

Research Series on the Chinese Dream
and China's Development Path

Linggui Wang
Jianglin Zhao

Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Asian Civilizations



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Research Series on the Chinese Dream and China's Development Path

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Drawing on a large body of empirical studies done over the last two decades, this Series provides its readers with in-depth analyses of the past and present and forecasts for the future course of China's development. It contains the latest research results made by members of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This series is an invaluable companion to every researcher who is trying to gain a deeper understanding of the development model, path and experience unique to China. Thanks to the adoption of Socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the implementation of comprehensive reform and opening-up, China has made tremendous achievements in areas such as political reform, economic development, and social construction, and is making great strides towards the realization of the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation. In addition to presenting a detailed account of many of these achievements, the authors also discuss what lessons other countries can learn from China's experience.

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August 2019

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Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Asian Civilizations and the Establishment of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind



Linggui Wang

Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech titled *Deepening Exchanges and Mutual Learning among Civilizations for an Asian Community with a Shared Future* at the opening ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations at the National Convention Center in Beijing on May 15, 2019. In this speech, President Xi stressed that the splendid Asian civilizations had written a brilliant chapter in the history of world civilizations. The people of Asia look forward to a peaceful, open Asia of shared prosperity and connectivity. Asian countries should respect each other and treat each other as equals. Also, they ought to uphold the beauty of other civilizations and respect the diversity of civilizations in the world. Moreover, they should uphold openness, inclusiveness and mutual learning, keep pace with time and pursue innovative development. This will consolidate the cultural foundation for building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.

1 Diversity of Civilizations: Mutual Learning or Clash of Civilizations?

World civilizations are diverse. The first article of the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, which was then adopted by UNESCO at its 31st session on November 2, 2001, points out that cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity and culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness of the different groups and societies that make up humankind.

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Some historians divide civilizations into different categories to highlight their differences. McNeill, the author of *A World History*, categorizes nine living civilizations in human society. This view is shared by Bagby. But some scholars say that there are ten to twelve categories. In his book *The Decline of the West*, German historian Oswald Spengler divides the world's civilizations into eight categories based on their longevity: Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, Chinese, Greco-Roman, Arabian, Western, Mexican, as well as the still-developing Russian civilization. Arnold Joseph Toynbee, a renowned Western historian, classifies world civilizations into 21 categories in his 12-volume book *A Study of History* by distinguishing primitive civilizations from derived civilizations: (1) primitive civilizations refer to first-generation civilizations that emerged directly from primitive societies including Egypt, Sumer, Minos, Ancient China, the Andes, and the Maya; (2) derived civilizations or kinship civilizations are those derived from first-generation civilizations: Hittite, Babylon, Ancient India, Greece, Iran, Syria, Arabia, China, India, Korea, the West and Byzantium. Besides primitive and derived civilizations, there are five arrested civilizations: Polynesia, Eskimo, Nomadism, Sparta, and Osman. In 1986, the Chinese scholar Ji Xianlin argued in *The Scope and Characteristics of Eastern Literature* that cultures in human history could be classified into four systems: the Chinese cultural system, the Indian cultural system, the Persian-Arab-Islamic cultural system, and the European cultural system. According to the famous American scholar Samuel Huntington, founder of the "clash of civilizations" theory, there are eight major civilizations defined in terms of their influence on the contemporary world. For Huntington, the Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western, Latin American, and African civilization will have a profound impact on the pattern of the world in the future.

It is debatable whether the diversity of civilizations should bring harmony or conflicts to the world. Mutual learning among civilizations and the "clash of civilizations" are two most representative theoretical models. Ever since human beings are civilized, especially since the emergence of industrial civilization, human activities have been expanding geographically, and exchanges have been deepening. However, there is still great difference in how we view each other's civilization and how we recognize each other's contribution to the future development of the world. According to the theory of mutual learning among civilizations, inter-civilizational exchanges will ensure social progress. Thanks to communication among civilizations, countries around the world conducted exchange activities that have produced various effects. For example, some languages contain a lot of borrowed words; some countries trace their history from written records of other countries; some import food and articles from other countries; some imitate the architecture of others and some people are buried in a foreign country. Another example is the four great inventions of ancient China and the Arabic numerals, both of which left an indelible mark on the advancement of world civilization. Through material and cultural exchanges as well as mutual learning, countries around the world have achieved peaceful development and human society has moved forward.

However, others believe that civilizations conflict with one another. Huntington puts forward the idea of the "clash of civilizations" in his 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. The core arguments are as follows. Firstly,

root causes for future international conflicts will lie more in cultural rather than ideological and economic disagreements. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics, and geopolitical fault line conflicts will drive future inter-civilizational battle lines. Secondly, the clash of civilizations is the greatest threat to future world peace. Thirdly, countries that belong to different cultures are at best alien or highly hostile toward each other since civilizations are more likely to choose competitive coexistence, which will lead to cold wars and cold peace. While cultural difference causes conflicts, cultural similarity will bring people together and encourage mutual trust and cooperation, weakening or eliminating estrangement. Lastly, Western culture is unique but not universal. Intercultural or inter-civilizational conflict happens mostly within the eight major civilizations. Islamism and Confucianism may jointly threaten or challenge Western civilization. Huntington's view on the clash of world civilizations reflects a perspective on global politics that is driven by Western zero-sum thinking. He argues that civilization is the source of future growth for all nations, and that competition among countries is the competition for interests. The advantaged civilization will help its country win the competition for national interests. Since inter-civilizational competition becomes the playground for national interest competitions, inter-civilizational conflicts will be inevitable. Huntington's view enjoys much popularity in Western countries, especially the United States. Even today, a few Americans with suspicious motivations are still trying to provoke strategic competition between China and the United States with the "clash of civilizations" theory.

Facts have proven that in the long history of human development exchanges and mutual learning have brought about development, peace and well-being while inter-civilizational conflicts have led to war, casualties and stagnation of development. Since ancient times, China has been well aware of this fact and has been upholding the concept of harmony without uniformity. In the long history of interacting with other civilizations, the rule of harmony has been respected. In 138 BC and 119 BC, Zhang Qian was dispatched to the Western Regions twice, opening up the Silk Road to spread Chinese culture in exchange for grape, alfalfa, pomegranate, flax, sesame as well as cultural artifacts. During the Western Han Dynasty, Chinese merchant fleets sailed as far as India and Sri Lanka, where they traded Chinese silk for colored glaze, pearls, and other products. With the advancement of technology, the Tang Dynasty exchanged envoys with over 70 countries. Chang'an, the capital city of Tang, bustled with foreign envoys, merchants, and students as a world-famous metropolis. In the early 15th century, Zheng He, the famous navigator of China's Ming Dynasty made seven expeditions to the Western Oceans, visiting many Southeast Asian countries and even reached Kenya on the east coast of Africa. To this day, evidence of his trip could be found in many places. On the other hand, China has been actively learning modern scientific and technological knowledge from other countries. European astronomy, medicine, mathematics, geometry and geography were introduced to China, expanding the horizon of the Chinese people. What our societies have achieved today was at least partly due to inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning.

In contrast, inter-civilizational conflicts often lead to destructions of the achievements of civilizations. There are many cultural relics and monuments in this world

that are not destroyed by natural disasters but by human-induced calamities. We have seen no more time of peace than war in human history. The “clash of civilizations” theory is merely a reflection of humanity’s memory of war. The stone wall at the entrance to the UNESCO headquarters in Paris was inscribed with one sentence written in several languages: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be made.” Today, the “conflict of civilizations” theory has made an unwelcome comeback. To view the relationship between countries and civilizations with the mentality of war is to scorn and bully others, which is in essence oppression.

2 Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Asian Civilizations Will Provide an Essential Drive for Civilizational Advancement and Peaceful Development

Civilization is not only the crystallization of human wisdom but also the demonstration of human achievements. Moreover, it serves as the source of future progress. Civilization does not result from providence but is created by human beings through observation and practice. Literary classics such as *The Book of Songs*, *The Analects of Confucius*, *The Talmud*, *One Thousand and One Nights*, *The Rigveda* and *The Tale of Genji*; inventions such as the cuneiform script, maps, glass, Arabic numerals, paper making and printing; majestic architectures such as the Great Wall, the Great Mosque of Mecca, Taj Mahal and Angkor Wat are all invaluable assets of human civilization.

There are two forces that take part in the creation of civilization; one come from the people, the other from international exchanges and mutual learning. As international connections expand, inter-civilizational exchanges and mutual learning are becoming an increasingly important influence on all countries as well as a vital force for human progress and peaceful development. On March 27, 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the UNESCO headquarter on China’s philosophy of harmony without uniformity, elaborating on the concept that exchange and mutual learning should enrich civilizations. This speech resonated powerfully around the world.

First, inter-civilizational exchanges and mutual learning will promote material progress and social development. As President Xi Jinping pointed out, the history of world civilizations has revealed that civilizations must keep up with the times and absorb the essence of the times. We should use innovation to propel the development of civilizations and continue to create enduring civilizational achievements. We should adopt the attitude of mutual learning when treating any civilization that humankind has created, actively draw on the merits of others, and make sure that we preserve and adapt all the cultural genes in contemporary culture and modern

society. We should also promote contemporary cultural value that transcends time, space as well as national boundaries.

Second, inter-civilizational exchanges and mutual learning will promote openness among countries. The same is true of civilizations. A civilization that observes a policy of seclusion for a long time is bound to decline. Throughout history, China has learned painful lessons in this regard. During his voyage to the West, navigator Zheng He had many friendly encounters. It was the long-term seclusion policy of the Qing Dynasty that led to China's rapid decline and backwardness. According to Gjergji Sinani, Executive Director of the Albanian Institute for International Studies, Voltaire "sought to create a better Europe by criticizing the evils of Europe and comparing its values with those of Chinese civilization. The 17th and 18th centuries are considered a period of crisis for the European mind. The sense of European superiority is one of the causes of this crisis. Therefore, "we need to be open-minded and strive to remove all barriers to cultural exchanges. We need to be inclusive and always seek nourishment from other civilizations to promote the joint development of Asian civilizations through exchanges and mutual learning."

Third, inter-civilizational exchanges and mutual learning foster interpersonal connectivity and harmony among countries. "People are the best bridge for exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. Closer interpersonal exchanges and better mutual learning are crucial to eliminating estrangement and enhancing mutual understanding among nations." According to Ralph Kader, CEO of the International Federation for Peace and Sustainable Development (IFPSD), "the right view of cultural diffusion will not trigger disputes arising from mistrust and suspicion; instead, it will enable countries to respect and learn from each other. A group that disrespects, degrades, or excludes others impedes the development of all cultures." In the design of the Belt and Road Initiative, interpersonal connectivity is included as an essential part. In recent years, China has worked with its counterparts to build platforms and develop ways of cooperation in education, culture, sports and health. In 2018, more than 160 million Chinese citizens went abroad, while inbound trips to China totaled more than 140 million. Civilian-level exchanges propel closer international exchanges and mutual learning between Chinese and other civilizations.

Asia has enjoyed a long period of peace since the end of World War II. During this period, Asian countries saw a double-digit increase in trade and investment along with the emergence of the most dynamic growth hubs in the world. At the same time, people from different Asian countries interacted in different fields and at different levels, making it possible to heal the wounds left by the war. A great deal of data and examples show that the "clash of civilizations" is not one of the external sources of Asia's progress. Instead, it was inter-civilizational exchanges and cooperation that prepared for Asia's economic growth and peaceful development. In his keynote speech at the APEC CEO Summit on November 17th, 2018, President Xi Jinping stressed that "We live on the same planet. It is home to more than 200 countries and regions, more than 2,500 ethnic groups, and over 7 billion people. Trying to erase their differences will not work. Differences are not a hindrance to exchanges, still less a cause for confrontation. Diversity and interaction between different civilizations, social systems, and paths can provide a strong impetus for human progress."

3 Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Asian Civilizations Represent a Critical Way of Boosting the Construction of an Asian Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

“Building a community with a shared future for mankind” is a major theoretical and practical innovation in international diplomacy with distinctive Chinese characteristics in the new era. President Xi Jinping first proposed this concept during his visit to Russia in late March 2013. “In a world where countries are more interconnected and interdependent than ever before,” he said, “while living in the same global village, where history and reality meet, mankind coexist in the same era and on the same planet, and have increasingly emerged as a community with a shared future in which everyone has in himself a few others.” Afterward, he stressed in various international speeches how China would vigorously advocate this notion and adhere to it at home and abroad. On March 28th, 2015, he underscored the need to build a community for mankind at the Bo’ao Forum for Asia. At the summit marking the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nation on September 28th, 2015, President Xi gave a speech titled Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win–win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind.

This is the first time that the Chinese leader has put forward and elaborated on the concept and core principles of a “Community with a shared future for mankind” at a major international organization. He said, “In today’s world, all countries are interdependent and they share a common future. We should renew our commitment to the principles of the UN Charter, build a new type of international relations that feature win–win cooperation, and create a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.”

The goal of the Community with a Shared Future for Mankind is to “build an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity.” To achieve this goal, we “must forge partnerships that are based on equality, consultation and mutual understanding. We should create a security architecture that feature fairness, justice, joint contribution, and shared benefits. Meanwhile, we need to promote open, innovative and inclusive development that benefits all, increase inter-civilizational exchanges to enhance harmony, inclusiveness, and respect for differences, and build an eco-system that puts mother nature and green development first.” This vision is China’s answer to “what kind of world we should build” and “how to build it.”

In the above, we can see that inter-civilizational exchanges and mutual learning are critical approaches to building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.

First, inter-civilizational exchanges and mutual learning are practical examples of “harmony without uniformity”. The practice of mutual inclusiveness is a prerequisite for all countries to participate in the building of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind. The Chinese have long appreciated the wisdom of “harmony without uniformity.” Zuo Qiuming, a Chinese historian from 2,500 years ago, recorded in the *Chronicle of Zuo* the following comments by Yan Ying, the Prime Minister of

the State of Qi during the Chunqiu Period: “Harmony is like cooking a thick soup. The right amount of water, fire, vinegar, meat sauce, salt, and plum are all needed to go with fish or meat. It is the same when it comes to music. Only by combining the right texture, length, pace, mood, tone, pitch, style and executing them properly can one produce an excellent piece of melody. Who would enjoy a soup with nothing but water in it? Whose ear can tolerate the same tone repeated on one instrument?” The proposal to build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind emphasizes the recognition of different civilizations, which is the precondition for exchanges, mutual learning, and harmony. Different countries have different resource endowments and different historical and cultural conditions. Only by acknowledging these differences can one respect other civilizations without feeling superior. Only in this way can we refrain from forcing other countries to pursue the same development model and respect each other’s differences while pursuing joint development. In other words, accepting different modes of development is an essential acknowledgment for all civilizations. According to Dr. Md. Harun-Ur-Rashid Askari, Vice President of the Kushtia Islamic University of Bangladesh, “Deliberate western distortion of the East poses a massive threat to the correct understanding of Asian civilizations. This phenomenon frequently appears in the long process of colonization. However, as decolonization began in the post-colonial period, dissenting voices emerged in the East in support of hitherto distorted civilizations.” In his 1978 book *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said criticizes European or Western interpretation of the East as an exaggeration of differences, a representation of arrogant Western superiority, and a clichéd analytical model of the Eastern world. Therefore, inter-civilizational exchange and mutual learning are the best ways to remove misunderstanding and misinterpretation between civilizations. By recognizing different civilizations, we recognize their value to the development of human society, making it easier for us to build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.

Second, inter-civilizational exchanging and mutual learning point to recognition of the strength of different civilizations, which will allow different civilizations to learn from each other and create together, contributing to the formation of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind. On October 20th, 2005, the General Assembly of UNESCO adopted *The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* at its 33rd Session. The *Convention* pointed out that cultural diversity creates a colorful world that encourages dialogue, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence among different cultures. President Xi Jinping noted in his keynote speech that “All civilizations are rooted in their unique cultural environment. Each civilization embodies the wisdom and vision of a nation, and is valuable for being unique. Civilizations vary from each other the same way that human beings have different skin colors and use different languages. No civilization is superior to the others.” In other words, only through acknowledging the strength of different civilizations can we create opportunities for learning and exchanging and take civilization to a higher level. For example, since Arabic numerals are easy to write, memorize and circulate, they have more advantages than other numerals to be universally adopted. China vigorously advocates that we should “respect the diversity of world cultures and overcome cultural misunderstandings, clash of civilizations and the feeling of

superiority through exchanging, mutual learning, and coexistence.” And that “We should respect all civilizations, treat each other as equals, and draw on each other’s strengths, to advance the creative development of civilizations.” “What China emphasizes is not only ‘aid’ but also ‘cooperation’,” said Dr. Hiria Ottino, President of the Tonga Pacific Affairs Council. What China is doing has offered an opportunity for Pacific islanders to engage in dialogues so they realize the need to preserve Pacific culture and develop an international perspective of the Pacific. China’s approach to engaging in regional affairs is in stark contrast to that of traditional powers who see China as a threatening challenge because they believe the Pacific region is “theirs”. This should not stop Pacific island countries from shaping their own future; nor should it prevent the West from politicizing the sources of foreign aid or hinder Pacific island countries from participating in the plans proposed by China. Foreign aid should not become a zero-sum political game on a global scale. People of the Pacific islands should not be seen as naively influenced by Chinese politics, for Chinese models and proposals show real promise of making concrete contributions to development goals.” When attending the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Qingdao on June 10th, 2018, President Xi Jinping pointed out, “While we keep hearing rhetoric such as the clash of civilizations or the superiority of one civilization over another, it is the diversity of civilizations that sustains human progress. Indeed, mutual learning between different cultures is a shared aspiration of all peoples.”

Third, inter-civilizational exchanging and mutual learning will facilitate the building of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind and lay a cultural foundation for it. When speaking at the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations on May 15th, 2019, President Xi Jinping stressed the need to “consolidate the cultural foundation for building an Asian Community with a Shared Future and a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.” Dr. Peter T. C. Chang, Deputy Director of the Institute of China Studies at the University of Malaya comments: “The diverse ethnic groups, languages, and beliefs in Asia can coexist peacefully and enrich each other through cross-cultural communication and integration. It is true that conflicts exist in diversity. The history of Asia is shaped by ethnic and religious tensions. That is why the harmonious co-existence of multiple civilizations in Asia cannot be taken for granted. Preserving harmony requires the joint effort of all countries.” According to Sadat Mansoor Naderi, Chairman of the Sadat Mansoor Naderi Foundation in Afghanistan, the concept of a Community with a Shared Future requires us to think differently and promote regional and global peace and development innovatively. Victor Hugo once said, “There is a prospect greater than the sea, and it is the sky; there is a prospect greater than the sky, and it is the human soul.” “We need a mind that is broader than the sky as we approach different civilizations. Civilizations are like water, moistening everything silently. We should encourage different civilizations to respect each other and live in harmony, so that exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations will become a bridge promoting friendship between people around the world, an engine driving the progress of human society, and a bond cementing world peace. We should draw wisdom and nourishment and seek spiritual support and psychological consolation from various civilizations, and work together to tackle the challenges facing humankind.”

“China today is more than a country by itself; it is Asia’s China and it belongs in the world. In the time to come, China will open its arms wider to embrace the world and contribute the dynamic achievements of Chinese civilization to the world.” As some foreign leaders have said at this conference, ancient Chinese civilization left a precious legacy to the world. President Xi’s vision of building an Asian Community with a Shared Future and a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind is another significant contribution that China has made to world peace and human progress. On February 10th, 2017, the 55th Session of the UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD) adopted the resolution of the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) unanimously. Meanwhile, the vision of building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind was included in the UN resolution for the first time. On March 17, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2344 on the situation in Afghanistan, stressing the importance of promoting regional cooperation and building a community in the spirit of win–win cooperation. The successful organization of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations has opened a new chapter of exchanging and mutual learning among Asian civilizations. Promoting peace, friendship, and cooperation, it fulfills the shared dream of the Asian people.

Translated by Mo Hao

Mankind's Wishes

The Highest Ideal of Mankind Is the Potential of the Future



Helga Zepp-LaRouche

It is the characteristic of turning points in history that the majority of people have no idea of what is occurring. Only visionaries who have a clear idea of the positive potential of the future are able to intervene at moments of decision, avert potential catastrophes, and usher in a new epoch of humanity. We find ourselves in such a phase change: the old world order developed after World War II and especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union is in the process of dissolution, but what the new order will look like is not clear yet. This is a period wherein even international law seems to be overridden, since at the moment neither the UN nor any other institution seems to be able to enforce it.

However, it is undeniable that the pendulum that has favored Western civilization over recent centuries—though for thousands of years Asia had occupied an outstanding and even leading place in universal history—has long been swinging back. This is clearly supported by the demographic development of Asia, completely new strategic interventions such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and clear objectives such as the concept of “Made in China 2025” and the outlook that President Xi Jinping has set for China by 2050.

Tremendous opportunities for Asia arise from this, and perhaps along with them a completely new form of responsibility, igniting the inspiration to work out concepts about how to advance humanity as a whole. President Xi Jinping obviously has this concern in mind when he speaks of the “Community of a Shared Future of Mankind.” We are now experiencing a precious moment, for never before in history has the conscious design of a new epoch with the idea of unified humanity as a higher idea, been so clearly defined as a task. If we want to create a better human order, it must be built on the best concepts that have been produced by various cultures. Those concepts must, so to speak, have an ontological character, because nothing in them

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can be accidental or of merely contemporary characteristics, if they are to determine the Dharma—the moral codex—which the spiritual leaders, and with them Asian societies, are to follow in this new chapter of universal history.

It is also obvious that the impetus for defining this “righteous way” must come from the ancient traditions of Asia such as Confucianism, Buddhism or Jainism, which are clearly linked to a commitment to lifelong self-cultivation and the moral refinement of mankind. Although the West made the same claim in its Classical and Renaissance periods of humanism, the idea of ethical improvement of man as a purpose in life is almost the opposite of the Western liberal model, where the prioritization of moral requirements or of one philosophy over another is emphatically rejected.

Then how must the principles be redesigned so that the new paradigm of a Community of mankind is on secure foundations where the requirements of modern natural science as well as a new system of international relations can be satisfied?

This question must be answered on different levels. A good starting point is the *Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence* or *Panchsheel*, which was first laid down formally in the *Trade and Transport Agreement between the Tibetan Region of China and India* on April 29, 1954. The preamble states that the two governments agreed on the following principles: 1. Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty 2. Mutual non-aggression 3. Mutual non-interference 4. Equality and mutual benefit and 5. Peaceful co-existence.

The first conference of independent Asian and African states in Bandung, 1955 led by then Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru expanded the *Five Principles* into the *Ten Principles of Bandung*. The same principles were underlined as core elements of international law at the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade. With the BRI, China has defined for the first time the relationship between nations that should serve as the basis of a global reorganization open to all nations. President Xi emphasized in his keynote speech at the first Belt and Road Forum in May 2017 that “We are ready to share the experience of development with other countries. We have no intention to interfere in other countries’ internal affairs, export our own social system or model of development, or impose our will on others.”

These principles of peaceful coexistence have deep roots in several Asian cultures. Some of these concepts are philosophical in nature; others are part of theological considerations. This article is about the identification of the approaches that have advanced humanity and are relevant to future understanding among peoples. They are also the approaches adopted by President Xi on his overseas visits, as he emphasized in a speech in New Delhi to the Indian elite in 2014: “Even in ancient times, people in China came to the realization that a belligerent state, great as it may be, ultimately fails. Peace is paramount. Harmony without uniformity and universal peace must be achieved. The Chinese concepts of ‘universal peace’ and ‘universal love’ are very similar to the Indian concepts of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakum’ (the world as a family) and ‘ahimsa’ (do not inflict injury).”

In the ancient scriptures of India, the Vedic texts, the Upanishads, and the classical Sanskrit literature, there are many important concepts that have both a religious and a

practical political significance. These concepts include, for example, the principle of ahimsa mentioned by Xi, the respect for all other creatures—not only the renunciation of any physical violence, but also of hurting the others in any way, either verbally or spiritually. Ahimsa is also a method of war prevention and conflict resolution, even for complex challenges in the real world.

Collections of the Rigveda are the oldest surviving complete literary work and have been handed down orally for centuries with the help of sophisticated mnemonics. In the Rigveda, there are fundamental thoughts on the cosmic order, which ultimately also provide the guideline for human activity on earth.

In the Upanishads, there are five principles that reflect the same basic orientation. The most basic concept is that of the all-embracing Brahman. “Ishawaram idam sarvam jagat kincha jagatvam jagat”—Everything that exists, wherever it exists, is permeated by the same divine power. This idea can also be found in Gottfried Leibniz’s idea of the Monad, where within every Monad the entire lawfulness of the universe is contained.

The second principle is that the Brahman, the creative principle whose expression is the entirety of the real world, is in every individual consciousness—the Atman. The Atman is the reflection of the all-embracing Brahman. It is individual consciousness, but not fundamentally separate from Brahman. “Ishwara sarvabhutanam idise tishtati”—the Lord dwells in the heart of every individual. The relationship between Atman and Brahman is the core around which the whole Vedic doctrine revolves. In the philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa, this corresponds to the affinity of the macrocosm and the microcosm, which makes it possible for an intangible force—an idea created by creative reason—to bring about a further development of the physical universe.

A third Vedic principle is that because of their common spirituality all people are members of a single-family. The Upanishads speak of humanity as amritashya putra, “Children of Immortality.”

The fourth concept that the Upanishads present is the idea of the consubstantiality of all religions, all spiritual paths. “Ekoham svat virpra bahuda vadanti”—“The truth is one, the sage calls it by many names.” This idea corresponds to the “Sanatana Dharma,” the single religion which stands above all religions, an idea also expressed by Nicholas of Cusa in his Platonic dialogue “De Pace Fidei,” written immediately following the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the associated bloody conflicts. In this dialogue, representatives of various religions and nations turn to God for help, because all of them are fighting wars and killing each other in His name. God instructs that they are also all philosophers in their respective nations and religions—beyond all religious traditions and teachings of the different prophets—and therefore can understand that above religion there is one God, and above different traditions, one truth. Incidentally, the Hindu Monk Swami Vivekananda cited the same argument in his famous speech before the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago on September 11, 1893: The followers of different religions have argued and fought each other purely because their point of view is too narrow, and they don’t grasp that the highest Being is infinite.

The fifth Vedic concept is that of the welfare of all creatures. “Bahujana shukhaya bahujana hitaya cha”—the Hindu philosophy seeks “the good of all people and all

forms of life on this planet.” The affinity to the Confucian ideas of the harmonious development of all is evident, as Confucius has said explicitly: “They who have success should help others to succeed.” This is the idea that serves as the basis of the BRI and the conception of “win–win cooperation” between various nations. The Confucian philosophy also gives a name to the new era which was founded by the prospective Japanese Emperor Naruhito: “Reiwa,” literally meaning “pursuing harmony.” Japanese commentators emphasize that this term traces back to the famous classical poetry anthology “The Poem of Manyoshu,” although the scholar Wang Peng points out that “ling-he”, the term that carries the best wishes for peace and harmony, was used by ancient Chinese emperors as the name for their reign.

As stated above, the idea of harmonious development of all as the basis for a peaceful world order is laid out in several Asian cultures. It stands in stark contradiction to the idea that relation among nations should constitute a zero-sum game. Therefore, its realization in practice requires a new stage of development in the evolution of mankind, “the Age of the Spiritual Man”, as Sri Aurobindo called it; or the increasing dominance of the Noösphere over the Biosphere, in which Vladimir Vernadsky saw a trajectory laid out by the natural law of the universe.

The universe has an inherent lawfulness that advances it to higher stages of development. Vernadsky saw the creative reason of mankind as an essential component of that universe, a geological power, which has been qualitatively advancing this higher development since the beginning of human evolution. In the science of physical economy, Lyndon LaRouche delivered proof of the absolute efficiency of human creativity which distinguishes man from all known living creatures, with his concept of Potential Relative Population Density.

Yet this anti-entropic higher development is neither linear nor the automatic result of objective processes—as for instance the variations found in historical or dialectical materialism, should prove. Along with the objective effect of newly discovered physical principles in production processes, now a substantial component of this process has become the intellectual and moral higher development of man.

In meeting the task of consciously shaping a new paradigm for humanity as stated at the beginning of this article, it is certainly an enormous advantage for Chinese and other Asian cultures that, thanks to the philosophy of Confucius, the development of a moral character has been the most important goal of education in the broad areas of Asia. Despite the considerable hype about digitalization and the role of artificial intelligence in future economic platforms, the moral quality of human beings will always determine whether new technologies are deployed for the benefit of mankind or for evil purposes. Thus, the letter written several months ago by Xi Jinping to eight professors of the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts, where he emphasized the extraordinary importance of aesthetic education for the mental development of the youth of China is of first-rank strategic importance. Aesthetic education plays a definitive role in the development of a beautiful soul; filling it with love while promoting the creation of great works of art.

Thanks to the continual influence of Confucianism according to which the development of a moral character represents the highest goal of education, it is taken for granted in China that attention to public morals and combating bad characteristics