

Through dialogue of cultures and convergence of civilizations – modern China on the partnership road towards development, peace and future of humanity

(Sociological marginalia about the Chinese strategy “Belt and Road”)

Summary: The paper elaborates on the following Chinese strategy: the dialogue of cultures and convergence of civilizations are a road of achieving partnership for sustainable development and peace in the world. The author first gives an overview of the history of Chinese culture and civilization: its depth, breadth and giant accomplishments. Then he discusses modern China from the period after Mao’s death and its leaders/reformers, in particular Deng Xiaoping and Xi Jinping, as the founders of the new development strategy in China’s internal and foreign politics. In that context, the focus of the author’s analysis is on China’s modernization and development strategy, relying on the rapid and high development of education, science and advanced technologies of the third and fourth developmental-civilizational waves, as well as liberalization of economy and democratization of social and political relations; the “Belt and Road” strategy – i.e., China’s great opening up and cooperating with the world through partnership for the sake of universal wellbeing of humanity, globalization with a human face, multipolar order and peace in the world.

Keywords: China, new leader profile, dialogue of cultures and civilizations, “Belt and Road”, globalization with a human face, partnership for peace and development in the world

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The future unifier of the world will not be any Western or pro-Western country – it will be China.

Arnold Toynbee

The story about China is the most successful story of development in world history.

Jeffrey Sachs

Chinese influence and rise in the world are the reality to which America must adjust.

Zbigniew Brzeziński, *Strategic Vision*

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We are building “Belt and Road” in a spirit of peace. The Old Silk Road flourished in peaceful times, while it deteriorated in wartime. The “Belt and Road” initiative cannot develop without a peaceful and stable environment.

We need to create a new type of international relations founded on mutually beneficial cooperation and to forge a partnership of building the common future of humanity, based on dialogue, and not conflict, on friendship, and not hatred. All countries should respect sovereignty, dignity and territorial integrity of other countries, appreciate their own development road and social system, as well as their core aspirations and interests.

Xi Jinping, *On Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity*

Time of challenges, geopolitical confusion and global transition from the unipolar world towards the multipolar world

Contemporary humanity is facing the rise of forces of the scientific-technological and informatic

revolution whose players are high professionals in the field of advanced technologies and ingenious creators of the new Internet generation. These new production forces strive for the world globalization and for opening the gates to the future of sustainable progress, solidarity and peace in the world. They are opposed by the forces of class monopoly, embodied in the alliance of mega-capital and its epigons and followers – ranging from modern technocracy, politocracy, mediocracy and the military-political complex. These forces would like to absolutize the power of capital and its world hegemony, to monopolize and conserve the unipolar order of “disaster capitalism” (N. Klein). Hence there is an ongoing increase in contradictions and conflicts in different parts of the world system and an increasingly evident split between the forces of the global North and the global South. These conflicts, from Ukraine to the Middle East, seem to be an introduction not only to the era of a new Cold War, but also a potential third world war.

In contrast to the daily-political analysts, who would like to camouflage real causes of these conflicts by oiling the wheels of the war machine that kills large numbers of people before our own eyes, but also destroys the legacies of civilization, turning them into new forms of ethnocide, urbi-cide and ecocide, serious researchers, futurologists and intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky, Immanuel Wallerstein, Ulrich Beck, Alvin Toffler, Edgar Morin and others, in their studies and journalist articles point not only to the causal matrix, but also to megatrends and the real nature of the ongoing conflicts, as well as of development tendencies – determinisms of the structural crisis of contemporary contradictions and conflicts, but

also the system change in modern times – from the unipolar world order towards the multipolar world order, and the replacement of predatory, murderous capitalism with post-capitalism as a new developmental and civilizational alternative of humanity.

In other words, humanity is at a new crossroads and demands not only new intellectual answers to the contemporary crisis, but also new forms of social engagement and combativeness of new generations, so as to achieve the victory of the alternative for peace, sustainable progress and survival of humanity and the planet.

A short overview of the history of Chinese culture, its deep roots and giant accomplishments

Besides India, China is the most populous country of the world, with about a billion and a half inhabitants. While until 1978 only 18% of the Chinese population lived in cities, in 2011, for the first time in this country's history, the city population was larger and, according to the expectations of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, until 2030, as many as 68% of the population will live in the cities. The history of China in the 21st century is marked by modernization, industrialization, urbanization, as well as domestic pluralization and global opening up to the world.

In *Insights into Chinese Culture* by Ye Lang and Zhu Liangzhi (2008), a special encyclopaedia of Chinese culture with a profound picture of development of various forms of culture and social conscience – from wisdom and beliefs, through

creativity and exchange, art and beauty, to folk customs and ecology – we may become familiar with the fascinating wealth and depth of Chinese culture ever since the time of Confucius and his *Book of Changes*, which elaborates the relationship between man and the heaven as one of the basic topics in Chinese philosophy. We will learn about the challenging philosophy of charity, philanthropy, respect for life and strongly developed ecological conscience, connectivity of man and nature and shared life of the world in the philosophy of light and virtue – people should begin from their mutual love and then spread that love towards everything that exists. Confucius believed that education was a prerequisite for improving own spiritual world and that it should serve a more sensible and wealthier life and evolvement of love and peace towards the world.

In ancient China, he founded pantheistic philosophy, which is pan-humanist and cosmopolitan. In its centre, there is the unity of all beings (kinds, nations) and things: philosophy of philanthropy and universal empathy of humanity. The idea in its focus is the idea that every being and thing has its nature of existence, *raison d'être*, which should be perceived and respected. Chinese civilization is open-minded and open-hearted towards the wealth and unity of the world's diversities. Life philosophy in traditional Chinese culture promoted cultural openness and tolerance, as well as enthusiasm for learning about different cultures. China was an advanced maritime and land civilization aspiring not only towards trade exchange, but also coexistence of different peoples and civilizations and the spreading of peace culture. This is, among other things, proved by the legend about the Yon-

gle Emperor sending Zheng He on a voyage to the West, along the so-called Maritime Silk Road. This is how the emperor advised Zheng He: “Stay on the heavenly path, follow law and order, do not mistreat smaller and weaker countries, spread prosperity and peace” (Lang, Liangzhi, 2022, p. 137). Even today this message is of current nature and significance in building peaceful politics of contemporary China. While Europe was undergoing dark ages, China was the oldest civilization in the world – the most enlightened and advanced empire on the planet, with the best governance (Durant, 2006, p. 80).

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Confucius had a great influence on China’s political and moral philosophy. Durant, among other things, writes that Confucius is the most important symbol of China, so great in size that it calls itself “the totality under the heavens”. Confucius’s philosophy of light is considered the philosophy of virtue and education as man’s continued improvement. The golden rule of moral and political philosophy was formulated by Confucius in the following way: “Return good for good, return evil for justice” (Crnjanski, 1923, p. 25). The greatest fortune of the people would be if the ignorant were prohibited access to public services, as well as if the wisest ones ruled (Durant, 2006, p. 27). His followers understood his greatness and foresaw the influence of his thought on the shaping of the social character and wisdom of the Chinese. As for the influence of this thinker and his importance for the spirit and history of China’s development, Durant writes: “No man has ever inscribed his name on the face and spirit of a nation as Confucius has done in China” (Durant, 2006, p. 170).

This is what Ye Lang and Zhu Liangzhi have written about Confucius’s philosophy: “The philanthropy of Confucianism is a kind of universal human sympathy, an interpersonal feeling of love for others” (Lang, Liangzhi, 2022, p. 211).

Another thinker with a strong influence on the culture of China and other East Asian societies and civilizations was Buddha, the founder of the religion of Buddhism as a symbol of light and enlightenment. He was the predecessor and incarnation of personalist-existentialist philosophy. His famous motto was: “Be a lamp unto yourself, Give the energy of light and charity to others”. With his energy of eternal light, he had the power to break the darkness in the human world and to spread enlightenment among ordinary people. That is why these two thinkers (Confucius and Buddha) are the most influential sages in the Eastern civilization world.

In his works, Arnold Toynbee writes about China and its mission throughout history, underlining that the Western tradition is nationalist, while Chinese tradition is ecumenical, and that is why the future belongs to China. He asserts that since the decline of the Roman Empire, the Western world has never succeeded in regaining its lost political unity, or the unity of the rest of the world, and that it is China’s destiny to ensure political unity and peace not only for half of the world, but the whole world. As for determinants and legacies which will enable China to become not only a geographical, but also a cultural foundation for the unification of the whole world, Toynbee states the following:

1. Twenty-one-century-long experience of the Chinese people's in maintaining the empire which is virtually a regional model for a world's state;
2. Ecumenical spirit permeating the Chinese nation throughout this long chapter of history;
3. Humanism of the Confucian view of the world;
4. Rationalism of Confucianism and Buddhism;
5. Feeling for mystery and admission that man's attempt to dominate the universe is devastating in itself;
6. Belief that, instead of trying to dominate the non-human nature, man should aim towards life in harmony with it;
7. Courage to pose challenges to the West in a positive competition, to peacefully put humanity into order and to achieve the ecumenical unity in the world;
8. The Chinese are not a nation with an aggressive ambition. They participate in enmities only when it is necessary to defend themselves. The Chinese maintain prevailing cosmopolitanism with Chinese ethnocentrism (Toynbee, Ikeda, 2005, p. 147).

French scientist and representative of historical sociology, Raymond Aron, writing about Chinese civilization as the oldest and the longest-standing in the history of humanity, in his study *Peace and War – A Theory of International Relations* (first edition in 1962, second in 1984), values positively the role of communist China in the country's industrializa-

tion and modernization processes, underlining also that “the authoritarian mono-party state has made China into a giant” (Aron, 2001, p. 332).

In his foreword to the collection *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*, Peter L. Berger writes about the phenomenon of Confucian Protestantism and its influence on the reproduction and mobility of modern meritocratic elite in China.

Today many researchers write without ideological burdens both about China's history and about its role in modern times, giving a different interpretation and symbolic meaning of the Chinese Wall and its former Silk Road strategy, emphasizing that China did not only defend itself from enemies, but also opened up to the world and that from such opening up – economic and commercial – and through the processes of trade exchange, also suffered acculturation processes, improved its technology and organization of work, as well as gave its technological and economic innovation as a gift to humanity and the world. This civilization, with deep roots and magnificent accomplishments, speaks about its always building successful bridges between transition and modernization processes, reaching the star-high peaks of humanity.

An overview of China's history – from revolution to evolution (about Deng Xiaoping's role)

The Chinese people's socialist revolution was led by Mao Zedong's Communist Party. It expanded

the notion and concept of the strategic partnership of social classes and political movements in the revolution. In the revolutionary practice, it was led by the Communist Party of China, relying on peasantry, because the social structure contained small numbers of workers due to undeveloped industry. In program terms, this revolution was founded on the unity of antifeudal and anticolonial liberation struggle. Namely, the small proletariat in the large numbers of population could not accomplish grandiose goals of the socialist revolution. That is why it was necessary to realize a strategic alliance of workers, peasants and intelligentsia. In program terms, this social and political revolution offered radical programs of agrarian reforms, anticolonialism and antifascism. It was only on such program that the revolution could awaken the initiative of Chinese people in its en masse struggle for social and political liberation. The legacies of that revolution are indisputable, particularly those embodied in the country's socialist industrialization, regardless of the mono-party system of governance. After Mao's death, the new collective leadership of the Communist Party of China, in the so-called cultural revolution, dogmatized ideologically and conserved politically the role of the Party in social development. It took the country into new contradictions and crossroads. The closure and changes were necessary for opening the space and releasing the initiative of the citizens and the people for further development (Marek, 1965).

After Mao Zedong's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping became the leader of China, inaugurating economic reforms and recovering China's

relations with the West. The government established diplomatic relations with the USA in 1979, and after late 1970s economy developed from centralist planning and state-owned industries to the combination of state-owned and private enterprises in production and services and, in the course of it, Chinese society increased its production, but also transformed itself.

Deng Xiaoping freed China from Mao's dogmatism and rigidity of the cultural revolution players (Mao's successors). He paved the road towards liberalization, modernization and democratization of economy and society. He focused on science, technology and educational policy as development factors of new China, its opening up to the world through positive competition and cooperation. At the same time, he softened the Party's monopoly and made its composition open for experts, echelons of the new profile of the leader. Instead of ideological suitability, the meaning of professionalism and work patriotism was put forward. Deng Xiaoping knew that China's opening up to the world required knowledge, education and science. In that respect, with the aid of the World Bank, he encouraged modernization and development of the country's educational system and raising the quality of education through exchange of students and teachers – in 1978, in there were China 165,000 students as compared to 5,300,000 in 2009; in 2011, on the list of 500 universities in the world, China ranked among five countries with the largest number of students. Another indicator is the number of Chinese students studying in the West, mostly in the USA.

Table 1. Number of students from China studying abroad

In 1978 there were 50 students.
In 1984 there were 14,000 students.
In 2010/2011 there were 157,000 students.
In 2011/2012 there were 194,029 students.
In 2021/2022 there were more than 500,000 students.

Source: Data for the period 1978-2012 were taken from David M. Lampton's study *Following the Leader* (pp. 23-24), originally relying on the study by the Institute for International Education, *Open-Doors Factsheet: China 2012*. The author of this paper took the data about the number of students in 2021/2022 from the projection presented at the gathering *China and the Balkans – Multicultural Dialogue*, which was held in Balchik, Bulgaria.

In his study *Following the Leader: Ruling China, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping*, David M. Lampton explored the revolution processes in China and the role of the leader as an actor of reforms and transformation of the Chinese state and society. The author particularly focused on the return and rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping and his merits in the conception of the program of reforms, liberalization and modernization of Chinese society and state and the role of the Party. In this study, based on the interviews with 558 Chinese leaders from 1971 to 2013, the author analyzed the evolution of Chinese leaders' thinking about governing the country and cooperating with the external world. The conclusion reached by the author is that the main strategic decisions of Deng Xiaoping and his associates (from 1977 to 1985) is that were classified into seven basic strategic categories which denoted the program and direction of social reforms and the politics of the new reformation course of the leaders after Mao Zedong:

1. From war and revolution to peace and development;
2. Pragmatic experimentalism;
3. Material impetuses of the market and the balance between the state and society;
4. New population development policy;
5. Education as a factor of building and promotion of capable cadres in economy and politics;
6. Maintaining the Communist Party's monopoly, but also transformation of its role in social changes;
7. From autarchy towards opening up to the world and using comparative advantages and interdependency in global politics (Lampton, 2015, pp. 18-28).

Three strategic decisions, the fruit of Deng's political and developmental philosophy, determined the future of modern China: 1) liberalization of economy and reaffirmation of the market's role;

2) democratization of society, new understanding of politics and the role of the Party; 3) opening up to the global world. Deng realized that politics and the Party must not have omnipotent power over manufacturers and citizens as in totalitarian systems, but their role in society should be encouraging, orienting and liberating. In that respect, Deng said: “Central power has no money, but it can offer you politics which will make it possible for you to do it yourself and to pave a new road” (Lampton, 2015, p. 27). These Deng’s words contain a cliché of a new understanding of politics, the party and society which will determine the direction towards a new, more participatory than mono-party system, and today, in the third decade of the 21st century, it is one of the most important challenges faced by the fifth generation of Chinese leaders, including Xi Jinping (Lampton, 2015, p. 226). In the context of changes, David M. Lampton in his study *Following the Leader* points out that, after Mao, three ideal types of the leader emerged in China – the transformational leader, the transactional leader and the executor of power. Lampton shows that the level of education of the leading cadres is changed not only in economy, but also in politics, emphasizing that 73% of the fifth-generation leaders (born mostly in the 1950s) today hold masters’ or doctoral degrees, while there is an increasing number of those who have studied abroad. At the same time, there is a gradual increase in the number of non-party individuals who hold the positions of vice-governors or deputy ministers (Lampton, 2015, p. 33).

It should be emphasized that Deng Xiaoping’s strategic initiatives led to significant transformations in the field of economy, as well as the political

system, social changes, urbanization, foreign affairs, and to the pluralization of society and democratization of the governance system and the leadership profile. A shift was made towards greater professionalization of the manager structure in economy and the strengthening of educational culture and professionalism at all levels of social organization. Deng Xiaoping made key strategic decisions, as researcher David M. Lampton asserts, underlining that the “greatest challenge for China is the question whether with less dominant leaders and with more pluralist and empowered bureaucratic institutions and society it can control itself in the country and abroad” (Lampton, 2015, p. 44).

In his study *The Grand Chessboard* (1997) Brzeziński properly predicted that “China’s future progress, as well as its growing into the major power, will largely depend on how skilfully the ruling elite will resolve two mutually connected problems: the question of transferring power from the present generation to the younger one and the question of coping with the increasing tensions between the economic and political systems” (Brzeziński, 1999. p. 152).

Xi Jinping as the leader of China’s new wave of modernization – program and strategies of the convergence of different civilizations, globalization with a human face and peace culture in the world

We live in the crucial era of humanity, the crisis of the neoliberal paradigm and unipolar globalization and search for an alternative project of the world’s

global and multipolar development in which the dialogue of different cultures and civilizations, as well as the convergence of different systems will be achieved.

It turns out that the domination of one development strategy and one power leads to neoimperialism, interventionism and violence/war conflicts in the world. Hence the request made by Xi Jinping at the 2017 Davos Forum for conducting globalization with a human face and peace, which would serve to all the nations of the world, as well as the request of Klaus Schwab, Director of the World Forum in Davos from 2019, for the “remoralization of globalization”, because the current model of asymmetric globalization has led to enormous growth of social and regional inequalities in the world, so it must be changed.

In modern times we face the rigid response of the USA to the crisis and the tendency of returning to conservative protectionist politics in international relations, which is a non-productive response to contemporary challenges. It is time for critical reconsideration of the global, neoliberal model of development and for abandoning the unipolar concept of asymmetric globalization, which is in the service of mega-capital and corporate power (transnational corporations) of the Atlantic Alliance powers. Only on the platform of the social-democratic development strategy is it possible to build the solidarist associative type of social relations and power, which will ensure: global justice and global peace in the world, sustainable peaceful development, coexistence of different peoples and civilizations, and convergence of different systems, thus opening up a road to the multipolar devilment of the world and happy future of humanity.

The Chinese strategy “Belt and Road”, established by Xi Jinping, is exactly an example providing and opening the road towards democratic progress, responsibility and partnership of all nations for sustainable and humane development of humanity. In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon neoliberal ideology of market fundamentalism, monetaristic and casino-gambling economy, today China is developing the capacities of real economy and represents a model of how to combine complementarily tradition and modernization processes, socialism and liberalism, and how to achieve successful growth and development in the world. Against this background, its reputation is growing in the world, Europe and the Balkans.

Reading the collection which contains Xi Jinping’s 85 articles and speeches, written and delivered between the beginning of 2013 and March 2019, entitled *On Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity*, we learn that Jinping spoke about the “Belt and Road” initiative for the first time in his lecture at Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan on 7th September 2013, pointing out the importance of connecting the Eastern and Western civilizations and of strengthening the communication and cooperation of nations and cultures as a necessary condition for progress. This is what Xi Jinping writes about this initiative, among other things: “It originally derived from my thoughts about the situation prevailing in the world. The world we live in today is the world of great progress, great transformation and deep change. The new stage of the scientific, technological and industrial revolution is currently in the state of creating driving forces of growth; national interests are becoming more and more

intertwined, while peace, development and mutually beneficial cooperation have become the main topic of our time". In his speech at the round table of the leaders of the "Belt and Road" Forum of International Cooperation in Beijing on 15th May 2017, Xi Jinping pointed more closely to the program determinations of the new platform and strategy of development of international economic and political cooperative relations, for the sake of advancing progress of civilization, peace and creation of the shared and brighter future. In that respect, the "Belt and Road" initiative, according to Jinping, is "the platform for open and inclusive cooperation, for a public good which we together give to the world... Although directed towards Asia and Europe, it does not reject any country or any side of the world" (Jinping, 2023, p. 531). This initiative gained support of more than 100 countries and international organizations and started the network of interconnected industrial cooperation on all four sides of the world, and has been shown that it has produced useful results not only for China, but the whole world as well. In his book *On Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity*, there is a justified program of common struggle for sustainable development in the world, the promotion of peaceful coexistence and partnership for the construction of a shared future of humanity. In this book, Xi Jinping emphasizes that "the Chinese dream does not refer only to the aspiration of making our own country prosperous and strong, to recover our nation and ensure happiness only to our nation. It is a dream about peace, development, cooperation and universal wellbeing... The Chinese people has always believed that China will do well only when

the whole world is doing well and that the world will do well only when China is doing well... China will continue to engage actively in the reform and development of the global governance system and thus try to make the international order more just and sustainable than it is" (Jinping, 2023, p. 51, 507, 612).

Denouncing dogmatism and sectarianism of ideas, contemporary China has turned a new page of the "Belt and Road" strategy in order to use the convergence of different systems to open the door of the future of humanity through partnership for sustainable development and peace in the world. The Chinese have understood that development and future of humanity can be built only through a dialogue, and not a conflict of civilizations. Today China uses the synergy of the potential of tradition and Confucian philosophy and Protestantism (Confucian Protestantism) as a specific symbiosis of moral and social solidarity, work and vocation ethics, neo-Marxism/socialism and liberalism and the power of new technologies of the third and fourth developmental-civilizational waves for the progress of society and humanity. Instead of ideological exclusiveness and political sectarianism, today's China is building bridges between civilizations and nations, respecting their autonomy/sovereignty and cultural diversity/identity (Mitrović, 2022, p. 152).

With the syntagm *neo-Confucian Protestantism*, I wanted to define a new development philosophy of contemporary China, which relies on a synthesis of the values of tradition and modernization, moral and social solidarity and ethics of work patriotism. The released creative energy of China's large population numbers is, therefore, making mir-

acles. Following moral messages of its sages, as well as of its contemporary leaders, on the platform of “let a thousand flowers flourish”, “it is not important what colour the cat is, it is important that it hunts mice” and the convergence of “one country – two systems”, competing with itself and the world in the “force of goodness and gift-giving”, China gives a valuable contribution both to its national development and to the development of contemporary humanity. Today, more than 500,000 Chinese people with secondary-school certificates continue their academic education at the most prestigious universities in the world. The largest number of people with masters’ and doctoral degrees then return to the country and get actively involved in the economic and social life of their home country. They seem to be announcing a new era of giant leadership rise of China and the meritocratic elite cycle in the world. As a matter of fact, in the past ten years, there has been an increasing number of students from Central and East Europe studying in China.

In his foreword to the collection *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*, Peter L. Berger writes about cultural dynamics of globalization, pointing to the phenomenon of culture hybridization, stating the example of China and its successful economic diaspora, whose culture is formed from the parts of traditional personalism and modern business culture in the West. Berger emphasizes the following: “To an extent in which China itself is integrated in the global economic system, examples of hybridization may appear, analogous to the lately popular understanding of the ‘Confucian merchant’, a learned businessman” (Berger, 2002, p. 18).

The slogan “Belt and Road” has a profound symbolic meaning: the road has an opportunity for strategic breakthroughs/progress and reaching new developmental-civilizational horizons only if its belt develops and expands simultaneously. This Chinese strategy says, in a philosophical-sociological language, that sustainable development of humanity is possible and feasible only if all its parts are evenly developed. The same regularity refers to the peace in the world. “There is no global peace without global justice” is the warning by the former President of Brazil, Lula da Silva. Unfortunately, we live in the world in which the future is already here, but it is not evenly distributed yet (W. Gibson), in which there is a sociological paradox: dichotomy between hyper-technological progress and social subdevelopment (M. Castells). Accordingly, French sociologist Edgar morin defines the anthropological aspect of the contemporary crisis in the following way: “Contemporary humanity is in crisis because it is insufficiently human”.

Defining the relationship between tradition and goals/ideals, i.e., the program of the movement led by him, Great Italian antifascist and leader of the Communist Party of Italy, Palmiro Togliatti, said, among other things: “We came from afar and are going far”. In this key/spiritual horizon, the attitude of China’s current leadership could be decoded/interpreted towards tradition, i.e., understanding and building a complementary relationship between tradition and modernization in the program and practice in the acting of social players in contemporary China. Namely, freeing itself from dogmatism of ideas and political sectarianism in post-Mao period and

opening up towards pluralist forces/potentials of Chinese and world society, China has not only modernized but also formulated “Belt and Road”, a new development concept and a vision for the new millennium.

The philosophical foundation of this concept is the theory of convergence and the world system redefined in a neo-Marxist spirit. It is composed of pluralist forces of the modern world of labour and other social players as development factors of new production forces of technological and general social progress and construction of a multifaceted pluralist civilization of the future. On that platform, releasing society’s new production forces for development, China has managed to achieve enormous growth through its new relationship towards education, science and new technologies, and the synergy of legacies both of its own and world’s development, and to become today’s leader/superpower, the leading country in the technological, economic and culture development in the modern era.

Nowadays, China is not only the most populous country in the world, but also the country with annual economic growth of over 10% for almost 30 consecutive years, which is the highest registered growth rate in one of the major world economies in history (Zakaria, 2009, p. 88). The Chinese model of economic growth and development is exceptionally appealing to the largest number of the countries in the South and the emerging countries, as pointed out by Dragana Mitrović, PhD, Professor at the Faculty of Political Science and the founder and director of the Institute for Asian Studies, underlining that today China is the largest exporter

and the second largest importer in the world, which achieves high surpluses. It has become a global investor with 12,000 projects in 172 countries worth a total of 613 billion US dollars, which makes it the largest or one of the largest global investors or creditors. Its currency has been internationalized. Moreover, it is the epicentre of the coalition of powers gathered in the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Together with Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa, China is promoting the idea of the necessary overcoming of the unipolar world and the creation of the multipolar world, which has a positive echo throughout the world (Mitrović, 2023, p. 11). China is the country with the largest number of universities and doctors of science, the greatest innovation in the field of modern technologies and production forces development of the third wave. Moreover, China is the country with significant military power and nuclear potential. As such, today it is not a threat to world peace, but a model in all respects. Its politics of opening up to the world, while respecting its national and liberation traditions, poses a challenge today. Young Chinese people are the largest group among foreign students at universities worldwide. China is open for globalization processes and with its politics of peaceful coexistence it gives a contribution to the multipolar world development. Therefore, in about ten years or so China will exceed the USA and become an inviolable leader in many fields of creation, as well as in development potentials. Many economists, sociologists and political scientists (Jeffrey Sachs, Immanuel Wallerstein, Noam Chomsky, Fareed Zakaria...) announce that we are already living in

the century of America's declining/disappearing power and that the "Chinese century" is setting in.

If the thesis of the unity of theory and practice is advocated on the basis of the dialectical theory of revolutionary praxis, then the true face of a theory is proved by its successful realization in practice. Starting exactly from this truth, we may say that the Chinese strategy of convergence has proved its advantages in practice by ensuring the progress of the society's production forces and a step forward from poverty, through concurrent development of real economy capacities in industry and new technologies of the third and fourth developmental-civilizational waves. The result of all these is huge technological, economic and social progress of Chinese society. Such development of contemporary China has made this country a respectable actor and a global leader. By reforming its model of development and opening up to the world, contemporary China advocates the change of neoliberal asymmetric globalization, which is in the function of absolutization of mega-capital power, and for the establishment of a socio-democratic model of globalization with a human face, as well as the transformation of global relations in the world – from unipolar to multipolar one (Sklair, 2002, pp. 244-271; p. 311; pp. 322-326).

Serbia supports and follows China's politics and develops sound economic, friendly and political relations with it, based on the principles of equal cooperation. The economic cooperation between Serbia and China is mostly based on direct investments and trade partnership. Today in Serbia, many Chinese companies have been engaged: in the field of mining, *Zijin Bor Copper*

(in Bor) and *Hesteel* (Smederevo Steelworks); Chinese companies are engaged in the construction of Belgrade–Budapest railway; Chinese company *CMEC* is engaged in the construction of energy projects in Kostolac B. The first large Chinese investment was the construction of the bridge on the Daube. Chinese companies have also been engaged in the construction of the new motorway in Serbia, within Corridor 11. In 2017, the Bank of China was opened in Belgrade. China and Serbia have signed a Memorandum of common shares and investments in agriculture, trade and tourism. The cooperation has also improved in the field of higher education, culture and science, while the diplomatic relations between these two countries are at the highest level.

China is a reliable partner in the preservation of sovereignty, international law and peace in the world. It plays a role of the constructive actor in the Organization of United Nations and in building a new, just and democratic multipolar world. As such, China can be a solid partner in the economic growth of the Balkans and its stable political development. That is why improving the relations with it today is in the interest of the Balkan countries and, at the same time, a contribution to the improvement of peace in the world.

China – a giant whose era is just beginning

Great French poet and novelist Victor Hugo once wrote: "Nothing else in the world is so powerful as an idea whose time has come". This thought

may be paraphrased today when writing about contemporary China, its perspective and mission in the future.

This populous and spacious country has opened up to the world and risen with dignity. It is becoming a model country. The country with the largest number of educated people, highly advanced technologies, the fastest economic growth, the largest army... It is also a leader by the number of ingenious innovators and creation in different spheres of life and work. It is the country whose leaders believe in the project of a shared future of humanity and of globalization with a human face, who follow the strategy of the dialogue of different cultures and the partnership of convergence of different civilizations and socio-cultural identities and systems, which do not threaten the world with weapons but conquer it with their work, spreading the culture of peace, cooperation and pan-humanism, awakening the hope in renaissance and future of the democratic socialism idea. This development strategy was built on the synthesis of Confucianism and Buddhism, tradition and modernization of contemporary China that is becoming a leader of the new development philosophy of the world: the achievement of “the working force for good” (Goleman, 2016), coexistence and peaceful cooperation in the world. It believes that knowledge is multiplied and spread through sharing with others, while goodness is achieved through gifts and solidarity. Its leaders today believe in Ghandi’s idea of the connection between peace and development – that “peace is a revolutionary idea; the study *Peace by Peaceful*

Means determines that revolution as a non-violent one. That revolution is occurring all the time; our task is to expand its scope and reach. These tasks last and will also last in the future; the question is only whether we are up to them” (Galtung, 2009, p. 377).

Li Bai, the poet who dreamed and wrote during the Tang dynasty rule, the golden age of poetry in China, left poetic masterpieces of a broad thematic and style spectrum, in which the universe of man’s soul is connected with the universe of the world, the land and the sky, while the people looking into the star-lit future of humanity is indeed the only one with pan-humanist and cosmopolitan energy and chance to be a true unifier of the multipolar world. Reading his poems, we feel the strong intertwining of man and the nature, the dream and the spirit of Chinese people’s freedom on the road of connecting and implementing Confucian philanthropy as a life philosophy and universal human empathy, or what Confucius called “love for others, for all beings in the world”. Only such authentic love with respect for the nature, dignity and diversity of identities of other beings, nations and cultures has the power and strength to move mountains, to open gates of the heart, to build bridges with other nations, cultures and civilizations. In short, to overcome all the obstacles on its road. To the happiness and joy of humanity, the future belongs to China. The legendary poet also dedicated these verses to China – they fly like flags, and point, like signal lights, eternal lamps and signposts from the rich treasury of Chinese poetry, to the star-lit goals of the struggle of the Chinese people and humanity:

Ljubiša R. Mitrović

Through dialogue of cultures and convergence
of civilizations – modern China on the partnership road
towards development, peace and future of humanity

*Raise your hand as if to reach for the star,
so happy that you have no strength to return,*

...

I want to raise my hand,

And reach for the moon

Mountains will be unable to stop me!

(Li Bai, in Lang, Liangzhi, 2022, p. 216)

With these Li Bai's verses and optimistic poetic words, we will finish our elaboration of China and its magnificent culture and civilization, with deep roots and high accomplishments, whose descendants continue to build the bridges of peaceful connectivity and cooperation among nations in the 21st century, reaching the star-high peaks of humanity.



A Buddhist monk during the service in the Kumbum Monastery (in Tibetan Gu Ben Xian Ba Lin),
one of the six monasteries for Gelug of Tibetan Buddhism, with more than 800 monks.

Photo: Uroš Šuvaković

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