

OPINION: CHINA-U.S. TRADE P.24 | FEATURES: INFLUENCER'S ENGLISH ESCAPADE P.42

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A landscape of exchange between civilizations



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Cover Photo: Yuzi Paradise in Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, features sculptures by artists from around the world (COURTESY PHOTO)

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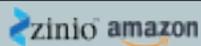
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Interconnected, Interdependent

Since President Xi Jinping introduced the Global Civilizations Initiative (GCI) a year ago, underlining respect for different civilizations and strengthened mutual learning, the term “civilization” has garnered increasing attention. But what exactly does it mean?

Unlike culture, which is a shared pattern of behavior or a way of life passed down from generation to generation, civilization implies progress in social development. It is characterized by advancements in multiple fields, from technology to governance. From an archaeological perspective, there are several scientific criteria to define a civilization. Findings indicate that Chinese culture dates back 10,000 years, while Chinese civilization has a history of more than 5,000 years.

Civilization, which references China’s time-honored history and ancient wisdom, entered the country’s political lexicon long before the GCI was proposed. In the late 1970s and 1980s, China embraced the idea of giving equal importance to both the economic and the cultural-ethical aspects of civilization, underscoring their progress abreast of each other. Xi, then, highlights five aspects—economic, political, cultural-ethical, social and ecological. He envisions a new model for human advancement that

calls for coordinated progress on these five fronts.

Interactions between different civilizations have existed since the dawn of humanity. From the ancient Silk Road connecting East and West to modern interconnectivity facilitated by globalization and digital technology, they have engaged in ongoing dialogue, a deep interaction of ideas, knowledge and values that can shape societies. Through this inter-civilizational dialogue, China has contributed its ideas to other civilizations and at the same time benefited from their merits.

The GCI is based on four pillars: respect for the diversity of civilizations, the common values of humanity, the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and international people-to-people exchange and cooperation. It calls for moving beyond estrangement, conflicts and feelings of superiority through a commitment to equality, mutual learning and inclusiveness. This approach underscores the importance of using the plural form “civilizations,” reflecting the multifaceted nature of cultural interactions and contributions.

The initiative is, of course, not about building a global civilization in China’s own image. Instead, it paves the way for a journey of discovery, learning and growth. **BR**



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VPHHX

CROSS-STRAITS RAPPORT

Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, meets with Ma Ying-jeou in Beijing on April 10.

Xi reiterated that adhering to the 1992 Consensus, which embodies the one-China principle, is the key to promoting the peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Straits.

From April 1 to 11, Ma visited the mainland heading a delegation of young people from Taiwan. Ma, former Chairman of the Chinese Kuomintang party, currently holds no public office.



Elevating Energy

Aerial drone photo taken on April 9 shows a view of the 300-megawatt compressed air energy storage station in Yingcheng, Hubei Province, which commenced operations on the same day. Utilizing the compressed air energy storage technology, air is compressed and stored in an underground cavern during periods of low power demand. Subsequently, the compressed air is released to generate electricity during peak demand periods. The station is projected to produce 500 million kilowatt-hours of power annually.

Personal Information

Business operators in China are prohibited from collecting excessive personal information while providing commodities and services through apps, according to a set of newly released regulations for implementing the law on the protection of consumer rights and interests.

According to the regulations, business operators are banned from using one-time general authorization and default authorization while providing commodities and services through apps, said You Xueyun, an official with the Cyberspace Administration of China, at a press conference on April 9.

She added that business operators are prohibited from coercing consumers into consenting to the collection and use of personal information that is irrelevant to business activities.

The regulations will take effect on July 1.

Major Disease Insurance

Around 11.56 million urban and rural residents in China benefited from the country's major disease insurance in 2023, which eased the burden on individuals by 7,924 yuan (\$1,095.9) on average, according to the National Healthcare Security Administration, Xinhua News

Agency reported on April 6.

China has established a three-tier healthcare security system comprising basic medical insurance, major disease insurance and medical assistance to mitigate the economic risks posed by medical expenditure.

The nearly 1 billion individuals covered by basic medical insurance are also covered by the major disease insurance, and are exempt from extra fees.

Currently, the minimum payment standard for major disease insurance in a certain locality should be no higher than 50 percent of the per-capita disposable income of local residents in the previous year, and the reimbursement rate should not

be lower than 60 percent of their medical bills.

The reimbursement rate for recipients of minimum subsistence allowances, people with special difficulties and people who fall into or fall back into poverty should be 5 percentage points higher.

Tourism Boom

China saw about 119 million domestic tourist trips made during the three-day Qingming Festival holiday, which ended on April 6, up 11.5 percent from the same period in 2019, data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism showed.

Qingming Festival, or Tomb-Sweeping Day, is an important occasion for Chinese to honor their ancestors. Many also spend the three-day holiday engaged in leisure travel.

Domestic tourism revenue during the period totaled 53.95 billion yuan (\$7.5 billion), up 12.7 percent from the same period in 2019.

Self-driving, cycling and hiking emerged as popular modes of travel during the holiday this year, with a preference for short-distance and local trips.

China saw 1.04 million inbound tourist trips and 992,000 outbound tourist trips made during the holiday, close to the number of trips made during the same period in 2019. Japan, Thailand and the Republic of Korea were popular destinations for outbound travel.

Special Education

China will establish a batch of pilot zones across the country with the goal of reforming the special needs education sector and fostering its development in a more effective manner to achieve high-quality growth, as reported by Xinhua on April 9. According to a circular published on the

Ministry of Education's website, the reform program will seek to explore methods of constructing a coordinated and integrated special needs education system that spans all stages of schooling from preschool to senior middle school and beyond.

The reform initiative will also bolster the financial support for special needs education through enhanced fiscal allocation and allowance policies, as outlined in the document. Furthermore, the pilot zones are expected to offer free basic education for all students with disabilities, and there will be improvements in the recruitment and professional development of relevant teachers, as stated in the circular.

Moreover, the circular highlighted that the reform will extend special needs education services to reach more students, with a particular emphasis on establishing special schools for autistic children.

Drought Relief

China has allocated 174 million yuan (\$24.1 million) from Central Government funding to assist with drought relief efforts in Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) announced on

April 8. The disaster relief funds, allocated by the MOF and the Ministry of Water Resources, will mainly be used to ensure the safety of drinking water and agricultural irrigation in the drought-affected areas of the two provinces, the MOF said.

Temperatures in the two provinces are expected to be 1 to 2 degrees Celsius higher than normal in April, the China Meteorological Administration said previously.

Drought is likely to persist in the two provinces, the administration said, urging strengthened water resource management.

Raising Awareness

The Chinese disease control authority has launched a week-long campaign to increase public awareness of schistosomiasis, an infectious parasitic disease caused by blood flukes, Xinhua reported on April 9.

According to a statement issued by the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration (NDCPA), the campaign, running from April 8 to 14, focused on publicity efforts targeting key regions and key population groups vulnerable to schistosomiasis infection.

Schistosomiasis was previously commonly recorded in



Antarctic Amazement

Citizens are pictured on the deck of the polar icebreaker *Xuelong 2* in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) on April 9. This inaugural domestically constructed icebreaker made its debut in the SAR for a five-day visit following its arrival the day before.

12 provincial-level regions in the Yangtze River Basin and to the south of the river. People get infected after contact with water infested with larval forms of blood flukes.

An outline for Healthy China 2030 initiative, issued in 2016, called for the elimination of schistosomiasis in all endemic counties nationwide by 2030. Last year, the NDCPA and 10 other departments issued an action plan to accelerate the

elimination of schistosomiasis between 2023 and 2030. The plan outlined three phases for the prevention and control of the disease to achieve the ultimate goal.

According to the NDCPA, China has made significant progress in schistosomiasis control after years of relentless efforts. By 2022, 75 percent of the 452 endemic counties in the country had met the standard for schistosomiasis elimination.



A Cup of Spring

Farmers pick tea leaves at a tea garden in Feixi County of Hefei City, Anhui Province, on April 9. As spring unfolds, tea gardens across the region have entered harvest season.

THIS WEEK ECONOMY

Further Opening Up

In its latest move to expand opening up, China will remove foreign ownership restrictions on some value-added telecom services provided within domestic pilot areas.

The value-added telecom services will include Internet data centers, content delivery networks and Internet service providers, online data processing and transaction processing, information publishing platforms and information delivery services excluding services related to online news information, publishing, radio and television, culture management, and information protection and processing services, according to a circular released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology on April 10.

The pilot areas are Beijing's national comprehensive demonstration zone for expanding opening up in the service sector, the Lin-gang New Area of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free

Trade Zone and the pioneer area for socialist modernization in Shanghai, the Hainan Free Trade Port, and the Shenzhen pilot demonstration area of socialism with Chinese characteristics, according to the circular.

After the restriction that foreign investors can only hold 50 percent of shares in electronic data interchange and networked electronic devices data processing businesses is scrapped, qualified foreign investors will be able to set up wholly-owned businesses to offer Internet of Things platform services, said Wang Zhiqin, Deputy Director of the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

Forex Reserves

China's foreign exchange (forex) reserves totaled \$3.2457 trillion as of late March, rising by \$19.8 billion, or 0.62 percent, from the end of February, according to data released by the State Administration of Foreign

Exchange on April 7.

Affected by factors such as the monetary policies of major economies and macroeconomic data, the U.S. dollar index, a measure of the value of the dollar against a weighted basket of major currencies, and global financial asset prices rallied in March, the administration said.

It attributed the increase in the scale of the country's forex reserves to the combined effects of currency translation, changes in asset prices and other factors.

The Chinese economy will continue to pick up, which is conducive to keeping the scale of forex reserves generally stable, it added.

Service Industry Expansion

China's service industry reported accelerated expansion in March, as shown by a rising business activity index which tracks the sector's performance, the latest data showed.

In March, the business activity index for the industry in general stood at 52.4 percent—up 1.4 percentage points compared to the previous month. A reading above 50 indicates expansion and below that mark, contraction.

The March reading also marked the third straight month of growth in the index, according to data jointly released by the National Bureau of Statistics and the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

In terms of specific sectors, the sub-indexes for the postal services, telecommunications and radio services, television and satellite transmission services, and monetary and financial services sectors, were all within a well-performing range with a reading of at least 60 percent, while the total business volume of these sectors also grew rapidly, the data revealed.

Meanwhile, the business activity sub-indexes for sectors such as wholesale, railway transportation, as well as leasing and business services, were

NUMBERS

China's Service Outsourcing Industry in January-February

(All growth rates are y.o.y., \$1=7.09 yuan as of April 11)

Service outsourcing contracts inked by Chinese firms

Total value



Executed contract value



Offshore service outsourcing contract value



Service outsourcing Executed contract value

With countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative

23.33 bln yuan

With the United States

22.71 bln yuan

With the European Union

14.43 bln yuan

at 53 percent or above, the data read.

Unicorn Enterprises

China added 56 new unicorn enterprises in 2023, which means the country added more than one each week during the period, according to the Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2024 released on April 9.

The Global Unicorn Index 2024 is a ranking of the world's startups founded after 2000 that are worth at least \$1 billion and not yet listed on a public exchange.

There are 1,453 unicorn enterprises in the world, with a total market value of \$4.6 trillion. China alone has 340 unicorn enterprises, ranking second worldwide, while the United States takes first place, with 703. China's unicorn enterprises are mainly in the sectors of artificial intelligence, semiconductors and new energy, the report said.

The report also highlighted Hefei, capital of Anhui Province,

as the fastest growing city in terms of the number of unicorn enterprises in China, followed by other major cities, including Guangzhou in Guangdong Province, Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province and Suzhou in Jiangsu Province.

TikTok's parent company ByteDance retained the title of the world's most valuable unicorn last year, worth some 1.56 trillion yuan (\$215.7 billion). Meanwhile, Shanghai-based Chinese video game developer and publisher miHoYo shot up 91 places to rank as the world's 12th largest unicorn, with an estimated market value of some 160 billion yuan (\$22.1 billion), according to the report.

Passenger Drone

Chinese drone maker EHang Holdings Ltd. on April 7 obtained the production certificate for the EH216-S passenger-carrying autonomous aerial vehicle system from the Civil Aviation Administration of China

(CAAC) in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province.

It is the first production certificate issued in China for an autonomous passenger drone, and also the first one in the global electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) industry. Previously, the EH216-S had obtained the type certificate and standard airworthiness certificate from the CAAC.

A type certificate is a document stating an applicant has demonstrated compliance with all applicable requirements of an aircraft design type. The standard airworthiness certificate is the authorization to operate a type-certificated aircraft in various categories.

Hu Huazhi, founder, Chairman and CEO of EHang, said obtaining the production certificate was an important milestone for the EH216-S to enter the mass production stage, as well as a necessary step for EHang to advance commercial operations.

The EH216-S has a maximum

design speed of 130 km per hour, a maximum range of 30 km, and a maximum flight time of 25 minutes. EHang delivered 52 EH216-S aircraft last year.

Data Resources

It is estimated that China created more than 32 zettabytes of data in 2023, according to a survey on data resources conducted by the National Data Administration.

During a conference on April 1-2, Liu Liehong, head of the administration, said as of late 2023, the country had installed over 1.05 million standard racks across eight national computing hubs, with an average rack utilization rate of 61.9 percent, 3.9 percentage points higher than that in 2022.

Standard racks, also known as server racks, are standardized structures used to mount and organize information technology and networking equipment in data centers, server rooms and other tech facilities.

Executed contract value Of outsourcing services

Of private enterprises

23.79 bln yuan

25.3%

of the total

Of foreign-funded enterprises

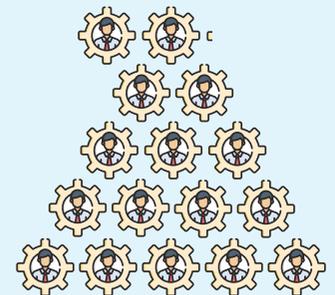
52.32 bln yuan

55.7%

of the total



In January-February
16,047 mln people



worked in China's service outsourcing industry

⚙️ = 1 mln

(Source: Ministry of Commerce)



ISRAEL

People take part in a rally calling for an immediate ceasefire between the Israeli Government and Hamas and the release of Israeli hostages taken by Hamas, in Jerusalem on April 9



UNITED NATIONS

The Security Council holds a meeting to recommence consideration of Palestine's full UN membership, in New York City on April 8



RWANDA

President Paul Kagame (center) and First Lady Jeannette Kagame (center right) light a remembrance flame surrounded by heads of state and other dignitaries as part of the commemorations of the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide at the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Kigali on April 7





ITALY

A visitor takes photos of illustrations at the Bologna Children's Book Fair at the Bologna Fiere Center in Bologna on April 8



UNITED STATES

A total solar eclipse photographed in Plano, Texas, on April 8



IRAN

Mourners take part in a funeral procession for the seven Iranians killed in the Israeli attack on the consular section of the Iranian Embassy in the Syrian capital of Damascus, on International Quds Day in Tehran on April 5

THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ WORLD-RENOWNED MATHEMATICIAN'S NEW POST

On April 3, French-Brazilian mathematician **Artur Avila** began a journey in international mathematical cooperation, taking up a position as guest professor at Nankai University in Tianjin Municipality in north China.

Avila, who is a professor at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, is known for his profound contributions to the field of dynamical systems and spectral theory. In 2014, he was awarded the Fields Medal, one of the highest honors for mathematicians, also known as the Nobel Prize of Mathematics.

Avila said China has been making good progress in mathematics, and he currently has five Chinese Ph.D. students, whose diversified research styles show the vitality and potential of China's mathematical community.

"Math is international. There's not one style of doing mathematics. Different cultures can be developed within China," Avila said.



Rocket Deliveries

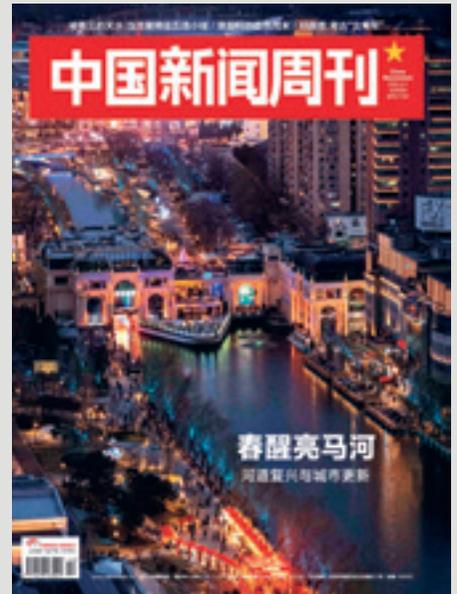
Economic Daily
April 7

On April 1, Space Epoch, a Chinese private rocket developer, announced a partnership with e-commerce giant Alibaba's Taobao platform to make express deliveries using rockets. The partnership could see Taobao deliveries arrive anywhere in the world within one hour.

Though it may seem like an April fool's joke, this new partnership is part of a trend that sees commercial rockets become a tool not only for interplanetary exploration but also international transportation. In 2022, SpaceX, a U.S.-based spaceflight company, launched the Starship project

to ship large volumes of cargo across the globe via a gigantic rocket system. The project, which aims to reduce cross-planet transit time to as little as 30 minutes, is currently in its experimental phase.

Space Epoch is one of several private spaceflight startups that have emerged in recent years. The introduction of space technologies to logistics will unlock massive potential in China's thriving e-commerce industry. However, rockets are still expensive compared with other more traditional methods of delivery. Measures that spacecraft companies can take to reduce costs include making their rockets reusable and automating the manufacturing process.



A River Awakened

China Newsweek
April 1

Nicknamed the "Seine of Beijing," the Liangma River has truly become one of the capital's trendiest hangout spots. Flowing from downtown to the eastern suburbs, the river offers a comprehensive slice of life in Beijing. For much of its recent history, the river remained a filthy, neglected urban canal. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), it was

"More countries and international organizations are welcome to participate in discussion, construction and sharing, to jointly build scientific research facilities on the lunar surface for humanity."

Guan Feng, head of the Lunar Exploration and Space Engineering Center of the China National Space Administration, as China and Thailand signed two memoranda of understanding for cooperation on lunar exploration on April 5

"It's imperative that we mitigate risks like geopolitical strife and trade fragmentation to maintain economic growth and stability."

Nguzi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General of the World Trade Organization, as it published its annual Global Trade Outlook and Statistics report on April 10. The report estimates the volume of global trade in merchandise will increase by 2.6 percent this year

a horse washing station, hence the name Liangma, which literally means “drying horses.” In the 20th century, the river became a drainage canal and was heavily polluted with industrial wastewater.

The transformation did not take place overnight. In 2019, local authorities launched a campaign to build a waterfront park along the river. Much effort was put into cleaning up the river, greening the banks and building riverfront parks and shopping centers.

The river has since evolved into not only a hotspot for everyday leisure activities but also a platform for international cultural events. In 2023, a host of art troupes from Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe were invited to perform on the riverbank. Live music events and flash mob events are also a common sight along the river.

As an example of successful urban rejuvenation, the Liangma River is still in the process of evolving, with burgeoning trends continuously reshaping its riverfront scene. In July, an esports center will open in the area to provide locals with a place to indulge in immersive virtual reality experiences.

Side Hustle Hype

Rednet.cn
April 1

In recent years, more and more young people have been taking up side hustles. Working as influencers, Web fiction writers, waiters and street vendors is among the most fashionable ways young Chinese supplement their day-job incomes. The popularity of side jobs reflects a shift away from the traditional office model, which tends to offer stable, predictable incomes, to more fluid and diverse modes of employment.

An increasing number of young employees are picking up sideline jobs as a fail-safe in the event of a pay cut or a lay-off. In the meantime, the rise of social media and their

deep integration with China’s massive e-commerce market have continued to generate new occupations that are unlimited by time and location.

For many Chinese youngsters, having a side gig is not only a means to earn extra money, but also a key driver of personal growth. No longer satisfied with settling into fixed work routines, this generation of youth strives for self-fulfillment and continuous self-discovery.

However, having a side job does not mean one can take his or her main occupation less seriously, or blindly follow what is hip and current. People should carefully select their sideline work based on their strengths and the amount of time they can commit.

PIANIST GETS HOLLYWOOD WALK OF FAME STAR

Chinese pianist **Lang Lang** was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles on April 10. The honor was bestowed in the category of live performance for Lang’s contributions to the world of classical music and his extraordinary talent.

Lang is the first Asian pianist to receive a star on the iconic sidewalk. “Internationally renowned pianist Lang Lang has sold millions of albums worldwide, topping classical charts and achieving simultaneous mainstream success,” said Steve Nissen, President and CEO of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce.

Born in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, in 1982 to a family of musicians, Lang began taking piano lessons at the age of 3. He gave his first public recital two years later, attracting attention as a musical prodigy.



“We at Blizzard are thrilled to reestablish our partnership with NetEase and to work together, with deep appreciation for the collaboration between our teams, to deliver legendary gaming experiences to players in China.”

Johanna Faries, President of Blizzard Entertainment, as the U.S. game developer announced on April 10 it will return to the Chinese mainland this summer, after a prolonged hiatus following a disagreement with NetEase in 2023

“The significance of artificial intelligence (AI) in city design and management is set to increase. As counterintuitive as it may sound, AI can help cities become more human-centric.”

Bruno Lanvin, President of the Smart City Observatory at IMD Business School, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

EAST MEETS WEST

Serving as director general of the World Trade Organization (WTO), headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, from September 2002 to August 2005, **Supachai Panitchpakdi** made history as the organization's first Asian leader.

In an exclusive interview with *Beijing Review* reporter Zhao Wei on the sidelines of the third Oriental Civilization Dialogue, a cross-cultural dialogue event hosted by the Mencius Foundation in Chengdu, capital of China's southwestern province of Sichuan, in early April, Panitchpakdi shared his views on the importance of cultural exchange between East and West and how these interactions can lead to a deeper understanding between diverse societies.

During their conversation, Panitchpakdi also touched on the relevance of ancient Chinese philosophies in shaping a shared future for all of humanity. Edited excerpts of the interview follow:



***Beijing Review:* What do you consider to be the most significant impact of cross-cultural dialogue and exchange, particularly in terms of fostering mutual understanding and collaboration between East and West?**

Supachai Panitchpakdi: Cross-cultural dialogue is crucial because today, more than ever, we are drifting apart instead of coming together to seek collective action, all the world, for all kinds of global problems like inflation, lack of food, physical warfare, trade tensions, etc. Instead of leveraging our diverse perspectives to find common solutions, some countries seem more focused on their own interests. This approach may not yield the constructive forces needed to address these worldwide problems.

Growing up in Asia and later studying in Europe, I observed distinct approaches to problem-solving. Asians often adopt a philosophical, humane approach that emphasizes personal and family values. This results in flexible and cautious solutions which may seem slow-paced to Western eyes.

We have an extended family system, community-based cultures and long histories. Meanwhile, the West has its own history and technological acumen; they value hard work and competition as key drivers of market capitalism.

However, competition sometimes goes beyond established rules. During my time at the WTO, I noticed some major countries occasionally disregarding rule books. Fast solutions are needed during urgent situations, but structural and social problems require careful deliberation over time. By combining both sides, the philosophical humanity with technological competitiveness, coexistence is possible. Therefore, we should constantly engage in cross-cultural discussions.

Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Civilizations Initiative (GCI) in March 2023, which calls for respecting the diversity of civilizations, advocating the common values of humanity, valuing the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and strengthening international people-to-people exchange and cooperation. How do you believe this specific initiative can positively impact global relations and create better understanding and cooperation among different civilizations?

President Xi's proposal, which I fully endorse, is praiseworthy. His goal is to constructively devise a new global governance solution. In my book on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), penned four years ago, I suggested a similar approach: prioritizing

development over mere markets, competition and technological change in the pursuit of globalization. (The BRI is a China-proposed initiative to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes—*Ed.*)

Dialogue on cross-cultural civilization has significant global implications. In this age of soft-power diplomacy, understanding each other's cultural and heritage backgrounds is vital for reducing misunderstandings that often lead to conflict. The rise of soft power can be seen in increased personal interactions among world leaders and enhanced social contact through channels like social media, all contributing toward improved mutual comprehension.

I am convinced that the United Nations' Agenda 2030 aligns with President Xi's vision as both emphasize people, planet, prosperity, partnership and peace, which are key elements required for successful global civilization dialogues. During my time at the UN and the WTO, I stressed equal participation by all countries. The GCI is an important proposal warranting