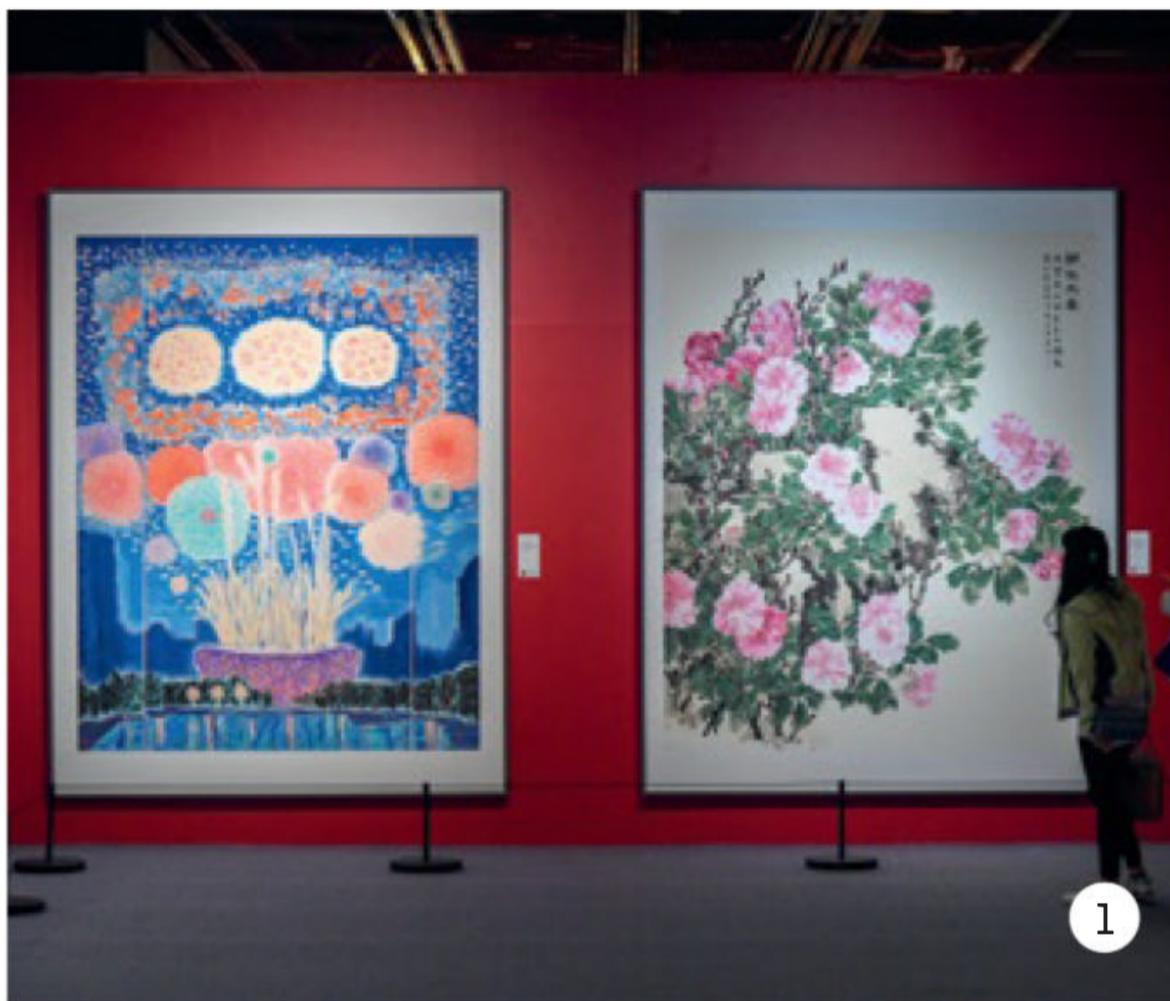
The axis is a 7.8-km-long symbolic line bisecting ancient Beijing. It starts in the south from the Yongding Gate, running across the Zhengyang Gate, Tiananmen Square, the Palace Museum, also known as the Forbidden City, and Jingshan Park, and ends at the Bell and Drum Towers in the north.

Many of Beijing's quintessential gems stand along this city stem. If extended northward, it also passes the National Stadium, also known as the Bird's Nest, and the National Aquatics Center, aka the Water Cube, both main Olympic venues.

The exhibition, from June 8 to July 31, features 175 artworks by some 90 career painters from across China.

(Text and photos by Wei Yao)

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Comments to weiyao@cicgamericas.com



1. A visitor takes a closer look at paintings inspired by Beijing's Central Axis at the Capital Museum on June 13

2. A winter scene in the imperial garden inside the Forbidden City

3. An artistic reproduction of mythical beasts decorating the corners of the Forbidden City's roofs

4. The Bell and Drum Towers, which marked the hours in ancient Beijing

5. A painting of the Forbidden City, which housed China's royal family from the 15th century to the early 20th century

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3



Are Talented Young People Being Identified Effectively?

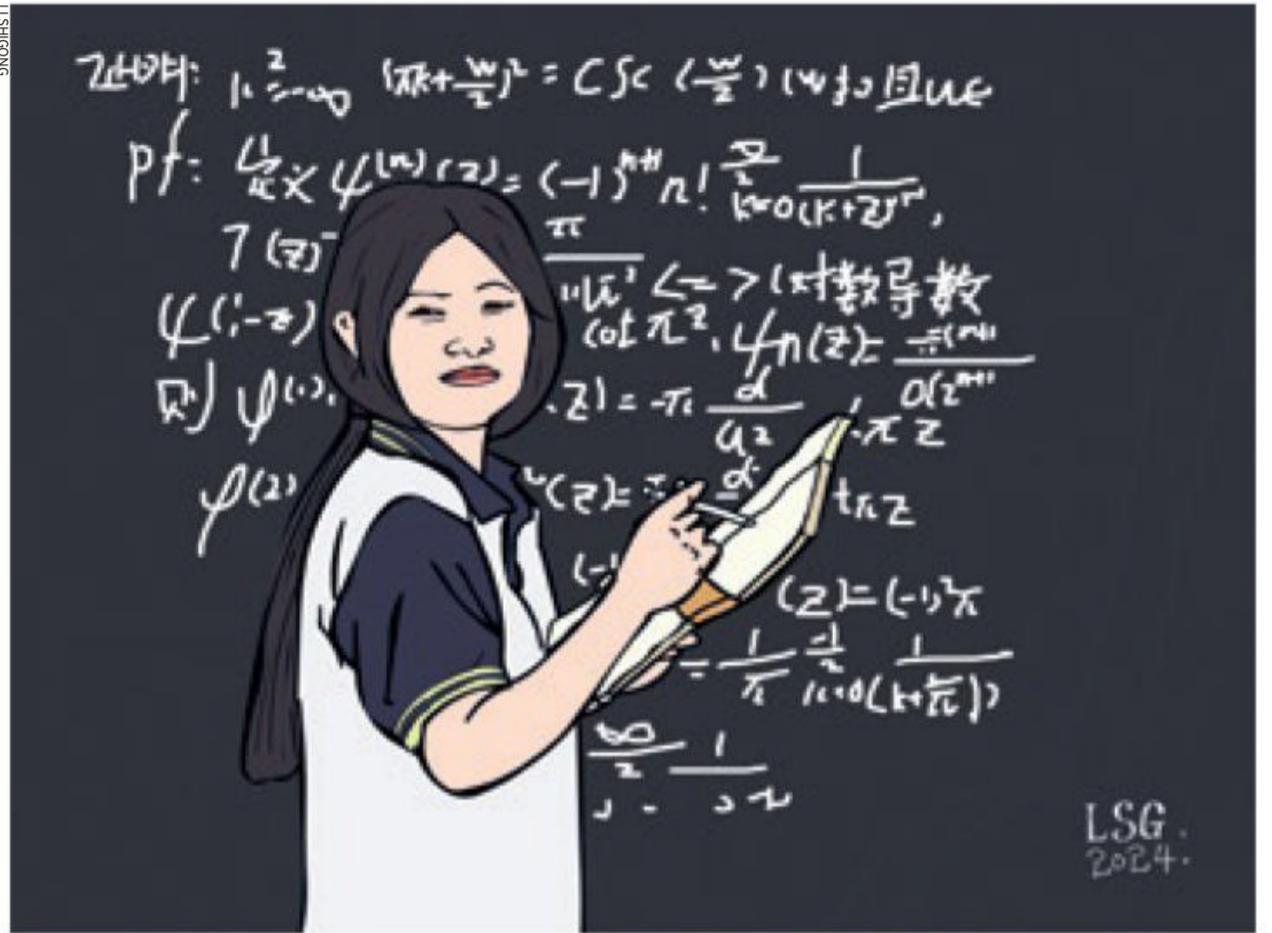
Recently, a 17-year-old fashion design student from the Lianshui Secondary Vocational School in Jiangsu Province grabbed widespread attention in China by reaching the 2024 Alibaba Global Mathematics Competition finals. Jiang Ping ranked 12th out of a total of 801 finalists. Her secondary vocational school background distinguishes her from the other finalists, who come from elite universities such as Peking University, Tsinghua University, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the U.S. She is also the first secondary school student in history to have reached the finals of the competition. Her exceptional performance has sparked public debate.

Tu Turong (Guancha.gmw.cn): Jiang's story reminds us that secondary vocational schools or schools of the kind, which were once overlooked or even looked down upon, also house hidden talent. With aptitude and hard work, these talented young people can also shine like diamonds.

Jiang is lucky because she has met a good math teacher, who was quick to discover her talent in mathematics and steered her into the field of advanced mathematics. It is his encouragement that has helped Jiang, who once felt she wasn't good enough to participate in the global math competition, muster up the courage to take on the challenge.

It's really exciting to see that Jiang's talent has been recognized, as it really rarely happens in this way. In real life, talents are often defined too rigidly. Job applicants have to meet employers' thresholds for academic qualifications. Some companies not only require applicants to have a bachelor's or graduate degree, but also require them to graduate from prestigious universities, as if they can't do the job if they do not.

There are now calls for Peking University or Tsinghua University to recruit Jiang. It reflects how much the public cherishes her talent, but it also implies an awkward fact: Even gifted students like Jiang tend to slip



through the cracks if they do not possess a glitzy educational background.

Many promising young people in China are not as fortunate as Jiang. They are not "excellent students" according to the traditional rigid standard, but they are often gifted in certain areas and have the desire to display their abilities.

It's hoped that there will be less discrimination against students from non-prestigious universities and more talented young people will be chosen from more diverse backgrounds and in a personalized manner. Do not judge young people based on academic qualifications, but on their abilities.

Zhu Changjun (Yangcheng Evening News): A lot of questions are now centered around why this prodigy is attending secondary vocational school instead of a senior middle school and whether there are any flaws in the current talent selection mechanism.

If Jiang entered senior middle school, where students focus on preparing for the college entrance examination, she may not have met her current math teacher. Also, academic

performance across all subjects is what is emphasized at senior middle schools, so she may not have been given the opportunity to reach her full potential in math.

Talents cannot be intentionally cultivated at regular schools. What matters is whether talented young people can be discovered—no matter whether they are in elite universities, general senior middle schools or secondary vocational schools—and can be given a good environment fit for their growth.

If we all acknowledge Jiang is a genius, then it must be admitted that her success can't be widely replicated. We cannot expect such geniuses to be produced in droves just because of Jiang's legend.

Jiang has made it to the finals of this global competition. But if her performance during the finals does not meet expectations, will it cause a reversal in the public's evaluation of her? Let's maintain calm and cool heads. **BR**



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