

The Xi Jinping's Community with a Shared Future for Mankind: Understanding in China-Africa Cooperation

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Abstract

The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind is the basic variable of President Xi Jinping's foreign policy construction. It is misunderstood or regarded as wishful thinking but this concept has an ideal view of what the world should be. It embodies quite rational pragmatism in the implementation of our times. This concept is the intersection of Chinese and Western ancient and modern philosophical thoughts. It is deeply rooted in the Sinicized Marxist socialist philosophy. This paper attempts to simplify its understanding and enhance its pragmatism consciousness under the background of China-Africa cooperation.

Keywords

A Shared Future for Mankind, Win-Win Cooperation, Xi Jinping's Thought, Marxism Sinicized, Belt and Road Initiative

1. Introduction

At the 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held from October 18 to 24, 2017, President Xi Jinping's theoretical contribution was written

into the Party constitution and five months later into the constitution of China. The contents are as follows: “*Xi Jinping’s thoughts in the new renaissance of socialism with Chinese characteristics* (习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想, *Xi Jinping xin shidai zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi sixiang*)¹.”

This major contribution recorded in the annals of the party and the state, is an important feature of China’s political system inherited by Mao Zedong since the founding of the People’s Republic of China.

However, President Xi Jinping is the third president to include his name in the Charter and China’s constitution after Mao Zedong’s theory and Deng Xiaoping’s actions. That operation reveals the Party’s General Secretary and then President’s huge contribution to the country’s revival².

In fact, Xi Jinping’s thought in the new rejuvenation period of socialism with Chinese characteristics refers to the great process of restoration, which has been and will be completed before 2049 (Tian, 2020) referred to as the Empire in the middle of the world. The year 2049 will mark the centenary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China and is also a century long revival period of Western imperialism after the Opium War. Furthermore, to restore China’s greatness, socialism has to be re-examined. Socialism must integrate and adapt to the characteristics of contemporary Chinese society, which is the ultimate dream of every Chinese citizen (Xi, 2016). President Xi Jinping’s great constitutional thought is composed of a series of thoughts directly related to him, including “*a community with a shared future for mankind and the People’s Court of Justice*”.

In a world where hegemonism, egoism, imperialism, supremacy, injustice, conflict, war and confrontation are increasingly prevalent, Xi Jinping’s thought of “*a community with a shared future for mankind*” has made innovative contributions towards curbing these scourges (Xi, 2014). This concept refers to what the destiny of each person and/or country has in common with another person, mankind. Therefore, we need to work together to solve series of problems in the common destiny of the whole international community.

At first glance, this is an ideal, far from the current reality, in which each country is seeking to maximize its own interests without really taking into account the interests of other countries. The State is, by definition, a cold monster with no friends, but it is said to have interests to defend. In this case, when every country has a narcissistic self-centered view of interests, how is a community of shared future for mankind with win-win cooperation established? Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, it is here that the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind has evolved into a truly pragmatic foreign policy approach.

In fact, philosopher believes that one can reconcile an initial fantasy ideal with an absolutely concrete reality. China-Africa cooperation is one of the examples of building a community of shared future for win-win cooperation among man-

¹The constitution of the People’s Republic of China promulgated on December 4, 1982.

²Xiang, B. (2018). *Backgrounder: Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/17/c_137046261.htm

kind. From the era of decolonization to the Bandung Conference to Africa's support for the People's Republic of China to regain its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, the two sides have always shown a firm willingness to work together since President Xi Jinping came into office. Driven by the "one generation one road" of large infrastructure construction projects such as energy, ports, airports, Faroe Islands and roads, these strategic projects occupy an important position in the development experience (Wintgens, 2016). Since the fifth president of the People's Republic of China announced the project at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan on September 13, 2013, the project has importantly become the benchmark for building a community with a shared future for mankind with Africa.

In 2018, President Xi Jinping and experts from the African continent jointly formulated the "eight initiatives", which set a framework for sustained cooperation between Africa and China in various fields to solve the development problems of each African country. A particularly interesting approach to cooperation is that one disadvantage of cooperation between major powers and Africa is to comprehensively address Africa's concerns without their views in most cases.

Long before President Xi Jinping, China and Africa have had good diplomatic, friendly and fraternal economic and political cooperation. During Covid-19, China became the largest investor in Africa. For several years, it has been the largest economic and trading partner of the African continent (Ngoma, 2021; Lohalo, 2021).

This paper attempts to understand the philosophical connotation and understanding of the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind in China-Africa cooperation. It will be divided into two parts: (a) community of human destiny: context and philosophical basis; (b) China-Africa cooperation in the era of a community with a shared future for mankind.

2. Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

1) Context

"A shared future for mankind" or "Community with a shared future for Mankind" is the basic variable of President Xi Jinping's foreign policy construction. This concept has been misunderstood. However, it includes cultural, economic, social, political, security and safeguarding international relations (Marcelli, 2019). It shows that there is only one destiny for mankind. Mankind must understand the common ground of mankind and/or countries' public interest³. As he wrote: "*Human beings live in the same global village, in the same time and space where history and reality meet, and increasingly become a community of destiny. I am in you, and you are in me*"⁴. Therefore, this is the common ground of the international community. At the socio-cultural level, it refers to the desire

³Wu, H. T., & Yan, G. C. (2019). The Construction of the Identity of University and Human Destiny: The Mission of the Times and Self Innovation of Chinese Universities. *Zhongshi zhongguo yu shijie*, No. 16.

⁴Xi, J. P. (2019). *Study Outline of Socialism with Characteristics in the New Era*. Xuexi Chuban She, Beijing.

for development—civilization exchange, knowledge sharing, socio-economic development and mutual learning (Harari, 2015).

Politically and economically, it has restored the democratization of international relations which is widely negotiated global governance, regardless of size and wealth. Both strong and weak are equal in mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation using multilateralism and the United Nations to support the expansion of developing countries in international affairs as the most representative and largest developing country in the world.

Fundamentally speaking, this is a philosophical concept, which represents a humanized view of international relations. This should be part of the international report. The standardization and humanization of President Xi Jinping's cosmic political ideal, as stated in the speech delivered at the United Nations on January 18, 2017: *“What is there in the world and what are we doing? This is a question that the whole world is thinking about, and it is also a question that I have been thinking about. It is the responsibility of politicians and people from generation to generation to maintain the momentum of peace and development. China's plan is to build a community with a shared future for mankind and achieve mutual benefit and win-win results”* (Xi, 2018).

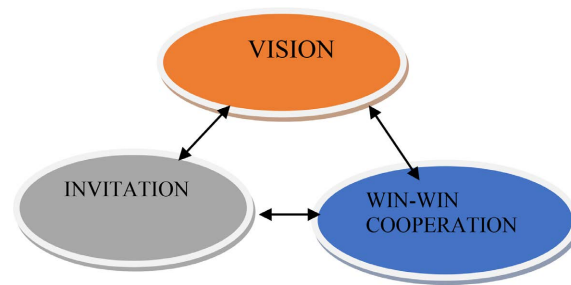
We must always bear in mind that the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind is inseparable from the concepts of *“mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation”*, or simply *“win-win cooperation”*. This means that the cooperation satisfies everyone and a cooperation to meet each other's expectations. In other words, a cooperation of *“I win, you win”*. This concept is not a zero sum game. One party's win is the other Party's lose. This concept is realized in the community of human destiny. It tirelessly looks for the contents of *“I win, you win”*, *“I am satisfied, you are satisfied”*. It should be noted that if the cooperation needs of all parties concerned in the community with a shared future for mankind are not met, cooperation will not be possible.

A very simple understanding of this pragmatic approach enables us to understand the consistency behind every action taken by President Xi Jinping in dealing with other countries. It also calls on the international community to build a community with a shared future for mankind through the belt and road initiative. *“Live a decent life and move on the great path of justice.” We encourage you to join the “belt and road” circle of friends. Its purpose is not to fill the “gap”, but to establish a network of mutually beneficial partners* (Xi, 2018).

Therefore, President Xi Jinping believes that the community of shared future for mankind is both a constructive world outlook and an invitation to participate in the “belt and road” joint project proposed. The content of this multifaceted concept is particularly interesting in understanding China's international relations today. A once self-sufficient China is now open to the world. Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, it has an inclusive and inclusive vision (Liu & Zhou, 2013).

2) Philosophical basis

This concept was originally used by President Hu Jintao in his internal policy



Source: Flowchart based on our own data.

Figure 1. Conceptual schema of President Xi Jinping’s thought of a community with a shared future for Mankind.

on the common destiny of the Mainland and Taiwan, and is now promoted and defended internationally by President Xi Jinping (Khan, n.d.). If we do not put President Xi Jinping’s thought in the overall vision of the various philosophies that constitute its moral foundation, as shown in **Figure 1**, it is difficult to understand his thought, which is contained in the community with a shared future for Mankind (Zhang, & Xi, 2015; Bell & Fan, 2013). Indeed, President Xi Jinping’s ideological foundation on a community with a shared future for mankind is rich and colorful. The latter is the intersection of several philosophical thoughts in ancient China, from Confucius, Mencius, TianXia, YinYang, DaTong and Taoism—Marxism to the founding fathers of the People’s Republic of China—Maoism and Deng Xiaoping, Xi Jinping’s scientific development thought in the new renaissance of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Tellingly, the China’s diplomatic philosophy is holistic and historical thinking. The Chinese looks at the world as a whole and reacts accordingly. Aiming at the community of a shared destiny of five-in one: equal partnership, mutual security, sharing development, confluent civilization and green ecology, China views the world experiencing profoundly and complex changes. These changes affect the configuration of power and international order. Accordingly, China’s diplomacy is dialectical which is a poling idea of Lao Tzu’s yin and yang, Hegelian dialectics and Marx-Engels dialectical materialism. Unity of opposition, mutual reinforcing and complementary have provided great source of inspiration and wisdom to deal with international affairs. While holding positive and optimistic views, China stresses bottom-line thinking. In China’s perspective crisis can be an opportunity and an opportunity can be transformed to a crisis⁵.

In China’s long history it has been mainly an inward looking and defensive country. Even with its strongest fleets in the 15th century China did not seek for hegemony of colonies. The present China could only rise through peaceful means. This challenges the western common believed wisdom telling who control oil lead the world or who control Eurasia lead the world. For Chinese, the objective of each engagement and war is first all to protect Chinese people. Among China’s strategies to achieve its global engagement are strategic thinking,

⁵Yang Jiamian. IFI Lecture: China’s foreign relations: Theories and Approaches, (conference at American University of Beirut).

partnership, belt and road initiative, participating and building global governance building new model of major powers relations and improving neighborhood policy (Lohalo et al., 2022).

The philosophical ideas mentioned by President Xi Jinping in many speeches are just complementary to each other (see **Figure 2**).

He quoted Mencius saying: “Live in etiquette and embark on the great road of justice. We encourage you to join the belt and road circle of friends. Its purpose is not to fill the ‘gap’, but to establish a network of mutually beneficial partners.” He not only mentioned Mencius’s integrity theory and the concept of Great Man, where Great Man was replaced by a big country (or the largest developing country), because China must embark on the great road of justice, which is understood as equality between countries. So the concept of social justice is included in Marxism which must lead to the goal of building a rich middle-class society by 2049 (Tian, 2020). Therefore, it is an international form of socialism⁶.

Here, by inviting the international community to join the “belt and road” circle of friends, instead of trying to fill their “gap”, but establishing a network of partners, mutually beneficial and philosopher stands on the following ideological positions:

- Tianxia definition, relying on Zhao TingYang, mutual improvement and perfect integration of diversity (Zhao, 2018).
- A better system to attract, integrate and coordinate all things under the sky: people and culture
- Yin Yang philosophy tirelessly seeks a balance between positive and negative, warm and cold, while maintaining a form of unity, complementarity and permanent transformation.
- Datong, a world view in which everyone is in peace.



Source: schematic based on our own data.

Figure 2. Schematic diagram of the overall understanding of the community of shared future of mankind.

⁶Qiao, W. W. (2019). The Community of “Human Destiny” is the Theoretical Legacy and Development of Marxist “Community” Thought. *Modern Education Forum*, 2.

<http://doi.org/10.32629/mef.v2i6.161>

In several speeches by President Xi Jinping, efforts must be made to deepen philosophical thinking to determine possible branches and interrelations. All these philosophical thoughts are intertwined in a perfect balance to form a coherent, harmonious and complementary whole. Therefore, putting yourself in the overall vision of many ancient or modern philosophies is of great significance to grasp the depth of the thought of happy philosopher. Especially in the reflection of reductionism, understanding may be seriously obscured.

3. China-Africa Cooperation in the Era of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

The community of human destiny is not only an empty ideal, nor the marginalization of any specific realism, but a relevant pragmatic model. In fact, the pragmatism of the community of shared future for mankind is embodied in a clear and popular concept today: “win-win cooperation, mutual benefit’ and ‘win-win, sharing in advance” (Andrew & Zhang, n.d.).

Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, within the framework of China-Africa cooperation, Africa was initially included in the “belt and road” project and finally included in the practical approach of “exchanging infrastructure for raw materials” (Lasserre, 2019). According to the data of the African Infrastructure Federation, one of the reasons for the underdevelopment of the African continent is the serious lack of infrastructure to promote intraregional trade (Sané, n.d.). In 2015, intraregional trade in Africa accounted for 18%, while Europe, Asia and North America accounted for 69%, 52% and 50% respectively which accounted for only 2% of international trade and 16% of the world population (Lohalo, 2021). By 2025, US \$130 billion to US \$170 billion will be needed to cover the infrastructure deficit. A “belt and road” is a road that can build energy infrastructure along roads, railways, ports, airports. So far, the continent has benefited from several infrastructure development projects, more than 6000 kilometers of railways and roads, more than 130 large-scale stadiums, ports and more than 80 medical facilities⁷. Africa is gaining access to infrastructure by stimulating its international and regional trade so that it can accelerate its development process. China is also benefitting by attracting itself to the potentially large African world market in the future.

This is also a real experience sharing, especially considering that China adopted the same policy in the period of reform and opening up in the 1980s, exchanging the market for imported technology and western expertise for newly established local enterprises. This policy will undoubtedly enable China to gain a firm foothold on the roof of today’s world of economic and social development. The cooperation between China and Africa in infrastructure and raw materials is carried out within this experience sharing framework. Africa has raw materials, but no infrastructure and industry. China has the means and technology to help

⁷China International Development Cooperation Agency, China’s International Development Cooperation in the New Era, The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, January 2021.

it make up for its infrastructure deficit. The exchange is fair and balanced. This is good for both sides. Therefore, cooperation is win-win because all parties meet their needs.

Similarly, the innovation put forward by President Xi Jinping at the China Africa Forum (FOCAC) consists of eight main initiatives. In fact, at the Beijing Summit and the seventh meeting of the Forum on China Africa Cooperation in September 2018, President Xi Jinping announced the effective implementation of eight major initiatives, namely; the industrial promotion initiative, the infrastructure interconnection initiative, the trade facilitation initiative, the green development initiative, the capacity-building and health initiative, human and cultural exchange initiative and peace and security initiative⁸. These initiatives were put forward on the basis of extensive and in-depth consultations between Chinese and African parties, in line with the principles of sincerity, pragmatism, friendship and frankness, and in line with the concept of justice and interests. They reflect the pragmatism of Xi Jinping's thought in the community of a shared future for mankind.

In addition, these initiatives are in line with Africa's interests and needs and development strategies contained in the African Union agenda 2063. Specifically, for African countries, the focus is on building their own development capacity, so that China-Africa cooperation can be promoted to a higher level through innovative cooperation concepts and models, or the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In addition to the above two examples, the philosopher also personally participated in the China Africa Institute established in 2019, providing a permanent framework for African and Chinese scientists to reflect on the smooth development of China-Africa friendship. This is a sign of people's attachment to Africa and its willingness to learn more about Africa through its scientists.

4. Conclusion

This paper attempted to understand the philosophical connotation and understanding of the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind in China-Africa cooperation. President Xi Jinping's idea of a community with a shared future for mankind is neither an empty ideal, nor a marginalization of the real world dominated by power game and egoistic interests. But pragmatism is inseparable from another concept of mutual benefit and win-win.

The China's diplomatic philosophy is holistic and historical thinking. The Chinese looks at the world as a whole and reacts accordingly. Aiming at the community of a shared destiny of five-in one: equal partnership, mutual security, sharing development, confluent civilization and green ecology, China views the world experiencing profoundly and complex changes. These changes affect the configuration of power and international order. Accordingly, China's dip-

⁸Speech by President Xi Jinping at the Beijing Summit of China Africa Forum held in Beijing on September 3, 2018: "Work Together to Create a Community of Shared Future and Common Development" in <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>.

lomacy is dialectical which is a poling ideas of Lao Tzu's yin and yang, Hegelian dialectics and Marx-Engels dialectical materialism. Unity of opposition, mutual reinforcing and complementary have provided great source of inspiration and wisdom to deal with international affairs. While holding positive and optimistic views, China stresses bottom-line thinking. In China's perspective crisis can be an opportunity and an opportunity can be transformed to a crisis.

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Within the framework of China Africa cooperation, this concept can be understood as a major project to: integrate Africa into the belt and road initiative, negotiate with the African side to implement eight major measures to establish a cooperation framework plan suitable for the reality of Africa, participate in the establishment of China Africa Institute and the establishment of a framework for the exchange of Chinese and African scientists, so as to strengthen China-Africa friendship through in-depth study between the two sides.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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