

On the Ethical Significance of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

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Abstract: The value concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind, posed and profoundly expounded by contemporary Chinese government leaders, offers an in-depth insight into the development trend of the world today and a fundamental solution to various global crises. It reveals the highly interdependent relationships between people and between nations, where they share the same benefits and risks against the backdrop of globalization, informatization and network civilization, asks for the withdrawal of existing egoism that disregards others' legitimate interests and the zero-sum bias that views one's gain as another's loss, while building a harmonious world featuring harmonious co-existence, common development and lasting peace. The value concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind is highly and profoundly significant for the creative evolution of ethics, not only laying a foundation in terms of values for a healthy, just and sensible global ethic and injecting the spirit of pursuing equal and win-win cooperation into international relations, but also providing theoretical support for an inclusive human ethical civilization that consists of mutual learning and harmonious co-existence of different ideas, accentuating the guiding idea of "devote your mind to heaven and earth, devote your life to the people; succeed the wisdom of the past sages; create peace for ten thousand generations."

Keywords: a community with a shared future for mankind; win-win co-existence; the significance of creative evolution of ethics

Building a community with a shared future for mankind is a core value concept posed by the Chinese leaders, among whom President Xi Jinping is representative. They address both the internal needs of China for rising and sustainable development and enhance the well-being of people all over the world. The

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* Foundation item: This paper is an outcome of the major philosophy and social science project "Studies on Major Theoretical and Practical Issues Concerning Patriotism Promotion Under New Circumstances" undertaken by the Ministry of Education (16GZD007).

ethical wisdom and cultural connotation conveyed by the very concept is gaining high recognition from an increasing number of foreign politicians, business elites, academic leaders and ordinary citizens and has found its way into the *Social Dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development*, a resolution passed by the 55th session of the Commission for Social Development of the United Nations (UN). What exactly could building a community with a shared future for mankind mean to the creative evolution? Could it serve as a theoretic cornerstone for a new ethical civilization by uniting most people in a unanimous understanding about values, despite the complex, diversified and conflicting ideas that fill the age? In a way, building such a human community is undoubtedly a crucial concept that concerns the overall, fundamental and long-term well-being of mankind. It touches on key, pivotal and decisive problems that relate to the global ethical framework, internal connotations of contemporary international ethics and the inclinations of human ethical civilization. It is also an ethical remedy based on Chinese ethics, providing guidance on values and actions for the world on its path of ending zero-sum bias, stopping confrontations around narrowly defined interests and building a world of harmonious co-existence. In that sense it is a revolution in ethical civilization and plays a leading role in the creative evolution of ethics.

1. Laying a value basis for a healthy, just and sensible global ethic

Globalization is a process of socialization human beings are going through and an enormously significant movement that influences human life, where human existence and development are becoming more and more interrelated and united. It is characterized by the flow of capital, technologies, talents and information across countries, by

compressed time and space, the quick spread of information, openness and sharing. "By entangling the present and the absent, interweaving faraway social occurrences and social relationships with local scenes" (Anthony Giddens, 1998, p.23), it makes the world more and more like an inter-dependent organic whole. The "internet+" and modern information technologies, like a profound and intense power, are propelling people to adjust their production and living patterns to keep pace, not only causing giant transformations in relations of production, but also reshaping people's intellectual lives and values.

Globalization, while bringing a shared thriving and development to worldwide economies also poses a series of profound and serious challenges, such as the escalating wealth polarization, the slowdown in economic growth, the rising unemployment rate and the ecological deterioration. These threats and risks raised by globalization are linked to all kinds of relations; people-to-people, people-to-society, people-to-nature, people-to-their inner self, region-to-region and nation-to-nation, sinking the modern social development into an uncertain adventure from the solid bank of definitive planning, weakening the national spirit and sense of homeland, and witnessing the meaning of human existence in the world replaced by an inclination towards homogenization. Globalization is resulting in uncertainty and diversity that leads to unbearable anxiety for individuals as well as a crisis of self-identification. In the high-capacity and high-density networks of social relations in the wake of globalization, individual identity is bouncing and instantaneous, and identity recognition is being threatened by crises involving people themselves, other human beings and society. While making the world flatter and flatter and the earth smaller and smaller, globalization is also internationalizing things that hamper human development despite its contribution to mankind. Alongside the wave of globalization come paradoxes,

pitfalls and crises, all the time intertwined with its positive effects. Those global issues, shared by all human beings, decide the overall fate of mankind and ask for joint human efforts to be resolved. It is hence pressing to develop an ingenious idea and a valid countermeasure that could both effectively address the problems and lead globalization onto the right path. A global ethic that could both fit into the trend of globalization and guide it towards healthy development is also urgently needed.

In the face of globalization and a raft of new problems following the trend, insightful people tend to construct a healthy, just and sensible global ethic through their thinking and actions. It was in this realm of thought that the global ethic was first initiated, before it gained recognition from politicians and international organizations and became popular during the last century. In 1988, *A Declaration of Interdependence: A New Global Ethics* was passed during the 10th World Humanist Congress of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), at the State University of New York, Buffalo, USA. It proclaimed that “the earth is made up of inter-dependent nations and countries. Whatever happens in one place on the planet, other places will feel it,” thus “each of us is highly responsible for this world community” (Paul, 1998, p.403). That marks a global ethic proposed from the perspective of humanitarianism, and accentuates that globalization and human fate are inter-dependent and people should respond with a moral awakening and a sense of moral responsibility. Hans Küng, a German theologian, was advocating a global ethic inside religion. In February 1990, he made a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, which was entitled “Why do we need global ethical standards to survive?” His book *Global Responsibilities* was published the same year, again advocating the construction of a global ethic. Later he (1997) drafted the *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic* with Karl-Josef

Kuschel which was approved at the Parliament of the World’s Religions held in Chicago in August 1993. Over 6,500 religious people attended the parliament and witnessed the declaration being read. It stresses that “without a new global ethic, there will be no new global order,” and also that “the global ethic means a basic consensus on some binding values, indelible standards, personalities and attitudes.” Hans Küng also had his book *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* published, which voiced his opinions on why and how a global ethic must be constructed in the age of globalization. In 1995, led by the former German President Willy Brandt, the Commission on Global Governance released a report entitled *Our Global Neighborhood*, which called for the establishment of “global civic ethics”. In 1997, UNESCO initiated the World Ethics Program, and then in March and December of that year discussed it during two conferences in Paris, France and Naples, Italy. It is fair to say that those declarations, initiatives and visions of a global ethic are based on and well-tailored to the challenges brought by globalization, and that they have won recognition from quite a few countries and even the UN. However, they are more a draft of slogans, which, in particular, lack in-depth thinking and pragmatic countermeasures that could tackle challenges caused by globalization and construct a global ethic, which features equality and mutual help, faces the future, addresses common demands of China and Western countries, and also benefits all human beings. Therefore, how to construct a global ethic that could really cater to the welfare of people all over the world remains unanswered.

The Chinese government led by President Xi Jinping, after a critical review of Western presumptions and suggestions about the construction of a global ethic since the 1990s, and an analysis of the current trends of globalization and its consequences, in reference to Chinese ancient

wisdom such as “the world of universal harmony”, proposed the idea of building a community with a shared future for mankind, laying the theoretic foundation for a healthy, just and sensible global ethic.

The value concept and strategy of building a community with a shared future for mankind marks an in-depth understanding about the trend of globalization, a top pick solution to its negative consequences, a fundamental way to counter anti-globalization or reversal of globalization, and an ethical cornerstone that will lead globalization onto a healthy and right track. It proclaims China's intention to embrace the trend, to step up efforts to counter new conflicts and challenges, and to take measures against threats brought by the reversal of globalization, so that the world will be more peaceful, more secure, and more prosperous. Building a community with a shared future for mankind is a prescription after a diagnosis of the challenges and predicaments that arise as a consequence of globalization. What's more important, it perfects guidelines and navigates the future global development as a highly feasible and insightful tool backed by values and sensibilities, reflecting a rising China as keenly longing to build a harmonious and beautiful home together with people all over the world, to enhance the welfare of the people, and to safeguard both their fundamental and long-term interests. The concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind, while trying to seek the greatest common divisor of interests from various stances, demonstrates a world consensus with Chinese characteristics that not only follows the trend of globalization but also strives to give a correct direction.

Building a community with a shared future for mankind, as a new value concept and strategy, helps to form a healthy, just and sensible global ethic, which can truly benefit all human beings only when based on a community with a shared future for mankind

and dedicated to building and maintaining such a community. Why is building a community with a shared future for mankind helpful for the formation of a healthy, just and sensible global ethic?

First, the value concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, by offering a sober understanding about and deep insight into global issues, accentuates the connections and symbiosis between countries under globalization, and lays theoretic foundations for a global ethic featuring interdependence. There is only one world that human beings share. Globalization is raising the sense of a community with a shared future for mankind by saying, “Human beings must seek an omnipotent solution to their life-changing issues, and reach a tacit agreement: we are all on the same boat” (Hauptman, 1998, p.5). The community with a shared future for mankind, implying integration and symbiosis between East and West, is meaningful in the ethical sense, for it requires the destiny of mankind to be placed, reflected upon and built inside the framework of the community. It is also ethically instructive for the world in pursuit of real common prosperity and harmony, for it has transcended both the Western and Eastern Centrism, both being tunnel visions that view the dominance of one side as the substitute for globalization.

Second, the value concept of a community with a shared future for mankind propels human beings to take an active and cooperative spirit to counter challenges brought by globalization, evade the pitfalls and guard against the risks. Aimed at symbiosis and a win-win outcome, it provides a consensus of basic values for the construction of a healthy, just and sensible global ethic. The concept, while recognizing the rationality of economic globalization, also emphasizes several problems following globalization. “Economic globalization is the historical trend, boosting trade, investment, flow of workforce and technological development,” and in that sense,

“it is a correct direction” (Xi, 2017). However, globalization is also leading to new conflicts and problems between man and nature, man and society, man and man, and “all those problems that get in our way we have to stand up to and try to solve, but without sacrificing the whole thing” (Xi, 2017). In the context of globalization, whether it is to battle climatic disasters or ease financial crises, the sense of a community with a shared future for mankind must be strengthened, in a bid to replace antagonism with cooperation, and life-or-death fights with win-win symbiosis. With the world being haunted by nerve-wracking problems and challenges, the sense of a community with a shared future for mankind requires joint efforts of all countries to counter all kinds of problems, conflicts, crises and challenges, and that nobody should, in exchange for private benefits, hurt the earth, other people, or possibly, themselves. Today’s world is becoming more and more connected and inter-dependent as a community with a shared future for mankind, and that calls for all the countries and their people to establish a sense of the community so they can be connected to other people and to the entire world, learn to cooperate in joint construction and to share with others. That is the core of a healthy, just and sensible global ethic.

Third, the value concept of a community with a shared future for mankind faces up to the very root of the wave of the reversal of globalization, and proposes a healthy and correct globalization to guarantee the shared interests of all the nations, to make globalization better address the common demands of the developed and developing countries and to point out a clear direction for a healthy, just and sensible global ethic. The concept, while saying no to the reversal of globalization, is also pushing forward the structural transformation of global governance, multilateral cooperation towards common prosperity and sustainable harmony of the world in the ethical sense.

To ensure the healthy proceeding of economic globalization, it is necessary to encourage openness, inclusiveness, universal benefits, balance, and win-win outcomes to tackle the worldwide challenges regarding justice and wealth polarization, and to extend benefits to all the countries rather than to make some beneficiaries while making others victims of globalization. Hence the cake of globalization must be made bigger, and shared more equally so that it can bring a sense of achievement and happiness to each of the countries. Only when the sense of a community with a shared future for mankind is established can the world both follow the trend of globalization and tackle the consequent problems more effectively, globalization leads towards the overall welfare of people all over the world, and a healthy, just and sensible global ethic must be formulated.

The healthy, just and sensible global ethic, proceeding from the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, stresses the connected and interdependent relationships between man and man, and between nations. It advocates breaking the barrier of the zero-sum bias that views one’s gain as another’s loss and egoism, and uniting one’s own destiny with others as well as the fate of the entire human community, just as the Chinese saying goes, “Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others” and “One should not impose on others what he himself does not desire.” President Xi Jinping once noted (2017) that “On the roof of the Federal Palace of Switzerland, there was a Latin motto ‘Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno (one for all, all for one)’. It reminds us that we should not only think about our own generation, but also take responsibility for future ones.” That is condensation of the very core of a healthy, just and sensible global ethic, namely mutual benefit and the unification of intra-generational

and intergenerational equality. The value concept of a community with a shared future for mankind holds that, under globalization people are not only dependent on each other but also share benefits and risks and go through thick and thin together. It proposes to build “a world of lasting peace”, “a world of universal safety”, “a world of common prosperity”, “an open, inclusive world”, and “a clean, beautiful world” (Xi, 2017). The construction of the “five worlds” is the very internal connotation of building a community with a shared future for mankind, as well as its goal and inclination of values. The two are inherently linked, for they can justify and support each other. Only when based on the value concept of a community with a shared future for mankind and the consequent unanimity in actions could the construction of the “five worlds” be accomplished. The concept goes right to the root of things that are hampering social development under globalization. It proposes to use dialogues and negotiations to solve all kinds of conflicts, to replace egoism disregarding others’ interests with a spirit of brotherhood, to link one’s own fate with others’ and that of the entire community with a shared destiny and to learn to share. Only in that way can a real good deed come out that benefits both oneself and others, and also leads globalization to mutual benefit and win-win symbiosis. All these are not only an interpretation of the internal value of the community with a shared future for mankind, but also a requisite for a healthy, just and sensible global ethic. The concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind brings the global ethic down from the too-far-away or Utopian sphere to the realistic ground. Meanwhile, by drawing on its in-depth understanding about and deep insight into globalization, it provides a theoretic cornerstone for a healthy, just and sensible global ethic, and lays the foundation for value identification and shared practices. Moreover, the construction of the community itself and the internalization and

externalization make up the key content and direction of the global ethic. The concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind, which integrates faith and responsibility, is undoubtedly a giant leap forward from the dualism in ethics popular throughout modern times. It also means a lot for the creative evolution of the new global ethic.

2. Forging an ideological ground for an equal, cooperative, win-win ethic of international relations

A global ethic, based on an in-depth understanding and deep insight into globalization and its consequences, is an integrated ethic that reviews human relations from the perspective of mankind and the world. As closely linked as the ethic of international relations and the global ethic seem, they can be quite different. If the global ethic is something shared by all mankind, and consists of and also confirms common human values, then the ethic of international relations is something specifically used between different human groups, and condensation of value and behavioral representation of the relationships between countries and between regions. The ethic of international relations can, during its construction, use global ethics’ patterns, frameworks and basic principles to internalize and reflect the basic spirit of global ethics, and act on global ethics through its construction, offering global ethics practical operational plans, realistic relationship construction types, and ethical base material for the coordination of international relations.

The value concept and initiative of building a community with a shared future for mankind proposed by China, features deep anxiety about the enormously unbalanced international relations, which suffer from inequality, anti-fairness and power politics, and a new thinking about a new order for the international relations. Focusing on the global

strategic safety and lasting peace, it proposes to let go of the ideas of “answer violence with violence” “beggar thy neighbor” and “one’s gain is another’s loss,” to build a new ethic of international relations that features equality, cooperation and win-win outcomes to bring true benefits to people all over the world. The ethic of international relations is an equality-based, harmonious and win-win symbiosis that is built upon the integration of individual values and social values. According to what the concept proposes, a country’s fate must be related to others’ and that of the entire world, and an equal, cooperative and win-win ethic of international relations must be established. All countries must review the current international relations through the lens of a community with a shared future for mankind, abandon the zero-sum bias and outdated winner-take-all mindset, and break new ground through concerted respect for each other’s core interests and key concerns, as well as equality and etiquette-based communications. President Xi Jinping (2016) once pointed out that, “China advocates a community with a shared future for mankind and opposes cold war mentality and zero-sum games. China insists that all countries, big or small, weak or strong, rich or poor, are equal, respects their people’s equal rights to choose their own path of development, and is committed to upholding international fairness and justice.” The Chinese initiative of building a community with a shared future for mankind is a deep understanding about the true spirit of the ethic of international relations, as well as a spontaneous guard and supportive mouthpiece for international fairness and justice.

The ethic of international relations built upon the value concept of a community with a shared future for mankind features sovereign equality, communications and negotiations, and democratization of international relations.

Sovereign equality, as the basic principle of

the ethic of international relations, means that all countries, big or small, weak or strong, rich or poor, share equal sovereignty, which should and must be respected by the international community. And no country should intervene in other countries’ internal affairs under the guise of claiming “superiority of human rights over national sovereignty”, for each country reserves its independent right to choose its own regime and path of development. Sovereignty is a special attribute that separates a country from a social group. And it was during the communications between those equally sovereign countries that modern international law was developed. In its “Preamble,” the *Charter of the United Nations* reiterates “The faith in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small,” and in its Article 2 stipulates that “The organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members” and “Nothing contained in the present charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.” The charter not only recognizes the principle of sovereign equality of states and non-interference in internal affairs, but also establishes the principle of self-determination of nation-states, largely enriching the content of the principle of sovereign equality for all countries. In 1954, the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” was proposed and advocated by China, outlining the ethical principles that international relations must follow and gain wide recognition from the international community. In 1974, Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States was passed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), confirming the countries’ economic sovereignty and their permanent sovereignty over natural resources, and providing secure legal safeguards for national independence and development. In 1982, came the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, stipulating that the countries have sovereign rights



United Nations Headquarters

over the natural resources of the continental shelf and exclusive economic zone. Hence President Xi Jinping (2017) also noted that “sovereign equality has been, for hundreds of years, the most important principle for the regulation of relationships between countries. It is also the primary principle that must be followed by the UN and all its bodies and organizations.” Sovereign equality indicates that all countries are equal and their dignity and sovereignty must be respected. The reason why the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind values sovereign equality so much is that, without sovereign equality there could not be truly equal international relations, nor development and protection of human rights in the countries. Human rights prone to foreign control and manipulation are not real human rights,

which should be based on liberty and equality. Therefore, the international community must abide by the principle of sovereignty equality. Only by following the very principle can all the countries be involved in equality-based global governance and construction of international relations, the equality of rights, opportunities and rules be pushed in all the countries, and an across-the-board, equal ethic of international relations be built. One that voices the very core of the solution to current conflicts between countries also acts as a prerequisite for the construction of a new ethic of international relations.

Communication and negotiation is a principle that should and must be upheld in addressing international relations, including all conflicts and strife. It is the way to handle international relations through candid

communications and sincere talks and to solve bilateral or multi-lateral conflicts based on respect for sovereignty equality. In nature it adopts political talks as the fundamental solution to conflicts, and seeks common values and a consensus on ethics, so as to strengthen international bonds and form a better united world. To be sure, communications and negotiations alone cannot solve all human problems. "However, rash actions without talks always lead to unexpected invasion. Once we know the crucial importance of dialogues and harmonious co-existence, we must learn to never act without talks" (The UNESCO Division of Philosophy and Ethics, 2001). Countless historical facts have proved that the countries will "gain from peaceful coexistence, and lose from conflicts". Holding a grudge against each other is not helpful, but disastrous, for it intensifies conflicts, makes things more complicated and finally causes harm to all sides. The construction of a community with a shared future for mankind must adhere to the principle of communications and negotiations, "try to solve conflicts by peaceful means, exclude violence or threaten, oppose stirring up or fueling trouble only for one's own profit, and refuse beggar thy neighbor approach" (Xi, 2014, p.356). Communications and negotiations, implying communicative rationality and inter-subjectivity, proposes to proceed from equality-based dialogues and seek the values that could be accepted by all sides as well as a point of convergence of interests. Only through communications and negotiations can there be a real mutual, understanding and trust, which is needed for an equal, cooperative and win-win ethic of international relations. After all, whether it is for equality, cooperation, or win-win outcomes, mutual understanding and sincerity is utmost necessary, as well as multi-layer associations, wide-ranging communications and negotiations. In that sense, the construction of a real ethic of international relations cannot be accomplished without sincere

communications and negotiations. The measure of the ethic would be how far and deep communications and negotiations could go under its influence.

Democratization of international relations is an important call and an internal demand of the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind, which contains the core connotation of Carl Marx's "association of free people", namely all members or countries are indispensable. They are equal in status, position, and rights and obligations to jointly build an ethic of international relations. Good and just ethics of international relations are not windfalls. Instead, they will only come when all the countries are motivated and mobilized to join in the construction. Only when the collective wisdom of all the countries and their people is gathered can such an ethic of international relations be built with a concerted willingness that originates from the common and overall interests of people all over the world, and is supposed to ensure their healthy development and steady accomplishment. The democratization of international relations calls for the ethical sense of "each country playing a part in shaping the future of the world". It stresses listening to voices and reasonable demands of all sides, gathering wisdom from all, encouraging all countries to proactively engage in the administration of international affairs apart from their dedication to domestic construction and development, and building a good international environment, so as to make the world more orderly, the international rules more just and the human future brighter. The democratization of international relations provides a framework for the ethic of international relations. It represents calls for justice in procedures and format, the spiritual exploration into justice in practice and content, and is also meaningful for its integration of the four.

The community with a shared future for mankind reflects the idea of symbiosis, aims for mutual benefit and strives for a win-win outcome. According to

what is proposed, there should be “dialogues, not antagonism; partnerships, not alliances” between countries, and “a new, mutual respect-based, win-win relationship, without conflicts or antagonism, must be built” (Xi, 2017). The community with a shared future for mankind places its values and ethical spirit in such a way that it enables all countries to review the world adopting a more interactive and associative thinking. They begin to spontaneously unite their own interests with those basic and long-term interests of all the countries and the entirety of mankind. The vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind points out the direction and provides spiritual support for a new, equal, cooperative and win-win ethic of international relations that will transcend the current ethic that is haunted by tunnel visions, zero-sum games and cold war mindsets. It has a profound and long-term meaning for the creative evolution of ethics.

3. Providing theoretic support for an inclusive ethic featuring mutual learning and harmony in diversity

Today, how to make different civilizations harmoniously co-exist through communications and how to avoid their extinction is a major concern of many thinkers and politicians.

The Chinese initiative of building a community with a shared future for mankind and its values reflect a deep reflection upon and criticism about the Clash of Civilizations theory. It plays a unique role in constructing an inclusive ethical civilization featuring mutual learning and harmony in diversity. In his speech entitled *Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind*, President Xi Jinping (2014) noted that, “The diversity of human civilization is a basic attribute of the world, and a source of human progress... Cultural differences must not become the root of conflicts. Instead, they should play their part

as an impetus for the progress of human civilization... Civilizations must draw on each other’s strength and make progress together. Let cultural communications and mutual learning become a driving force for human society and a bond of world peace.” Here the idea “Cultural differences must not become the root of conflicts” is explicitly expressed, indicating Chinese governmental leaders’ reflection upon and criticism about Samuel Huntington’s theory of Clash of Civilizations. In 2014, during his speech at UNESCO headquarters, President Xi Jinping also noted that, “As long as the spirit of inclusiveness is upheld, there will be no so-called ‘clash of civilizations,’ and the harmonious co-existence of civilization is sure to come.” Different civilizations created by different nations are also connected in some way. Huntington only saw the “differences”, while neglecting the “harmonious” dimensions of civilizations. In fact, the “harmonious” parts of civilizations are far more common than the “clashing” parts, and are more important and closer to its nature. Human civilizations, whether on the whole or down to specific branches, are always dynamic and never stop evolving. There is never one civilization that can exist without other civilizations. They just grow amid confrontations and clashes. Only by drawing nourishment from others can a civilization maintain its liveliness and get lasting energy.

The value concept and strategy of building a community with a shared future for mankind rejects the Clash of Civilizations theory, advocates the Harmony of Civilizations theory, and will surely push forward the construction of an inclusive ethical civilization featuring mutual learning and harmony in diversity. The Harmony of Civilizations theory holds that human civilization is a polymer of civilizations blossoming in their own splendor, and is a palace decorated by them. Arnold Joseph Toynbee (2005), a famous British historian, in his best-known work, *A Study of History*, through an in-depth

study on and a comparison among the civilizations of the West, Russia, India, China, Southeast Asia, Egypt, Orthodox, Islam, Africa and Meso-America, concluded that each form of civilization “hands us a key that opens the door to a certain social regime and culture belonging to civilizations that have ever existed” (p.48). The variety of civilizations lends color to the history of human culture, and also provides diversified models for people to inherit and learn. “The diversity of civilizations is the very value behind exchanges and mutual learning... All the civilizations, either the Chinese civilization, or the others around the world, are all the fruit of human creative labor” (Xi, 2014, p.258). Colorful human civilizations highlight the glory of human history, while also making mutual learning possible. The civilizations of the future, through mutual learning, are sure to witness new formats or types. That is not only an internal demand of the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind, but also a requisite need to maintain the development of the community.

The construction in nature is an outcome of “harmony in diversity”, not of “uniformity without cohesion”. The former is a call from the inside of the well-balanced development of human civilization and the very direction its values should take. The ancient Chinese text *Discourses of the State: Discourses of Zheng*, quoted Shi Bo, a famous historian of the Zhou Dynasty, as saying that “The world is created because of harmony in diversity. If there is only uniformity without cohesion, things will stop growing. Balancing different things brings prosperity, while overlapping the same things results in extinction of liveliness.” Coordination between different things is the very key to long-term development of old things and generations of new things, while the seeming uniformity at the expense of diversity fails to keep things going. The ethical idea of “harmony in diversity” proposed by Confucius was based on

Shi Bo and Yan Ying’s ideas on how to differentiate “harmony in diversity” and “uniformity without cohesion”, only Confucius brought the idea further and raised it to a key standard that separates a superior man from an average man, namely that a superior man, when pursuing harmonious co-existence with others, never gives up his own principles even though he respects diversity, while an average man is just adulatory and habitually casts his own principles aside. “Harmony in diversity” and “uniformity without cohesion” are different. The latter excludes differences, while the former embraces differences, and in that way becomes justified (Feng, 1999). “Harmony in diversity” in nature is to recognize the diversity of things and to seek internal harmony of man and things while respecting that very diversity. It holds that each civilization has its own value and strengths. Respecting the uniqueness of each other and drawing on each other’s strengths imply that human civilizations are aiming for a diversified, mutually-beneficial and harmonious blossoming beauty. That is also an important law for the existence and development of human civilizations. If one civilization just feels superior and refuses, or even disdains, to learn from others, it will smother opportunities for its potential development, and even invite hostility or even betrayal of others. That would be a disaster for both itself and other civilizations. In that sense, therefore, only when different civilizations begin to respect and learn from each other, and when there are active dialogues and communications between them, can there be a thriving human civilization.

The Harmony of Civilizations theory insists that each civilization is a profound representation of the human civilization system and they should be viewed as equal in status. “There is no perfect civilization, nor a useless civilization. No civilization is lower or worse than others” (Xi, 2014, p.259). Therefore, a rational attitude must be adopted when

the differences between one's own civilization and other civilizations are studied. And the principle of drawing on each other's strengths, being inclusive and learning from each other must be upheld, while the attitude of attacking, being derogatory toward or disrespecting each other must be abandoned. "Historical and realistic evidence has shown that pride and prejudice is the largest barrier for the mutual learning and communication between different civilizations" (Xi, 2014, p.258). Only by giving up pride and prejudice can the values of civilization be built upon equality and mutual respect. "One world, multiple voices" depicts how current human civilizations complement each other. Opposing cultural hegemony and colonialism is an intrinsic requirement of diversity and equality of civilizations. According to the bias of cultural hegemony or imperialism, the human world can only be ruled under one hegemonic culture. However, the truth is that hegemonic cultures cannot build a real ethical civilization. Only the equality-based cultural values required by the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind can bring blessings to mankind. And that is the intrinsic reason why the concept got responses and recognition the instant it was proposed.

Inclusiveness and mutual learning are the intrinsic requirements and value orientations of the development of human civilization. "Civilization blossoms because of communications and mutual learning. Cultural communications and mutual learning act as a strong driving force for progress made in human civilizations and peace in the world" (Xi, 2014, p.258). Inclusiveness and mutual learning, both the virtues and drivers of civilization, mark the basic stance and values of the Harmony of Civilizations theory, which is completely different from the Clash of Civilizations theory. "Only with inclusiveness human civilization could go towards communication and mutual learning. Just as the

sea embraces all rivers that run into it, all human civilizations condense labor and wisdom of the people. They are all unique...worth respect and treasuring" (Xi, 2014, p.258). The secret of a vivid civilization lies in its inclusiveness and mutual learning, only through which can a civilization get a perpetual driving power, draw on others' strengths to improve itself while preserving its own characteristics and advantages. The construction of a community with a shared future for mankind calls for the establishment of a diversified but harmonious ethical civilization that comes after cultural communications, mutual learning and respect. And that in turn requires a respect for cultural diversity and efforts to seek similarities as shared by different civilizations, so as to ensure that mutual learning and inclusiveness will not be realized at the expense of individual characteristics, to develop a cultural trend to recognize and appreciate cultural inclusiveness and mutual learning, to drive dialogues between different civilizations and development models, to draw on each other's strengths, to achieve common prosperity through communications, and to make cultural communications and mutual learning a bond that connects people from all countries. In the vivid picture of the diversified but harmonious ethical civilization, different civilizations would go in parallel, grow together without harming each other, carry out cultural dialogues and finally achieve harmonious co-existence, just as Feng Youlan (2000) said, "When the five colors are put together, they will accentuate each other; when the eight musical instruments play in concert, there will be harmony and peace" (p.154).

Building a community with a shared future for mankind is a core value concept and "Chinese scheme" proposed by Chinese governmental leaders based on their accurate understanding about and deep reflection upon the trend of globalization, the requirements of the construction of international

relations and the law of the development of human civilizations. It has a profound and lasting meaning for the creative evolution of ethics, not only providing fundamental values for the construction of a healthy, just and sensible global ethic, injecting the spirit of pursuing equality, cooperation and win-win into international relations, but also providing theoretic support for an inclusive human ethical civilization that consists of mutual learning and the harmonious

co-existence of different ideas, and accentuating the guiding idea of “Devote your mind to heaven and earth; devote your life to the people. succeed the wisdom of the past sages; create peace for ten thousand generations.” It is sure to provide a universal ethical spirit and core values for the second “axial period” on the horizon and kick off a new chapter of the glorious human civilization.

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