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Cover Photo: An embroideress in Qingshui Village, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, embroiders traditional Tibetan clothes on September 10. The prefecture, located in Sichuan Province in southwest China, is also home to a large group of Tibetans (XINHUA)

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Moving Mountains

A remote location, away from highways and transport; scarcity of natural resources, which hampers the development of pillar local industries; and lack of education are the major causes of poverty in most of the underdeveloped areas in China. Next comes the demographic structure. When the population of a place consists of a large number of the old, differently abled and those suffering from diseases, it is difficult to bring them out of poverty by implementing the measures taken for other demographics on the assumption that one size fits all.

This is where the concept of targeted poverty alleviation comes in. The government has been formulating different policies for places with different characteristics, and these can be microscopic when needed, such as targeting single villages or even individuals.

Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, southwest China, home to the Yi ethnic minority, is one of the most destitute areas in the country. It is among the places which were in deep poverty in the past and are now in the final stage of poverty alleviation. In Liangshan, the government initiated poverty alleviation policies such as relocation, providing subsidies, pairing the area with better developed places for partnership assistance, and facilitating access to education.

The "one kindergarten, one village" program helps Yi children, who once spoke only the Yi language, learn Mandarin before admission in primary school so as to better follow the national curriculum. Roads, schools and hospitals have been

built to improve living conditions and access to tap water has been expanded.

However, given the area's remote location, besides poverty alleviation work, there is also the need to ensure that those who have been lifted out of poverty do not fall back into it again. There is still a long way to go to consolidate the achievements and help Liangshan enjoy long-term development.

Once the people in the remaining pockets of poverty step into a moderately prosperous society as scheduled, the goal to ensure everyone has enough food and clothing, access to compulsory education, basic medical services and safe housing will be realized. This goal, according to ancient texts, was one of the objectives pursued during the golden age in China's history. And in modern China, the government has pledged that not a single person will be left behind when a moderately prosperous society in all respects is built.

At the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, poverty alleviation became a mission to build a moderately prosperous society in all respects and the Party led the nation, including all ethnic groups, to wage a war on poverty. Today, with the fight coming to the final push, there is great concern about its progress both at home and abroad. Especially in view of the novel coronavirus epidemic, there is apprehension that the disruptions may cast a shadow on the poverty alleviation work.

However, the emerging facts and figures prove that solid progress has been made and not a single person, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity, will be left behind. ■

WRITETOUS



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Please provide your name and address along with your submissions. Submissions may be edited.

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MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Residents see off medical experts from the Chinese mainland departing from their hotel in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on September 16.

The experts worked round the clock and tested over 1.78 million samples in Hong Kong to do nucleic acid tests during the past weeks. No local infection was reported on September 15, the first time since early July.



YINXIANG

Lake of Tranquility

An aerial view of Nahai Lake in Luqu, a county in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province, northwest China, on September 15. Thanks to a ban on herding and other efforts to restore the environment, as well as increased precipitation in the province in recent years, the lake has expanded and its ecology improved.

Enhanced Image

The main findings of the 2019 China National Image Global Survey were released by the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies, a research institution affiliated to China International Publishing Group, in Beijing on September 15.

The survey showed China's overall image improved in 2019, with overseas youth, aged 18-35, having the best impression of the country. China scored 6.3 on a 10-point scale, 0.1 point higher than in the previous survey.

It also showed that other BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa—have retained their good impression of China.

Regarding China's participation in global governance, more than half of the respondents said they expect it to play a bigger role in economic, scientific and technological fields.

The Belt and Road Initiative proposed by China has seen increasing popularity, with 23 percent of the overseas respondents acquainted with it, 3 percentage points more than in 2018. The top six countries with the highest awareness of the initiative were India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Germany.

More people, compared with the 2018 survey, thought that Chinese enterprises would bring along new capital and technologies, and create jobs in other countries. And fewer thought Chinese enterprises would impact local employment and affect the balance of the local industrial chain.

Those in developing countries expressed greater expectations for opportunities to emerge from Chinese enterprises' presence in their countries, the survey found.

While infrastructure connectivity and unimpeded trade are the most

praised areas, geopolitical conflicts, differences in political systems and trade protectionism are the major challenges faced by the countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

The survey was jointly conducted by the academy and Kantar Group, a marketing data, insight and consultancy company, with 500 respondents from each of 22 countries in Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania and Africa, from June to September in 2019.

COVID-19 Guideline

The National Health Commission on September 15 released the seventh novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) prevention and control guideline, stressing that the disease is mainly transmitted via respiratory droplets and close contact. The latest version said there are risks of infection when people are exposed

to contaminated objects or environments under certain conditions.

When five or more cases are linked by the same location of exposure, it is to be regarded as an infection cluster, the guideline said. Previously, the occurrence of two or more such confirmed cases was identified as an infection cluster.

For the convenience of epidemiological investigations, the latest version gave specific criteria for imported cases, and new infections linked to imported cases.

After taking a COVID-19 test at ports of entry, those entering the Chinese mainland should spend seven days in isolation centers for medical observation and take another test before completing quarantine.

If the test result is negative, they should isolate themselves at home for another seven days before they can travel around.

Smart Expo

To promote global exchanges of smart technologies and international cooperation in the smart industry, the 2020 Smart China Expo Online was held in Chongqing Municipality in southwest China from September 15 to 17.

Co-hosted by Chongqing and Singapore, it saw over 550 companies and other participants, including foreign enterprises such as Intel, IBM and Siemens.

"Smart technologies are vital for the inclusive and sustainable future we want," said Liu Zhenmin, UN Under Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, while addressing the opening ceremony via video link. "In the ongoing fight against COVID-19, smart technologies have been deployed to prevent, monitor and contain the spread of the pandemic, and to support recovery."

"The creativity and innovation of industries is key to the advancement of smart technologies, while governments have a crucial and expanding effect on creating an enabling environment," he added.

The expo, themed “Smart Technology: Empowering Economy, Enriching Life,” had 41 online forums on 5G, blockchain, industrial Internet and semiconductors.

A branch venue was set up in Singapore for the opening ceremony, which maintained real-time connection with the main venue in Chongqing.

AI Principles

Chinese institutions, universities and enterprises have jointly released principles governing the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by children.

The principles aim to reduce the possible negative impacts of AI on children while providing them with better education, Zeng Yi, Director of the Ethics and Security Center of the Beijing Academy of Artificial Intelligence (BAAI), said at a conference organized in Beijing for announcing the release of the principles on September 14.

According to the principles, AI development should safeguard children’s dignity and protect and promote their free development and diversified growth. AI products should help protect their privacy, promote their physical and mental health, and avoid potential risks.

The principles were released by BAAI, Peking University, Tsinghua University and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, together with enterprises that focus on AI development.

In recent years, with the increasing popularity of online courses,

games and social media, children have more exposure to AI products, whereas their ability to identify risks and hidden dangers is insufficient, Zeng said.

More attention needs to be paid to the data protection, authorization and security of AI products. The formulation of related principles can ensure the healthy growth of children, he added.

Online Literature

A total of 28 literary works have been shortlisted to compete in the 2019 online literature rankings.

The entries, announced by the online literature center of the China Writers Association on September 14, have three categories: online fiction; online literature with influential intellectual property (IP); and works with international influence.

Fourteen novels were shortlisted for online fiction, including a novel whose title is translated as *Vast and Mighty*, revolving around college graduates starting their own businesses.

Ten literary works made the list of online literature with influential IP, including *Zhu Xian*, a popular fantasy that has been developed into online games.

Four other titles were shortlisted in the category of internationally influential works.

The public can vote on them between September 14 and 28, via chinawriter.com.cn. The final rankings, based on the voting results and



Dental Health

Children learn how to brush teeth at a kindergarten in Jiapu, a township in Huzhou, Zhejiang Province in east China, on September 16, ahead of Teeth Care Day on September 20.

expert appraisals, will be released on September 28.

Marrow Donations

The China Marrow Donor Program (CMDP) has facilitated 10,000 donations of hematopoietic stem cells (HSC) over the past two decades, with more than 2.8 million potential donors listed in its database, according to the Red Cross Society of China.

HSCs are stem cells from which

all types of blood cells are formed. They are found in the bone marrow of adults and used to treat blood diseases such as leukemia.

The Red Cross Society of China presented a certificate to Lin Binbin, the 10,000th HSC donor, on September 15. The presentation took place in Beijing at an event marking the Sixth World Marrow Donor Day.

The CMDP, established in 1992, is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Red Cross.



Rice Race

A rice harvesting competition in Quanzhou, a county in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China, on September 15. Four teams consisting of 60 people each participated, reaping, threshing and weighing the rice within two hours.

Steady Rebound

The recovery of the Chinese economy continued to gather steam with major economic indicators improving in August, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on September 15.

Retail sales of consumer goods returned to growth for the first time this year, rising 0.5 percent year on year in the month. The measurement of consumption fell 1.1 percent in July.

Industrial output increased 5.6 percent year on year, accelerating from the 4.8-percent rise in July. In the first eight months, industrial output expanded 0.4 percent from one year earlier, compared with

a decline of 0.4 percent in the January-July period.

Fixed assets investment edged down 0.3 percent year on year in the first eight months, further narrowing from a fall of 1.6 percent posted in the January-July period.

Private fixed assets investment, which accounts for more than half of total investment, fell 2.8 percent in the January-August period, compared with a decline of 5.7 percent in the first seven months.

Exports grew at a faster-than-expected pace in August, increasing 11.6 percent year on year, though imports edged down 0.5 percent from one year earlier.

NBS spokesperson Fu

Linghui said the rebound in major indicators in August came as the economy extended its recovery. He predicted that the economic growth is likely to post “an evident acceleration” in the third quarter if recovery momentum continues in September.

China’s GDP expanded 3.2 percent year on year in the second quarter, reversing a contraction of 6.8 percent in the first quarter.

Hainan Investment

A new batch of 151 projects started construction in the southern island province of Hainan on September 13, as part of its efforts to advance the free trade port program.

With a total investment of 40.3 billion yuan (\$5.89 billion), they include infrastructural facilities, the first phase of an aircraft engine maintenance base in provincial capital Haikou, a high-end intelligent commodity manufacturing park in the Yangpu Economic Development Zone, and a yacht dock project in the tropical resort of Sanya.

On June 1, the central authorities released a master plan for the Hainan Free Trade Port, aiming to build the whole island into a globally influential high-level free trade port by the middle of the century.

Previously, the province had launched 221 projects in two groups, with a total investment of 77 billion yuan (\$11.37 billion) in this year for building the free trade port.

By the end of this year, investment in these projects will reach 8 billion yuan (\$1.18 billion).

BMW Project

The second phase of a high-voltage battery center invested in by BMW Brilliance Automotive (BBA), a joint venture between BMW Group and Brilliance China Automotive Holdings Ltd., started production in the northeastern province of Liaoning on September 14.

The expanded center is the first location in the BMW production network to manufacture fifth-generation high-voltage batteries.

“China is of high importance to BMW, both as a market and as a location for production and innovation,” Milan Nedeljkovic, member of the board of management of BMW AG, responsible for production, said. “With this new battery center, we will more than double our local battery production capacity in China.”

The expansion is concrete proof of BMW’s commitment to continue investing in Shenyang, Liaoning and northeast China,



New Choices

Shoppers select commodities in a mall on the new extension of Nanjing Road in Shanghai on September 13, the day when the area opened to the public. With the flagship stores of many Chinese and foreign brands located here, it has added to the appeal of the pedestrian commercial street.



The Smell of Profit

Workers make *naan*, a Uygur-style flatbread, at a food industry park in Jiashi County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, on September 12. The park's *naan* production involves 1,200 local residents, including 696 from impoverished households. As many as 300,000 *naans* are sold via online and offline channels a day.

according to BBA President Johann Wieland.

China is BMW's largest single market. BBA was founded in 2003. In 2019, its plants in Shenyang, the provincial capital of Liaoning, produced more than 530,000 vehicles for the Chinese market, an increase of more than 9 percent year on year. Maximum annual capacity of the two plants is expected to reach 650,000 units over the coming years.

P2P Regulation

The number of peer-to-peer (P2P) lenders in operation across China stayed at 15 at the end of August, down 99 percent from the start of 2019, Feng Yan, Deputy Director of the Department of Inclusive Finance of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, said at a press conference on September 14.

There had been an 88-percent decline in lenders and a 73-percent drop in borrowers, she said, adding

that both the numbers of participants and P2P companies had fallen for 26 consecutive months.

Online P2P lending, where investors sidestep traditional lenders such as banks to lend directly to borrowers, was once seen as an important credit mechanism.

However, China has tightened its regulation and supervision over the sector in recent years to forestall financial risks.

Regulators will continue to step up scrutiny of the P2P sector to reduce risks, Feng said.

Self-Driving Truck

FAW Jiefang has rolled out J7, a self-driving heavy-duty truck.

Equipped with seven cameras, 5-mm wave radars and one lidar, as well as an autopilot system, J7 is capable of automatic overtaking, lane changing, lane centering, adaptive cruise control, blind spot monitoring, obstacle avoidance and other maneuvers, the com-

pany said.

The L3 self-driving truck was jointly developed by FAW Jiefang and PlusAI, an artificial intelligence startup in California, the U.S.

The autonomous truck will be mass manufactured and generate large amounts of data at a low cost during real operations to feed its L4 algorithm. With continuous autonomous learning and over-the-air technology upgrade, the L4 self-driving truck will be put into commercial operation in 2023, according to the company.

L3 automation only conditionally allows drivers to take their hands off the wheel or eyes off the road at low speeds, while L4 refers to a higher level of automation that generally requires no human involvement or oversight.

The cooperation will speed up the upgrade of smart trucks and contribute to China's intelligent automobile industry chain and intelligent transportation system, said Hu Hanjie, Chairman of FAW Jiefang.

China Lab

French beauty giant Clarins Group said it has opened a laboratory in Shanghai to better identify and meet the needs of Chinese consumers.

It is the first lab Clarins has set up outside Paris.

Vitro experiments, sensory analysis and clinical tests will be conducted in the lab. Researchers can screen the active ingredients of products and verify their efficacy, test and compare skin conditions before and after use of the products, as well as invite Chinese consumers for sensory evaluations.

Olivier Courtin-Clarins, Managing Director of Clarins, said the company has seen great possibilities for cooperation with its Chinese partners since their first visit to China in 1999.

Courtin-Clarins said the company hopes to draw more inspiration from traditional Chinese medicine for product development.

The lab is expected to not only develop new products for the Asian market, but also bring innovation to Clarins' global markets.



Intelligent Solution

A visitor plays a video game with a 5G-connected virtual reality headset at the 10th China Smart City and Intelligent Economy Expo in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province in east China, on September 11. The four-day event showcased the latest products and technologies from 300 enterprises in the area.

THIS WEEK WORLD



UNITED NATIONS

The first plenary meeting of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly opens for the UN headquarters in New York City on September 15



UNITED STATES

People run past the Empty Sky memorial at Liberty State Park in Jersey City, New Jersey, on September 11, commemorating the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 amid the novel coronavirus pandemic



UNITED KINGDOM

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss (right) holds a video conference with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi in London on September 11, securing the UK's first major trade deal after Brexit



GERMANY

Visitors take a selfie in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, illuminated during the 2020 Festival of Lights on September 11



MEXICO

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador waves the Mexican flag on the central balcony of the National Palace in Mexico City during Independence Day celebrations on September 15



JAPAN

Yoshihide Suga, the new leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, stands after being elected by parliament's lower house in Tokyo as prime minister on September 16



NEW ASTEROID NAMED AFTER CHINESE SCIENTIST

A newly discovered asteroid has been named after renowned Chinese scientist **Wu Weiren**, chief designer of China's lunar exploration program.

On September 8 a ceremony was held in Beijing to officially announce Asteroid Wuweiren, approved by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) earlier in April.

Wu, an academican of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a major pioneer of Chinese deep space exploration, is the winner of the World Space Award, the highest award of the International Astronautical Federation, in 2020.

Wu was appointed as the chief designer of China's lunar exploration program in 2008. Under his guidance, China launched three lunar probes, the last one being *Chang'e-4*, which made the first-ever soft landing on the far side of the moon.

The asteroid, coded 281880, was discovered by the Near-Earth Object Telescope at the Purple Mountain Observatory in east China.

Asteroids are the only celestial bodies that can be named by their discoverers. The naming is recognized as an international and permanent honor.



Abacus Learning

Nanfang Daily

September 11

During this year's Two Sessions held in late May, some members of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference proposed students begin learning abacus skills in primary-level mathematics classrooms across China. Currently, while abacus is taught in schools, students are not required to master abacus skills. In response to the proposal, the Ministry of Education said the group responsible for mathematics curriculum standards would decide whether abacus skills should become compulsory.

Supporters believe that learning abacus

is not only a necessary platform for inheriting Chinese intangible cultural heritage but also a way to improve children's imagination and spatial thinking ability. Others believe learning abacus skills will have a detrimental effect on regular math learning, as the abacus uses a different set of mathematical rules.

Public discussion has been previously sparked by suggestions that other traditional cultural heritage, such as woodcarving and opera, be included in the national curriculum.

Discussions have centered around whether or not inclusion in the school curriculum is the best way to pass on Chinese culture, and whether students' academic burdens should be increased without their consent. The inclusion of abacus learning in the national curriculum should be the result of careful analysis by experts, as well as the result of public discussion.

Prevention on Campus

Beijing Youth Daily

September 12

A number of Chinese universities have announced to reduce Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day holidays in order to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The universities plan to extend the winter holiday in compensation.

Beijing Municipal Education Commission spokesperson Li Yi explained that it is necessary to adopt closed management as part of regular epidemic prevention and control. At the start of the new semester in late August and September, over 930,000 university students returned to Beijing from all over China. In order to deal with the large and mobile population of university students, universities need to adjust their methods of teaching and learning, as well as campus lifestyle.

Students are being encouraged to stay on campus and to avoid non-essential travel. However students planning to visit family, seek employment, or receive medical treatment may leave campus after notifying the university. The policy aims to provide effective tracking of infections and sources of infection.

Beijing is still in the stage of epidemic prevention and control, so students are required to reduce their off-campus activities, including entertainment, tourism and fitness.

"I think there has to be an awareness that we are not in a zero-sum game. Particularly in globalization, the cake gets bigger, and we can both have a share. I guess the only solution is to try to find common ground, and common ground means you have to compromise."

Joery Wuttke, President of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, in an interview with CGTN on September 15

"Global challenges, from the pandemic to climate breakdown, continue to mount and require Sino-American collaboration. After the U.S. election, a window of opportunity might open for a careful renegotiation of the [U.S.-China] relations at the heart of the world economy."

Isabella Weber, a U.S. professor of economics, in *The Guardian* on September 11



A freshman presses her finger onto a painting while registering at the Khoo Teck Puat Gymnasium of Peking University in Beijing on September 1. As the new school year starts, college students are returning to campus in Beijing under tight epidemic prevention and control measures

Autumn and winter are always the seasons with a high incidence of respiratory diseases. Also, according to a guideline released by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, there is a risk that the coronavirus could become much more active during the coming winter. Accordingly, universities in Beijing still require students to wear masks on campus. Students and staff are also priority groups for influenza vaccination.

Targeting Poor Populations

People's Daily

September 11

Securing employment is the most direct and effective way to raise people out of poverty.

In a bid to support the export of labor services, a vital channel for creating jobs, local governments should cooperate with enterprises to provide policy promotion, information exchange and skills training in poverty-stricken areas. Besides offering an organized way to expand labor service export, the governments should also consider offering transportation subsidies for poor people who work in other provinces.

Local governments also need to combine employment and poverty alleviation with industrial development by supporting enterprises that contribute to poverty alleviation and that develop relevant industries. In addition, the construction of industrial parks with preferential policies throughout the country can create an encouraging environment for migrant workers returning to their hometowns to start businesses.

Providing better job training is also a significant contributor to poverty alleviation, helping upskill workers and improve the knowledge of entrepreneurs.

CHINESE DIRECTOR WINS GOLDEN LION

Chinese director **Zhao Ting** has taken home the top award at this year's Venice Film Festival with her film, *Nomadland*, on September 12.

Also known as Chloe Zhao, the Beijing native who moved to the United States when she was 15, is the first Chinese female director to win the festival's top prize, and also the first woman to win the prize in a decade.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, this year's Venice Film Festival was held as a combination of in-person and virtual events. As travel restrictions prevented her attendance, Zhao accepted the Golden Lion award via video link.

The film, which is based on Jessica Bruder's 2017 non-fiction book, *Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century*, tells the story of an out-of-work American woman who becomes a modern-day nomad. It will screen at major festivals in Toronto, New York and Telluride, as the events agreed to put aside their rivalry to cooperate amid the pandemic.



“The Democratic Progressive Party authority and the pro-independence elements on the island are the culprits responsible for the current complex situation in the Taiwan Straits. They had made a total miscalculation in believing that they could succeed in splitting the country by relying on foreign forces.”

Ma Xiaoguang, a spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, at a press conference on September 16

“For countries across the income spectrum, human rights-based policies can help to shift these [COVID-19 pandemic's] impacts from devastating to manageable; and contribute to a recovery with better protection and greater resilience.”

Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, at the 45th Session of the UN Human Rights Council on September 14

An aerial photograph of a vast valley filled with terraced tea fields. The fields are a vibrant green and arranged in neat, curved rows that follow the contours of the land. In the background, there are rolling green hills and mountains under a clear blue sky with a few white clouds. A small village with traditional buildings is visible on the right side of the valley.

COVER STORY

RIDING THE RELOCATION EXPRESS

An ethnic group in southwest China joins the national drive for progress
By Wen Qing



An aerial view of Huangcaoping Village, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province in southwest China, on September 2

A Sunday in early fall is a good time for those living in the Mu'endi community to enjoy their new life after their busy relocation here recently. At the Central Square, the community elders can be seen chatting and laughing in the warm sun. Young women sit on the lush green lawns, keeping an eye on their toddlers while embellishing their homemade clothes with the unique embroidery of their community. The only store in the community bustles with boisterous children scrambling to buy lollipops.

Mu'endi is a newly built relocation community in Zhaojue, a county in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province in southwest China. Over 6,000 people who once lived in extreme poverty in deep mountains have been re-billed here. The relocation is part of the targeted poverty alleviation initiative that started in 2013 to help those living below the national poverty line, equivalent to about 3,218 yuan (\$475) annual per-capita income as of the end of 2019, pursue moderate prosperity. Villagers left their dilapidated mud houses in the mountains to move into the new apartments in Mu'endi, paying only a token sum of money. The rest of the cost has been borne by the government.

Liangshan has historically been one of the poorest regions in China. But with the implementation of the targeted poverty alleviation policy, it has made progress by improving housing and transportation and finding jobs for residents to achieve sustainable growth, so that they will not remain dependent on government handouts. The drive has revitalized rural Liangshan.

Living on the cliff edge

Mouse Labo is one of the relocatees. The 26-year-old moved into his new apartment in Mu'endi with his wife and three children four months ago. "My new home is large, bright and was furnished by the community before I moved in. We spent only 10,000 yuan (\$1,474) on it," he told *Beijing Review*. "If I had to buy it on my own, I may not be able to afford it even after saving for the rest of my life."

The market value of the new apartment is estimated to be about 300,000 yuan (\$44,000). Mouse Labo is the sole wage earner in his family and his earnings were erratic in the past.

Life in Mu'endi is convenient for it has amenities such as shops, a recreation center for the elderly, and community reading rooms for children. Moreover, a primary



The newly built Mu'endi community in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province in southwest China, on August 22

and middle school and a hospital are under construction, so are factories and agricultural parks that will provide jobs.

For Mouse Labo, one of the biggest benefits is that his children can now have quality education, which motivated him to move down here from his old village Atulieer. "The living expenses in the community are bound to be higher than those in the village. That's why I and some other villagers at first hesitated to move in here," he said. Besides, in the old village, they could grow corn, potato and other vegetables to feed themselves. "In the past, many villagers did not like to relocate," he said. "Now people's mindset has changed."

Besides being a devoted son, husband, and father, Mouse Labo is also an Internet celebrity, with nearly 100,000 followers on Douyin, the Chinese version of short video platform TikTok.

He became the cynosure of all eyes with a special skill—free climbing, which he acquired in the old village. It's no mere hobby or adventure sport but an essential skill for those living in Atulieer, an isolated village surrounded by steep mountains.

For the over 300 villagers living there, the only way to get out of the village was by climbing down a wood and vine ladder hanging on the almost vertical cliff, which led to the village being dubbed the cliff village. Even children needed to acquire free climbing skills to go down to school. Mouse Labo started climbing down and up when he was just 4 years old.

Why there is no paved road to this village? China has become renowned globally for its infrastructure building capability, the Belt and Road Initiative being a prime example of it. The complicated geology is the main reason. Jise Fangsen, deputy head of Zhaojue, the county where Atulieer is located, attributed it to the village being in a fault zone in the Hengduan Mountains that is prone to geological disasters such as landslides and rock falls, making road construction extremely difficult.

Besides natural hurdles, the prohibitive cost also scuppered the local government's road building plan. "Building one road to Atulieer is estimated to cost about 60 million yuan (\$8.8 million)," Jise said. In 2019, Zhaojue's total revenue was 219 million yuan (\$32 million). For a county with many poor villages to help and other social plans to implement, it was simply an unaffordable sum.

The people in Atulieer mostly lived by growing corn, potatoes and oranges. An average family's annual income was only a few hundred dollars as they could not sell their goods much due to transportation hardships. So why did people choose to live in such a closed and remote area in the first place?

"Before the People's Republic of China was founded, different Yi tribes fought among themselves endlessly and Atulieer, situated on a cliff that is easy to defend, was a safe haven. The people seeking refuge here were also attracted by the abundant sunlight, warm climate and fertile soil. Once

they settled down, they were reluctant to leave," Jise said.

However, strengths may turn into weakness when the external environment changes. As the chaos ended and the outside world entered a period of speedy development, secluded Atulieer missed that opportunity.

To address that, the village built a steel ladder to replace the old frayed ladders of wood and vine with local government fund of 1 million yuan (\$150,000). Under the guidance of three technicians from Yunnan Province, the villagers did most of the work themselves, including lugging up steel tubes, generators and construction materials.

The work was arduous, but brought tangible results. "With better transportation, a tourism company came to invest in our village and develop outdoor adventure activities such as climbing," Mouse Labo said. Now he works for such a company as a tour guide. His monthly salary is 4,000 yuan (\$590), far better than in the past.

Atulieer is a window to observe the poverty alleviation efforts in Liangshan, where extremely poor families have been relocated to new communities and given assistance and incentives to develop tourism or grow agricultural specialties to help themselves.

Growing a better life

While new apartments and new roads are a good beginning, industrial development and jobs are essential for sustainable growth.

Ciqu Laza's family fell into poverty when her two sons died, leaving her with five grandchildren to bring up. The septuagenarian gets various government allowances, yet she still cherishes working to add some money to the family coffers. She is in good health and has found a job clearing weeds in a blueberry plantation. "I earn over 2,000 yuan (\$295) every month, that's really nice," she told *Beijing Review*.

Before the plantation came up, Ciqu and other villagers grew potato or buckwheat, which meant a lot of labor but a meager income. Now besides their wages, they can also earn more money by leasing their land to the plantation. She can earn a rent of 10,000 yuan (\$1,474) every year.

The blueberry plantation, established in 2019, is a flagship project for poverty alleviation in Butuo County. According to Shang Zhaoyang, Deputy Director of the Bureau

of Commerce in Butuo, the abundant sunshine and the soil are highly suitable for large-scale blueberry cultivation. "China's blueberry market has a huge potential to tap," he said.

The 240-hectare plantation has been co-funded by the local government and Tian Zhimei, a leading agricultural company in Sichuan, which sent technicians to instruct the villagers how to manage the plantation. When the blueberries ripen, the company sends personnel to buy them at a guaranteed price, which has greatly reduced risks.

Developing agriculture is creating jobs and perking up farmers' income. But still more can be done to add value to agri-



Mouse Labo returns to his old village Atulieer on August 22

cultural products. "We plan to build a cold storage and extend the industrial chain to create more profits," Shang said.

Bringing about change

While relocation and industrial development can reduce material poverty, many areas in Liangshan face a deeper level of poverty—an outdated mindset.

Bajiu Tie'er is the head of Xiaoshan, a village in the prefecture. His father passed away five years ago and according to the custom of the Yi people, he was expected to host a lavish funeral to show respect,

no matter that the lavish display was likely to leave him and his sisters bankrupt.

A traditional Yi funeral would start with relatives and friends arriving and setting off fireworks to signal their arrival. Then the host has to set off fireworks too, to tell them they are aware of that. As soon as the guests arrive, cattle have to be slaughtered in a gesture to thank them for coming.

"For us Yi's, the more cattle and sheep a family slaughters during funerals, the more it is respected," Bajiu said. "I heard that in neighboring counties, some people even butchered 50 cattle, fell into bankruptcy and had to sell their house and land just for a funeral. And most of the meat, instead of being eaten, went to waste."

So he was determined to take the lead and change such an extravagant practice. He suggested to his sisters that they dispense with the fireworks and not slaughter so many cattle. The sisters were hesitant at first, fearing it would be construed as disrespect for the departed and they would become an object of derision among villagers. However, he continued with his persuasion and finally, they agreed to have a simple funeral.

"After that, other people in the village followed suit. No extravagance and waste at funerals in our village," he said with pride.

Many other Yi families would have also preferred not to throw a luxurious banquet but were worried the villagers would mock them and were forced to host an extravagant and wasteful display. So some villages and counties began to issue regulations to ban such ostentation. For example, Ahou, a village in the prefecture, has council regulations for weddings and funerals, advocating frugality and avoiding extravagance. Villagers who do not comply may have their public welfare benefits suspended.

"Now in our village, rather than comparing the number of cattle killed in weddings and funerals, people have begun to compare the academic performance of their children," Bajiu said. "This is the kind of comparison we want." ■

(Reporting from Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province)

COVER STORY

WINGS TO WIN

Mountain people fight poverty with education and skills training

By Wen Qing

Mist shrouded Jiebanada, a village at the foot of a mountain in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province in southwest China, on the early morning of August 21. Six-year-old Jineng Xiaofei got up early as usual, washed up and had breakfast. By then the sun was out and the mist had been blown away, revealing a bright blue sky. Holding his mother's hand, Jineng walked to the newly built and only kindergarten located at the center of his village.

"Clap your hands and wash them frequently for good hygiene," sang Jineng and his classmates from the *Washing Hands* song, to start their day at the kindergarten.

Jineng's village is in Zhaojue, a county in Liangshan that is still in poverty. Due to poor transportation, a location that is cut off from the outside world and a lack of educational resources, local people have lagged behind their peers in other parts of the country.

However, with the implementation of poverty alleviation plans, the prefecture, realizing the importance of improving education for poverty alleviation, has carried out a project to popularize Mandarin, the standard Chinese language, among preschool students so that they can master the necessary language skills.

Improving education

The Yi people in Liangshan use the Yi language in their daily lives. Many children had not learned Mandarin before entering primary school. And even after, many are unable to speak Mandarin well, can't follow their teachers and lose interest in studying. Some even drop out of school, affecting their future.

Jineng's older brother Jineng Wuha, who is in second grade, has performed poorly because he can't understand what his teachers say in class.

"Before going to kindergarten, Jineng Wuha could hardly speak Mandarin. But now he has improved a lot and even teaches me to speak it at home sometimes," his mother Azhi Wuji said.



Azhi Wuji and her son Jineng Xiaofei at his kindergarten in Jiebanada Village in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province in southwest China, on August 21

Azhi said when she and her husband went to work in Guangdong Province in south China and Gansu Province in northwest China, they couldn't understand what other people said since they couldn't speak Mandarin. "It was very hard," she said. So she wanted her children to speak Mandarin well. Jineng Xiaofei's younger brother was enrolled in kindergarten in September. Azhi said she wants him to speak Mandarin as well as Jineng Xiaofei does.

Lack of skill in the standard Chinese language hampered local people's efforts to make a decent living. To alleviate poverty, the prefecture has spared no effort to develop education, an important way for ending the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

In May 2018, Liangshan started a pilot project to popularize Mandarin among preschool

students. Under the project, 2,724 village kindergartens were established and 112,800 children started to learn Mandarin. They also offer courses in the Yi language and traditional culture to keep the ethnic culture alive. The kindergartens are within primary schools, in rented houses or transformed village committee offices. To attract more children, the prefecture provides free lunch.

Huang Jing, Director of the Preschool Mandarin Learning Leading Group Office of Liangshan, said, "Many parents found that their children were making rapid progress in learning the standard Chinese language, and they became more willing to enroll their children there."

"After the first batch of children graduated from the program and entered primary schools, a follow-up survey was conducted.



Farmers attend skills training at a village in Xide, a county in Liangshan, on August 24



A kindergarten in Jiebanada Village in Liangshan on August 21

It showed them to be more focused in class and more willing to communicate with teachers, and they generally achieved better scores," Huang said.

In December 2019, the Communication University of China conducted a sample test on the linguistic capability of first grade students in Liangshan who had participated in the preschool Mandarin learning project. It found that 99.03 percent of them meet the language standard.

Tech-equipped farmers

In addition to building kindergartens, Liangshan has also provided training to help farmers improve planting and cattle raising skills.

On August 24, Adi Aqie, a 36-year-old villager, went to the night school at the center of his village by motorbike. Technicians from the agriculture and rural affairs bureau of Xide, a county in Liangshan, came to the village to give lectures that day. One of the topics was how to increase potato output, which was of great concern in Adi's village. This year, several hailstorms have killed many potato stalks and as a result, the total output may decrease sharply. Lama Wusha, an agricultural technician, offered solutions to improve the survival rate and output of potatoes.

Adi's village, Xiaoshan, used to be the only impoverished one in Xide, the lack of technology and skills being the primary reason.

In November 2015, Bajiu Tie'er's sow gave birth to over 10 piglets, but they all died because he lacked technologies to keep them warm in the cold weather. "Farmers can't thrive without technology," said Bajiu, who is also secretary of the village branch of the Communist Party of China.

To prevent similar mishaps, the village organized farmers to watch videos on pig raising to learn how to ensure their piglets survive the winter. As these training sessions became more popular, a night school was established for villagers.

"Although it's called a night school, it's not run at night only. The courses are given according to farmers' needs and in various venues such as the fields or farmers' homes," Bajiu said. "When it's sunny, people sit around the square at the center of the village to listen to the courses while basking in the sun."

The night school offers courses at least once or twice a month. In early May, which is a critical period for preventing animal diseases, experts are invited to teach how to vaccinate animals. During traditional Yi festivals when migrant workers return home for celebrations, the night school offers trainings on labor arbitration and safety to improve farmers' awareness of their rights and interests. The school also provides training in electrowelding, excavator driving and cooking during the festivals according to migrant workers' needs.

Lama Wusha said the biggest changes in villagers after attending night school is that they are beginning to believe in science. "In the past, villagers didn't trust vaccines, so we teach them the importance of vaccination during the training. Now all the cattle in the village get vaccinated," she said. "We also stress the importance of keeping the pens clean to reduce the chance of bacteria breeding and prevent cows and sheep from developing chronic diseases."

"In the past, many cows and sheep died of illnesses every year because we didn't trust vaccines. But after taking classes at the night school, we began giving injections to the animals and now they seldom fall ill," Adi said. "Today, there are very few cows or sheep that die of illnesses, so our profit has increased. In the future, I will continue to attend night school courses so that I can learn more and become more of a modern farmer." ■

(Reporting from Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province)

A ROAD TO PROSPERITY

Village in southwest China makes great strides in poverty alleviation By Ma Li



Qiesha Ci'er and his family pose for a photo in front of their new house on August 24

In late August, the harvest season of walnuts, Qiesha Ci'er and his wife Jizi Mozizuo were able to sell their produce without leaving the village where they live. Abuluoha is located in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, southwest China. A newly built road enabled merchants from other regions to travel to the village to make purchases.

Liangshan, home to a large number of Yi ethnic minority population, is a national-level poverty-stricken area. Abuluoha is

surrounded by mountains on three sides and a cliff on the fourth, with only two roads for entry and exit. To access a road, the villagers had to hike for about 4 km on a cliff about 1,000 meters high, or walk down to the bottom of the valley and reach the other side of the river using ziplines.

It used to be known as a leprosy village because around 300 leprosy patients were sent there for quarantine and treatment in the 1960s. Today, the disease has been eliminated thanks to improved medical treatment. Once poverty-stricken and secluded,

the village has been revived and gained access to convenient transportation, water supply, and agricultural techniques.

Qiesha Shigan, the eldest son of Qiesha Ci'er, left the village to work in Yantai, Shandong Province in east China, in October last year.

When he returned to the village in July, he found that the village had seen great changes. "When I left for Shandong, I walked for more than four hours to cross the mountains; when I came back, a bus carried me directly to my home," Shigan told *China Today*.

Before January 1, cable cars over valleys were installed in Abuluoha, allowing villagers to travel more conveniently. In the past, they had to carry supplies on horses. On June 26, the opening of a road ended its status as China's last village not accessible by paved road, just in time for 33 households, including 29 poor ones, to move to new two-story houses in a relocation site. The family of Qiesha Ci'er is one of them.

"Without spending any money, we get an apartment of more than 80 square meters fitted with flush toilets, a TV and a washing machine. It was hard to imagine that we would move from a shabby adobe house to such a modern one," Ci'er said.

Overcoming difficulties

In April, Jizi Mozizuo developed hydro-nephrosis. "Before taking the cable car, I called the hospital in the county and asked the ambulance to wait for us at the other side of the zipline. It took my wife quickly to the hospital," Ci'er said.

Before the road had opened, the villagers were especially worried when it came to taking sick people or pregnant women to the hospital for the bumpy road made them suffer. In the past, it could take over five hours to reach the hospital. "Many women gave birth halfway to the hospital," Jilie Ziri, Secretary of the Abuluoha Village Branch of the Communist Party of China, told *China Today*. Improvement in transportation was an urgent task.

To address the transportation issue, local provincial, municipal and county-level governments decided to build a road on the cliffs. However, the construction was challenging due to the high altitude, special geological conditions and frequent collapse of loose and cracked mountain rocks caused by rainfall. Chen Ju, a constructor from Sichuan Road & Bridge Co. Ltd. still felt stressed when recalling scenes during the construction. "Landslides kept occurring as we pushed ahead with the project. For some time, we were forced to suspend construction as the excavators were smashed or fell into the deep valley," he said.

In November last year, the project



An aerial view of the new road and newly built houses in Abuluoha Village in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, southwest China, on August 24

came to a halt due to too many difficulties. The company invited a team of senior engineers to work out solutions to key problems and draw a plan for building tunnels, bridges and subgrades. The 3.8-km road included three tunnels and a steel bridge. "This is quite rare for roads connecting villages with the outside world," Chen said.

After a year of hard work, the road opened to traffic on June 26. "Building such a road cost over 10 million yuan (\$1.4 million), raising concerns over whether it was worthwhile to mobilize so much labor force, resources and money to do this," Jilie said. According to him, many netizens suggested that the funds could have been used to move the whole village away from its current location. Each household could also have received subsidies during the relocation from that money.

However, relocation can also have adverse effects. "It can be hard for people who have lived in this enclosed village for decades to adapt to the new environment.

Most of them may fail to make a living with their limited skills. After the money distributed to them is all spent, they might return to poverty," Jilie said, suggesting that the investment may seem unworthy in the short term, but is expected to bring long-term benefits to the villagers.

Sustainable development

"Since poverty alleviation across China is expected to be completed by the end of this year, we are making efforts to avoid being left behind. From August 2019 to the same month this year, the per-capita income of the villagers reached 9,000 yuan (\$1,317), which means Abuluoha is no longer a national-level poverty-stricken village," Jilie said. Besides the road and new houses, the improvement in villagers' income is the best news for them this year.

Since last year, Jilie has led villagers to develop modern ecological agriculture. Apart from planting walnuts and Chinese prickly ash, they have also grown 3.3 hectares of navel oranges and 8 hectares of mangoes. "The

mango orchards will grow to 33.3 hectares next year. It will become a major channel for improving villagers' income," he said.

The village arranged targeted training for local workers to drive excavators and prune prickly ash and walnut trees. Many housewives have become skillful at pruning.

To further long-term development and achieve sustainable economic growth, Jilie plans to convert more than 30 old houses near the Jinsha River into homestays and develop short-distance travel routes along the river. With the convenience brought by the road, more tourism activities including mountaineering, rock climbing, outdoor adventure and experiencing local folk customs will also be introduced. ■

(Reporting from Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province)

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COVER STORY

TRANSFORMING LIVES

New homes spell a new life for villagers while retaining traditional culture

By Xia Yuanyuan

Anyone who visits the new home of Jize Munai is greeted with a welcoming ritual. Once comfortably seated, the guest is shown a large photo of his old house that hangs proudly on a wall. Jize, 48, believes this photo tells the story of how his family has transitioned from a very difficult past to a modern life.

The photo shows him with his wife and three children in front of a dilapidated bungalow, which has a wooden roof and mud walls. The ramshackle yard was home to the family livestock.

Nestled on a mountain about 2,000 meters above sea level, Xujiashan Village, in Ganluo County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, was home to Jize, his community and his ancestors. The prefecture with a sizeable population of Yi people is also one of the

country's most impoverished areas.

Seven counties in Liangshan are among the 52 still to shake off their impoverished status. And as China moves to eradicate extreme poverty by the end of 2020, the prefecture is one of the main battlegrounds in the fight against poverty.

Because most of Liangshan's population resided on mountains, the construction of safe housing and supporting facilities was an important part of its poverty alleviation program so that they could move to areas with more hospitable conditions.

Modern housing

Many residents have moved into modern houses adjacent to lush forests. Recalling the tough time in the past, Zhang Guiqing, Secretary of

the Communist Party of China Xujiashan Village Branch, said, "In the past, villagers trekked across dirt roads littered with animal dung... And when rainstorms hit, floodwater rushed down from the mountains, damaging their fields."

Surrounded by mountains, the village of over 300 residents had endured isolation and poverty for generations.

The transformation took place in 2016, when road construction began. A 4.1-km-long road connecting the village to the outside world was completed a year later, changing the way villagers move about.

In 2019 villagers moved into 65 modern steel structure houses, which have spacious rooms with basic furniture, and are close to facilities, in sharp contrast to the old mud-walled dwellings a few hundred meters away.



New houses in Qingshui Village in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, southwest China on September 10



Jize Munai and his wife in their new house in Xujiashan Village in Liangshan on September 10

"We used to live in adobe houses and have never seen such nice houses [built close to] a clinic and restaurant," Jize told *Beijing Review*.

"In fact, the most comfortable thing is that I can take a hot water shower, while in the past, I could only bathe in cold water," Mahai Amozhi, a villager, said. "The new house has a kitchen, bathroom and toilets, all with running water!"

To solve the housing problem, the local government invested 22.77 million yuan (\$3.3 million) in the project, with support from the Central Government.

According to Zhang, on average, each villager is entitled to 35 square meters of living space, so Jize's family of five got a 175-square-meter new house.

At the end of 2019, Xujiashan successfully put poverty behind them. The per-capita net income of farmers in the village increased from 3,000 yuan (\$435) to about 11,000 yuan (\$1,594) annually as their stockbreeding program expanded.

Healthy lifestyle

Villagers in Daganyi in Ganluo didn't get new houses, but instead improved their lives by renovating their existing houses.

"This is my new kitchen, equipped with a rice cooker, a refrigerator and a microwave oven," said Muji A'he, a 58-year-old Yi, enthusiastically showing his new appliances. In the past, Muji cooked on a pot over a fire.

Apart from setting up new kitchens, at the beginning of 2019, the local government also helped residents of Daganyi build much-needed

facilities, including flush toilets, taps and biogas digesters that process waste into biogas.

After the construction of roads and houses was complete, the village focused on the improvement of the environment to raise the happiness index.

"If the environment is more beautiful, the happiness index will be higher," Wang Xiaoji, head of the Poverty Alleviation and Development Bureau of Ganluo, said.

In 2017, all villagers finally moved out of poverty. "We encourage our poor households to have a dream. The dream does not need to be too big, as long as it means one can live a good life," Wang said.

Like the villagers in Daganyi, many people in other parts of Ganluo have seen their dream of having a new home come true. Since 2018, the county has improved the living conditions of 23,600 households through the housing project.

Protecting local culture

Despite the housing improvements, there have been critics who said that such projects may lead to a loss of Yi people's traditional architectural culture.

In fact, protection and inheritance of ethnic minority traditional architectural culture is one of the key points emphasized by the local government.

In Xujiashan, Yi colored murals on the walls of the new houses are an example of cultural retention and sensitivity. And in order to preserve the culture in Gumo Village,

Zhaojue County, the local government retained three old houses with Yi ethnic architectural features, converting these into a small museum to present the ethnic culture to visitors and so that it is not lost to locals.

Apart from the Yi ethnic group, Liangshan is also home to a large group of Ersu Tibetans, a branch of the Tibetan ethnic minority. Walking into Qingshui Village, the new houses are surrounded by fields of galsang flowers which means good times or happiness in Tibetan. It symbolizes the good living conditions of Ersu Tibetan families in Qingshui after they moved into their new village.

The mountainous Qingshui, at an elevation of 2,300 meters, has a population of 781 people in 214 farming households. In October 2019, all villagers relocated to 147 new houses. The new houses have distinctive elements of Ersu Tibetan architecture.

"Cultural heritage is the greatest wealth we have. In the future, we will help villagers develop homestays based on ethnic culture and develop tourism. It helps to increase villagers' income and also protect ethnic culture," Wang Minghai, head of Qingshui Village, said. ■

(Reporting from Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province)

COVER STORY

THREADS OF LIFE

Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in southwest China, which has a large population of the Yi ethnic minority, boasts the best preserved Yi embroidery. Believed to have a 1,700-year-old history, the art has been recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage.

Yi embroidery is seen on traditional Yi clothes, shoes, pillowslips and decorative objects. Graphic images of fire, tiger head and bullhorn are common, along with abstract designs. The main threads used in Yi embroidery are black, red and yellow, representing their worship of the earth, fire and sun respectively.

In the past, a Yi girl's embroidery skills, especially for making beautiful clothes, used to be a measure of her abilities. However, the art fell into neglect for some time due to their hardscrabble life. But now, as some counties are developing an embroidery industry to create jobs and achieve sustainable growth, many Yi women have picked up their needles and threads once again, hoping to create not only beautiful patterns but also a life of plenty. ■

(Photos and text by Dong Ning)



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Comments to yanwei@bjreview.com

1. A close-up of a graphic pattern of Yi-style embroidery
2. An embroidery session in progress at the Mu'endi community training center in Zhaojue County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, on August 22
3. The simple tools used in Yi embroidery
4. Red thread is used to produce a red pattern
5. A veteran at work at the Mu'endi community on August 22



5





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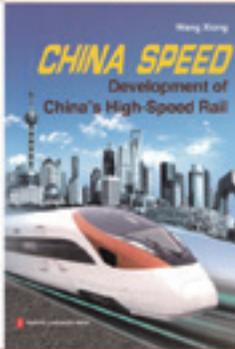
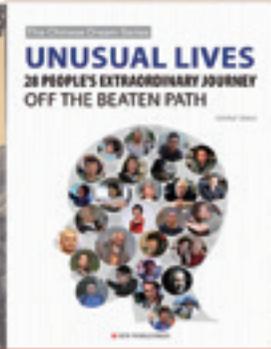
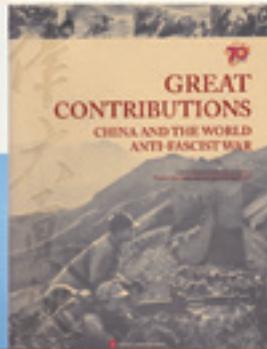
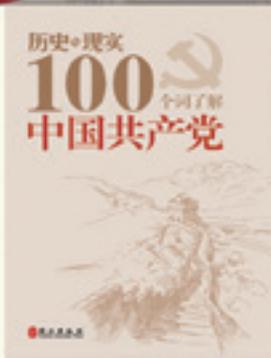
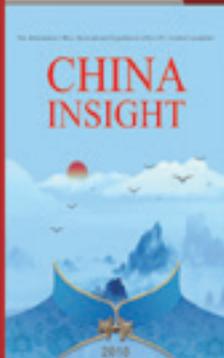
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Unlocking the Door To Understanding

Xi's book provides insight into China's governance policy framework

By Charles Onunaiju



The author is director of the Center for China Studies, Abuja, Nigeria

The third volume of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* is a continuum of the elucidation of the thoughts, issues and policies that are central to the governance of contemporary China, as articulated in the two earlier volumes by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee. This volume reflects expansive and dynamic ideas fleshed

out by China's specific social realities and the broader social milieu of the contemporary international situation.

The 650-page book begins with Xi's historic report to the 19th CPC National Congress in October 2017, which traverses all key issues that are central to the governance of China.

The report dispels all insinuations of wavering and vacillation, often leveled by so-called experts in the Western scholarly community and political establishment toward the CPC. It says, "The path of socialist political advancement with Chinese characteristics is the logical outcome of the evolution of history, theory, and practice as the Chinese people have long engaged in struggles since the advent of modern times. It is a requisite for maintaining the very nature of the Party and fulfilling its fundamental

purpose."

In addition, the report offers contributions to the scientific study and understanding of comparative politics underlining the fact that "no two political systems are entirely the same, and a political system cannot be judged in abstraction without regard for its social and political context, its history, and its cultural traditions. No one political system should be regarded as the only choice."

The tradition of constantly updating socialism with Chinese characteristics reached a new stage of theoretical breakthrough with the establishment of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Looking from the historical context and summary of the experiences accumulated in the exploration of contemporary national social realities, the scientific theory



A technician works at a Chinese-built novel coronavirus testing lab in Baghdad, Iraq, on July 29





Shenzhen International UAV Expo in Guangdong Province, south China, on September 13. More than 1,000 drones were on display at the event

of Marxism-Leninism combined with the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics gave clarity to Xi's thought as the latest development in the theoretical guide to the work of the CPC and the political flagship in the governance of China for a considerable time to come.

Xi's thought is the crystallization of the collective wisdom of the CPC from the summary of its experiences and the decisive leadership of the Central Committee of the Party. The volume captures Xi's innovative thought and how it has decisively shaped the governance of China.

Volume III offers critical insight to understanding the nature, structure and practice of the state of China. This would help enormously to clarify and understand China, a major country and responsible state, and its behavior on the world stage. Representative of the broadest interests of the people, the CPC and the state of China are free from vicious corporate special interests that make most modern states behave in ways that conflict with the general interests of the people of the world for collective security, peace, development and shared prosperity.

The CPC is a proletarian party of the working classes, constantly broadening its base and expanding its outlook in accordance with evolving historical realities, which encompass the contemporary global reality and China's own existential national condition.

The book explores key issues of global governance and China's contributions.

The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, also known as the Belt and Road Initiative, is a major

international platform. It gives practical expression to the international democratic order of participation and multilateral engagement of all states and other stakeholders in the international system. It is now in full throttle, having accorded to the aspirations of all peoples to inclusive participation in global governance. A scientific contribution of the CPC in understanding the social forces shaping the emerging community with a shared future for humanity, the Belt and Road Initiative gives practical effect to the trend of common development as an anchor for collective security and sustainable peace.

Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Volume III is a compelling treasure trove that gives unique insight into the complex web of issues that provide the critical policy framework for the governance of China. The effort invested by the leadership of the CPC and the state in governing China is here, laid bare and made easy to understand by Xi's insights.

The volume would enrich researchers and political leaders who seek to understand the issues involved in the exponential growth of China. ■



A photovoltaic power plant in the Hobq Desert in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, north China, on September 14

Defining China-EU Political Agenda

Chinese President Xi Jinping held discussions with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen via video link on September 14. They reached consensus on advancing ties, safeguarding multilateralism, and jointly addressing global challenges. An edited excerpt from a Xinhua News Agency report follows:

Leaders of China, Germany and the EU on September 14 agreed to strengthen communication and cooperation to ensure the success of the upcoming series of major political agenda between China and the EU, enhance mutual trust, seek mutual benefits on a win-win basis and uphold multilateralism.

The leaders announced the official signing of the China-EU agreement on geographical indications (GIs) and stated their commitment to speeding up negotiations on the China-EU Bilateral Investment Treaty to conclude the negotiations within this year. They decided to establish a China-EU high-level environment and climate dialogue and a China-EU high-level digital cooperation dialogue, and to forge China-EU green and digital partnerships.

Xi said the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is accelerating changes unseen in a century, and mankind is standing at a new crossroads faced with multiple common challenges. It is more imperative for China and the EU, as two major forces, markets and civilizations, to firmly grasp the general trend of mutual support and united cooperation in face of such situations, promote sound and stable development of the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, and inject more positive energy into COVID-19 response efforts, economic recovery and championing justice.

Principles for boosting ties

Xi proposed four principles for developing the China-EU relationship.

First, China and the EU should adhere to peaceful coexistence. As there are no identical political systems in the world, the coexistence of multiple civilizations represents normalcy. "The firmer the strength underpinning China-EU peaceful coexistence, the more guaranteed

world peace and prosperity," Xi said.

Second, China and the EU should adhere to openness and cooperation. China is working to foster a new, dual-cycle development architecture with the domestic cycle as the mainstay and with domestic and international development reinforcing each other. "China will seek better interconnectivity and effectiveness between the two markets and resources on the two sides to promote common development in a more robust and sustainable way," Xi said.

Third, China and the EU should adhere to multilateralism. Xi stressed China is ready to work with the EU to step up dialogue and coordination at bilateral, regional and global levels, stay committed to a global governance outlook featuring consultation, contribution and shared benefits, defend the international order and system with the United Nations at the core, and promote political settlements of international and regional hotspot issues.

Fourth, China and the EU should adhere to dialogue and consultation. "China and the EU need to stay committed to the mainstream of cooperation, resolve misunderstanding through dialogue, overcome difficulties through development and properly manage differences."

Macro-policy coordination

Since China and the EU are important trade and investment partners, Xi said the they should step up macro-policy coordination and unleash more cooperation opportunities.

Remarking that the agreement on protecting GIs was officially signed on September 14, Xi said the two sides should adopt a positive and pragmatic attitude, work to upgrade cooperation, facilitate the post-pandemic world economic recovery and jointly safeguard an open trade and investment environment.

"The Chinese market remains open to the EU. More high-quality and safe EU agricultural products are welcome to enter China," Xi said.

"The two sides should forge China-EU green partnerships," he added, also saying that the two sides need to participate constructively in the global multilateral process of tackling climate change and protecting global biodiversity. They should support each other in running the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow next year and promoting the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming to achieve positive results.

The two sides need to forge China-EU digital partnerships, Xi said, adding that China has put forward its global initiative on data security, and hopes that the EU will work with China to formulate standards and rules for the global digital field and promote the sound development of global governance in digital economy.

Xi said the two sides should address each other's legitimate concerns, adding that China follows closely the recent developments of the EU in 5G, foreign investment review, government procurement and competition policy.

Xi expressed the hope that the EU will keep its trade and investment market open, foster an open, fair, just and non-discriminatory business environment and protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, China and the EU have maintained close contacts in anti-pandemic and global health cooperation, demonstrating the significance and global impact of China-EU relations, Xi said.

For the next step, the two sides should strengthen macroeconomic policy coordination and cooperation, maintain the stability of the global industrial chain and supply chain,



Chinese President Xi Jinping co-hosts a China-Germany-EU leaders' meeting in Beijing on September 14 via video link with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose country currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

and jointly promote the recovery of the world economy, Xi said.

Xi called for strengthening vaccine research and development cooperation, to strive for making vaccines universally available global public goods, and fully accommodate the availability and affordability of the vaccines in developing countries.

Personnel exchanges must be resumed in an orderly manner, and the cross-border movement of goods should be facilitated, he said.

He also urged tripartite cooperation with Africa on the basis of full respect for African countries' will, calling on the international community, especially multilateral financial institutions and commercial creditors, to take stronger action on debt relief in Africa.

Clarifying China's principled position on Hong Kong-related and Xinjiang-related issues, he said that the essence of the issues is to safeguard China's national sovereignty, security and unity, and to protect the rights of people of all ethnic groups to live and work in peace.

"China firmly opposes any person or force creating instability, division and chaos in China, and meddling in China's internal affairs by any

country," he stressed.

"There is no one-size-fits-all path to human rights development in the world. There is no best way, only the better one," Xi stressed, adding that countries should handle their own issues first.

Chinese people will not accept "an instructor" on human rights and oppose "double standard." China is willing to strengthen exchanges with the European side based on the principle of mutual respect so that the two sides can both make progress, Xi said.

Strategic partnership

Merkel, Michel and von der Leyen said China is an important strategic partner respected by the EU. It is imperative for Europe and China to strengthen cooperation, jointly safeguard multilateralism, resist unilateralism and protectionism, and respond more effectively to various global challenges. This is in line with the common interests of both Europe and China and the international community.

The EU is willing to work with China to strengthen dialogue, promote mutual trust, and push cooperation in economy and trade, investment, green economy, climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development for more achievements.

The European side was encouraged by the signing of the agreement on GIs and welcomed China relaxing market access restrictions, expanding opening up, and pledging to conclude the EU-China investment agreement negotiations within this year.

The European side is willing to strengthen cooperation with China in international organizations, promote anti-pandemic international cooperation, maintain free trade, and promote the economic recovery in Europe, China as well as the rest of the world at an early date.

On the human rights issue, the European side admitted its problems and expressed the hope to conduct dialogue with China based on the principles of equality and mutual respect to enhance mutual understanding and handle their differences properly.

The leaders also exchanged views on international and regional issues including Afghanistan and the Iranian nuclear issue. They agreed to strengthen communication and coordination and to make joint efforts in maintaining international and regional security and stability. ■

Existential Implications

Pressing need for a viable vaccine underlines necessity of cooperation **By Josef Gregory Mahoney**



The author is professor of politics at East China Normal University in Shanghai

While a number of countries have made progress in containing and controlling the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), even moving forward cautiously with “new normals” sans masks in public spaces, and restarted economies and in-person schools, the global situation remains dire. In September, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported the highest single-day increase in global infections since the pandemic began. In the U.S., universities alone reported 45,000 new cases in the first few weeks of the fall semester and top health expert Anthony Fauci, responding publicly to optimism from President Donald Trump, countered by saying the situation in America has not yet “rounded the corner.”

It has become increasingly evident that some countries lack the national capacity or will to control the virus, and thus are banking on effective vaccine development and distribution. Indeed, as long as the virus is uncontrolled in any single jurisdiction it poses a global threat. Consequently, even those countries capable of control consider a vaccine necessary to protect themselves from subsequent resurgence of infection from foreign arrivals.

Research updates

Several media outlets are running real-time vaccine updates sites, and with almost two dozen publicly known efforts underway, the

constant trickle of developments makes it difficult to determine where precisely “we” are in terms of having a vaccine. There are some indications that a vaccine might be available for some people as early as later this year or more broadly by mid-2021, but who precisely, where precisely, and when precisely remain as uncertain as whether any of them will actually work and do more good than harm.

COVID-19, like other coronaviruses, is tricky when it comes to vaccine development. Multi-year efforts to develop vaccines for the severe acute respiratory syndrome and the Middle East respiratory syndrome have not been successful yet given the specific ways these RNA viruses infect human cells. More importantly, it is difficult to create effective vaccines for diseases attacking the upper respiratory tract that don’t in turn create adverse reactions worse than the disease itself.

Further, new vaccines aiming at a virus that mutates quickly always face challenges. In COVID-19 these challenges are acute. For example, some studies indicate that its antibodies decay rapidly, within three months by some estimates, particularly among those who experienced mild forms of infection, and there’s no evidence yet that they ever confer immunity from a second infection. It’s not yet clear what this means for potential vaccine efficacy, but we do know that many of the vaccines currently under development require more than one dose.

Given the peculiarities of the disease and in many cases the competitive and non-cooperative approaches of some countries and companies, we might still be years from an effective global vaccine solution even if some viable vaccines emerge sooner. More pessimistic assessments suggest COVID-19 might be with us a lot



longer than we hope—that we might have to learn to live with it as we have with other diseases like HIV/AIDS.

With that in mind, there have been some promising developments in learning how the disease attacks the body and why it affects some people worse than others. They have suggested new treatments that are currently being developed. It might well be the case that the arrival of a safe and effective vaccine will be outpaced by



(Top) People go shopping in New York City, the U.S., on September 9, the day when shopping centers, earlier closed because of COVID-19, were allowed to reopen

Scientists work at a COVID-19 vaccine laboratory in Argentina on August 14



Need for cooperation

All of these challenges and their global impact indicate the need for international cooperation. While there have been some public efforts for cooperation, on the whole the process appears a matter of competitions between nations with various implications for security that go well beyond immediate disease control.

Somewhat infamously, the U.S. has refused to cooperate on vaccine development while simultaneously undermining WHO. On the one hand, these responses appear to dovetail with the Trump administration's America First and zero-sum approaches in international affairs. On the other hand, perhaps the biggest reason the U.S. won't cooperate is that in many respects, it can't.

New drug development in the U.S. is primarily the business of a private pharmaceutical industry, one that is a global leader, fields a powerful political lobby, and above all is motivated by securing intellectual property rights and profits. In this respect the Trump administration is triply bound.

First, as a pro-free enterprise political party, Trump's Republican commitment to the supremacy of market-based solutions over those fostered by the government remains unshakable, all the more so perhaps in an election year when alienating a powerful industry could both hurt his campaign for a second term and undercut vaccine development.

Second, the U.S. Government simply doesn't have the capacity these private industries have. The best scientists and laboratories are in the private sector, as are production capacities. Furthermore, existing legal frameworks for development and testing and associated liabilities are suited more for corporations than government.

Third, unable to command or organize these competitive industries better than they can do themselves, the U.S. Government is reduced to trying to guess which companies are likely to be successful. This is the fundamental

purpose of the White House vaccine taskforce, known as Operation Warp Speed: Identify the most promising candidates, place large advanced orders with them, providing capital for accelerated development, and thus assure Americans are first in line if a successful vaccine emerges.

Of course, one might not emerge, and even if it does, we are likely to discover that its efficacy, already problematic, will be undermined without a global vaccine strategy that reduces disease incidence worldwide, and in turn, that slows mutations.

In this respect, Trump's failed approaches to disease control are likely to intersect in even more devastating and self-defeating ways given longer-standing and still adamant attacks on multilateralism. His shame-and-blame approaches to COVID-19, particularly aimed at China and WHO, have been revealed as a sham by Bob Woodward's new book, *Rage* (2020), where Trump effectively admitted on tape that he was playing politics with the outbreak.

Both COVID-19 and global warming, which can increase the likelihood of new outbreaks in the future, indicate the need to rethink how we respond to global crises in ways that move beyond overlapping private sector/national competitions, particularly as exemplified by the U.S.

Already, some theorists are discussing the possible emergence of new health superpowers, and the risk of new health-based hegemony, if not outright imperialism. Those potentialities may become self-fulfilling prophecies given longstanding and worsening trust deficits and insecurities, particularly as COVID-19 makes everyone more vulnerable.

Consequently, finding a real solution for global cooperation for the immediate goal of addressing COVID-19 carries existential implications far beyond those already associated with the pandemic. Whether a viable vaccine or more effective treatments emerge, the pressing need to cooperate on multiple fronts through multilateralism indicates that not doing so only increases health and security risks for all. ■

the development of a cure, and we might ultimately conclude that it is safer and easier to treat the disease than prevent infection. While the term "vaccine" has more cachet in contemporary discourse than "treatment," progress on either front will be welcomed. That said, we know that simple behavioral adjustments like wearing masks, washing hands, social distancing and self-quarantining significantly reduce incidence rates.



Zhang Guimei with Chen Fayu, a 2012 graduate from the Huaping High School for Girls in Lijiang, Yunnan Province in southwest China, on July 4. Chen is a police officer now

Girl Goals

High school principal combats prejudices against girls in education **By Yuan Yuan**

In worn-out clothes and a pair of glasses, Zhang Guimei looks solemn. Her faltering steps and pale face indicate that she is not well. “I was diagnosed with a few diseases over the years, but I’ve never had time to deal with them,” Zhang said.

Nothing has stopped her since she stumbled onto a new career 12 years ago—helping girls from impoverished families in the southwestern province of Yunnan obtain higher education.

In 2008, she founded the Huaping High School for Girls, China’s first free high school

for girls, in the mountainous city of Lijiang and served as its principal. More than 1,600 graduates from the school have been admitted to colleges and universities.

“She helped open a window to a new life,” Chen Fayu, a 2012 graduate, said. Chen enrolled in the Yunnan Police College and now is a police officer. “I wouldn’t be who I am today without her strict requirements in school. We called her a dragon, but we also called her mom.”

“Education is the only way for the locals to rise out of poverty, especially girls,” Zhang

said. “An educated woman can make a difference for her family.”

A tough project

Zhang calls Yunnan her second home. She followed her sister to the border province, far from her family in Heilongjiang Province in the northeast, in 1974 at the age of 17. After having worked in different industries and functions, she finally became a teacher.

In 1990, Zhang and her husband moved to his hometown Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture in northwest Yunnan and began teaching at a middle school.

But an unexpected tragedy changed her life. In 1994, her husband passed away from stomach cancer. Zhang applied to relocate to a remote school in Huaping County, which is part of Lijiang, hoping to move away from old memories.

However, less than a year after her move, she was diagnosed with uterine fibroids. She couldn’t afford surgery to remove them and the county’s women’s federation initiated a donation campaign for her. The local residents, mostly living below the poverty line in those days, were finally able to raise enough money to get her treatment.

After recovery, Zhang worked even harder to return the generosity she had received. She found a growing number of local girls dropped out of school after the nine-year compulsory education covering primary and junior middle schools due to financial difficulties.

“Some families believed it was useless for girls to receive advanced education,” Zhang said. “They were forced back home for either early marriage or farm work.”

She visited the family of a few dropouts and promised their parents that she would provide free high school education for their daughters. She sometimes even gave them money from her own pocket as financial support.

Zhang’s idea for a free high school for girls in Huaping popped up in 2002. She took it for granted that this project would quickly receive widespread support but the fundraising proved challenging. After years of efforts, she collected only 20,000 yuan (\$3,000) and almost decided to give up.

In 2007, she was elected a deputy to the 17th Communist Party of China National Congress and traveled to Beijing for the event. A journalist interviewed her and reported on her free high school project.

The coverage was a turning point. The governments of Lijiang and Huaping allocated a total of 2 million yuan (\$296,000) to support Zhang’s plan.

A tough role model

However, opening the school was just the beginning of new challenges. Since the school's campus had no walls due to limited funds, Zhang had to constantly drive away snakes and other animals to protect the teachers and students.

Moreover, most of the first 100 students had a weak academic foundation. After one semester, six students dropped out, while nine of the 17 teachers resigned due to the harsh living and working conditions.

Zhang finally managed to persuade two of the dropouts to return and vowed to spare no efforts to keep the 96 students in school until they graduated.

In 2011, the first graduates from the school took part in the national college entrance exam and 69 of them were admitted to colleges and universities. Over the ensuing years, the girls have been accepted by prestigious universities in China. This year,

among the 159 graduates, 150 enrolled in universities.

To get her students to study in a disciplined manner, Zhang personally monitors their schedule since the school's establishment. She lives on campus. Beside her pillow, she has a flashlight, a bullhorn, a mobile phone and some painkillers. She sets her alarm for 5:15 a.m., gets up, and staggers through the corridors of the dormitory to wake up the students with her bullhorn.

"They call me a dragon because I am so harsh with them," Zhang said. "But so far, this has been the only effective way to get them into university. When kids in urban areas struggle not to lose at the starting line, these girls don't even know where the starting line is."

Zhang Hongqiong, a teacher at the school, said Zhang Guimei has devoted everything she has to empowering the students for their future. "Education may not be the only path for everyone, but it is the only

one for these girls," she said.

Zhang Guimei's persistence has led to many different avenues of support. The Yunnan Normal University has launched various assistance projects and agreed to send 46 future graduates as trainee teachers to the school each year.

But the arduous work has taken a toll on Zhang Guimei's health. She has been diagnosed with bronchitis, arthritis and hypertension.

"I don't know how long I can keep doing this work," she said. "I hope graduates from my school will be able to get into the best universities in China and more girls from impoverished families can change their life with education." ■

Copiedited by Rebeca Toledo
Comments to yuanyuan@bjreview.com



Zhang Guimei inspects a class at the Huaping High School for Girls on July 4

Spending Is Power

Nationwide campaign launched to facilitate poverty alleviation through consumption By Lu Yan

Hu Kaixin, a 27-year-old office clerk in Changchun, Jilin Province in northeast China, is used to purchasing goods from producers and vendors all over the country at great deals online. With the recent boom in live-streaming marketing activities, she particularly likes to buy agricultural products from poverty-stricken villages that are recommended by well-known live-streamers during their shows. For example, she has bought seasonal produce and local specialties such as hams, flowers and fresh fruits from Yunnan Province in southwest China.

Hu said most of the food she bought

online was delicious. "Along with getting quality goods, I'm also very happy to help poor villagers and farmers who have difficulty selling their fruits of labor. It's a win-win effort," she told *Beijing Review*.

Most of the live-streaming shopping events that Hu recently participated in were part of a pro-consumption campaign that the Chinese Government launched in September to boost the sales of products from impoverished areas and promote poverty alleviation.

"The campaign signifies that the relief-through-consumption strategy has reached a new level," Hong Tianyun, deputy head of the State Council Leading Group Office of

Poverty Alleviation and Development, said at a press conference in Beijing on August 28. Sales of products from impoverished areas have topped 102.7 billion yuan (\$15.1 billion) amid consumption-powered poverty reduction efforts, according to the office.

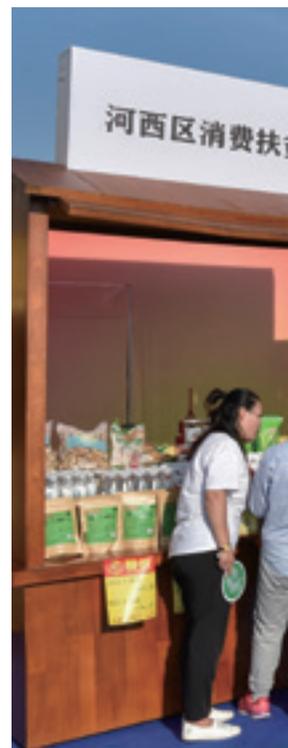
An all-in push

Themed Involving Tens of Thousands of Enterprises and Hundreds of Millions of Chinese Consumers, the campaign is significant since China aims at eliminating absolute poverty and completing building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020.

Jointly organized by 11 central government departments, the month-long sales promotion consists of five special activities to raise public awareness of the e-commerce platforms and brick-and-mortar venues where products from poor regions are available.

"We hope that urban residents can buy quality goods on online and offline platforms and that products from poor areas can be profitable for rural sellers," Hong said.

According to Wang Dayang, a senior official with the leading group office, there are three major channels to sell products from poor areas. The first is websites launched by e-commerce platforms like JD.com and Tmall.com, as well as designated areas in supermarkets. The second is online and brick-and-mortar specialty stores, where commodities are categorized by region. The third is an increasing number of vending



machines installed in shopping malls, hospitals and train stations.

The Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival fell on September 23 this year, and the month-long campaign added to the celebration with various events. Different provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities made plans based on their own features and unique conditions.

In January, the State Council released a guideline calling for wealthier provinces and municipalities in the east and south to help less developed central and western regions sell poverty-relief products, foster rural industries and generate jobs.

For instance, the southern province of Guangdong held farm produce expos in cooperation with Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.

The events generated sales of more than 24 billion yuan (\$3.55 billion) worth of poverty-relief goods, according to Liang Jian, deputy head of the Guangdong Provincial Office of Poverty Relief and Development.

In addition, as a way to fulfill their corporate responsibilities, some large companies have established food supply chains in poverty-stricken areas for their canteens and encourage employees to buy their products by organizing group purchases.

Building recognition

Established in 1999, Xiangyu is a premier olive oil production company in Longnan,

Gansu Province in northwest China. Over the last two decades it has directly and indirectly helped over 4,600 local households shake off poverty and generated over 970 million yuan (\$143 million) in rural income.

At a press conference in early September, Liu Hongyu, Board Chair of the company, said the promotion campaign will help boost small and medium-sized businesses like hers, which cannot afford commercials on major platforms like the state television to promote their organic products nationwide.

Xiangyu has been authorized by the Gansu Provincial Government to add the Ganwei label on its products. Established in 2019, Ganwei is an officially recognized farm produce quality certificate allocated to 200 enterprises in Gansu. In this way, the province aims to build a brand unique to its specialty products, expand their sales channels and earn a bigger share of the market. Taking advantage of the government's endorsement, Xiangyu has signed cooperation deals with large state-owned enterprises to help its sales.

Hong said consumers and governments at all levels put great importance on brand building. "It takes both the power of the market and the encouragement of the government to bring premier quality products from the remote mountainous areas to the entire country," he said, adding that creating famous national brands is crucial.

With the development of industries in poverty-stricken areas, relief-through-consumption is a platform that can help companies with promotion and enable more consumers to get to know them, Hong said.

Against all odds

This summer, severe flooding in south China caused lackluster sales of agricultural products in affected areas due to the disruption of supply chains and infrastructure damage.

Ge Rongbin's humble poultry business in Nushanhu Town, Anhui Province in east China, was severely affected by flooding in July. Although the fowl were successfully evacuated, selling them became a problem. However, with the help of the local government, Ge found an online store and was able to sell about 400 chickens, ducks and geese.

Hong said boosting the sales of products and services from impoverished areas is also an effective way of consolidating the country's poverty alleviation achievements amid efforts to restore livelihood and production activities following the novel coronavirus disease epidemic and natural disasters. It is also a powerful measure to prevent rural residents from falling back to poverty. ■

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(Left) Li Fuwen (center), a resident of Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province in northwest China, sells homegrown wolfberries via live-streaming with the help of two hosts on September 3

A promotional activity for agricultural products from impoverished areas in Hexi District, Tianjin in north China, on September 4



Restoring Confidence

Xiamen fair shot in the arm for investors **By Zhang Shasha**

Being the managing director of HERM Studio, a unisex British watch brand, Simon Ryley knows the value of timing. So despite the restrictions on international

travel due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), he was present at the China International Fair for Trade and Investment (CIFT) when it kicked off in Xiamen, Fujian

Province in southeast China, on September 8, talking incessantly with curious visitors in his company's booth to introduce the delicate models.



The China International Fair for Investment and Trade (CIFIT) opens at the Xiamen International Conference and Exhibition Center in Xiamen, Fujian Province in southeast China, on September 8

“Our primary goal in attending the fair is to showcase our products, make connections and develop our retail network in China,” Ryley told *Beijing Review*. It was HERM Studio’s debut at CIFIT and Ryley said he didn’t imagine he would make so many contacts in such a short time and was planning to turn up next year.

The watchmaker came to know of CIFIT thanks to the British Chamber of Commerce Guangdong (BritCham). At a promotional symposium of CIFIT in Guangzhou, Guangdong

Province in south China, in July, BritCham was invited to take part in this year’s fair and HERM Studio, a member of the trade association, seized the chance to attend the four-day event.

“We really appreciate CIFIT’s support in giving us the opportunity since our members are acquiring concrete benefits to increase their brand exposure and conduct business talks,” Vicky Luo, BritCham’s Office Manager in Shenzhen, said.

Post-epidemic CIFIT

The fair was first held in 1997 to promote trade and investment between China and foreign countries. The annual event saw business as usual at the bustling Xiamen International Conference and Exhibition Center this year too. Only the sight of people wearing masks and following epidemic control measures at the entrance was a reminder of COVID-19. For the fair industry, despite the losses in all walks of life due to the pandemic, chances coexisted with difficulties.

“The unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic to traditional fairs have created new opportunities for the acceleration of digitalization,” Wang Shouwen, Vice Minister of Commerce, said at the International Investment Forum held on September 8. The CIFIT Committee upgraded its online system and initiated a brand new version with the technical support of Chinese tech giant Alibaba Group.

According to a report released by the Qianzhan Industry Research Institute, a market research consultancy in Guangdong, in August, the digital economy accounted for 36.2 percent of China’s GDP in 2019, increasing from 14.2 percent in 2015. It contributed more than 50 percent of the economic growth on average during 2014-19.

Given the huge potential in the digital economy, the cooperation provided a great opportunity for Alibaba. “The online CIFIT marks a milestone event for Alibaba to explore with the committee and pioneer a sustainable digital CIFIT model,” Song Jie, partner and Vice President of Alibaba, said at the forum. “We hope to contribute our solution to the exhibition industry in Xiamen, China and the whole world on digitalization and intelligence, and ultimately lead the global trends of digital investment.”

While online fairs become trendy in the post-epidemic period, transnational investment flows will also undergo profound changes. The UN Conference on Trade and Development had assessed that if the pandemic was controlled by the first half of 2020, global foreign direct investment (FDI) would decline by 5 percent. If it lasts the whole year, it would drop by 15 percent.

“COVID-19 has accelerated digitalization,” Li Yong, Director General of the UN Industrial Development Organization, said at the forum.

Large multinationals and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) alike now recognize that investment in new technologies, innovation and digitalization will not only deliver efficiency gains, but has become pivotal for survival and expansion.

Better environment

China’s business environment has been improving continuously and it has become an ideal destination for foreign capital. According to an investment report issued during CIFIT, the country’s annual paid-in foreign investment increased 150 times from \$920 million in 1983 to \$138.31 billion in 2018. The average annual growth rate hit 15.4 percent, 5.7 percentage points higher than the global increase in the same period.

Although grappling with COVID-19, foreign investment activities revived gradually, as indicated by statistics from the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM). In August, the paid-in FDI in China expanded 18.7 percent year on year to 84.13 billion yuan (\$12.3 billion); from January to August, it rose 2.6 percent year on year, amounting to 619.78 billion yuan (\$91.1 billion).

The results are attributable to the country’s all-out efforts to revive economic vitality during COVID-19. Wang said a raft of measures have been rolled out to tide enterprises over difficulties, help them seek new opportunities amid challenges and open up new fronts.

In June, the State Council issued a master plan for building the Hainan Free Trade Port in the south to facilitate a higher-standard opening up. The National Development and Reform Commission and MOFCOM slashed the negative list that tables the areas out of bounds for foreign investors to 33 items from 40, ramping up efforts to open up sectors such as finance, education and agriculture.

MOFCOM also released rules on handling complaints from foreign-invested enterprises in August. These will come into force on October 1 to improve the foreign investment complaint system.

The local authorities too have been taking targeted measures to optimize the business environment and attract investment. CIFIT serves as a microcosm of investment policies and environments where both Chinese and foreign participants set up exhibition booths to promote projects and raise investor recognition.

Shanxi Province in north China has been CIFIT’s guest province of honor since 2019. This year, its exhibition area had 12 zones displaying the province’s specialty industries and achievements in industrial transformation, marking its largest scale ever.

“Today’s Shanxi is breaking new ground for reform and opening up,” Vice Governor Lu Dongliang said at the investment forum, adding ▶▶

that the province is committed to accelerating industrial transformation from a resource-oriented economy.

Coal is one of the primary resources of the province and Lu said Shanxi will no longer be “the king of coal” but usher in an energy revolution.

Xiangming Intelligent Control was one of the 139 enterprises from Shanxi that participated in CIFIT. Engaged in intelligent and unmanned coal mining, the company was introduced in CIFIT as an energy transformation company.

Zhang Ping, sales manager of the private company, said SMEs that focus on energy transformation are gaining substantial support from the local government and at the national level at large. They were at CIFIT to promote their brands and showcase Shanxi’s achievements in industrial transformation to attract more capital.

A “plant factory” at CIFIT demonstrated vegetable seedlings being grown under an LED lighting system instead of in a greenhouse. It was the brainchild of Sananbio, a company established jointly by the Institute of Botany at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and Sanan Group in Quanzhou, Fujian, in 2015. The system combines indoor vertical farming with horticultural lighting, demonstrating how research institutions are collaborating with companies for industrial use of research.

“CIFIT is an international platform for us to understand the local and global market demand for essential agricultural products,” Li Jing, a professor at the institute, said. A resident of Quanzhou for several years, Li said she appreciates the city’s talent management policy, which plays an essential role in the development of scientific and technological enterprises.

Two-way investment

A two-way investment platform, CIFIT also offers opportunities for Chinese investors to understand other countries.

“We are very confident in the Chinese business environment,” John Paul Inigo, special trade representative of the Philippine Trade and Investment Center, told *Beijing Review*. His hope was that CIFIT would convince Chinese investors that the Philippines, CIFIT’s guest country of honor this year, is a good investment destination.

Inigo said relations between China and the Philippines have become closer since President Rodrigo Duterte’s first visit to China in 2016. In 2019, China became the Philippines’ top trading



A visitor takes a photo of the vertical farming system developed by Sananbio, an agricultural tech firm in Fujian, at CIFIT on September 8



The International Investment Forum is held on the sidelines of CIFIT on September 8

partner, top import source and third biggest export market, with the bilateral trade valued at \$35.3 billion. In the year, Philippine exports to China grew 11.32 percent to \$9.8 billion while imports from China increased to \$25.5 billion, a 15.81-percent growth.

Ramon M. Lopez, Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry of the Philippines, said in a video message during CIFIT that with the Philippines and China sharing a long and rich history steeped in culture and trade, he was confident that the participation in CIFIT will see “the Philippines and China ...

develop an even stronger partnership amidst a better normal and healthier global environment in the coming years.”

Former President of Serbia Tomislav Nikolic also said in a video message that international economic cooperation can be greater, more extensive and more intensive after a pandemic if adequate political decisions and initiatives are taken. ■

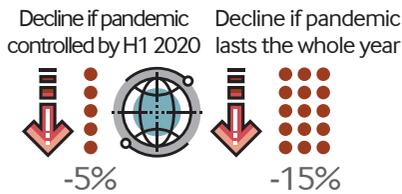
(Reporting from Xiamen, Fujian Province)

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China and Foreign Direct Investment

(\$1 = 6.9 yuan)

Impact of COVID-19 on Global Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)



Role of the Digital Economy

The value added of the digital economy has increased from 2.6 tln yuan in 2018

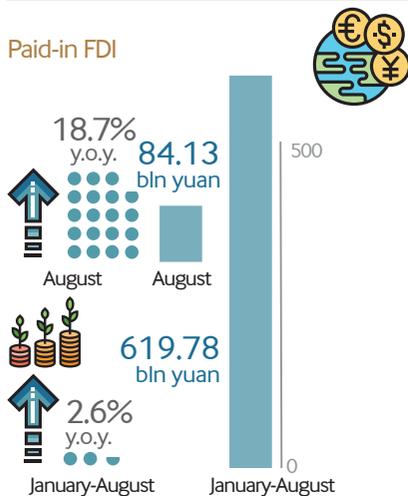
to 35.8 tln yuan in 2019

Fruits of 2020 CIFIT

- A total agreed investment of more than 800 bln yuan
- 1,018 business groups sought cooperation and investment opportunities
- More than 2,300 cooperation agreements were signed
- Over 16,000 investment promotion projects were posted online
- 18 video conferences were held during the fair

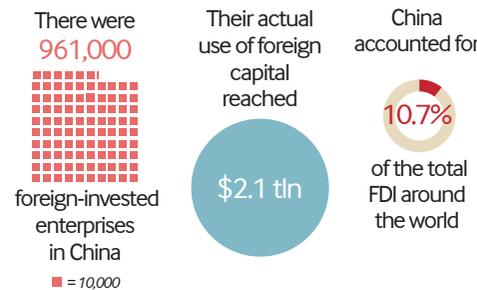
Foreign Investment in China

Paid-in FDI

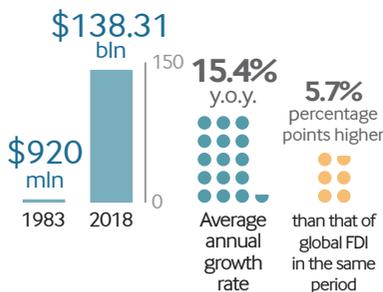


China ranked 1st among developing countries in attracting foreign investment for 27 years since 1992, except for 2004 at second place

By the end of 2018

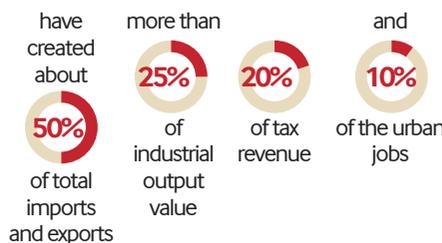


China's annual paid-in FDI



Over the past 40 years, foreign investment has contributed more than 25% to China's economic growth

Foreign-invested enterprises that are less than 3% of the total number of enterprises in China



(Sources: UNCTD, CIFIT, China News Service, MOFCOM, Qianzhan Industry Research Institute, Xinhua News Agency; compiled by Beijing Review; designed by Pamela Tobey)



Film Industry Regains Vitality as Production Resumes

It was a sweltering morning in early September when the production crew of a crime movie started filming their first scene at a convenience store in Xiamen, Fujian Province in southeast China.

The crew was one of the many production houses that have resumed work in Xiamen since the coastal city recommenced film and television shooting in April. About 20 crews have started filming and over 10 others were in preproduction in the first half of this year, according to local authorities.

Filming in other parts of China has resumed as well. Statistics showed that 48 crews have already begun filming, and 63 others have been preparing to resume shooting in "Chinese Hollywood" Hengdian World Studio in Zhejiang Province in east China since July, a 16-percent increase from last year.

"Too many projects were put on hold in the first half-year due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, so we might see a retaliatory rebound in the number of busy film crews for the remainder of the year," said Xue Qiaofeng, Vice General Manager of Xiamen Service Center for Film and TV Industry.

Although heavily battered by the COVID-19 outbreak, film investment, production and the box office in China are embracing the dawn of a full recovery as the epidemic has been largely contained in the country.

Favorable policies, including tax cuts and rent relief at national and provincial levels, have been helping film-related

businesses tide over the difficulties amid the epidemic.

Fujian has allocated 48.17 million yuan (\$7.03 million) to support its film industry, benefiting film crews, studios and cinemas.

Xiamen provides virtual reality-driven online location scouting services for filmmakers. It also offers to cover the costs of nucleic acid testing for film crews working in the city.

Since cinemas reopened in late July nationwide after a months-long hiatus, re-released films and newly screened titles have both accelerated the pace of recovery of China's box office.

According to big data provider Endata, China's box office in August was more than 3 billion yuan (\$442.5 million) while in July it came in at only 192 million yuan (\$28.32 million). The box office of the 34th and 35th weeks combined reached 2.3 billion yuan (\$339.25 million), up 77 percent over the same period last year.

Chinese cinemagoers' demands are still robust and the box office is expected to perform even better during the upcoming National Day holiday, traditionally one of the peak seasons for box-office sales in China.

Some highly anticipated domestic productions are slated to hit the screen during the week-long October holiday this year. The much-awaited titles include *Leap*, a movie based on stories from Chinese women's national volleyball team starring Gong Li, and *Legend of Deification*, a 3D animated fantasy adventure film.

The hashtag "Films for this year's

National Day holiday" has garnered over 46 million views on the Chinese social media platform Weibo with many young users expressing their enthusiasm for the coming blockbusters.

"I sincerely miss the days when people used to laugh together in the cinema," a Weibo user wrote. Many others even joked about living in cinemas during the holiday.

The Eight Hundred, a China-produced World War II epic, has fueled enthusiasm among moviegoers. It raked in 2.5 billion yuan (\$368.75 million) in 22 days.

With rising enthusiasm among movie buffs, China's box office is expected to rekindle the entire film industry chain.

The regained vitality of the box office is alleviating the stress of sluggish return of funds for film investors.

According to local authorities, in the first half of 2020, 175 film and television companies and 66 filming projects landed in Xiamen, generating a total investment of nearly 30 billion yuan (\$4.4 billion).

Some companies have found their own way to strive against the impact of the epidemic.

Mini TV shows, with less than 10 minutes per episode, have become the new focus for a Xiamen-based company named Dayu Cultural Media.

"While maintaining a high level of quality, such shorter series require less investment and bear lower risks," said Chen Senhui, general manager of the company.

A report by Maoyan Entertainment shows that China's online entertainment market, including online TV and film streaming platforms, saw a big surge when movie theaters were shuttered due to COVID-19.

According to Xue, the industry might see a reshuffle as many traditional film and television companies were squeezed out of business while many well-performing companies are newcomers. ■

"Too many projects were put on hold in the first half-year due to the COVID-19 outbreak, so we might see a retaliatory rebound in the number of busy film crews for the remainder of the year."

—Xue Qiaofeng, Vice General Manager of Xiamen Service Center for Film and TV Industry

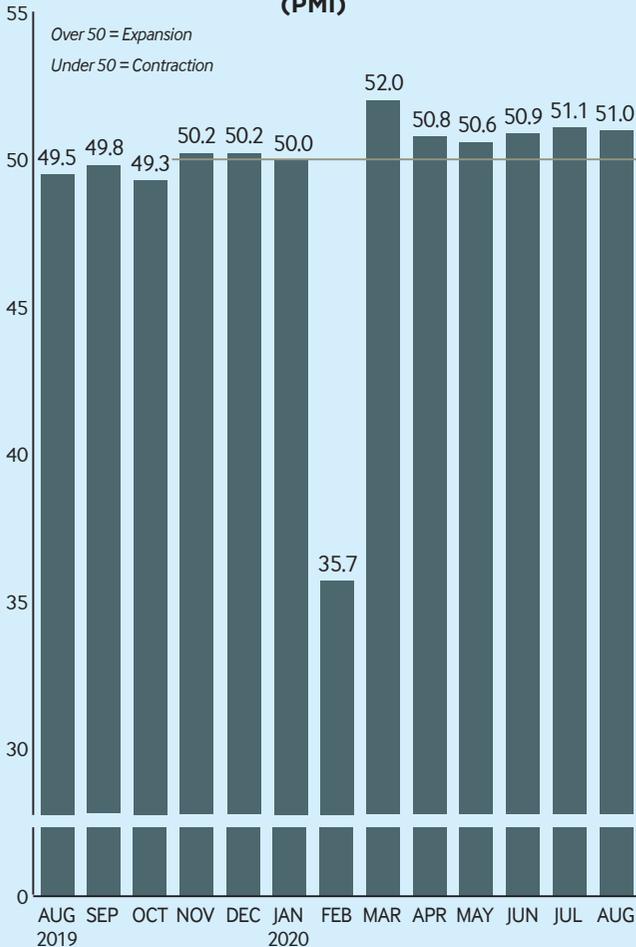
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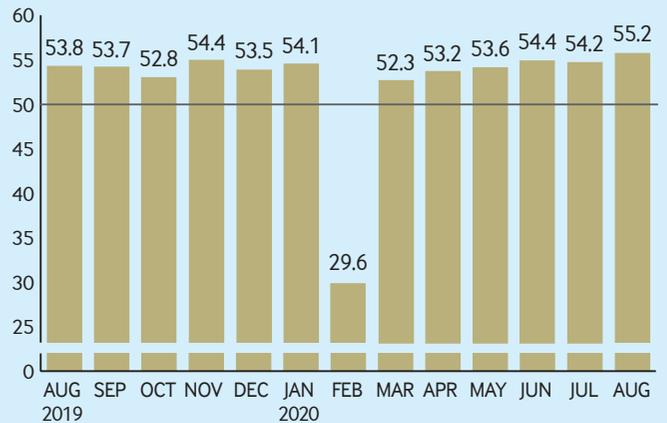
NUMBERS

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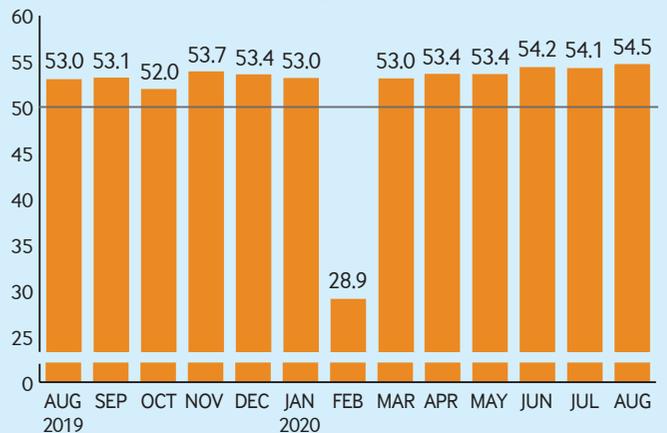
China's Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)



China's Non-Manufacturing PMI



China's Comprehensive PMI



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

7.81 million

new urban jobs were created in the first eight months, down 2.03 million from the same period last year. The government gives priority to stabilizing employment, aiming to add over 9 million new urban jobs this year.

China's courier sector is expected to

handle over 75 billion

parcels this year. Due to COVID-19, the sector saw dampened business in January but resumed growth soon.

109,000

new-energy vehicles were sold in China in August, up 25.8 percent year on year. The auto market has maintained its recovery momentum, thanks to increasing demand and strong incentives.

(Source: Xinhua News Agency)



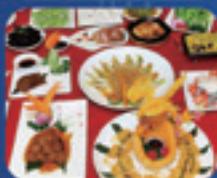
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Mixed Reaction To *Mulan*

Initial box office remains tepid while critics say woman warrior remains a role model
By Li Qing

Song of *Mulan*, the ballad written 1,500 years ago by an anonymous Chinese poet, has inspired countless plays, novels and poems over the centuries. It is part of many school textbooks that children in China have grown up learning.

In 1998, Disney made an animation film *Mulan* on the young woman who disguised herself as a warrior and joined the king's army in her aged father's place to fight invaders and safeguard the nation.

The story also attracted Niki Caro, the New Zealand director known for her Oscar-nominated 2002 film *Whale Rider*, an engrossing drama about a Maori girl who becomes the chief of a tribe where according to the Maori tradition, only men were accepted as chiefs. Caro became keen to make a film on *Mulan*. "What drew me to this project was *Mulan* herself, her journey from village girl to soldier to warrior to hero," she told Xinhua News Agency.

But the new *Mulan* met with more adversities than its heroine had. One of the most anticipated movies of the year and originally due for release in March, the release date had to be postponed twice due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. However, it was finally released in Chinese theaters on September 11.

Jiang Fan, a 28-year-old mother in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province in east China, was among those who queued up to see the film at the first screening. *Mulan* has been Jiang's favorite "Disney princess" since she watched the animation. "I was moved by her power and tenacity, which made her a fierce fighter from an ordinary girl," Jiang told *Beijing Review*.

The theater she walked into had large posters of the film everywhere, showing *Mulan* in her red battle dress, holding a sword. This time, she reviewed the story with her 4-year-old daughter.



A poster of *Mulan*, the Disney film directed by New Zealander Niki Caro with Chinese actress Liu Yifei as the warrior heroine

"I wanted to introduce my old friend to my daughter and explain to her what love for the family and country is, and how to be strong in adversity," Jiang said.

Miscalculating the China factor

The action drama based on the animation took Caro and her team five years and cost Disney over \$200 million. However, due to the pandemic, Disney changed the plan to release it in

theaters around the world and opted for streaming it with a limited theater release in China.

Thanks to effective epidemic prevention and control, cinemas in China, the second largest film market in the world, have resumed for nearly a month, which is a positive signal for the film industry worldwide.

"If *Mulan* doesn't work in China, we have a problem," Alan F. Horn, Co-Chairman of the Walt Disney Studios, told *The Hollywood Reporter*.

However, in the first four days since its release in China, *Mulan* brought in just \$23.2 million, below the \$30 million the Christopher Nolan-directed sci-fi-meets-spy film *Tenet* generated the previous weekend. That puts it on the low end of Disney film debuts in China. Besides the restrictive reopening policies for cinemas in China, unsatisfied viewers also contributed to the cold reception.

Though Caro integrated many Chinese elements into the film, Chinese viewers did not buy them. Some of these elements, which make the film a stereotype of Oriental elements in the eyes of the Western world, failed to depict Chinese history and culture accurately to the Chinese.

For instance, the place in east China that has been shot as *Mulan*'s hometown is actually about 3,000 km away from her historical home.

On Chinese film review website Douban, it has nearly 170,000 reviews, most of which are tepid, giving the film a maximum 4.9 out of 10 stars. However, *Mulan* got 7.5 on Rotten Tomatoes, the film review site in the U.S.

The Chinese perspective

In the eyes of industry insiders, this reflects the cultural differences among countries. Li Jiaxin,

a Chinese film producer, told *Beijing Business Today*, "The Chinese prefer to see a heroine who takes her father's place in the army. How *Mulan* transforms from a traditional woman's character reflects women's struggles in ancient times as well as *Mulan's* filial piety and bravery."

However, in Caro's film, she is more of a Disney princess stereotype, with a witch as her foil. As a result, the Chinese audience may not buy it, she added.

Zhang Wei, a film critic, told *Beijing Review* that it is challenging for even a Chinese team to dramatize such a well-known story with profound Chinese culture and meet people's expectations, let alone for a U.S. company. However, the film leads people to think about the double standard in society. It accepts male dominance while women are judged when they try to challenge the rules.

"Told not to forget her place all the time, *Mulan* finally finds her place. She questions the rules, defies them and demonstrates women's empowerment. "In my opinion, *Mulan* will tell girls all over the world to be brave," Zhang said.

Common element

Though it was a letdown for Jiang that the film had dropped Mushu, a small dragon that was the guardian angel of *Mulan's* family in the original animation, she still liked it. "The film is faithful to the original plot and captures the theme of loyalty to the family and the country, interpreting *Mulan's* spirit correctly," she said. "It encourages women to follow their hearts and dare to speak up. That is a significant extension of the animation."

Disney depicts *Mulan* as an independent woman who can save herself instead of waiting for someone to save her, Zhang Zhouxiang, a *China Daily* commentator, said. "That's a good point where Chinese and Western values are similar because gender equality and female independence are now valued in both cultures. It will strike a chord with both Chinese and Western audiences."

Caro said for her, it has always been essential to have strong female characters at the center of a film. It is now more important than ever before, particularly female characters that are complex. "Not just strong, but complicated, vulnerable, smart, honest and loving," she said, adding that *Mulan* is all of those things.

"It's not that we don't have great female directors. We do. It's that they are not given enough opportunities," Caro said. "But I hope *Mulan* will help change that. Now the spotlight is on us, and we need to hold it and keep having this conversation until we have a real impact."

Before the China screening, the long-awaited film premiered on Disney+, Disney's streaming service, on September 4, with



A screen shot from *Mulan*



A still from *Mulan*

subscribers needing to pay \$29.99 to view it.

It is a significant experiment for Disney. Bob Chapek, Disney CEO, told the media, "We are looking at *Mulan* as a one-off, as opposed to trying to say that there is some new business window model we are looking at."

Chapek said *Mulan* would be a "fairly large stimulus" for new consumers to sign up for the streaming service. "We see this as an opportunity to bring this incredible film to a broad audience currently unable to go to movie

theaters, while also further enhancing the value and attractiveness of a Disney+ subscription," he said.

Since *Mulan* was streamed on Disney+, it has brought in \$33.5 million, nearly equivalent to current sales in cinemas. This indicates that the streaming platform can bring significant gains for Disney. ■

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Is It Necessary to Have a Cooling-Off Period for Divorce?

The long-expected Civil Code was passed by the 13th National People's Congress, the top legislature, during its third session on May 28. The Civil Code, which will take effect on January 1, 2021, has an article requiring a one-month cooling-off period before filing for divorce. It stipulates that a divorce application can be revoked by either of the couple within the period. Within 30 days after the expiration of the period, both parties can personally apply to the marriage registration authority for a divorce certificate.

The introduction of the cooling-off period has generated debate. Some people have welcomed the measure, arguing that it can be helpful in reducing divorce rates, maintaining social stability and preventing a hasty divorce. However, there are others who say that the stipulation doesn't have any practical

value and will only extend the period of divorce process and increase the pain of the applicants.

A chance to think rationally

Long Yifei (Professor with the School of Law at Renmin University of China):

We know that in many divorce cases the marriage can't be sustained. However, a considerable number of people seek divorce due to some irrational reasons. Occasional conflicts are normal in married life, and some couples resort to divorce to resolve conflicts. This situation is very common in our lives.

The 30-day cooling-off period is designed to give the parties a chance to think rationally about a number of questions: Is the relationship really broken down? Is there any possibility of living together? Do marital conflicts have to end in divorce? How will the divorce influence the children?

Therefore, a legal provision emphasizing emotional healing and careful thinking is conducive to the resolution of conflicts in marriage, stability of marriage and family relations.

Li Yalan (President of Heilongjiang Lawyers Association): In many judicial cases we deal with, couples often get angry because of some trivial matter. "I can't live with you. I want a divorce," is a typical retort when they fight. Then they decide to terminate their relationship.

People are emotional. Marriage entails a gradual and often long process of knowing, understanding and falling in love. As time passes, the memories of the good times spent together always come to mind. By then, however, if the relationship has been dissolved, it will be hard for the parties to come together again.

In judicial practice, we see that a lot of divorce decisions are impulsive. If there is a period for cooling off, the two sides may decide not to divorce in the end and cherish their relationship more in the future.

Li Li (Lawyer with Yingke Law Firm): The value of marriage must be highlighted through certain practices. For example,

wearing a ring at the wedding ceremony is an external display of the value of marriage. The cooling-off period represents a cautious attitude toward marriage. The more complex the divorce process is, the more valuable the marriage would feel.

Divorce is not a joke. The impact of divorce on the lives of couples and their children, families and society is much bigger than imagined. The stipulation of this cooling-off period will help people understand the importance of the family and encourage them to give due attention to their marriage.

After one month's calm thinking, if the two still want it, they can get a divorce. If one party withdraws the application during this month, it is likely that divorce was not his or her real intention.

A counterproductive move

Yi Yi (Founder of a law firm in Beijing):

Hasty divorces do exist in real life. But a larger proportion of couples file for divorce after a long unbearable relationship. The cooling-off period will not help calm them, but only prolong the process of divorce and deepen their suffering. If people have decided to divorce, no cooling-off period will stop them.

In 2019, among the 4.15 million divorces in China, only a minority of cases were based on impulsive decisions; most of the divorce decisions were carefully considered. The introduction of the cooling-off period may reduce the divorce rate, but at the same time, it may also make more people shrink back from marriage.

Jiang Shengnan (Writer): The intention of the rule is to prevent hasty and impulsive divorce and maintain family stability. But being forced to prolong the pain in a marriage that has proven to be a failure may be counterproductive.

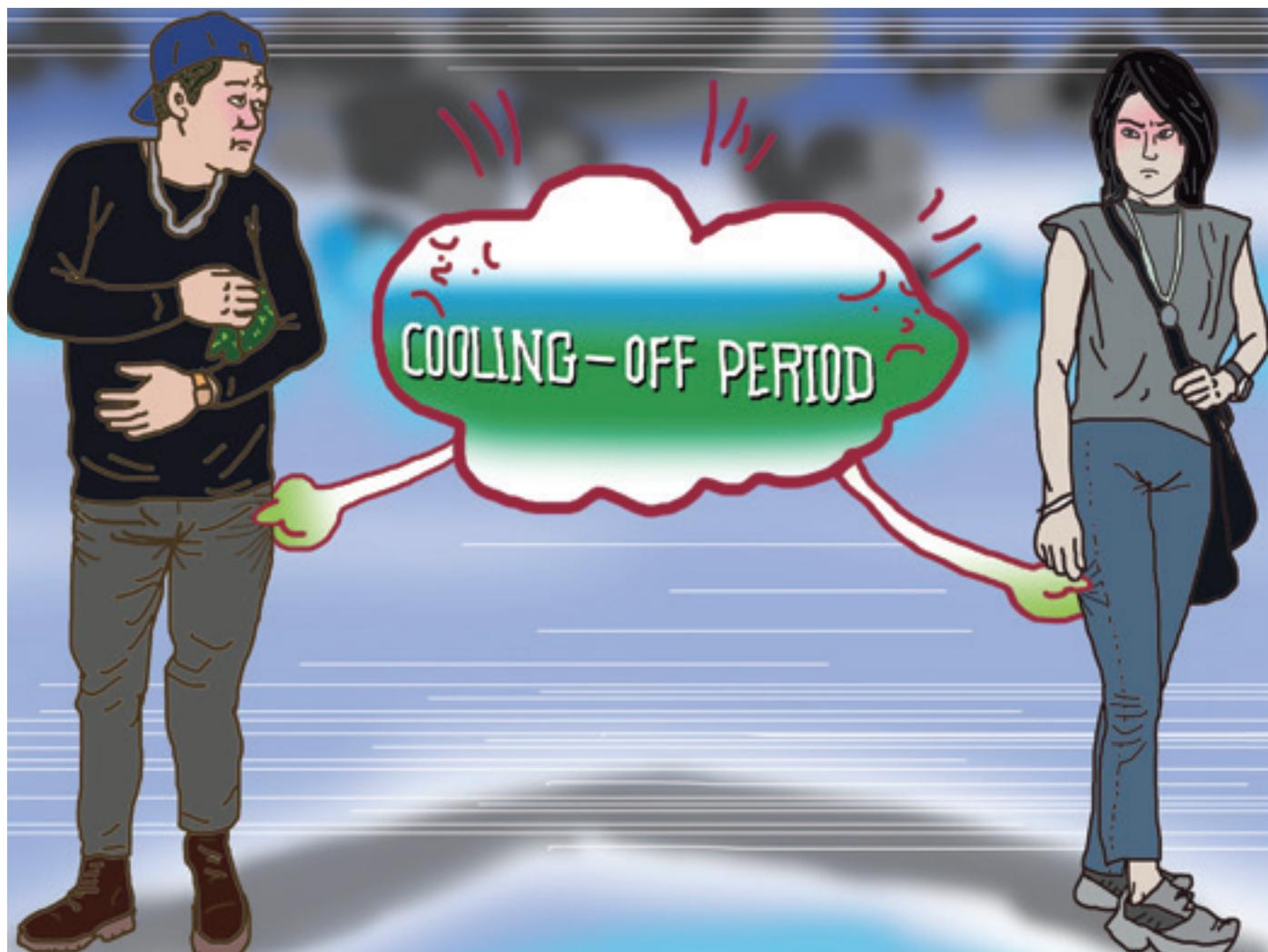
Statistics show that less than 5 percent of couples are involved in a lightning marriage and impulsive divorce. The vast majority of people decide on marriage after careful consideration. The need to have a cooling-off period to prevent impulsive divorce should not neglect the interests of 95 percent of the

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couples who really want a divorce.

Besides, this cooling-off period is likely to inflict greater pain on the vulnerable in the couple. The other partner may be hiding, transferring, selling or destroying common property or causing emotional or physical harm.

Zhang Bancheng (Executive of an Internet company): The new rule will greatly raise the cost of divorce.

In fact, most people who file for divorce don't do it because of the feeling on one day or night, but due to a long period of dissatisfaction, pain and suffering. When two people get married, both need to consent. But when it comes to divorce, it's fair that it requires application from only one party who is suffering greater pain in the marriage.

Only happy individuals can make a happy family, and happy families can create a happy society. Blindly increasing the cost of divorce may reduce the divorce rate, but does not really save an unhappy marriage.

More parties needed

Xia Yinlan (Law professor at China University of Political Science and Law): The cooling-off period is a buffer for couples attempting to divorce, calling their attention to using their legal rights prudently and asking them to shoulder more responsibilities for their marriages and families.

Couples in extreme situations such as domestic violence may have difficulty reaching an agreement to divorce. Intervention from public powers, including public security authorities and courts, will give stronger protection to victims. They can apply for personal protection orders in court first, and if domestic violence is identified, the judges will end the marriage.

Cao Qiaoqiao (Judge from Beijing Xicheng District People's Court): A common divorce litigation takes about three to six months. But if the defendants are found to have committed bigamy, are taking

drugs, gambling, or being physically or mentally abusive to their spouses, courts will approve divorce in the first hearing.

There is no unlimited freedom. Marriage is no exception. The divorce process via government agencies in China was too easy. Some people have not been clearly distinguishing a dead marriage from an ill marriage, leading to reckless divorces.

Divorces in some European nations must be done through litigation, which is to let people know marriage is not a trifling matter.

A few civil affairs departments have invited third-party institutions to participate more in mediating domestic disputes, helping couples realize the roots of their marital illnesses and solve the problems sensibly. ■

Bucking the Trend

By Lan Xinzhen



Statistics from the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) show that from January to August, China's actual foreign capital use totaled 619.78 billion yuan (\$90.8 billion), up 2.6 percent compared to last year. Most striking is the figure for August, which stood at 84.13 billion yuan (\$12.4 billion), growing 18.7 percent year on year. Amid the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that is ravaging the globe, many countries have seen a sharp decline in foreign capital inflows, but China is amazingly bucking the trend.

That is not to say that it doesn't face many difficulties in attracting foreign investment, not only because the pandemic is limiting people's travel, but also because some politicians in the U.S. and Australia are relentlessly denigrating China by dint of the virus.

Unable to tame the pandemic itself, the U.S. has suffered a plunge in foreign investment, leading many economists to predict that this year China may overtake the U.S. as the top absorber of foreign capital.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has adopted measures to curb China on all fronts, harming China's interests in international markets and the global supply chain. However, even this has failed to dampen international investors' strong interest in China. Three reasons can explain this tendency.

First, foreign capital covets the Chinese market thanks to China's efforts to stabilize foreign investment. In order to promote economic growth, it has taken effective measures to keep employment, the financial sector, foreign trade, foreign and domestic investments and expectations stable. President Xi Jinping is personally overseeing the coordination of COVID-19 epidemic prevention and control and social and economic development, which has helped stabilize foreign investment.

The government has adopted a series of policies to stabilize the stock of foreign investment and increase it at both the macro and micro levels. In addition, foreign investment projects worth more than \$100 million are guaranteed, with extra services at every step of the process in order to better cushion the blow from the pandemic.

Second, with China's economy reopening, the Chinese market is emerging as a refuge for foreign capital. The impact of COVID-19 on the Chinese economy and society lasted only three months, and since April, economic activities have begun to return to form, which has strengthened foreign investors' confidence in China.

So far, the Chinese economy is outperforming

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other world economies across the board, pushing up foreign investors' expectations. In fact, China has become a vital refuge for U.S. companies since it overcame COVID-19 because its rebounding consumer economy has helped offset the damage from tumbling sales back home, according to an article in a *Wall Street Journal* in early August. U.S. companies like Sketchers and Nike stressed that it was China that tided them over the hardest three months of the pandemic for the latest quarterly earnings season.

Third, China's improving business environment has made foreign investment procedures more convenient, thus persuading more investors to come to China. The Foreign Investment Law, along with its supportive regulations, which took effect this year, is even more hands-off and makes inbound investment more convenient. The fundamental momentum of long-term economic stability and development remains.

Moreover, China still boasts comprehensive competitive advantages in terms of supportive industries, human resources and basic infrastructure. It continues expanding opening up and optimizing the business environment.

According to statistics from MOFCOM, in the first eight months of the year, foreign investors set up nearly 20,000 companies in China, with Japan, the U.S., the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the UK and Germany contributing the most. Service and hi-tech companies are especially welcome in China, and therefore investment in the service industry, particularly in the hi-tech service industry, had the biggest share of investment in this period. Actual foreign capital use in the service industry grew by 12.1 percent year on year, while in the hi-tech service industry, it jumped by 28.2 percent, with most made in development and design services surging by 47.3 percent and in professional services by 111.4 percent.

Some countries and regions have been interfering excessively with the global supply chain and trying to discourage their domestic companies from investing in China by providing fiscal subsidies and tax relief, and forcing them to leave China. Some politicians are touting "de-Sinicization" of the supply chain. However, the increase in foreign investment against these headwinds testifies to the fact that China remains the major investment destination for most transnational companies. ■

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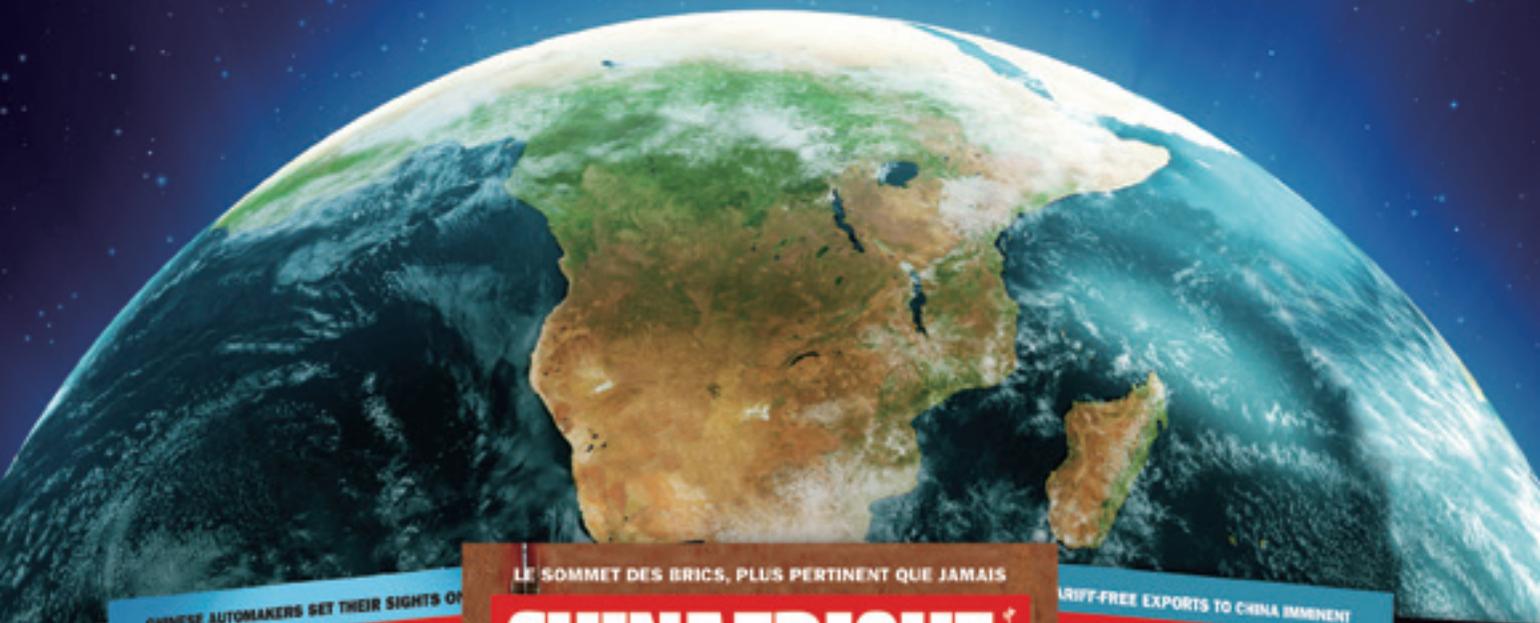
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