

Harmony Is Most Valuable— the Cultural Implications of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

Yang Xiannong*

Abstract: The distinguished tradition of Chinese culture, i.e., the belief that harmony is most valuable, contains the cultural genes constituting a community with a shared future for mankind. Xi Jinping's thoughts about a community with a shared future for mankind consciously carries on and promotes the Chinese nation's cultural tradition that harmony is most valuable, advocates the cultural contents of peace, harmony, concord, kindness and pleasantness. It integrates the theory and practice of a community with a shared future for mankind with the traditional Chinese cultural concept that harmony is most valuable which is an important value orientation for contemporary human society to deal with human, ethnic and international relations.

Keywords: harmony is most valuable; Xi Jinping; a community with a shared future for mankind

The conception that harmony is most valuable is the most basic principle that Chinese culture has advocated in handling human relationships. This principle has been extended and applied in the form of such conceptions as harmony in diversity, seeking common ground while shelving differences, world peace and the world of great harmony, which have come down through generations, to handle both relationships with other countries and domestic ethnic nations. In handling such relationships, China adheres to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, maintains solving various world disputes by peaceful means and carries on the Chinese cultural tradition that harmony is most valuable. China also promotes the cultural contents of peace, harmony, concord, kindness and pleasantness, and makes

* Yang Xiannong, senior researcher, Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences; Doctoral Advisor, Southwest Jiaotong University

unremitting efforts for building a community with a shared future for mankind.

For over five thousand years, China has been repeatedly separated and re-united due to such intricate factors as politics, economy and cultural traditions, but the concept of a “world of great harmony,” which the Chinese nation has been pursuing, has never changed. According to The Conveyance of Rites in the *Book of Rites*, a book of the Western Zhou Dynasty, “When the Great Way prevailed, a public spirit ruled all under the sky; they chose men of talents, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere, and what they cultivated was harmony. Thus, men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up for the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless people, and the disabled, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work, and females had their homes. They accumulated articles of value, disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. They labored with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it only with a view to their own advantage. In this way selfish scheming was repressed and found no development. Robbers, filchers, and rebellious traitors did not show themselves, and hence the outer doors remained open, and were not shut. This was the period of what we call the Grand Union.” The “world of great harmony” for ancient Chinese people was just an ideal realm where there was no invasion, violence or war, and people, as well as countries, helped each other kindly and lived in peaceful co-existence. The Chinese people have always longed for world peace and pursued friendly relations with people from all countries. Chinese thinkers have put forward the ideas that “loving people and treating neighbors kindly are treasures of a country” (*Zuo’s Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*), and that “harmony is most valuable” as early as in the pre-Qin times, which is proof that since ancient times, Chinese people have wished for peace and harmony with the people of other countries. The concepts of peace and harmony have been embraced as a precious principle by our ancestors, becoming an important part of Chinese ethos. The so-called “*he*” in Chinese culture just refers to harmony, concord, peace and pleasantness. Confucius regarded harmony as the core of humanistic spirit, stressing that “In practicing the rules of propriety, harmony is most valuable” (*Analects of Confucius*). He argued that the ruling of a state, the handling of affairs and ritual systems should all take harmony as their value standard, that “the government is thus in harmony when the looseness is used to blend the strictness and the strictness blends the looseness” (*Zuo’s Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*), that social governance should practice the mutual enhancement of looseness and strictness; and the proposition that “A man of virtue pursues harmony but does not seek uniformity, a petty man seeks uniformity but does not pursue harmony” (*Analects of Confucius*), which is a principle for the handling of human relationships, indicates Confucius’s agreement with being “affable, but not adulatory.” Laozi preached that “All things leave behind them the Obscurity (out of which they have come) and go forward to embrace the Brightness (into which they have emerged), while they are harmonized by the Breath of Vacancy.” According to Laozi, the Dao can produce all the other things just because it contains *yin* and *yang*, the two opposite sides, and *yin* and *yang* interact and thus constitute Harmony; once either side is jeopardized or threatened, the other would also be threatened or jeopardized. Therefore, harmony is the essence of all things in the universe and the very basis for the survival of heaven, earth and all things. The *Guanzi* holds that people could be harmonized and united so long as they develop their moralities, saying that “being harmonious and united, they would be able to be trained”. Being harmonious, people would be united, and would thus be

free from harms. Likewise, Mencius maintained that “Opportunities of time vouchsafed by Heaven are not equal to advantages of situations afforded by the Earth, and advantages of situations afforded by the Earth are not equal to the union arising from the accord of Men”(Mencius), regarding the union of men as the most important factor. The consciousness of harmony is based on the awareness of co-existence, which indicates that co-existence or the very core spirit of co-existence, is harmony. This harmony not only contains harmony between nature, society, individual human beings, minds and civilizations, but also between various nations, races, countries, cultures and groups. Only harmony can bring about common prosperity and co-existence, and the lack of harmony will cause destruction to all.

The Chinese nation's peace-loving spirit can be seen in all schools of thought, becoming the universally accepted humanistic spirit in Chinese culture. It has infiltrated natural sciences including agriculture, medicine and astronomy, social sciences including politics and law, and humanities such as art, music, dance, religion, literature and philosophy, and has been used to handle both international and ethnic relations. Zhang Qian's diplomatic mission to the Western Regions, Zheng He's voyage to the Western Oceans, and the northern and southern lines of the Silk Roads, are all the best historical evidence for the friendly exchanges between China and the world. The thought about “loving people and treating neighbors kindly” and the proposition that “harmony is most valuable” in the Chinese culture, and the spirit that “the world works for the interest of all people” which has been promoted from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen, imply the value orientation of a community with a shared future for mankind; they have increasingly been recognized by the international community, and won people's universal attention day after day, and the cultural contents of peace, harmony, concord, kindness and pleasantness have increasingly become an important value orientation to deal with interpersonal, ethnic and international relations in contemporary society. The Chinese nation's peace-loving tradition is the cultural resource that we must utilize in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind is a contemporary proposal which has been made to grasp the development trends of mankind for pursuing the common prosperity and realizing the common interests and values; it is consistent with the theme of peace, development, cooperation and win-win outcomes for all people, and is a creative transformation and an innovative development of the notion that “harmony is most valuable” in the Chinese culture. Chinese President Xi Jinping has pointed out, “As the term suggests, a community with a shared future for mankind means that the destiny and future of every nation and country are interlocked. So, we should endeavor to build this planet of ours into a large harmonious family and realize a better life”.^① Xi pays much attention to the inheritance and innovation of the Chinese nation's excellent traditional culture. He advocates the cultural contents of peace, harmony, concord, kindness and pleasantness contained in the proposition that “harmony is most valuable,” consciously carries on and develops the Chinese nation's cultural tradition that respects harmony, making the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind highly integrated with the Chinese culture respecting harmony at both theoretical and practical levels. Thus, he provides a Chinese solution for the handling of contemporary international relations and exchanges, turning the Chinese concept of harmony into the core concept for building a community with a shared future for mankind.

① Xi, 2017, December 2

1. Striving for the peaceful development of the world

Maintaining world peace is the common mission for all mankind; after the end of the cold war in the last century, with the multi-polarization of the world and the in-depth development of economic globalization, all countries have paid more attention to dialogues and cooperation. Maintaining world peace has increasingly become a universal pursuit of the international community. The International Day of Peace 2018, themed on “working together to build a community with a shared future for humanity and a world of lasting peace and universal security,” was held in Nanjing, and in a congratulatory letter, Xi Jinping said, “Peace has been universally aspired after and pursued by human society all the time. Peace and development have become themes of the times, but countries still face increasingly complex security threats and the lingering threat of war. The Chinese nation loves peace and the Chinese people know well the value of peace. China unswervingly takes the road of peaceful development and remains a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development and a defender of the international order.”^①

Development calls for peace, and to seek for development in a peaceful and stable situation is of paramount importance for today’s world. In the previous century, men encountered two world wars, and went through confrontations in the cold war, so all peoples are thirsty for achieving lasting peace and universal prosperity. In international competition, military means have relatively lost their effects, and economic and technological ones have gained relatively more influence; in addition to the post-war high internationalization of production and capital, such economic and technological means have driven the interdependence between developed countries to an unprecedented degree. The rule of unbalanced economic development of capitalist countries is still working, and the conflicts between them have not yet disappeared, but none is willing to solve them through war: they mainly employ such peaceful methods as negotiations and dialogues. In terms of politics, all countries should respect and consult with one another, without imposing one’s will upon others; in the field of economy, they should improve each other and develop together, without resulting in a great economic gap between rich and poor; in the sphere of culture, they should learn from each other and pursue common prosperity, without excluding the cultures of other nations; respecting security, they should trust each other and maintain security together, setting the new security concepts of mutual trust, mutual benefits, equality and coordination, and solving disputes through dialogue and cooperation instead of resorting to military force or military threats. These ideas have gradually become mainstream in the international community. As Xi Jinping points out, “Mankind is in an era of major development as well as profound transformation and change. The trend toward multi-polarity and economic globalization is surging. IT applications in social development and cultural diversity are making continued progress. A new round of scientific and industrial revolution is in progress. Interconnection and interdependence between countries are crucial for human survival. The forces for peace far outweigh factors causing war, and the trend of our times toward peace, development, cooperation and win-win outcomes has gained stronger momentum.”^②

Thanks to the development of cyberspace and transportation since the beginning of the new century, the exchanges between different peoples and races from every corner in the world in terms of their lives,

① Xi, 2018, September 19

② Xi, 2017a, p. 538

academic activities, production and trade have become increasingly convenient and frequent, and people from different countries have had their lives increasingly linked. As Xi Jinping pointed out, “Today, thanks to the rapid development of the internet, big data, cloud computing, quantum satellites and artificial intelligence, we human beings are connected as never before. On the other hand, we also face global challenges unprecedented in terms of numbers, dimensions and severity. The destiny and future of all of us across the world are increasingly intertwined.”^① At present, most countries and regions are enjoying peace and security, and a world war has been avoided, but small-scale regional conflicts and even local warfare still take place from time to time. Therefore, preventing war and maintaining world peace has become a consensus throughout the globe, the scale of peace movements is increasing, and peace has become the aspiration of everyone. Over decades after the end of the Second World War, 12 million people lost their lives in war, large swarms of innocent civilians became refugees, regional hotspot issues are intricate, international terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism are still fairly vigorous in some areas, the transnational problems of environmental pollution, drug trafficking, transnational crime and serious infectious diseases become increasingly conspicuous. In a word, mankind still needs unremitting efforts to fulfill its ideal of lasting peace.

Xi Jinping has declared, “The CPC and Chinese people pledged long ago to make a new and bigger contribution to human development. Having experienced bitter sufferings in the past, the CPC and Chinese people know the value of peace and development and see it as our sacred duty to promote the peaceful development of the world.”^② The reform and opening-up of China and the fulfillment of the Chinese Dream entail both a peaceful international environment and friendly cooperation with other countries. Striving for peace to serve socialist modernization is a primary task of China’s diplomatic work. The foreign policy of China is to maintain world peace and enhance common development. A new world war will not break out within the foreseeable future, and relatively long-term peaceful international environments and satisfactory neighborhood situations are achievable. However, uncertainties affecting peace and development are on the rise, the elements of traditional and non-traditional threats to security are intertwined, and the scourge of terrorism is more acutely felt. Hegemony and power politics have new manifestations. Local conflicts triggered by ethnic or religious contradictions and border or territorial disputes have cropped up from time to time. The North-South gap is widening. The world is far from being tranquil, and the old international political and economic order, which is unfair and irrational, has yet to be fundamentally changed. China is an important force to maintain world peace and stability: the stronger China becomes, the more reliable world peace will be; correspondingly, the strength of peace to prevent war will be greatly boosted, and the peaceful development of China will make tremendous contributions to human society. China is a large developing country that has one fifth of the world’s population, and its peaceful development is a great engine for the cause of peace and progress of mankind. Thanks to China’s development, from the second half of the 20th century to the early 21st century, the proportion of populations in middle-income countries to the total world population increased from 9% to 22%. And if China reaches its Two Centenary Goals of modernization by mid-century as it has planned, the proportion of populations in upper and middle income countries to the total world population will increase from the present 9% or so to 22%.

① Xi, 2017, December 2

② Xi, 2016, July 2

As Xi Jinping has announced, “China will continue to hold high the banner of peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit and uphold its fundamental foreign policy goal of preserving world peace and promoting common development. China will remain firm in its commitment to strengthening friendships and cooperation with other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and to forging a new form of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation.”^① China’s peaceful development will make important contributions not only to its socialist movement, but also to the world. China, the largest socialist country in the world at present, adheres to the path of peaceful development; it has not only achieved remarkable development, but also stuck to the socialist path with Chinese characteristics. This solution and its success will certainly exert profound influence over the direction of the peaceful development of the future world.

2. Realizing the harmonious co-existence of all countries

Today’s world is facing a series of global issues, including climate change, energy crisis, resource exhaustion and population problems. In the face of all these problems, no country in the world can be spared. Xi Jinping points out, “Mankind, by living in the same global village within the same time and space where history and reality meet, have increasingly emerged as a community of common destiny.”^② The solution to global problems must rely on the collective efforts of all countries, which must form a community with a shared future, make joint efforts, and co-exist harmoniously. Globalization is an irreversible trend in the development of today’s world, and no country can evade this tide. And, each country can steadily move forward in the tide of globalization and share the achievements brought about by human intelligence and globalization only when it actively participates in globalization and interacts with other countries.

The present international community shows conspicuous gaps between the north and the south, and between different regions; this is a crux in the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind. To achieve common prosperity and progress, therefore, we must solve problems caused by unbalanced development. As Xi Jinping has pointed out, “There cannot be an enduring development in the world when some countries are getting richer and richer while others are lagged behind in prolonged poverty and backwardness.”^③ An economic foundation is a prerequisite for peaceful development, and the building of a reliable economic foundation is a crucial condition in turn for a country’s attempt at long-term stable development. When they engage in their own development based on realities within their own territories, each country should be actively acclimatized to and join the globalization, actively interact with other countries, and learn from the experience of other countries’ successful development. At the same time, they should benefit one another, oppose such deglobalization behaviors as trade protectionism, and thus achieve common development. Moreover, exchanges at the superstructure level, in politics and culture, for example, also play a decisive role in harmonious development. All countries should develop together and benefit one another, enabling all people throughout the world to share benefits brought about by the development of mankind. Only

① Xi, 2017b, p. 58

② Xi, 2013, March 24

③ Xi, 2013, March 24

thus can we create a win-win situation and achieve the sustainable development and common prosperity of human society.

The notion of harmony to create a win-win situation is a time-honored Chinese tradition. Due to its relatively fixed living areas, language, laws, ethics, customs and beliefs, China developed its family-based patriarchal organizations based on consanguinity and formed communities impressing people with the sense of collective interests. Traditional countries in the West mainly originated from military organizations based on war and plunder, greatly differing from China in terms of the ways of their formation. China has undergone fragmentations caused by feudal separatists but there were no intense or sharp oppositions between races, ethnic groups or religions. The Chinese people's sense of internal harmony originated from their cultural correlations such as ancestral home, consanguinity, geographical connections, language, laws and customs, which had never been fundamentally interrupted. This is remarkably different from the view and form of states formed in the West through war and colonization. As President Xi Jinping points out, "We must all strive to avoid falling into the Thucydides Trap; the notion that a great power is bound to seek hegemony doesn't apply to China, which lacks the gene that spawns such behavior."^① What the Chinese people collectively developed through their geographical characteristics, national ethos, their ways of production and life, and their cultural orientation, are the realms of material and spirit life that take a relaxed attitude towards both the inside and the outside. Such an attitude came from the geographically enclosed environment that features mountains in three directions and the ocean in one and the self-contained natural economy, and also from the regional self-consistency, cultural autonomy and spiritual self-sufficiency, all of which have been subject to traditional Chinese ethics, the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues, and the political idea that the populace were more important than the ruler. The Chinese people's introversion, calmness, indifference and concentration in terms of their internal realm, as well as the harmony, ease, compliance and pleasantness of their external world, were just the normal status of social life that Chinese culture has advocated. In this traditional culture, there was no terror or unease constantly caused by wars and conflicts, and no pain inflicted by the collapse of this world and the other; instead, they were able to sufficiently smother their internal unease, spiritual tensions and despairs. In Chinese society before modern times, the government and society were perfectly blended, without clear division; the government adopted the policy of non-action toward society, imperial autocracy had been strictly restricted, and the spirit of tranquility and non-action had been embraced. The Chinese people's life style of that time was based on the boundless idea of *tianxia* (the Chinese nation and its neighborhood). In such a state of inclusiveness and harmony, there was no internal conflict that could not be solved, and people were able to eliminate the threats of various invasions from the outside world: they lived a joyful, vivid and colorful life, which had its concrete and practical aims. For long, China had been one of the most powerful countries in the world but had no interest to plunder or bully the outside world, and left no record of colonizing or invading other countries.

Countries in the contemporary world vary in terms of their paths of development, systems, stages and characteristics, and display a variety of features, therefore it is necessary to promote the idea of win-win cooperation, inclusiveness and harmony. As Xi Jinping has observed, we "...differ in national conditions and stages of development and face different challenges. But we all share a common goal pursuing stronger

① Xi, 2014, January 23

growth, meeting challenges and achieving common development.”^① This lays a foundation for the promotion and development of the spirit of unity and partnership. Diverse development is a sign of the vigorousness of the world, and each country should have an open mind to tolerate others’ choice and development, and every country’s experience of development has something deserving to be used for reference, so all countries should be modest and prudent and learn from others. China aims for the common development of mankind, the full development of man; it effectively eliminates contradictions and disputes between countries with its inclusiveness, and tries to enable people from all countries in the world to share the achievements of development, especially common development. Xi Jinping stresses the equality of all countries in the world, pointing out people should “adopt a new vision of seeking win-win outcomes for all, and reject the outdated mindset that one’s gain means the other’s loss or that the winner shall take all.”^②

Over four decades since its reform and opening up to the outside world, China has paid increasing attention to multilateral diplomacy which mainly gives play to various international organizations, and with a larger degree of inclusiveness, constantly extended the diplomatic sphere in an inclusive, harmonious, healthy and prudent manner while it continues its various efforts in the traditional diplomatic domain. Various international cooperative organizations have become an important bridge for China to connect itself with the international community, and a major international stage for China to display its inclusiveness and harmony, as well as its diplomatic principles. As is shown in China’s attitude towards the UN and its particular guidelines since its reform and opening up, China’s multilateral foreign policy in the new era mainly has the following characteristics: sticking to independence and principles; making full use of a multilateral mechanism to seek for shared interests; actively taking part in various activities and observing international rules; opposing a few countries’ brutal hegemony and unilateralism, paying increasing attention and giving more and more support to multilateralism; agreeing on the progressive reform of such multilateral mechanisms as the UN, so that it suits the international situation and better reflects the requirements of most countries; and facilitating the construction of a harmonious win-win world with permanent peace, sincere cooperation and common development, and reflecting more of China’s new profiles and new phenomena in the age of reform and opening up to the international community. In his speech at the UN office in Geneva in 2017, Xi Jinping emphasized that the international community should make efforts in the aspects of partnerships, security, growth, inter-civilization exchanges and the building of a sound ecosystem, and offered a five-step solution calling for “dialogue and consultation, joint efforts, win-win cooperation, exchanges and mutual learning and pursuing green and low-carbon development.” The notion of building a community with a shared future for mankind was officially put into a UN resolution in February 2017 and was elevated to an international consensus. As Xi points out, “China advocates a community with a shared future for mankind and is opposed to the Cold War mentality and zero-sum game. China upholds that all countries are equal, irrespective of size, strength, and wealth. It respects the right of all countries to choose their own path of development, upholds international equity and justice, and opposes the act of imposing one’s will on others, interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and using one’s strength to bully the weak. China does not covet the rights and interests of other countries, nor does it envy their development, but it will never give up its own

① Xi, 2017a, p. 474

② Xi, 2017a, p. 523

legitimate rights and interests. We Chinese people do not believe in fallacies, but we are not afraid of them; we do not make trouble, but we are not afraid of it. No country should entertain the fantasy that China will barter away its core national interests or allow its sovereignty, security, and development interests to be infringed upon.”^① As China’s attitude indicates, we can achieve the prosperity and progress of civilizations only when all countries tolerate and learn from one another and get along with the attitude of harmonious co-existence. The countries which attempt to plunder others for the purpose of their own interests will shoot themselves in the foot and are doomed to failure at the end, for they go against the general trend of the development of the world. We should tolerate and learn from one another, take part in globalization with a positive attitude, and join the world’s people to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

3. Maintaining the harmonious co-existence of mankind

The problem of the international ecological environment has attracted increasing attention from all countries, and it is a question of the survival of mankind. Ecological environment consists of the natural conditions that man relies on to survive, including geographical surroundings, mineral resources, atmosphere and the earth’s surface. As people’s activities have caused serious damage to the structure and function of local and even global ecological systems, the survival and development of mankind has been threatened, and the only way to solve the problem is to build a community with a shared future for mankind. Xi Jinping therefore points out, “There is only one Earth in the universe and we mankind have only one homeland. Today, Earth is still the only home to mankind, so to care for and cherish it is the only option for us. There is a Latin motto inscribed in the dome of the Federal Palace of Switzerland which says ‘Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno’ (One for all, and all for one). We should not only think about our own generation, but also take responsibility for future ones.”^②

Ecological issues are intricate, but the massive damages to the world’s ecological environments happened after man developed the industrialized society. The international circle of environmental protection universally believes that since the 1970s, the damages of industrial civilization to nature has increasingly approached a critical point, and the reaction of nature against mankind has become more and more violent. The worsening global environmental problems mainly lead to: acid rains cause the degeneration of ecological systems on land, the increasing greenhouse effects and global warming inflict damage to the structure of the atmosphere, the consumption of the ozonosphere affects the growth of plants and jeopardizes water systems, the sharp decrease of forest areas leads to the desertification of lands and the loss of water and soil, the extinction of species increasingly reduces biological diversity, the increasing deterioration and desertification of lands sharply decrease the amounts of arable lands in the world, and water pollution and scarcity have resulted in the insufficient supply and even serious shortage of water in 60% of the world. Besides, the worsening surroundings caused by space debris, oceans, noise and nuclear pollution are threatening mankind’s survival. They are no more purely natural issues, nor internal problems of a certain country; how to solve environmental problems has become a general concern throughout the world, a question concerning the future of mankind. The international environmental problems may affect social security and stability, and even provoke political

① Xi, 2017a, p. 42

② Xi, 2017a, p. 538

conflicts and violate a state's sovereignty on a certain condition, impacting upon politics, the economy and cultures of the international community in various ways. Once the conflict between countries caused by the problem of ecological security becomes serious, it may evolve into a traditional security problem that has to be solved through military means, and even into an armed conflict or local warfare. The environmental problem is also a warning against the survival of mankind, which has also been embodied at the level of national security, and become an important consideration in the making of national security strategies. The globalization of the environmental problem also demands all countries to cooperate with one another.

How to maintain the ecological environment for the harmonious survival of the world is a significant subject for all countries in the 21st century. Non-traditional threats, including the greenhouse effect, ocean pollution, acid rain and desertification, are against all mankind. Therefore, every country is obliged to guarantee the ongoing survival and development of the biosphere, and with respect to the global environmental problems, they should advocate global governance, solving the problem of cooperation mechanisms at the international, national and regional levels. Regarding the relationships between national and human security, it is necessary to build a community with a shared future for mankind if the concept of national security is upgraded to the idea of "human security." Xi Jinping points out, "To build a sound ecology is vital for mankind's future. All members of the international community should work together to build a sound global eco-environment. We should respect nature, follow nature's ways and protect nature. We should firmly pursue green, low-carbon, circular, and sustainable development. China will shoulder its share of responsibility and continue to play its part in this common endeavor."^① The impact on any part of the ecological environment will cause a holistic problem, then affect the ecological security of bordering countries, and even the whole world. Once the ecological environment is destroyed, it will take the efforts of several, a dozen and tens of generations to be restored, and its cost in terms of human, material and financial resources is immeasurable. Engels remarked in the *Dialectics of Nature*, "The people who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor, and elsewhere, destroyed the forests to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that they were laying the basis for the present devastated condition of these countries, by removing along with the forests the collecting centers and reservoirs of moisture."^② Since the reform and opening up, China has achieved rapid economic development, but its ecological environment has become fragile, and the worsening smog, sandstorms and greenhouse warming have shown the trend that the problem of ecological security may be extended from local areas to the whole country. The most crucial factor contributing to this phenomenon is the lack of a healthy environmental protection system and associated mechanisms.

Xi Jinping has pointed out, "The Chinese people are fully aware that China has benefitted from the international community, and they are willing to contribute to international development through their own development. China's opening drive is not a solo act. Rather, it is an invitation open to all. It is a pursuit not to establish China's own sphere of influence, but to support the cooperative development of all countries. It is meant not to build China's own backyard, but a garden shared by all countries."^③ The building of a community with a shared future for mankind requires each country to have global horizons and a strong sense

① Xi, 2017a, p. 525

② Engels, 1987, p. 46

③ Xi, 2016, July 2

of responsibility for the international community, hold a correct attitude towards the development of itself and others, and actively call for a cooperation mechanism for a harmonious environment. In his report at the 19th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping pointed out that man and nature constitute a community with a shared future, and that man must respect, comply with and preserve nature. This has provided a Chinese solution for the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, which is a means to face the alienation of the relationships between man and nature. The ecological construction is an environmental guarantee for the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. According to Xi Jinping, “There is an inevitable contradiction between man’s infinite demands in his pursuit of survival and development, and the finite supply of earth resources. An ancient thinker said, ‘Creatures that Heaven breeds are limited, and wealth that Earth offers are infinite, but man’s desires for these two are not.’ This discloses the contradiction in question at a certain aspect.”^① To solve contradictions between man and nature, we need to follow the objective rule of harmony to coordinate relationships between man and nature, so that civilizations can fulfill their all-round, harmonious and sustainable development. As Xi Jinping has asserted, “Chinese culture values harmony between man and nature and respects nature.” The Chinese nation advocates a holistic cosmology and organic thinking and has thus developed its organic agricultural mode featuring “mulberry fish ponds,” and its value concept that “all the people are my brothers and I share the life of all creatures.”^② Therefore, we should “build an ecosystem that puts Mother Nature and green development first. Mankind may utilize nature and even try to transform it, but we are after all a part of nature. We should care for nature and not place ourselves above it. We should reconcile industrial development with nature and pursue harmony between man and nature to achieve sustainable development throughout the world and the all-round development of man.”^③ In the construction of an ecological civilization, we must keep in mind that mountains, rivers, forests, lands and lakes form a community of shared life, and that the ecological environment of every country is a community. Keeping this in mind, we should work together to build a fair and reasonable cooperative win-win mechanism of global environmental improvement. Based on previous experience and lessons of mankind, we should pay more attention to coordinating the relationships between man and nature, promote the concept that nature means wealth, and foster the awareness that man and nature are a harmonious organic community of shared life. Therefore, Xi Jinping has pointed out, “China will continue to actively participate in the evolution and construction of the global governance system. China will contribute more Chinese wisdom, Chinese solutions and Chinese strength to the world, to push for building an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity. Let the sunshine of a community with a shared future for humanity illuminate the world!”^④

4. Calling on people to get along with each other

The Chinese people believe that “men at their birth are naturally good,” promoting the notions of “being good with people,” “building good-neighborly relationships,” “doing good to all people in the country” and

① Xi, 2007, p. 118

② Xi, 2014, p. 85

③ Xi, 2017a, p. 525

④ Xi, 2018, March 20

“benefiting all people in the country.” Therefore, Xi Jinping points out, “We need to seek common ground while shelving and narrowing differences to build a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation. All countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, must treat each other as equal. We need to help each other achieve sound development as we work to ensure our own development. The world will be a better place only when everyone is better off.”^①

China cultivates friendly cooperative relationships with other countries based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. Retaining its full sovereign rights in its diplomatic relations, China has cultivated its diplomatic tradition with Chinese characteristics, and made significant contributions to the maintenance of world peace. The Chinese government holds the conception that all countries should be equally respected in terms of their sovereignty, social systems and development paths, solving disputes through consultations and dialogues and seeking common development on the basis of fairness and justice. It has thus laid a satisfactory basis for the mutual benefits of all countries in the world. As Xi Jinping has pointed out, “No country in the world can enjoy absolute security. A country cannot have security while others are in turmoil, as threats facing other countries may also haunt itself. When neighbors are in trouble, instead of tightening his own fences, one should extend a helping hand to them.”^② The Chinese people have been creating more opportunities for the world to share win-win cooperation, tried their best to show their greatest kindness, and offered assistance to the international community. They have tied their own destiny to that of the world’s people, to enhance the progress of all mankind. China entered a new historical period with respect to its foreign aid at the end of the last century, and its basic guideline is to continue its five principles of peaceful co-existence and its eight principles of foreign aid, to seek friendship, equality, mutual benefits and common development together with other developing countries, to attach no political conditions to foreign aid, and carry out close cooperation in international affairs; reform and innovate on the basis of continuing the legacy of tradition, draw on the effective international experience in foreign aid to adopt the mode of concessional loans, extend the sources of foreign aid, enlarge the scales of foreign assistance, adjust the structure of foreign aid, diversify the modes of foreign aid, which cover funds for joint ventures and cooperative projects, grant aid, mixed loans and interest subsidies on concessional loans; and make progress by building permanent facilities and setting up sole proprietorship enterprises, joint-venture establishments and cooperative businesses, and encourage Chinese enterprises to directly cooperate with those in other developing countries. Since the beginning of the 21st century, China’s foreign aid has entered a stage of rapid development: not only that the amounts of foreign aid have dramatically increase at a double-digit rate, but also that the direction and mode of aid has rapidly been adjusted and improved. Correspondingly, projects for the purpose of social welfare and people’s livelihood, as well as of international emergency humanitarian assistance, have become new strong points, and the mechanism of management systems concerning foreign aid has also been constantly improved. Additionally, China has declared for the first time to reduce or cancel the RMB debts of both heavily indebted poor countries and the least-developed countries that owe RMB to China. China has put forward a series of guidelines and policies regarding its foreign aid, including sticking to the principle of equality and mutual benefits, diversifying the modes of development and the contents of assistance, fulfilling the development with

① Xi, 2016, September 5

② Xi, 2017a, pp. 541–542

practical effects, and eliminating disputes in friendly manners. These indicate China's basic principle of equal cooperation and common development in getting along with other developing countries, and the consensus between the two sides to develop a new type of long-term, stable, equal and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Xi Jinping suggested building the Belt and Road Initiative under the principle of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration. He wishes to improve economic development in underdeveloped countries by integrating development strategies connectivity of infrastructures, and extending trade and people's communications. In doing so, he anticipates reaching the goal of common development and shared prosperity by building a positive atmosphere and reliable basis for a lasting regional and world peace. China is willing to make more contributions, and to share the achievements of development with others. As Xi Jinping has expressed, "We should promote open and inclusive cooperation for win-win outcomes. We should reject self-centered, short-sighted and closed-door policies. We should uphold WTO rules and support the multilateral trading system to build an open world economy."^① In recent years, China's foreign aid has not been limited to those offered through such funding channels as grants, interest-free loans and concession loans, and not to such economic aid provided through the construction of complete projects, goods and materials and technical cooperation, the cooperation on the development of human resources, the dispatching of medical teams and volunteers, debt relief for heavily indebted countries. What is presented together with these funds is the Chinese mode of development, China's friendship with the people from the assisted countries, and the values that both sides have recognized. These things can play a more permanent role than hospitals, farms, stadiums and monuments.

China's foreign aid has been mixed with a "Chinese factor" or "Chinese experience" in the process of absorbing and digesting Western knowledge and technology. Since China was once colonized, it is easier for other developing countries that underwent the same to understand and learn from such an experience and meet their own realistic domestic needs. China draws on its own experiences in its development, and recommends such experiences to other developing countries including those in Africa. As the results indicate, China's experience is helpful for developing countries, the African countries, for example, to integrate better with global economy. Having realized that environmental protection is a key to sustainable development, China transmits the information, vision and mode of green development to other developing countries through training assistance and other aid forms, enhancing environmental protection throughout the world. Through China's assistance, African countries have also learned about the Chinese people's diligence, bravery and kindness and their sincerity, real results, friendship, and good faith, and noticed that China's market economy, on the basis of its reform and opening up, did not breed any selfish, arrogant acts: they see hope from such a China's experience, and thus gain confidence in development. The transmission and share of Chinese experience are helpful for the development of developing countries, for the cementing of their partnerships, and for the improvement of international harmony.

5. Encouraging all countries to get along with one another

Since its reform and opening up in 1978, China has adopted the guideline of "building friendships

^① Xi, 2018, June 11

and partnerships with neighboring countries,” and of “giving top priority to relations with neighboring countries,” and it has gradually changed its previous ideological attitude towards bordering countries and its neighborhood, as well as its way of thinking and its mode of behaviors, both of which delimited clear friend-enemy relations. More specifically, it has established step by step the new pattern of strenuously developing friendly and cooperative relationships with all neighboring countries and properly dealing with various difficult problems, and the old mode in the cold war has been replaced with the new guideline of harmony with neighboring countries. More importantly, Xi Jinping has developed this conception, saying that “Close neighbors are better than distant relatives. This is a simple truth that the Chinese people have understood since ancient times. That explains China’s firm commitment to building friendships and partnerships with its neighbors to foster an amicable, secure and prosperous neighborhood. Under the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefits and inclusiveness, China is actively working to deepen win-win cooperation and connectivity with its neighbors...and stands ready to sign such a treaty with all its neighbors.”^①

China is one of the countries with the largest number of neighbors in the world, and its neighborhood relationships are also one of the most intricate forms in international politics. Historically, harmony and shared prosperity have alternated with confrontation and hostility between China and its neighbors, but China is a country sticking to the tradition that “loving people and treating neighbors kindly are treasures of a country”(Zuo’s *Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*). After 1978, international and neighboring situations began to improve. As China pushes forward its reform and opening up the relations between China and its neighbors have been showing the good trend of constant and in-depth development. Trade relationships between China and most of its neighbors have become links accelerating this change; a new phenomenon has emerged in China’s diplomacy during this period, revealing its independent foreign policy of peace and its standpoint of not aligning with any alliance of powers: China sticks to an independent foreign policy of peace, refusing to join any bloc. It is ready to make friends with every country, rather than succumbing to any external pressure. China has never intervened in other countries’ domestic politics and will not allow other countries to interfere in its own internal affairs. China has insisted that its affairs should be run according to its specific conditions and by the Chinese people themselves. China does not attach itself to any bloc of powers, nor does it take part in any group or organization that targets a certain country; rather, it is concentrated on its own business. These foreign policies have greatly improved the relations in all aspects between China and its neighboring countries, which may have different social systems and ideologies. Since the 1980s, China has normalized relations with all neighboring countries, establishing various mutually beneficial relationships with these countries; it has thus grasped strategic opportunities in greatly pushing forward Chinese peaceful development and going all out to enhance its domestic construction. Keeping in mind the idea of “building friendships and partnerships with neighboring countries,” China creates a complete set of overall diplomatic plans, which regard “major power relations as key, relations with neighboring countries as a top priority, relations with developing countries as a foundation, and multilateral diplomacy as an important arena,” and thus greatly improved its neighborhood diplomacy. Chinese people have gradually built up their confidence and initiative in the harmonious coexistence with the world, and the evidence is that China has presented more proposals, taken part in more institutional arrangements, and undertaken more responsibilities. For example,

① Xi, 2015, March 29

it took the lead in presenting the free-trade agreements with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), hosted the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program, and together with Russia established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Xi Jinping believes that every country can harmoniously co-exist with one another, and the knack "is that the sovereignty and dignity of all countries, whether big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, must be respected, their internal affairs given no interference and they have the right to independently choose their social system and development path. In organizations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, the Universal Postal Union, the International Organization for Migration and the International Labor Organization, countries have an equal voice in decision-making, constituting an important force for improving global governance. In a new era, we should uphold sovereign equality and work for equality in rights, opportunities and rules for all countries."^① China has made it clear that it will not export ideology, not impose its own development mode upon others, and not seek for hegemony even after it becomes powerful. All these are the solemn promises that Chinese leaders have given to the world after the founding of the People's Republic of China. The emergence of China offers opportunities and benefits to its neighbors, but creates impacts upon and causes concerns among them; how to placate and calm them in this new situation is an unprecedented task and pressure in China's diplomacy. Xi Jinping's solution to this problem is to build a community with a shared future for mankind, which means to "advance democracy in international relations and reject dominance by just one or several countries. All countries should jointly shape the future of the world, write international rules, manage global affairs and ensure that development outcomes are shared by all."^② Since the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2015, President Xi Jinping has begun to call on the fostering of a sense of community of shared future, subsequently mentioning building the "China-ASEAN community of common destiny" and the "Sino-European community with a shared future," established the "community with a shared future with neighboring countries," and worked for the creation of both the "Asian community with a shared future" and the "China-Africa community with a shared future," etc. This thus extends the horizons of the "community with a shared future for mankind," which aims at international harmonious coexistence. The continuous and successful practice of major countries' diplomacy for the purpose of harmonious coexistence is very significant for China's future; it helps as China concentrates its domestic efforts to develop a reliable external environment, provides strategic support and reliance for China to approach the center of the world's stage, and meanwhile elevates the global status of the entire Asia-Pacific area.

Xi Jinping has stated, "Generations of Chinese people have been brought up learning the tenets that peace is most precious and that one should seek harmony without uniformity and promote peace and benevolence among all countries. Love of peace is part of our DNA. The sufferings the Chinese people went through in modern times have only made peace more precious for the Chinese people. Their dedication to development requires peace more than anything else, and their longings for a better future have made them more determined to uphold peace. We are committed to the path of peaceful development and reject the logic

① Xi, 2017a, p. 539

② Xi, 2017a, p. 540

that suggests that a rising country would always seek hegemony. China's determination and will to follow the path of peaceful development is never to be shaken by anyone, anything or for any reason."^① The proposal to build a community with a shared future for mankind is both a representation of the essence of the traditional Chinese culture and a reflection on the future development of the world; it has pointed out a direction for us to explore the traditional path away from the zero-sum game. The annual meeting of the World Economic Forum 2018 was themed with the subject "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World," which embodies the spirit of "building a community with a shared future for mankind" advanced by Chinese leaders, and meanwhile frankly acknowledging the serious disputes between the mainstream opinions in today's world. This world is increasingly becoming a community with a shared future in which everyone has in himself a little bit of others. On several important occasions in 2018, Xi Jinping has put forward various measures to make further progress in reform and opening up, and this indicates that China will not hesitate in sticking to peaceful development, reform and opening up, and globalization. In the process of building a community with a shared future for mankind, the conception that "harmony is most valuable" is the most important source of cultural leadership. The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind framed by Xi Jinping has expressed the aspiration of the Chinese nation, and Xi's statement that socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new age "means that the path, the theory, the system, and the culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics have kept developing, blazing a new trail for other developing countries to achieve modernization. It offers a new option for other countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence; and it offers Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving the problems facing mankind."^② The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind is both an ideal and a methodological principle to guide our association with the international community. The notion of building a community with a shared future for mankind is a concise summary of the status quo of human society, and meanwhile provides a Chinese solution for the development of mankind. This conception is the outcome of Chinese wisdom which promotes the idea that "harmony is most valuable." Sticking to the cultural contents of peace, harmony, concord, kindness and pleasantness, it has brought China more firmly to the center of the world's stage, further enriched and enhanced Chinese people's epochal international awareness, enabled China to undertake more international responsibilities and help benefit the world. The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind is an exemplary outcome of the "harmony" culture of China in the new era.

(Translator: Huang Deyuan; Editor: Xiong Xianwei)

① Xi, 2015, October 22

② Xi, 2017b, p. 10

REFERENCES

- Engels Friedrich. (1987). Dialectics of nature. In *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 25. New York: International Publishers.
- Xi Jinping. (2007). *Zhijiang xinyu*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Publishing House.
- Xi Jinping. (2014). *The governance of China*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- Xi Jinping. (2017b). *Secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era Delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China*. Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- Xi Jinping. (2013, March 24). Speech at Moscow State Institute of International Relations. *People's Daily*.
- Xi Jinping. (2014, January 23). Conversation during an exclusive interview with *The World Post*. *People's Daily* (overseas edition).
- Xi Jinping. (2015, March 29). Keynote speech at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2015. *People's Daily*.
- Xi Jinping. (2015, October 22). Speech at dinner hosted by The Lord Mayor of the City of London. *People's Daily*.
- Xi Jinping. (2016, July 2). Speech at a ceremony marking the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. *People's Daily*.
- Xi Jinping. (2016, September 5). Keynote speech at the Opening Ceremony of the B20 Summit. *People's Daily*.
- Xi Jinping. (2017, December 2). Keynote address at the CPC in dialogue with world political parties high-level meeting. *People's Daily*.
- Xi Jinping. (2018, March 20). Keynote speech at the closing meeting of the first session of the 13th National People's Congress. *People's Daily*.
- Xi Jinping. (2018, June 11). Remarks at the 18th meeting of the council of heads of member states of the shanghai cooperation organization. *People's Daily*.
- Xi Jinping. (2018, September 19). Congratulatory letter to the 2018 International Day of Peace. *People's Daily*.