

LI YANG

Online anchors leading young people astray

After more than 30 years of opening-up and embracing new technology, China has been transformed into the world's second-largest economy. At the same time its culture has also experienced a remarkable transformation.

Responding to the cultural shocks that have occurred has been a pressing challenge for Chinese leaders, who believe the rise of China should be not just economic but also cultural. Late top Chinese leader Mao Zedong and his successors have all said China's culture should originate from the Chinese people, and serve them in return. The vulgar culture that has emerged online is a fresh test of this cultural ambition.

Despite the internet administrative department's painstaking efforts, indecent or "empty" live broadcasts are flourishing in various forms.

The anchors of such live online broadcasts have become popular celebrities, and it is now viewed by many youngsters as an attractive profession, because of the low entry threshold and potentially high returns.

Basically, these anchors attract fans with their good looks, and then perform — usually in a flirtatious manner, and sometimes doing nothing more than repeating a daily routine — in front of the camera in exchange for a payment by viewers that is made by the click of a mouse or a tap on a touch screen.

According to CBN Data, a polling agency headquartered in Shanghai, the "online celebrities" industry's annual output value this year is expected to hit nearly 60 billion yuan (\$9.23 billion), from almost nothing two years ago. In comparison, the box office revenue in China last year was 40 billion yuan.

CBN Data's report says nearly 70 percent of the fans were born after 1990. Once an anchor becomes a popular online celebrity, he or she will work as salesman or saleswoman for e-commerce companies. But they will never stop their performances, so as to retain their fans.

The anchors are also the favorite hosts for video websites, as they can attract large audiences. The top anchors can also attract hundreds of millions of yuan in venture investment, to package them into stars in other fields.

What is even more worrisome is that more and more adolescents regard being an online celebrity as a shortcut to success, while the authorities have no legal foundation to ban the industry so long as the broadcasts do not break the law.

A July survey by qq.com, a major online portal in China, shows the most attractive profession for 54 percent of the Chinese college students sampled was being an online celebrity. A vocational college in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, even opened a department to train online celebrities in July.

What an irony, given the Chinese government's call for mass entrepreneurship and innovation.

We should reflect on what kind of a family and social atmosphere we have created when the majority of young people are eying such a profession, simply as a way to make easy money. Integrity and creativity will be left by the wayside on such a path to quick riches.

If this momentum is unchecked, the industry, which does not yield added value for the country, will be a huge waste of capital and human resources.

Party chief Xi Jinping made an important speech on culture and entertainment work today two years ago, in which he criticized the vulgar culture and low tastes in China's culture and entertainment industry.

People should stay away from inferior entertainment models and pursue higher-level spiritual happiness.

And it is high time the internet and cultural administrative departments took concrete actions to regulate indecent and culturally damaging online live broadcasts, so as to encourage a healthy cultural environment online and prevent young people from being led astray in cyberspace.

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ROBERT LAWRENCE KUHN

Value of green development has been recognized

Pollution is a scourge in China, the debilitating consequences of unbridled industrial growth. But how can China halt and reverse such devastation without undermining economic growth? For China to achieve its goal of becoming a "moderately prosperous society," this question must be answered.

One of the pioneers in seeking answers to this question has been the coastal province of Zhejiang in East China, where environmental protection had been sacrificed on the altar of economic growth. To begin its environmental healing, the Zhejiang government shut down thousands of polluting workshops and restricted heavy industries such as mining and papermaking. What happened to the economy as a result?

To find out, I went to Zhejiang, where I discovered that Anji county in Zhejiang's mountains has been transforming itself from a polluted mining area into a "green center" of ecology-friendly agriculture, industry and tourism.

In 2003-05, the county closed three mining companies and a cement factory in Yu village, consequently the village's GDP fell from over 3 million yuan (\$449,842) to only 200,000 yuan, a drop of 93 percent.

Fortunately, the area has rich resources of bamboo and local residents began making money in an eco-friendly way. Today, Anji produces over 3,000 bamboo products, from underwear to home furnishings, that generate revenues of 18 billion yuan (\$2.7 billion) a year, making Anji the world leader for bamboo products.

President Xi Jinping was the Party secretary of Zhejiang between 2002 and 2007, and he promoted green development. Back in 2006, when I met Xi in the provincial capital Hangzhou, he stressed the importance of Zhejiang's forests.

And speaking in Yu village in 2005, Xi famously said, "We must get rid of the old development mode. In the past, we said we wanted clear waters and green mountains and we wanted mountains of gold and silver at the same time. In fact, clear rivers and green mountains are mountains of gold and silver."

Putting theory into practice, Zhejiang

has pioneered an "eco-compensation" system which enables environmental preservation and facilitates eco-friendly industries by transferring funds based on the meeting of certain standards for water quality, forest size, and the like.

For instance, the Xin'an River flows into Qiandao Lake from neighboring Anhui province, which is the source of most of the pollutants in the water. But why would Anhui, a less developed province, pay to improve the environment of Zhejiang, a more developed province?

To settle their dispute, in 2012, the parties developed an "eco-compensation"

framework. Under this mechanism, if the water from Anhui attains a mutually agreed standard, Zhejiang pays Anhui 500 million yuan. If it doesn't meet the standard, then Anhui pays Zhejiang that amount.

Zhejiang's eco-compensation system is an innovative idea — a new way of thinking — to help solve what once seemed like an intractable problem.

Environmental protection is now a priority in China. Green development is the third of the Five Major Development Concepts put forward by Xi Jinping, and the government has instituted tougher environmental protection laws and is showing greater determination to enforce them. There are now no caps on the penalties levied for pollution, and NGOs as well as regulators can take legal action against corporate violators.

Even the public can monitor polluting firms.

Unless China's environment is cleaned up, the Chinese dream will not be achieved, because if its environment remains massively polluted the Chinese nation will not be rejuvenated. For the first time in China's history, green development has been elevated to highest national importance.

The author is a public intellectual, political/economics commentator, and an international corporate strategist. He is also host of Closer to China with R.L. Kuhn, a weekly show on CCTV News (Sundays 9:30 am and 9:30 pm).



SHEN TIANCHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

BRICS countries have every reason to stand together

Editor's Note: Leading Chinese experts on BRICS studies and international affairs attended a Beijing-based seminar hosted by the Pangao Institution on Wednesday, where they exchanged views ahead of the eighth BRICS Summit to be held in Goa, India, on Saturday and Sunday. The following are excerpts of their comments:



He Yafei, former vice-minister of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council and former vice-minister of foreign affairs

For a more inclusive global governance system

Despite doubts about its sustainability and performance, the BRICS mechanism has become a leader of developing countries, and close cooperation within the five-nation bloc will grant emerging economies a bigger say in global affairs.

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis that hit most economies, the five members, namely Brazil, China, India, Russia, and South Africa, are faced with certain difficulties such as imbalanced development, due to the lackluster global growth. But that does not justify the West's questioning the effectiveness of the transcontinental group, which actually stems from the advanced economies' concerns about the rise of these emerging economies.

The truth is that over the past decade or so, BRICS has become a mature, versatile platform for multinational cooperation among the five developing countries, which have outrun the West in terms of total GDP and are reshaping the geopolitical and global economic order.

Home to about 42 percent of the global population, 21 percent of the world's GDP, and nearly half of the world's foreign reserves, BRICS is now a major economic engine that has contributed over half of the global growth in the past decade and is playing an ever greater role in global governance.

However, BRICS is not aimed at destroying or replacing the global governance system led by the West, rather it looks to optimize it and make it more inclusive. The regular meetings among BRICS leaders, be they official or casual, do not just deepen the economic and financial cooperation within the bloc, they also raise the voice of all emerging economies in international affairs.

The BRICS New Development Bank, for example, has great potential to provide more financing options for BRICS members and better protect their currencies from financial shocks. The green bonds it issued this year are another example of the BRICS mechanism's efficiency and determination to reduce poverty worldwide.



Liu Zhenye, deputy director of the Globalization and Global Issues Institute at the China University of Political Science and Law

Providing mutual support in the international arena

To a point, what drives the five BRICS nations to stand together is Washington's overseas security strategy, which is not happy about the major powers in a region taking control of regional affairs. As regional leaders and emerging economies, the BRICS countries have every reason to support each other in the global political arena.

Since they have different cultures, economic conditions, and national interests, they have to be careful in their bilateral and multilateral exchanges. China, for instance, has several strategic options to make sure the bloc works despite the differences that exist among its members.

The first is unity. That the five states stick to agreed arrangements under the BRICS framework and hold regular leadership meetings, so they can demonstrate their political resolutions, stances, and appeals in a way that the West might feel obliged to take seriously.

The second is utilitarianism. Although their primary concerns and interests can vary, or even clash, the BRICS members are better together than apart. The rise of China in recent years is reshaping the geopolitical situation in Asia, and may exert unwanted influences on its partnerships with Russia and India in terms of border disputes. The existence of the

BRICS is conducive to keeping unnecessary troubles at bay.

Pragmatism is also needed to maintain unity. It is justifiable and understandable for China to aid major regional powers in need of support. BRICS can and should be a viable platform that balances the global governance and gives developing economies more say.



Zhu Feng, executive director of the China Center for Collaborative Studies on the South China Sea at Nanjing University

More than just a marriage of convenience

Vibrant and emerging as it is, BRICS does have its problems. The vastly different social systems and cultures of the five member states is a big challenge for starters. The growth of BRICS largely depends on the leaders' political will, which has made the annual leadership summits and the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank possible. Yet, it needs more institutional efforts and tangible gains to be sustainable.

Besides, the BRICS members are yet to make the most of their cooperation with regard the Belt and Road Initiative. That India shows little interest in participating in the Beijing-proposed Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor, is a case in point. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor also needs India's full cooperation to take effect.

Therefore, it has to be made clear what kind of role the BRICS is playing and should play in global governance. It cannot be a marriage of convenience that does not last for long. Closer connections are needed between BRICS cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative, and the five members need to expand cooperation with more countries along the routes of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. It is shared interests, values and overcoming challenges together that can

form a fruitful partnership.



Sun Yanfeng, a Latin America studies researcher at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations

Priority should be rebranding as club for emerging economies

For the BRICS countries, a few speed bumps should be faced and dealt with carefully. The bloc's contribution to global growth is declining, with Russia and Brazil suffering from negative growth and China undergoing economic transitions. Brazil has just witnessed tumultuous political transitions in which former President Dilma Rousseff was removed from office in August, while South Africa and Russia have their own domestic problems.

Questions about BRICS's legitimacy and its future are on the rise given the member states' declining economic performance and a slew of differences ranging from political systems to certain geopolitical disputes. Trade exchanges within the group are still largely confined to bilateral, not multilateral interactions.

However, the bloc still means a lot to China and other members too. The China-Brazil comprehensive strategic partnership would not be possible if it was not for their BRICS ties. The multinational mechanism is also of great political, symbolic importance to developing countries, and its presence featuring leadership meetings is already a success for China's diplomacy.

Implementing their cooperative deals should be a top priority for the five nations. For that to happen, they need to re-brand the bloc as a club for emerging economies, boost trade exchanges, and seek more reciprocal deals like visa-free policy and judicial cooperation.

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