

THE IDEA OF A HUMAN COMMUNITY OF SHARED DESTINY

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Abstract: This paper examines the idea of a Human Community of Shared Destiny and its relationship and contribution in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The community of shared interest for humanity is a concept that represents China's flagship vision of a more just and secure world. This shared destiny for humankind is a new paradigm that is an inheritance, innovation and development of Marxian philosophy and traditional Chinese wisdom. As the world's largest developing country, China envisages itself as an active initiator and builder of world peace and global development. This vision of a global community covers the aspects of politics, security, economy, culture, ecology, global governance and international order. In this project, China expects to play the role of a global leader by focusing international efforts towards eradicating the global issues of poverty, reduced inequalities and sustainable ecological and economic development as well as promoting partnerships that are beneficial for progress of humankind. On the basis of analysing the characteristics of the thought of a global community of a common future, this paper studies the relationship between China's vision and its potential in realising the various SDGs for the purpose of a common good. It also discusses its realistic significance and value in the contemporary international society.

Keywords: Culture of Harmony, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, World Development, Xi Jinping

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1. Introduction

At the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, Chinese President, Xi Jinping, in his keynote address officially proposed to the world, a major global vision titled "Working Together to Build New Partnership of Win-Win Cooperation and to Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind." Now seven years later, the entire world is undergoing a global crisis caused by corona virus and in this worldwide pandemic situation, all the nations of the world are once again reminded of the imperativeness, requirement and urgency to build and work together as a community with a shared destiny. Apart from the global pandemic situation, ours is a world that is made more complex by various challenges ranging from poverty, inequalities, regional conflicts, hunger and lack of food security, deterioration of environment, climate change, and depletion of natural resources, war, terrorism, economic adversities and unbalanced development. In such a scenario, what is the way for development? "Let us unite ever more closely to create a new mutually beneficial partnership and community of shared future for mankind. Let the aspirations of development, prosperity, fairness and justice spread across the world!" said the Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Human beings face many common, frequent and unsavoury challenges. If all these issues that threaten peace and development are to be dealt with, the global order and international governance needs innovative value systems of shared foundation and solutions. It can be said that the vision of a community for shared interest for humanity was born in line with the needs of the times. The ideology has distinctive Chinese characteristics and profound international significance. On February 10, 2017 at the 55th session of the UN Commission for Social Development, this flagship vision of China was formally adopted into an official UN document, titled "Social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development". This approval and inclusion into the United Nations official documents gives significant opportunities for the concept of shared human destiny to forge global consensus on building a shared future for

humanity and contribute to building a world that is open, inclusive, clean and one that enjoys global peace, universal security and common economic prosperity.

The human community of shared destiny is a global vision for the future covering politics, security, economy, culture and ecology and are proposed by China to the global community as a way forward in achieving the Five Pillars of SDG – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships.

This paper proceeds in four sections. The first section lays out the relationship between ancient Chinese tradition and the ideology of the human community of shared destiny. The second section explores how this vision is an innovation and development of Marxist philosophy. It goes on to take specific features of Marxian philosophy and inspects in depth its various philosophical connections with China's flagship proposal of a shared destiny while at the same time exploring how it contributes to human development and progress in the contemporary world. The third section deals with the aspect of how a conservative country like China, modified its entire international outlook in order to realise its vision of a shared destiny for mankind. The final section investigates how the community of shared destiny leads to the realisation of sustainable development goals.

2. Ancient Chinese Wisdom and the Vision of Shared Destiny

President Xi Jinping's proposition of a Human Community of Shared Destiny has deep roots originating from ancient Chinese culture and beliefs. This concept embraces the holistic concept and mode of thinking based on the traditional Chinese cosmology of 'unity of man and nature.' It regards the natural world and human society as a unified organic whole. It also inherits the political notion that 'the world is for the common good' and the social concept of 'harmony without uniformity' (Pan). It advocates that all countries should set up a correct notion of justice and order, and form an orderly pattern of unity, cooperation and harmony that contributes to mutual respect, equal coexistence and coordinated development.

At the same time, in the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, the 'culture of harmony' is rooted deep. The concept of 'harmony' in China is rich in connotation and broad in extension, covering the contents of the Confucian value system on personal cultivation and governing the world. The Chinese civilization contains the international outlook of harmony among nations, the social outlook of harmony without uniformity, and the moral outlook of kindness among people (Zhang, Lin and Zhao). Together with the values of harmony, kindness to others, and the principle of "never do to others what you would not like others to do to you" have been passed down from generation to generation in China. It is on these great cultural values of ancient Chinese tradition that the community of Shared future for mankind is based upon.

3. Development of Marxist Philosophy of Community

This idea of Human Community of Shared Destiny proposed by Xi Jinping is an evolution of Marxian framework and philosophy in the 21st century. This vision is extracted from the socialist core values that can reflect the core category of humankind, which is the global extension of contemporary Chinese values. To a certain extent, it also reflects the mainstream ideology in contemporary China in the global perspectives of innovation and development

The innovative concept of a shared human destiny draws attention to the fact that in the present situation, humanity should strive for conflict resolution based on harmonious and beneficial understanding of the world in its entirety. This would promote our civilization to a higher level leading to long term stability and development based on harmony. This vision embodies the Marxist theory of social development, the significance of theory to practice, and the promoting role of contradictory identity in the development of thing, thus putting forward the idea of the unity of opposite (Hoogvelt). The vision of a community with a shared future advocates win-win cooperation among all countries on the basis of resolutely safeguarding core national interests. It goes beyond the

individual interests, focusing on human development and the future of the world.

President Xi Jinping in his address of the United in 2015 stated that the Republic of China should not only solve their indigenous issues but also consciously involve itself in international governance and can bring about significant positive changes on the global front by dealing with persistent common problems faced by various countries of the world. As a huge country that is experiencing development at a rapid pace, China wants to shoulder the responsibility in bringing about active change and making a positive contribution. This also sheds light on the relevance of Marxist philosophy in the modern times.

3.1. Interconnectedness of the World

It is part of the Marxian vision that human beings live in a world where everything and everyone is interconnected and nothing exists in isolation. As humankind experiences tremendous advancement, we are becoming more and more interconnected than ever. With technological advancement, human ability to change and modify nature for the purpose of self-interests is increasing rapidly which is gradually contributing to the pollution and destruction of nature. Rapid progresses in the fields of information technology and communication have reduced our world into a global village (Attwood).

Globalisation has further contributed to this interconnectedness of the global community. In such a scenario, any crisis which the world experiences, be it in terms of economic, political, environmental situations, etc. affects the entire world because of the inherent interdependence of the various nations. The economic crisis of 2008, for example, started as a mild problem in the US economy in 2007 and it gradually snowballed into a full blown economic catastrophe affecting markets and economies of different countries around the world by 2008 (Singh). When the entire world is going through a global economic crisis, no single country can escape from its ill effects. We can also take the example of the current pandemic situation

of COVID-19, where the entire world had to come together in dealing with the crisis. Based on this, we can say that the whole of humanity is interconnected and is one community. All nations should cooperate with one another in order to deal with any crisis (Findev Guide). The same goes for scenarios of development as well.

For example, President Xi Jinping put forward the 'One Belt and One Road' project, which could stimulate the development and progress of the various countries that are involved in this project. This is an opportunity for many under-developed countries to build and strengthen their transportation infrastructure like roadways, waterways, and airports. Many countries of the world have fortified their ties with the People's Republic of China in the idea of sharing, cooperation and mutual benefits. This has led to the growth of world trade, which led to the improvement of economic activity for all involved. It brought about immense progress within the Chinese economy as well as many other countries who lie in the path of the 'One Belt and one Road' (Lu). Therefore, be it solving problems or be it working towards progress in the future, all the countries of the world should work in unity. This is what forms the crux of the concept of a Human Community of Shared Destiny.

3.2. The Relation between the Whole and Part

The idea of a shared future for humanity is a proposition that has been put forward after the analysis of the multi-tier relationship between the whole and parts of the real world, which are, the relationship of the world and humankind, the relationship between countries all over the world, and the relationship of the government and its people (Chambre). Earth is a whole and humanity in its entirety is part of this whole as they live in this whole in its totality. The undertakings of people will have an effect on the environment in which they live in, and this can be witnessed through water pollution, air pollution, usage and depletion of the various resources on this planet. The activities of human beings have affected the environment to such an extent that we are now living on the edge. In this scenario, if

the environment is not preserved and protected, then soon, we would have done irreversible damage to the very environment we live in. As Xi Ping observed, "the earth is home to all humans, and humans have no other choice but to cherish it. ... Humans should be responsible not only for ourselves but also for their next generation" (538). Humanity cannot surrender and sacrifice the wellbeing of the environment for its own personal gains.

When we look at all the various nations of the world, because of economic globalisation, all the nations are interconnected with each other, thus forming a unity. "Economic globalization has become a trend that nobody can stop, which make the prosperous in trade, investment, talents and technology" (Xi Jinping 543). Past experience shows us that increased economic activity contributes to increase in the development of the world, and vice versa. It is crucial that each government should give importance to the inclusion and promotion of this development by joining hands and promoting policies for development thus benefiting their own people as well as the people of other countries, care should also be taken that this development does not come at the price of irremediable damage to the very environment we live in. This requires all countries to work together as a whole in order to promote sustainable development. Each government should always give priority to the rights of the people and protect human rights in handling domestic problems (Xi Jinping 546).

Xi Jinping's proposition of a common objective for humanity urges that while all the governments of the world should come together to promote economic development, this should be done in a sustainable way that protects our environment. He states that each government should strive to improve the standard of living of its people, improvement of human rights, work towards the construction of a better legal system, while at the same time promoting wellbeing of not only its own people, but also of the people all over the world.

3.3. Unity of Opposites and Diversity

Marxism is of the view that the progress of everything is driven by contradictions. Marxist perspective of dialectics consists of two ingredients, opposition and unity. The current global scenario can be said as a unity of contradictions. The various countries of the world are both against as well as dependent on one another. There is rivalry in cooperation, and cooperation in rivalry. A community of shared future for humanity stresses competition under the restraint of civilisation, which can be said as unity of opposites.

The present world is a diversified unity that is an amalgamation of various countries having diverse histories, backgrounds and cultures, which makes this a world that is full of conflicts and contradictions. It is imperative that the discord arising from these contradictions are solved through dialogue. For example, President Xi Jinping said that the perfect relationship between the nations of the world is “Countries in different sizes can co-exist with each other, and benefit from each other, in order to be prosperous together. Big countries and small countries should treat each other as equals and strike a balance between justice and interests. Justice should be more important than interests” (532).

As human beings, as much as we are different, we are also equal, co-existing in this one planet. Development and progress can be possible only when we treat each other as equals while at the same time respecting and considering the differences. The vision of shared future advocates progress and development as a unified whole. “There is no superior or inferior civilization, only distinctive features and different regions. Differences among civilizations should not be a source of conflict, but a driving force for the progress of human civilization” (Xi Jinping 544). Consequently, a human community of shared destiny emphasizes that all nations share the same destiny; then all countries should open the door to share their achievements with the rest of the world, work together to solve political conflicts, jointly promote economic development, deepen cultural exchanges, promote

global cultural integration, and enhance the sense of honour and happiness (Zhao and Li 11-13).

4. China's Foreign Policy and Practice for the Shared Future

Prior to President Xi Jinping's revolutionary speech in 2015, China had a rather conservative approach towards its foreign policy. However, under President Xi Jinping, the outreach and limits of its international policy have been reconstructed exponentially to include various projects that are in line with China's vision of a shared future for humanity. Under the new foreign policy, going further than his predecessors, Xi Jinping has added a strong normative dimension, in which China's development is linked to the "common development" of other countries (Foot and King). Accordingly, Xi has instructed China's senior leadership to increase China's capacity in four areas of global governance: rule-making, agenda-setting, opinion shaping, and overall coordination (Wang). China's increased economic power has given it the capabilities to enforce change. In his address to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping reported that China's "international influence, ability to inspire, and power to shape" have all increased.

At the National Security Commission in February 2017, President Xi Jinping insisted on a global vision in national security work, coordinating and combining development and security, principles with tactics. He stressed the need to proactively shape China's national security environment, and strengthen and guide cooperation of the international community in the security field, combining 'Chinese wisdom' and 'Chinese solution' to world order (Huaxia). As Stephen Smith observed,

China now formally declares its absolutist development model as a new recourse for the various nations of the world and demonstrates a major role in leading the reconstruction of governance systems all over the world. Such actions were unfathomable in the past. However, under Xi Jinping, the limits of permissible and legitimate action have expanded exponentially" (4).

Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, had noted in 2013 that China hopes “to promote, through our diplomacy, the Chinese culture, contribute Chinese wisdom to the handling of international relations, share China’s governance experience and offer Chinese solution to improve global governance.” The objective is to build a “community of shared future for mankind,” a concept that under Xi Jinping has been elevated to serve as Beijing’s vision of an alternative world order (Rolland). By the summer of 2018, “Xi Jinping’s thought on diplomacy” had become established as the theoretical guide for China’s new Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese characteristics aims to foster a new type of international relations and build a community with a shared future for mankind (Xiangyang). Previously held boundaries of state action have been dramatically expanded to include efforts to proactively reform international order, engage in ideological competition with the West, and assume greater responsibility for global affairs in accordance with its elevated power and status (Smith 2).

Xi Jinping has legitimated the efforts for China to take up a constructive role in reforming the international order from which it has benefited so greatly (Goldstein). China increasingly frames its foreign economic policies by what could be called benevolent developmentalism, whereby China is responsible for bringing development to poorer states. As Liu Jianfei observes: “implementing the ‘Belt and Road’ initiative [...] is a grand project to bring benefits to the people all around the world” (Liu 37). China has been consistent and persistent in designing a foreign policy that paves way and allows China to enable it to shape its vision of a shared future for humankind – a reality. The reconstruction of quasi-Confucian and Marxist ideas of moral responsibility, however, signal that China’s recent embrace as a provider of global public goods will continue, but without assuming burdens that exceed its status as a developing country (Smith 12).

5. Shared Humanity and Sustainable Development Goals

In the present world, while there is tremendous growth and unparalleled opportunity, there is also a great degree of challenges like hunger, climate change, inequality and war that needs to be

faced as the world experiences transition and evolution. Development should take place at a pace that is sustainable. In his speech at the UN headquarters in 2015, President Xi said: "We should build partnerships in which countries treat each other as equals, engage in extensive consultation, and enhance mutual understanding. The principle of sovereign equality underpins the Charter of the United Nations. The future of the world must be shaped by all countries." From the practical level, whether to participate in the international rules, or set on global issues and public opinion propaganda, the practice of human community can discuss regulation, paradigm, welcome the risk, sharing development, to create common values as the core of community of interests, safety, responsibility, and ecology, strengthen the initiative of China's participation in international affairs and production, and help Chinese ideology in this sense the international voice of ascension (Brier).

As the new era focuses on contemporary China, China's development in both soft and hard terms has grown significantly and China has become the second largest economy in the world. China is more closely connected with the rest of the world. The "China initiative", with the vision of a community of Shared future for mankind at its core, conforms to the trend of history and The Times, reflects the common aspiration of people all over the world and provides a useful reference for building a new type of international relations. Specifically, in terms of economy, the thought advocates the reform of the global economic governance system and promotes the establishment of a fair and reasonable global economic governance model. In terms of politics, this thought advocates that all countries should strengthen political mutual trust, oppose hegemonism and power politics, and promote the establishment of a safe and stable global political governance model. In terms of culture, the idea advocates respect for the diversity of diverse civilizations, interaction and exchanges among different cultures, and the establishment of a global cultural governance model featuring inclusiveness and mutual learning. Therefore, the idea of a community of shared future for mankind is conducive to promoting the construction of a new type of

international relations and laying a solid foundation for the establishment of a prosperous, free and harmonious world.

In 2017, at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China Xi Jinping reiterated the notion of "building a community of shared future for mankind", in which he also pointed out how China would do to realize this idea. The Chinese President noted: "We must stay on the path of peaceful development, and continue to pursue a mutually beneficial strategy of opening up. China will continue its efforts to safeguard world peace, contribute to global development, and uphold international order." Under this vision of building a human community of shared destiny, Xi Jinping calls on global powers to promote open, innovative and balanced development that benefits all. When reciprocal benefits and a cooperation strategy that is a win-win situation for all the parties involved can be achieved, then the interchanges amongst the world nations will become more peaceful and laced with amity. Countries of the world could walk in the same path in building a human community of a shared destiny. International and global development will be more contributory to people's sustenance.

The concept of a community of human civilizations advocates mutual inclusiveness among different civilizations, constantly seeks the maximum convergence of different national interests, and adheres to the principle of concrete analysis of specific problems, which is characterized by the methodology of dialectical thinking (Li). China has demonstrated to the world its unique characteristics in terms of path, system, theory and culture, and integrated the maintenance of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics into the great process of building a human community with a shared destiny, recognizing and respecting the diversity of civilizations, development models and lifestyles of the world. We should promote exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, strengthen communication and enhance friendship on the basis of sincerity and friendship, and promote the Chinese dream for the world (Chowthi 61).

In the present world, security of the various nations of the world is inter-connected. Without authentic security, it is not possible to establish a shared future for humanity. This requires the

countries to address security issues of both traditional and non-traditional nature in a cooperative and coordinated manner. This would ensure that the security is upheld and shared by all. This vision of global peace and security will be a constructive contribution towards global peace as this would result in promoting mutual trust and cooperation between various countries in order to deal with security threats and maintain peace at both global and regional levels.

The inspiration of a common destiny gives great prominence in forging partnerships at regional and international levels in which all nations treat one another as equals and engage in mutual dialogue, consultation and understanding. It strives to find new pathways of interaction and negotiation based on peaceful dialogue and partnership rather than confrontation and grouped alliances. It requires countries to give up obsolete mind-sets that resort to seeking toxic alliances that leads to toxic confrontation, and not to target a real or imagined enemy or any outside party. The mission is to incorporate and implement a security design that features a shared contribution towards equality, fairness and justice leading to inclusive development and increased harmony amongst all the nations invested in this mutually beneficial growth while at the same time respecting their respective differences.

Another important aspect in the vision of building a human community of a shared destiny is the expansion of inter-society and inter-country exchanges to promote peace, development, harmony, inclusiveness while at the same time respecting differences and dissimilarities. The vision of a shared future also places importance on protecting Mother Nature and preserving our ecosystem. Active encouragement of sustainable development is a significant requisite for realising the vision proposed by Xi Jinping. The nations of the world must strive towards the common goal of respecting Mother Nature, vehemently stick to the pathway in the promotion of forests, low carbon emissions thus making significant and active contribution towards sustainable development. This is the only way through which mankind can effectively deal with the innumerable challenges brought about by the industrial civilisation. After several years of rapid industry

based development, China has dedicated itself to pursuing a low-carbon, circular, green and sustainable development. Experts say China has been closely communicating over climate change issues with European countries. And the country is earnest in fulfilling its commitments on emission reduction (Holzmann and Grünberg). An effective and sustained harmony between people and planet is the way forward to build together, preserve and protect our mutual planet. This has paved a clear cut path that makes it clear for the various nations of the world on how to properly handle their relationships and cooperate with one another for the benefit of prosperity and peace for all.

6. Conclusion

Although "Building a Human Community of a Shared Destiny" is a vision and philosophy that has been raised by Chinese President Xi Jinping, in the year 2015 at the 70th anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly, it belongs to the world. This ideology is China's solution to collectively deal with and address the various challenges of the world. To maintain peace, ensure development and sustenance of continued prosperity, China has proposed this concept for the achievement of shared, win-win development for the global community. This proposition transcends national borders, cultural, ideological and ethnic differences as it has been proposed to help the various nations of the world to cope up and deal with persistent global challenges.

In the year 2017, recognising the significance and the potential of this vision in dealing with, containing and eradicating the various challenges of the world, the United Nations Economic and Social Council adapted Xi Jinping's vision for shared future to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental ones. Xi Jinping in his 2017 address at Geneva has proposed 'five adherences': partnership, security pattern, economic development, cultural exchanges, and ecological construction, which provide the action guide for the construction of a human community of shared future. He insisted: "Pass on the torch of peace from generation to generation, sustain development and make civilization flourish: this is what people of

all countries long for; it is also the responsibility statesmen of our generation ought to shoulder." With regard to a majority of problems and challenges in the world, China strongly believes that a community of shared future for mankind should be constructed in order to achieve and realise win-win sharing.

This vision of global community sharing and striving towards a common destiny can be viewed as the way forward in achieving the Five pillars of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships. To achieve these goals, the global community should promote partnership, security, growth, inter-civilization exchanges and the building of a sound ecosystem.

Firstly, it supports equality amongst the various nations against hegemony. All the nations of the world, irrespective of geographical size, military and money power should be respected. The same is applicable for the regions that are within the same country. This promotes equality amongst countries and also equality within the same country while at the same time respecting their inherent differences.

Secondly, this vision for human future recognises and emphasises the interconnectedness of people from different countries and different backgrounds. Global challenges like poverty, inequalities, hunger issues, lack of food security, ensuring economic growth, decent standards of living, lack of basic education, and pollution of our environment are common problems that are faced by humankind. These can be dealt with only when the various nations work towards a common good by pursuing mutual interests, strengthening cooperation thus advancing towards the development of humankind.

Thirdly, China's flagship proposal gives a great deal of significance towards less consumption of resources and the promotion of sustainable development as Earth is our only home and hence it deserves the respect, protection and preservation from all the countries of this world. In his watershed speech at the Geneva in 2017, with regard to sustainable development, President Xi Jinping said:

We should make our world clean and beautiful by pursuing green and low-carbon development. Man coexists with nature, which means that any harm to nature will eventually come back to haunt man. We hardly notice natural resources such as air, water, soil and blue sky when we have them. But we won't be able to survive without them. Industrialization has created material wealth never seen before, but it has also inflicted irreparable damage to the environment. We must not exhaust all the resources passed on to us by previous generations and leave nothing to our children or pursue development in a destructive way. Clear waters and green mountains are as good as mountains of gold and silver. We must maintain harmony between man and nature and pursue sustainable development.

Fourthly, countries of the global community should cooperate with one another on aspects of global governance, form alliances and partnerships that promote and concern mutual core interests and form harmonious global relationships that strive towards the achievement of mutual goals.

China has made great efforts and advancement towards the proactive reformation international order, engages in ideological competition with the West, and has assumed greater leadership and responsibility for global affairs in accordance with its elevated power and status as the second largest developing nation in the world. However, will other countries that are used to alternative forms of governance accept a form of governance that is based on the socialist form of society? That is something that remains to be seen and is the scope of future research. The concept of a shared destiny for humankind is definitely a complex ideology filled with many repercussions and it surely needs and deserves future research in order to gain a better holistic comprehension.

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