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“Belt and Road”: One Decade of Successful Global Cooperation

This thematic issue of the journal *Progress*, published by the Foundation “For the Serbian people and the state”, is dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the implementation of the “Belt and Road”, which was initiated by President of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping.

Looking back at the decade since the successful beginning of the project implementation, we may state that it is the greatest multilateral project ever, not counting, of course, the creation and development of the Organization of United Nations, which includes more than 150 countries. Although there have been attempts to present this project primarily as an economic, infrastructural and investment one, it cannot be reduced only to that dimension because it has marked China’s great opening up to the cooperation with the whole world and in all spheres: from investments in infrastructural projects, via cooperation in the fields of virology and public health, which was particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, to

cooperation in the fields of ecology and culture. Therefore, it is a comprehensive cooperation at the global level, closely connected with President Xi Jinping’s vision about *three global initiatives*. Most importantly, the basic principle of this cooperation is its voluntariness: every sovereign country which believes that it will have interest in participating in the “Belt and Road” initiative is welcome and it will participate in those fields subject to its interests. The inclusive characteristic of the “Belt and Road” has extraordinary significance for small countries, often used to being forced to participate in an international initiative or not, regardless of how they would choose of their own free will. We believe this is exactly the reason for the large success of this initiative.

By expressing our honour to President of the People’s Republic of China for initiating this global initiative and by publishing the texts of Chinese and Serbian authors in this issue dedicated to the “Belt and Road” implementation, we would like to welcome President Xi Jinping to Serbia.

Articles

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Get a Keen Grasp of the Inherent Relations between the Vision of a Human Community with a Shared Future and the Three Global Initiatives

Summary: The focus of this research is on the Global Civilization Initiative, the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative of General Secretary Xi Jinping as China's unique and strategic response to the global society challenges and the vision of future progress. Economic growth is the foundation of security and civilization, while further work will show the importance of the vision of Chinese communists who, in the era of deep changes and crises, see a solution in the fact that the progress of other countries leads to the establishment of the world of wellbeing and safety. The three initiatives are inherently connected and mutually strengthening, which points to the road of progress of human society from three different perspectives – growth, security and civilization. China will work hard on their implementation in order to help the international community to achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and inject strong impetus into global economic growth because it is the pathway towards world peace and cooperation.

Keywords: three global initiatives, economic growth, global security, friendship, planetary harmony

In March 2023, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed to the world the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High Level Meeting. It was then that the last piece was added to the organic unity consisting of the vision of a human community with a shared future, the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Security Initiative (GSI). The unity, following the trend of human progress and in response to the once-in-a-century changes of the world, points to the right direction where the world

at the crossroads should go. It is a new development of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy and speaks volumes about the sense of history, the sense of mission and responsibility and the global vision of the Chinese Communists with Comrade Xi Jinping as their chief representative. To break new ground in advancing the major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, we must get a sound grasp of the scientific nature and the considerable significance of this unity and the inherent relationship between the vision and the three global initiatives.

From the historical perspective, the three global initiatives, accurately reflecting three major themes of human progress, constitute three pillars supporting the overarching vision of a human community with a shared future.

Throughout the long river of history, different civilizations, flowing and converging from time to time, have surged forward like the waves. Along with the continuous progressing of human society and the deepening of globalization, countries have become increasingly connected and inter-dependent, gradually forming a community with a shared future. Meanwhile, people of all countries come to realize that material abundance, peace and stability and cultural prosperity are what all societies aspire to. To achieve them, we need growth, security and civilization, which complement and reinforce each other. As an ancient Chinese saying goes, “Only when the granary is full will people learn etiquette; only when people are well-fed and clothed will they know honor and shame.” Growth is the basis for security and civilization. Only when all countries prosper can peace last and civilization thrive. Another ancient Chinese saying goes that “Stability brings a country prosperity while instability leads a country to poverty.” Security is the prerequisite of growth and civilization, without which the latter cannot be achieved. Ancient Chinese also believe that the civilized tend to enjoy safety while the uncivilized are more prone to troubles and danger. Civilization is what grows on the basis of growth and security. It is the accumulation of a people’s cultural pursuit and carries the imprint of a nation’s history. It has a gradual and imperceptible influence on people’s way of thinking and doing things, providing spiritual strength to the cause of development and security.

The three global initiatives, inherently connected and reinforcing each other, point out the way forward for the progress of human society from three different perspectives, namely growth, security and civilization. They are the main buttresses supporting the vision to build a human community with a shared future. The GDI, from the perspective of growth, answers the question of what development philosophy people need and how to achieve global development. It aims at creating the material foundation for this human community with a shared future. The GSI, from the perspective of security, focuses on the issue of what security concept humanity needs and how to achieve universal security. It aims at building the security guarantee for the community. The GCI, from the perspective of the upper structure, answers the question of how to view different civilizations and how to enable exchanges and mutual-learning among them. It aims at building the cultural foundation for the human community.

From the perspective of practice, focusing on the prominent issues amid the profound changes, unseen in a century, the three global initiatives provide viable paths for the world to build a human community with a shared future.

Today, our world, our times, and the historical course are changing in ways like never before. The global economic recovery is weak and faltering, various security challenges keep emerging, misunderstanding, estrangement and conflicts among civilizations still exist, and deficits in global peace, development, security and governance are going from bad to worse. As the world has entered a new round of turbulence and transformation, humanity has once again reached a crossroads in history. Its future depends on the choice of all peoples around

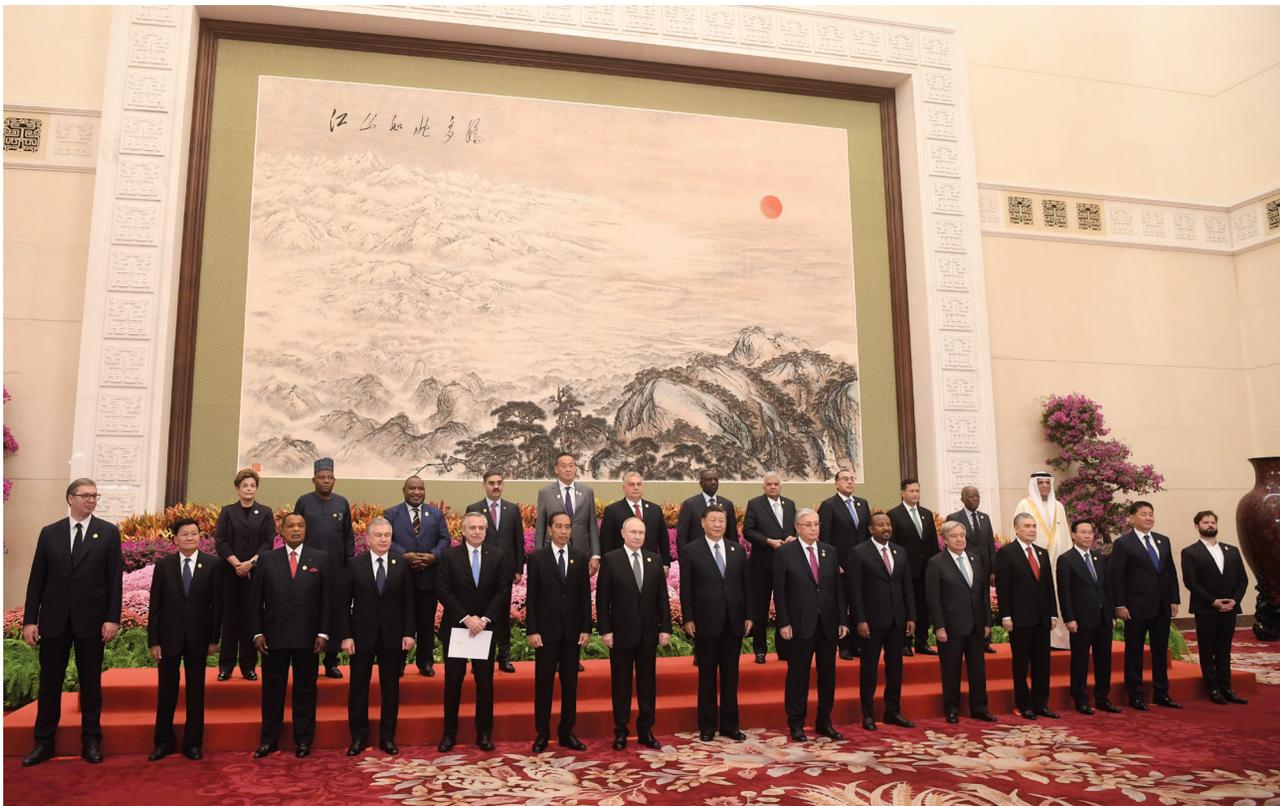
Liu Jianchao

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the world. At this historical juncture, General Secretary Xi Jinping, with his great foresight, sets the direction for the world by proposing the vision of building a human community with a shared future as the overarching goal, and the three global initiatives as the action plans to address the outstanding issues facing humanity, and call on all countries to join the just cause.

The three global initiatives, centering on the overarching goal of building a human community

with a shared future, are three well-conceived prescriptions that aim to take on the fundamental ills of the world and address their crux, a fine example of the problem-oriented approach. Targeting issues like humanity's survival, development and modernization, the GDI has effectively responded to the strong aspiration and urgent need of the international community, developing countries in particular, for faster economic growth. It also focuses on tackling the unbalanced and inadequate development within



President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, with President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping and other world leaders at the opening ceremony of the Third Forum for International Cooperation "Belt and Road", Beijing, October 2023

Photo: Dimitrije Gol

and among nations, thus setting the direction for the cause of global development and global cooperation on development. Going forward, China will work hard to implement the GDI, so as to help the international community to achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at a faster pace and inject strong impetus into global economic growth. On issues related to conflicts, wars, stability and peace, the GSI sheds light on the practical pathway to global security governance. It serves not only as a sound guidance for humanity to deal with global security challenges, but also a viable solution to regional hot-spots and geopolitical conflicts. China's success in brokering the reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and its commitment to promoting the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis through peace talks are all cases in point of how we resolve security dilemmas by following through the GSI. Targeting issues like misunderstanding, estrangement, lack of mutual trust and inclusiveness among civilizations, the GCI aims to achieve the dialectical unity of diversity and commonality of civilizations, by seeking the common ground among them while fully respecting their diversity. On the one hand, the GCI highlights the importance of inheritance as each civilization has its own rich past. Meanwhile, it also emphasizes the need to fully harness the relevance of its past to the present times as history is always a mirror to understand the present and future. It then advocates building a global network for inter-civilization dialogue and robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation to promote mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries and pool greater consensus for inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning.

From the perspective of philosophy, the vision of building a human community with a shared future and the three global initiatives demonstrate salient theoretical characters and the unity of the worldview and the methodology.

The vision of building a human community with a shared future provides scientific answers to the epochal questions of what kind of world we should build and how to build it. The vision, together with the new outlook on growth, security and civilization encompassed in the three global initiatives, represent the worldview of China and the Chinese Communists in the new era. They also provide the methodology for putting that worldview into practice, as they contain not only profound political wisdom but also many practical pathways and measures. Thus, they represent the unity of both the worldview and the methodology.

The vision of building a human community with a shared future and the three global initiatives are scientific. They encapsulate the stances, viewpoints, and methods of Marxism, reflecting the hallmarks of Marxism, and demonstrating salient theoretical characters. Underpinned by dialectical and historical materialism, the vision and the three global initiatives reveal the laws governing the development of human society and its future direction. They also provide scientific methods and pathway to advance human society, demonstrating the great power of truth.

The vision of building a human community with a shared future and the three global initiatives are people-centered. Focusing on the aspiration for a better life of peoples around the world, the vision and the three global initiatives highlight the overall interests of humanity and strive to improve the common wellbeing of all peoples. Moreover, they care for each individual.

Liu Jianchao

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Actively responding to the yearning of peoples of various countries for peace, development and cooperation, the vision and the three global initiatives are committed to creating conditions to realize and guarantee each individual's well-rounded development.

The vision of building a human community with a shared future and the three global initiatives are practical. They embody the CPC's strong sense of responsibility to promote world harmony through concrete actions. More facts will prove their correctness and imperativeness. Their meaning and theoretical system will be further enriched with the changes of situation.

From the perspective of civilization, the vision of a human community with a shared future and the three global initiatives, rooted in the Chinese civilization, steer theoretical innovation on international relations in the new era.

As General Secretary Xi Jinping noted, "To meet our common challenges and create a better future for all, we look to culture and civilization to play their role, which is as important as the role played by economy, science, and technology." The Chinese civilization advocates affinity between all people and all creatures, and peace among all nations as it believes that humanity rises and falls together, which underlies the way we Chinese view and understand societies and peoples of different regions and languages. For us, an ideal society pursues the common good as a just cause and advances common interests of all. The sound economic ethics put people's enrichment and wellbeing first and uphold justice while pursuing interest. The right security concept favors virtue over war and believes that essence of using force is to stop violence. The correct way to engage with other civilizations is to seek harmony

without uniformity and appreciate other cultures and promote shared prosperity. The most important principle to uphold when interacting with others is credibility, amity and good-neighborliness. What the vision of a human community with a shared future and the three global initiatives pursue – namely peaceful co-existence, win-win cooperation, inclusiveness, and shared growth – has been all along in the genes of the Chinese civilization. They speak volumes about the defining features of the Chinese civilization, namely its continuity, creativity, consistency, inclusiveness, and peaceful nature. They are a fine example of how our Party adapts the basic tenets of Marxism to China's specific realities and its fine traditional culture. They also represent a major breakthrough by the Party in its exploration for the future of humanity.

Traditional Western theories of international relations tend to observe the world from the perspectives of strength and geo-politics. Theories like "the hegemonic stability" and "the clash of civilizations" are imbued with exclusionary ideas. In contrast, the core tenets of the vision of a human community with a shared future and the three global initiatives are rooted in the Chinese civilization. At the same time, they are highly consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter including developing friendly relations among nations based on sovereign equality and respect for equal rights of peoples, maintaining international security by collective and peaceful means, and achieving international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, or cultural character. These creative and ingenious views on international relations demonstrate oriental wisdom and provide a new perspective and paradigm for humanity to



Antique Chinese sundial with compass

Photo: Shutterstock

think about ways of engagement among nations and ways to tackle global challenges. Such a mindset, totally different from that of the traditional Western theories in nature, determines that China will never tread the old path of seeking hegemony even when it grows in strength, engage in hegemonism or power politics, pursue its own security at the cost of the security of others, stoke division or confrontation, or create small circles to alienate those with different views. Instead, China will remain committed to promoting world peace, driving global development and safeguarding the international order.

The vision of a human community with a shared future and the three global initiatives uphold and apply Marxist stances, viewpoints and methods, and constitute a well-developed system of thought with compelling logic. They reflect a keen grasp of the law of history and the Chinese civilization, and

the deep reflection on the questions presented by the times. The three global initiatives, which are interconnected, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, provide a strong underpinning for the vision of a global community with a shared future and offer China's solution to build a better world. On the new journey ahead, guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, in undertaking the CPC's external work we will continue to implement Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, hold high the banner of the human community with a shared future, and pool positive energy worldwide to deliver the three global initiatives. We will honor the Party's solemn commitment to seeking progress for humanity and harmony for the world, and make an even greater contribution to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the advancement of the cause of human progress.

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Unveiling Historical Laws of the Rise and Fall of Human Civilization and Pointing to Path for Civilization Advancement: Theoretical Connotation and Practical Value of the Global Civilization Initiative

Summary: Analyzing strategic advantages and the depth of the Global Civilization Initiative and its role in the modernization of humanity, through the practice of the Chinese path and respect for diversities, the author offers a scientific vision of further development of the planet and directions of progress. The opening of the ancient Silk Road provided important channels for the exchange of cultures, goods and information between the East and the West, laying a strong foundation for further cooperation of civilizations. Even after numerous social, political and economic changes in the international environment, China remains firm in pursuing independent foreign politics of peace, vigorously advocating Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and for continued expansion of friendly exchanges and mutually useful cooperation with the countries throughout the world which have different cultures and ideologies. The global security deficit can be solved only through honest understanding and respect, and that is why China insists on mutual consultation and understanding with the promotion of shared progress through cooperation.

Keywords: Global Civilization Initiative, mutual cooperation, unity, scientific socialism, modernization

At the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward for the first time the Global Civilization Initiative, which profoundly answered the “question of humanity’s modernization” and instilled confidence and strength into the promotion of coexistence, exchange and mutual appreciation of different civilizations, the progress of

humanity’s modernization and the prosperity of the garden of world civilizations. The Global Civilization Initiative originates from the exploration and practice of the Chinese path to modernization and draws on the experiences and lessons of all civilizations, embodying the historical laws and practical logic of the progress of human civilizations. With rich theoretical connotation and



Mock-up of the Forbidden City, formerly the emperor palace of Chinese dynasties, today a museum, Beijing

Photo: Milica Dragić

significant practical value, the Global Civilization Initiative demonstrates the wisdom and commitment of an ancient civilization with a history of more than 5,000 years, and is another important scientific solution provided by China in the new era to address the challenges faced by the entire human race.

Profoundly Unveiling the Historical Laws of the Rise and Fall of Human Civilizations

Each of the various civilizations created by mankind has its own distinctive characteristics, and they together have made important contributions to the development and progress of humanity, accumulating a rich heritage. Based on a profound understanding of the historical

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development process of human civilizations and the new form of human advancement brought about by the Chinese path to modernization, the Global Civilization Initiative emphasises respect for diversity of global civilizations and promotes a civilizational perspective of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness. In any period of history, civilizations can be “beautiful in their own right and appreciate the beauty of others” so long as they focus on exchanges, mutual learning and inclusiveness. On the contrary, any civilization that advocates the estrangement, collision, and superiority between civilizations, based on a winner-takes-all approach, even though it may gain the upper hand that is powered through for a while, will eventually lose in the long run. As crystallization of labour and wisdom, every civilization embodies and perpetuates the spiritual lineage of a country and a nation, whose historical heritage and development innovations must follow the laws governing historical development and conform to historical trends. Chinese civilization, the only great civilization in the world that has been developing without interruption, has been rooted in the fertile soil of a multi-ethnic culture that is harmonious in diversity and has achieved inclusive development through exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations.

Let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement. As an old Chinese saying goes, “Learning alone without exchanges with others will lead to ignorance.” The interactions among civilizations serves as the basis for the harmonious coexistence of humanity. In historical practice, communication among civilizations sustained various constraints

due to differences in geography, language and cognition, resulting in long-standing barriers. Nevertheless, mankind never relented in its efforts to promote the exchanges among civilizations. The opening of the ancient Silk Road, for example, provided an important channel for the exchanges and interactions between the Eastern and Western civilizations. Through the Silk Road, economic, cultural and scientific exchanges among countries such as the ancient China, India, Persia, Arabia and Rome continued to expand, greatly contributing to the development and progress of human civilizations. Many achievements of people-to-people exchanges were absorbed during the formation and development of ancient Chinese and Western philosophy, laying a sound foundation for exchanges among civilizations. It is not of pure coincidence in history that the ideas of Confucius and Plato are similar in some way. Their historical and cultural roots may be traced back to the exchanges and integration of early human civilizations. In modern times, exchanges and cooperation among countries around the world have become more frequent and extensive, and human society has thus created a more integrated modern civilization. At the beginning of the 20th century, Marxism spread from the West to China, and China and European countries, as representing Eastern and Western civilizations respectively, came across an important turning point for exchanges among civilizations. After its birth, the Communist Party of China (CPC), taking Marxism as its guiding ideology, has broken new ground for Chinese revolution and development, demonstrating the charm of Chinese civilization, and contributing to the enrichment and development of world civilization to a greater extent.

Let mutual learning transcend collision. As a Chinese adage goes, a delicious soup is cooked by combining different ingredients. Diversity of civilizations endows different civilizations with unique charm, and it is only by complementing each other's advantages and learning from each other can we enhance the quality of our own civilization and promote the creative development of human civilizations. There is no such thing as a perfect civilization or a good-for-nothing civilization in the world. Civilizations are enriched by mutual learning and sublimated by integration. The strong vitality demonstrated by Chinese civilization in our era lies in the extensive borrowing and absorption of advanced human civilization achievements. By combining the basic principles of Marxism with China's reality and the excellent Chinese traditional culture, the CPC has scored a series of major theoretical achievements and led the Chinese people of all ethnic groups to create a form of civilization featuring coordinated development of material, political, cultural-ethical, social and ecological advancement, providing valuable experience and useful reference for the development and revitalization of civilizations in other countries. China remains firm in pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace, vigorously advocates the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and continuously expands friendly exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation with countries around the world with different cultures and ideologies. Unlike some Western scholars and politicians who vigorously advocate the theory of clash of civilizations in the international community, the Chinese people are not only deeply aware of the differences between the

Chinese civilization and other civilizations, but also committed to promoting broader and higher-level dialogues among civilizations, striving to transcend collision of civilizations through mutual learning among civilizations.

Let inclusion transcend alleged superiority. As an old Chinese saying goes, diversity in harmony generates while sameness stifles vitality. There is no superiority or inferiority of civilizations, only differences in characteristics. All civilizations deserve respect, and this is the necessary broad-mindedness for dealing with different civilizations. History has shown that only through inclusiveness can human civilizations have the impetus to exchange and learn from each other, and only by transcending the alleged superiority of some civilization can all civilizations achieve progress and everlasting development in exchanges and mutual learning. Drawing on their economic, technological and military advantages since modern times, some Western countries have alleged superiority of Western races, cultures and civilization, claiming Western civilization as the end of human history. This view of civilization, with its distinctive feature of capitalist ideology, not only makes Western culture suffer from increasing narrow-mindedness and seclusion, but will also inevitably intensify the clash of civilizations, inducing hatred and unrest among nations. Throughout its 5,000-year history of civilization development, the Chinese people have always followed the principle of "diversity in harmony", and have made an indelible contribution to human advancement by understanding and respecting the civilizations of other countries while maintaining their cultural self-confidence. Since the founding of the People's Republic of

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China, the Chinese Government and people have firmly advocated that civilizations should respect and learn from each other and that each country follows the path of civilization development that is consistent with its own reality and the needs of its people. China will never engage in cultural colonialism or ideological export, nor will it seek to change the political systems and development models of other countries, and even less interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. China stands firmly against all forms of alleged superior civilization and all obsessive attempts to transform or even replace other civilizations, striving for harmonious coexistence of different civilizations with mutual appreciation.

In-depth Understanding of the Practical Logic of the Progress of Human civilizations

The Global Civilization Initiative not only provides ideological guidance for the progress of human civilizations, but also clarifies the pursuit of values, indicates the direction of advancement and points to a practical path for the progress of human civilizations from a rational and pragmatic perspective, thus becoming a guide for action in advancing humanity's modernization process and making the garden of world civilizations flourish.

The Global Civilization Initiative upholds the pursuit of values for the progress of human civilizations. In the course of thousands of years of development, human civilizations have gradually absorbed the values of peace, development,

equity, justice, democracy and freedom, which are shared by the entire mankind and constitute distinctive mark of advanced civilizations. Peace and development are the common cause of mankind, equity and justice are the shared ideals, and democracy and freedom, the common aspiration. In the face of a complicated world, humanity's shared values serve as a largest concentric circle for mankind to build broad consensus, arriving at the greatest common divisor for all peoples in aspiring a better future, and leading the value orientation to work together for a better world. To advocate the shared values of mankind, countries need to uphold a highly responsible attitude towards the future and destiny of humanity, to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilizations, and to respect the exploration of path to values by people of all countries. Instead of imposing their own values or models on others or stoking ideological confrontation, countries should adhere to the shared values of mankind in a concrete and realistic way in their practice of fulfilling the interests of their peoples.

The Global Civilization Initiative makes clear the direction of progress of human civilizations. Throughout history, mankind as a whole has progressed towards the development of productive forces, political equity and justice, and well-rounded development of individuals, and towards peace, cooperation, development and win-win situations. However, this progress is not about setup divide of history, but continuously innovating in the inheritance of civilizations. At the practical level, it is about fully tapping into the historical and cultural values of each country and

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promote the creative transformation and innovative development of its fine traditional culture in modernization process. As the foundation for the inheritance and development of a country and a nation, the fine traditional culture not only needs to be protected and passed on from generation to generation, but also requires innovation in modernization by keeping pace with the times. In the process of its formation and development, traditional culture is inevitably subject to the limitations and constraints of people's level of understanding, the historical conditions and the social systems at different times, and inevitably bears the imprint of the old times, and contains obsolete and outdated things. That requires mak-

ing correct choices in the context of modernization requirements while studying, researching and applying traditional culture. Adhering to the principle of making the past serve the present and learning from the past, we should carry forward the traditional culture in a discriminative way. We should promote the integration of traditional culture and the contemporary culture in creative transformation and innovative development. All countries around the world should respond to the new requirements of the progress of the times, strengthen the harness of the relevance of their own histories and cultures to the present times, carry forward the spirit of fine traditional culture that transcends time and space, transcends



View of Gulangyu Island, which is in the UNESCO World Heritage list, Xiamen, the Province of Fujian

Photo: Ivona Katić

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national boundaries, that is full of eternal charm and values to our times, and make the most basic cultural genes of their countries to adapt to the trends of the times, harmonize with the contemporary society and co-exist with the rich and colourful civilizations created by people all over the world, so as to provide correct ideological guidance and immense impetus for pushing forward the progress of human civilizations.

The Global Civilization Initiative provides a practical path to the progress of human civilizations. Countries around the world have nurtured their respective brilliant civilizations, complementing each other, thus laying a solid foundation for international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation, which not only are important ways to promote mutual understanding and affinity among peoples of different countries and jointly advance the progress of human civilizations, but more significantly serve as important pillars for building a new type of international relations in the new era. To this end, the Global Civilization Initiative proposes a practical path to strengthening international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation, with a focus on exploring ways to build a global network for cross-civilization dialogue and cooperation, enriching the content of exchanges and expanding avenues of cooperation, so as to promote the development of diverse human civilizations through rich and colourful people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. First, we should improve the mechanism and innovate the methods for people-to-people exchanges. We should give play to the role of various regions and departments, actively carry out various forms of cooperation between parliaments, political parties,

think tanks and local governments, regularize and institutionalize people-to-people exchanges and cooperation activities, and continuously build an all-round, multi-level and wide-ranging network of international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Second, we should continuously enrich the contents of international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Extensive activities for people-to-people exchanges can be carried out in academic, educational, health, sports, tourism and other fields to consolidate the social foundation of people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Third, we should make coordinated application of cultural forms such as literature, theatre, film, television, music, dance, fine art, photography, acrobatics, literary criticism and arts education, and make rational use of various means of mass communication, group communication and interpersonal communication to jointly create diverse and effective channels for people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. China initiated the Conference on Dialogue of Asian civilizations in May 2019, which together with other platforms for exchanges among civilizations serves as a new avenue to facilitate mutual learning and appreciation among civilizations in Asia and the world at large and to jointly transcend the clash of civilizations. As long as the international community continues to strengthen people-to-people exchanges and cooperation and carry out in-depth and diverse exchanges of ideas and emotions, a new prospect will be open up for enhanced exchanges and understanding among different peoples and better interactions and integration of diversified cultures. Together we can make the garden of world civilizations colourful and vibrant.

A Positive Response to the Real Challenges in the Process of Humanity's Modernization

Today's world is undergoing unprecedented changes. One important manifestation is the serious harm caused by hegemonic bullying practices that are deeply harmful. The peace deficit, development deficit, security deficit and governance deficit are aggravated, and the mankind is facing challenges never seen before. The fundamental solution to the severe challenges faced by the mankind in its way to modernization lies in promoting humanity's modernization and jointly building a community with shared future for mankind. The Global Civilization Initiative is dedicated to overcoming the common challenges that hinder humanity's modernization and profoundly reflects the real concern to care for achievements of human civilizations.

The Global Civilization Initiative cracks the peace deficit and fully demonstrates the peaceful attributes of humanity's modernization. The mankind has experienced two major world wars in the past century, which have ravaged peoples from all countries. Although without large-scale global wars since WWII, there have been frequent conflicts and unrest in some countries and regions, and the international situation has witnessed increasing instability, posing a serious threat to world peace. In this era, a very small number of major countries, still clinging to the old mindset of the Cold War and zero-sum game, use force or threaten to use force at will, wield the sticks of hegemony, power politics and neo-interven-

tionism to stir up trouble and intensify conflicts for their own interest, making the world situation even more complex and unstable. In June 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released its Global Trends Report, which showed that some 89.3 million people were displaced globally in 2021 for such reasons as war, violence, persecution and human rights violations, an increase of 8% over the previous year and more than twice the number of people displaced 10 years ago. The growing peace deficit indicates that the peaceful nature of humanity's modernization is facing serious challenge, and that the "modernization" of some countries and regions is deviating from the fundamental direction of the progress of human civilizations. The Chinese nation is a peace-loving nation, and the CPC is a political party that regards the real lasting peace of the entire mankind as its noble ideal. Especially since the beginning of the new era, China has proposed a series of peace concepts, demonstrating its image as a peacemaker.

The Global Civilization Initiative cracks the development deficit and strives to produce the driving force for modernization of humanity. At present, the world economy suffers from sluggish recovery and insufficient global development momentum. In recent years, the world economy has faced a marked increase of unfavourable factors for growth, especially under the impact of unexpected factors such as COVID-19, the economic growth has generally been declining. According to a report released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in January 2023, the global economic growth rate in 2022 was 3.4%, a decline of 2.8

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percentage points from 2021. It is predicted that the global economic growth rate will fall further to 2.9% in 2023. At the same time, the problem of imbalanced and insufficient global development remains prominent. The World Inequality Report 2022, released by the World Inequality Lab, shows that in 2021, the wealthiest 10% of the world's population held 52% of total global income while the poorest 50% held only 8.5%. Nowadays, more than 700 million people worldwide still live in extreme poverty and their most basic needs in terms of health, education, water and sanitation still remain unmet. The poverty rate in rural areas worldwide is 17.2%, more than three times higher than that in urban areas. It follows that the global development deficit is further expanding and continuously eroding the foundation of humanity's modernization. In the face of a growing global development deficit, China adheres to the path of peaceful development, open development, cooperative development and common development, striving to achieve a development higher in quality, efficiency, equity and sustainability, actively facilitates economic globalization towards a more open, inclusive, balanced and win-win direction that will benefit all, so that the development achievements of Chinese path to modernization continue to consolidate the foundation of the progress of human civilizations and produce new driving force for humanity's modernization.

The Global Civilization Initiative cracks the security deficit and strives to build security guarantees for modernization of mankind in an all-round way. The present time witnesses a complex and serious global security situation with inter-

twined traditional and non-traditional security threats. In the sphere of traditional security, the geopolitical games among major powers are becoming increasingly fierce. The world sees more blocs formed and increasingly apparent confrontations among them, as well as an increased threat of nuclear war. The fact that the existing nuclear weapons worldwide number around 22,000 and over 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted so far is quite enough to pose a grievous threat to the security of the entire mankind. In the sphere of non-traditional security, issues in areas such as climate change, ecological environment, food and energy, information networks and public health are becoming increasingly prominent. According to The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022 report released by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) together with other organizations, 702 million to 828 million people in the world faced hunger in 2021, an increase of about 46 million people from that of 2020 and a cumulative increase of approximately 150 million compared to 2019. Meanwhile, the global energy production and supply situation continues to deteriorate and energy prices are volatile at high levels. We must rely on the unity and cooperation of all human beings to eliminate the global security deficit. However, the lack of mutual trust makes it difficult for the international community to build consensus and take actions for cooperation. In response, China insists on mutual consultation and understanding, winning respect with respect, resolving suspicions with frankness and honesty, and promoting common progress through cooperation. The Global Civilization

Initiative proposed by China draws experience and wisdom from the history of human civilization development and is committed to providing more comprehensive, long-term and thorough security guarantees for humanity's modernization.

The Global Civilization Initiative cracks the governance deficit and continuously improves governance system of humanity's modernization. The lack of effective control over peace deficit, development deficit and security deficit is closely related to the serious governance deficit in the international community. On the one hand, the growing prominence of global issues has put forward greater demands and higher requirements for global governance and raised greater expectations for the role played by major powers in international affairs. On the other hand, there has been a decline in the capacity and willingness of some major powers to provide public goods for global governance. As the world's largest economy, the United States pursues the priority of its own interests and wantonly upholds a unilateralist policy of beggar-thy-neighbour, benefiting itself at the expense of others, and making the current global governance system more dysfunctional, ineffective and incompetent. In recent years, the United States has repeatedly withdrawn or threatened to withdraw from international mechanisms and is keen to establish exclusive "small circles" and "small groups", making use of global governance as an instrument or weapon for political purposes, hindering the process of reforming and building the global governance system, and undermining the institutional basis of global governance. As important participants and contributors to global governance, the representation and voice of

emerging markets and developing countries are severely constrained. Faced with the turbulence and changes in the world, the global governance system needs to keep pace with and adapt to the times. To this end, China has put forward and practiced the concept of global governance based on the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, advocating that all countries in the world pool their wisdom, make use of their respective strengths, do their best and share the fruits. As a new international public good, the Global Civilization Initiative has become an important part of the global governance system, which will drive the global governance system towards a more just and reasonable direction and guide modernization of mankind into a new stage from chaos to governance and prosperity.

Full Demonstration of the Significance of Chinese Modernization to the World

For over 100 years, the CPC has been adhering to the shared values of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom for the entire mankind, striving to advance the great cause of human civilization progress and creating a new form of human advancement with Chinese path to modernization through continuous exploration and practice. The new form of human advancement created by the CPC has emerged from more than 5,000 years of Chinese civilization, from the exchange and mutual learning among civilizations, and from the combination of the basic principles of

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Marxism with Chinese realities and with Chinese fine traditional culture, and is therefore a new form of human advancement with rich contemporary connotations and strong vitality. The Global Civilization Initiative is a major theoretical innovation arising from the process of Chinese modernization, with its significance to the world having been fully demonstrated.

Chinese path to modernization actively practices a new concept of advancing the progress of human civilizations. The core idea of the new form of human advancement through the Chinese path to modernization is to ensure that modernization is people-centred and to continuously realize the people's aspiration for a better life. During the New Democratic Revolution, the Communist Party of China, guided by Marxism-Leninism, formed and developed the values that led the practice of revolutionary struggle, completely ended the history of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society in the old China, and achieved the great leap from feudal politics of thousands of years to people's democracy in China. After the founding of the People's Republic, the CPC united and led the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in self-reliance and hard work, achieving extraordinary development accomplishments that made the Chinese people extremely proud. In the long-term practice of reform and opening up and socialist modernization, the CPC has united and led the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in making unremitting exploration and achieving the tremendous transformation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong. Entering a new era, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the concept of innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared

development and took sharing as the starting point and foothold of development, leading the Chinese people to make historic strides towards the all-round human development and the shared prosperity for all people.

Chinese path for modernization has found a new avenue for promoting human advancement. The core element of the new form of human civilizations created by Chinese modernization is the successful exploration of a Chinese path to modernization. Upon its founding the CPC was deeply aware of all the maladies of capitalist modernization and has drawn profound lessons from the history of many developing countries that have fallen into the development trap due to copying the Western model. To this end, the CPC has adhered to the independent exploration of a modernization path that was in line with its own realities, and has united and led the Chinese people of all ethnic groups to make remarkable historic achievements in its modernization process in just a few decades since the founding of the People's Republic of China. In contrast to the modernization path of developed Western countries, the new Chinese modernization path not only breaks the myth that modernization can only be achieved by following the capitalist model of modernization, but also expands the avenue for developing countries to move towards modernization, providing a new option for the modernization for many countries and peoples in the world who aspire to develop independently, and contributing new solutions to the problems arising from humanity's modernization and to the challenges of human civilizations.

Chinese path to modernization steadily develops a new system that promotes human advancement.

The great practice of Chinese path to modernization as a new form of human advancement is a historical process of exploring, creating, consolidating and developing the socialist system, and is furthermore a great undertaking leading the world socialist movement. For over a century, the CPC has united and led the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in an arduous struggle, accomplishing the socialist revolution, establishing and developing a socialist system, and advancing the revival and development of the world socialist movement. The new form of human advancement created by the CPC, which has a strong vitality and lasting influence, demonstrates the incomparable superiority of the socialist system. The socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era is profoundly influencing the world landscape and the process of human advancement with even more brilliant development achievements, continuously pushing the world socialist movement into a new historical stage and giving scientific socialism a new vitality in China in the 21st century.

Chinese path to modernization promotes the building of a new order that promotes the progress of human advancement. The new form of human advancement created by Chinese path to modernization is one that advocates openness, inclusiveness, cooperation and win-win outcome. Internationally, it calls for promoting the building of a more just and equitable international order and the creation of a new world of lasting peace and

universal prosperity. As a Marxist party striving to achieve social justice and equity, the CPC has always supported the efforts of the vast number of developing countries to build a new international order and advocated that the new international order should reflect the general aspirations and shared interests of people all over the world, and should reflect the requirements of historical development and progress of the times. This new order is about putting an end to hegemony and power politics, pursuing democratic international relations and giving every member of the international community a voice in international affairs. China will continue to practice true multilateralism, advocating that international affairs should be handled by all countries through consultation. China will continue to act as an advocator and defender of the international rule of law, a firm guardian of the international fairness and justice, and a contributor to and builder of the global governance system.

The Global Civilization Initiative follows the trend of historical development, gives Chinese answers to the question of humanity's modernization, and provides ideological and action guidance for progress of human advancement. As more and more countries actively answer the call of Global Civilization Initiative and facilitate its implementation, the humanity will inevitably embark on a new journey of modernization and build a more prosperous garden of world civilizations.

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Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference: China's Practice in Consultative Democracy

Summary: On the rich soil of 5,000-year long Chinese culture, a great creation of the Communist Party of China and Chinese was built – socialist consultative democracy as the world's unique and original form of political and cultural organization, in which people govern their country. The aim of this paper is to point to the importance of social dialogue and continued consultations with the people in order to ensure that individuals exercise comprehensive and true rights in the political, economic, cultural and social life. For its realization in practice, it calls for the functioning of a highly inclusive and integrated democratic system in which every idea and talent have an opportunity to develop and be applied in real life. Only in this manner it is possible to realize high development objectives of this great country which, spreading solidarity and democracy, integrates the will of the Party, people and state.

Keywords: dialogue, consultations, tradition, public opinion, people's democracy

Whole-process people's democracy is the defining feature of socialist democracy. Rooted in the rich soil of the five-thousand-year Chinese culture, as a unique and original form of socialist democracy, consultative democracy is an important way by which whole-process people's democracy is practiced. It is a great creation of the Chinese communists and the Chinese people. The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (hereinafter referred to as the CPPCC) is a crucial channel and specialized consultative body for socialist consultative democracy. With its full-fledged institutional

procedures and participatory practice, the CPPCC plays a key role in promoting whole-process people's democracy.

Public Matters Decided Through Discussion: the Concept of Consultation in Whole-Process People's Democracy

As pointed out by General Secretary Xi Jinping, under the socialist system in China, public matters

should be discussed and decided through consultation to find the maximum common denominator of social will and demand, which is what people's democracy is really about. In China, consultation is a cultural concept, a way of participation, and more importantly, an institutional arrangement, which showcases the salient features of whole-process people's democracy and ensures that people run the country.

As a cultural concept, consultation is deeply rooted in the fine traditional Chinese culture. Consultation involves "discussion", something we Chinese do all the time without being aware of. It reflects a basic behavioral mode for the Chinese to get along with other people, deal with things and coordinate relations, which also gives expression to the cultural essence of the fine traditional Chinese culture, especially the culture of peace and harmony. In China, "discussion" is applied in dealing with not only social relations, but also political relations. It reflects the people-oriented philosophy. In the Rites of Zhou, the importance was stressed to consult all ministers, all officials and all people. In the Book of Documents, there was a calling to consult even the lowest strata of the people. And in the Book of the Songs, there was an admonition that one should not fail even to consult the woodcutter. Therefore, it is easy to see that since ancient times, there has been great emphasis in China to give expression to the will of the people, as well as their worries and concerns. It reflects the Chinese belief that everyone under heaven belongs to one community and people are the root of the nation. In the long course of history, the awareness of discussion and the concept of

consultation have been incorporated into the social, cultural, and psychological fabrics of the Chinese people and China's political and cultural traditions, which gives rise to the way of thinking and behavioral patterns of the Chinese nation, thus providing rich social soil for the realization and practice of whole-process people's democracy. Comrade Mao Zedong was deep in Chinese history and culture. He once said: "The handling of relations in every respect needs consultation". "As you well know, the character of our government is to discuss with the people. We can well call it a government of discussion."

As a way of participation, consultation reflects the value of regarding people as masters of the country. Letting people run the country is the founding mission of Chinese democracy. China boasts 9.6 million square kilometres of land, over 1.4 billion people, and 56 ethnic groups. The ethnic groups and regions vary greatly from one another in terms of customs and culture. In such a complex country, to ensure that people exercise extensive and genuine rights in political, economic, cultural and social lives, there needs to be a highly inclusive and integrated democratic system, where people have channels to air their views, platforms to express differences, and mechanisms to coordinate different interests and pursuits. In China, consultation is an important means for the people to participate in political life and the administration of public affairs. The formulation and implementation of all important decisions are based on the solicitation of opinions of relevant parties through consultation.

Important matters of the state are decided based on soliciting people's opinions. During

the drafting process of the 14th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives through the Year 2035, General Secretary Xi Jinping made multiple field trips to different localities, and presided over numerous thematic symposiums to listen to ideas and suggestions of people from all walks of life and working in different fields. Through on-line solicitation of opinions, 1.018 million pieces of opinions were collected, which were then categorized into 1000 plus suggestions and absorbed into the final documents in one way or another. The extensive, multilevel and institutionalized activities of consultation and diversified channels of consultation have enabled the people to feel for themselves democracy in its real sense. It has been proven that whole-process people's democracy is democracy in its broad, genuine, and effective form.

As an institutional arrangement, consultation is a result of long-term explorations on political democracy. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the CPC has had ever deeper grasp of the laws underlying political democracy, come up with the concept of whole-process people's democracy, and translated the concept into well-conceived and effective institutional arrangement and the real practice of democracy. It is the natural outcome of the long-term unremitting political and democratic explorations of the CPC.

During the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japan, the CPC put forward the ideas that "state affairs are public affairs of the country, not a private matter of one single political party", "a common program must be found based on consensus through consultation as guiding principles

of governance". A democratic government against Japanese aggression was established which involved consultation and cooperation with people from outside the party based on the "third-third-third principle", namely, CPC members constituted one third, left-wing outside-party personnel constituted one third, and people of the middle ground the rest one third.

On the eve of the founding of the People's Republic of China, comrade Zhou Enlai said, "One of the features of New Democracy is that consultation and discussion are carried out widely so that everyone has an idea of what is to be discussed, and that a common agreement can be produced through open discussions at meetings."

The 13th National Congress of the CPC called forth the establishment of dialogue mechanisms for social consultation. The 18th National Congress of the CPC called on improving the socialist system of consultative democracy, with stipulations on multilevel institutional development of consultative democracy. The 19th National Congress of the CPC stressed on strengthening the institutions of consultative democracy and developing complete procedures and practices. The 20th National Congress of the CPC emphasized improving the system of consultative democracy and various institutional consultative platforms. While pressing ahead with political democracy, the CPC has continuously improved its institutional arrangements for consultation, which constitutes an important foundation for the political practice of exercising whole-process people's democracy.

The Chinese communists have always upheld the value of people's democracy. Through

democratic elections, democratic consultations, democratic decision-making, democratic management, and democratic oversight, the system of socialist political democracy has been established. Consultative democracy has been embedded into the whole process of socialist democracy, which covers all political parties, organizations, ethnic groups, social strata, and people from all walks of life, and is reflected in every link of democratic practice. With its all-encompassing nature in all dimensions, it can avoid focusing only on elections where empty promises are made during campaigns only to be forgotten afterwards. Consultative democracy ensures that the people enjoy the most extensive, sustained, and in-depth participation in their daily political lives.

State Affairs Decided Through Consultation: the Practice of Consultative Democracy of the CPPCC

As an institutional arrangement with distinctive Chinese features, the CPPCC has conducted consultation, focusing on the priorities of the Party and the country, and has played an important role in the different historical periods of socialist revolution, construction and reforms. The CPPCC exercises whole-process people's democracy by promoting the multilevel institutional development of consultative democracy, and has contributed greatly to economic and social development.

Important state affairs have been decided through political consultation. Founding the

People's Republic of China through political consultation was a shining example of Chinese consultative democracy, which also marked the opening chapter of political consultation of the CPPCC. In April 1948, the CPC Central Committee released the "May 1st Calling", which called on "all democratic parties, people's organizations, and socially influential people to convene a conference of political consultation". It was warmly responded to by various democratic parties and personnel of various sectors. Over 1,000 democrat personnel in Hong Kong went to the liberated area in over 20 batches, several of whom were directly involved in the preparations for the New Conference of Political Consultation. In July 1949, the preparatory meeting of the new CPPCC solicited designs for the national flag. 2922 draft designs were contributed. Through group discussions at various levels, the design of "red flag with five stars", made by Zeng Liansong, a company staff in Shanghai, won the most approval. Finally, this design, by an ordinary citizen, after minor changes, was designated as the national flag for the People's Republic of China and became the high-flying five-star flag we see today. From September 21 to 30, 1949, the first plenary meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference was convened. 662 members from 46 units were gathered together to discuss important state matters. The meeting adopted the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, equivalent to the provisional constitution, the Law on the Organization of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and the Law on the Organization of the People's Central Government of the People's Republic of China. Decisions were

made during the conference on matters such as the state capital, national flag, national anthem, and annals. The National Committee of the CPPCC and the Committee of the Central People's Government were elected. The plenary announced the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

Whenever there are important decisions to make, consultations will be conducted. The CPC values the spirit of consultation in its state governance, as reflected in its consultations with representatives of other political parties and of all walks of life. Members of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee are invited to attend plenary sessions of the CPPCC every year to discuss important state matters. Responsible officials of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council and those in charge of certain departments and ministries are often invited to thematic standing committee meetings of the CPPCC, thematic consultation symposiums and seminars, where in-depth discussions and interactions are carried out. On the afternoon of March 4, 2016, General Secretary Xi Jinping attended the discussions with the CPPCC members from the China National Democratic Construction Association and the Association of Industry and Commerce. After hearing the views of the CPPCC members, General Secretary Xi made the important proposition about building "cordial" and "clean" relations between the government and the business community. Such scenes of face-to-face solicitation of ideas and interactions are a vivid example of Chinese-style democracy.

Democratic oversight enhances good governance. As an important form of delivering socialist consultative democracy, democratic

oversight by the CPPCC is part and parcel of the supervision system in China, and is of the consultative nature. It mainly takes the forms of airing opinions, criticisms or suggestions. The focus of democratic oversight is on how state policies and decisions are implemented, with the aim of helping the Party and the government better solve problems, improving work, strengthening solidarity, and building cohesion. For instance, the 12th CPPCC conducted supervision and research on the implementation of changing business taxes into VATs, the two-child policy and the pollution control of the Tengger Desert. Focusing on major issues on the implementation of the 14th Five-Year Plan, the 13th CPPCC carried out special programs of democratic oversight. Ten special committees organized continued oversight on one major issue in their fields respectively and came up with opinions based on these efforts. In 2021, centering around "continuously improving the business environment", the Economic Affairs Committee of the CPPCC conducted research on over 130 selected SOEs, private businesses, and foreign businesses. Bi-weekly consultation symposiums were convened. The implementation of key resolutions was vigorously supervised. The CPPCC also cooperated with the Association of Industry and Commerce in organizing over 10,000 businesses in reviewing the business environment. The CPPCC members aired the problems they discovered such as lingering miscellaneous fees imposed on businesses, the lack of smooth transition from old to new policies, policy gaps among authorities and between various departments, lack of policy continuity between incumbent authorities and their predecessors etc.

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They raised constructive suggestions on stable, predictable, and law-based business environment, and received positive response from relevant authorities. These activities of democratic oversight have gone a long way in facilitating the implementation of relevant policy measures aimed at improving the business environment and boosting the confidence of market players.

Consultation serves development agenda. The CPPCC has a concentration of talents and influential figures from various sectors, including accomplished experts, experienced officials

familiar with policies, industrial pacesetters and seasoned entrepreneurs. As distinguished representatives of various sectors, they are highly capable of contributing constructive ideas and suggestions. For example, the thematic consultation meeting on “Innovation-Driven Development” on May 14, 2019 drew together nearly 100 academicians, who had been working on the front line of education and research over the years, with insights on the status, underlying laws, and problems in fundamental research and scientific innovation. With open discussions

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View of Xiamen, the city in the Province of Fujian

Photo: Ivona Katić

and candidate actions, the meeting turned out to be highly constructive. Responsible officials in charge of relevant Party departments and State Council ministries gave briefings and listened to these suggestions, many of which were later incorporated into ensuing policies. The story of “a hundred academicians discussing innovation” soon spread and received thumbs-up from the wider society.

Consensus-building is facilitated by seeking common ground while putting aside differences. Since its inception, the CPPCC has always been committed to consolidating the common political foundation and building consensus through extensive and democratic consultations, thus contributing its strength for the development objectives of the country. In June 1950, the second meeting of the 1st CPPCC National Committee discussed the issue of land reforms. Comrade Liu Shaoqi (then Vice Chairman of the Central People's Government) delivered the “Report on Issues Related to Land Reforms”, in which he elaborated on the necessity, justice and relevant policies of land reforms. Most participants at the meeting showed endorsement. But there were also some who thought that government decrees would be enough without the need to mobilize the masses. Some liberals who came from the landowning class had reservations and doubts concerning land reforms. Given the situation, leading officials of CPC central committee invited representatives from democratic parties, personnel without party affiliation, and other patriots to discussions to exchange views. With much in-depth communication, consensus emerged through various forms of consultation. After the meeting, all democratic

parties released statements and resolutions in support of land reforms.

Solidarity is created from diversity. Solidarity and democracy are the two themes of the CPPCC. Like thousands of rivers running into the oceans, the CPPCC is the most extensive patriotic united front organization, with wide representation and inclusiveness. The 14th CPPCC covers 34 sectors including 8 democratic parties, personnel without party affiliation, major people's organizations, all 56 ethnic groups and the five major religions. There are around 3,200 CPPCC committees and over 600,000 CPPCC members at the national, provincial, city and county levels. The CPPCC members come from different political parties, ethnic groups, social strata, and groups with various religious beliefs. Working together in solidarity based on the common ideal and political foundation, the CPPCC members strive for more harmonious relations between political parties, ethnic groups, religions, social strata, and compatriots at home and abroad. In recent years, mechanisms have been improved in the CPPCC for various political parties to participate in exchanges on relevant matters. There have been more smooth channels for non-CPC intellectuals, people working in the private sector and those of emerging social strata to air their opinions. The CPPCC members of ethnic minority groups and religious groups have enjoyed more access in terms of themed tours and inspections, sector-wise consultations and reflection of public opinions. The CPPCC members in Hong Kong and Macau are encouraged to support the law-based governance of the Special Administrative Regions and their chief executives. Exchanges have been expanded

with party organizations, social organizations and people of various communities in the Taiwan region. Representatives of overseas Chinese are also invited to the CPPCC activities, so as to facilitate solidarity among Chinese compatriots at home and abroad.

Specialized Consultative Body is innovating for better consultation

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Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels once said that the whole question is determining the true meaning of democracy. General Secretary Xi Jinping also pointed out that democracy is not an ornament for decoration; rather, it is for solving real problems of the people. History and practice have proven that consultative democracy fits China's realities and can help solve many problems. In today's world with its diversified ideas, complex interests and varied social strata, the reason that China has achieved the two miracles of rapid economic growth and long-term social stability is that consultative democracy, deeply rooted in the Chinese soil, can strike a balance between uniformity and diversity and achieve the integration of the will of the Party, the state and the people. The development of consultative democracy is a long-term historical process. As the specialized consultative body, the CPPCC is constantly evolving with innovation in practice. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the CPC Central Committee with comrade Xi Jinping at its core has paid great attention to the role of the CPPCC as an important channel and specialized consultative body for socialist consultative democracy, with a series of important guidance

made, which prompted the CPPCC in theoretical and institutional innovations and innovation in practice.

The CPC attaches great importance to the role of the CPPCC in consultative democracy and provides theoretical guidance for the development of the CPPCC as a specialized consultative body. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC National Congress in November 2013 pointed out that the overarching goal for comprehensively deepening reforms is to improve and develop the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and to modernize China's system and capacity for governance. In October 2017, the 19th National Congress of the CPC stressed that the CPPCC, as a distinctively Chinese political institution, is a major channel for socialist consultative democracy, and its committees are specialized consultative bodies. In September 2019, the CPC Central Committee convened a conference on political consultation, which further clarified the functions and responsibilities of the CPPCC committees as specialized consultative bodies. The meeting made clear that the CPPCC is part and parcel of the state governance system and called on the CPPCC to improve the content of consultation, enrich its forms, improve its rules and procedures, cultivate a consultative culture and improve the consultative capabilities. In October 2022, the 20th National Congress of the CPC stressed that we will uphold and improve the system of CPC-led multiparty cooperation and political consultation and ensure the integration of Party leadership, the united front, and consultative democracy. We will give full play to the CPPCC's role as a specialized consultative body and see that it coordinates

efforts to promote democracy and unity, and emphasizes on both consultation and consensus building. Improvements will be made to institutions, standards, and procedures to help the CPPCC ensure that in-depth consultations and interactions are conducted, opinions are fully expressed, and broad consensus is built. Efforts will also be made to improve the systems and mechanisms through which the CPPCC committees conduct democratic oversight and their members stay engaged with people from various sectors.

The CPPCC as a specialized consultative body, has deepened explorations for the practice of consultative democracy. The 12th CPPCC renewed the mechanism of biweekly consultation meetings, which was practiced once on the history, thus greatly increasing the frequency of consultations. The biweekly consultation meetings are of small scale but with high-level attendance. The Chairman of the National Committee of the CPPCC often presides over meetings of around twenty people, covering the CPPCC members, officials in charge of central ministries, experts in certain fields as well as front line workers and ordinary folks. On June 19, 2020, the biweekly consultation meeting on “improving takeaway food safety regulation” was held. Among the participants were Wang Lei, CEO of Ele.me (a food delivery platform), Mu Rongjun, co-founder of Meituan Group and Gao Zhixiao, express deliveryman who persisted in his work even during the pandemic. Gao Zhixiao said with excitement: “I used to work just to make a living. After the pandemic, I feel the greatness of my job, for what we are delivering is not just daily necessities but also warmth and hope.”

In response to new circumstances and new tasks, the 13rd CPPCC National Committee started the practice of long-distance consultation meetings and expert symposiums, which further expanded the width and depth of consultations. Through live streaming, such long-distance consultation meetings have brought consultations to local communities, schools, factories, and the fields. Some CPPCC members also present their points with pictures and videos. “I did not know that the work of the CPPCC could be so posh!”, the CPPCC members and Chinese netizens commented. Being flexible, professional and in-depth, expert seminars often focus on one specific issue with continuous consultations in a relaxing atmosphere.

Over the past ten years, centering around “matters of great significance for the state” and the concerns of the people, the CPPCC has held 19 thematic standing committee meetings, 20 thematic consultation meetings, 144 biweekly consultation symposiums, 17 long-distance consultation meetings, and 74 expert seminars. The means and platforms of consultation have been continuously improved. A paradigm of regular, multilevel consultation in various fields with orderly participation has taken shape. The CPPCC members and ordinary folks who have participated in these consultation meetings reflect their perception in a straight forward way: “political consultation meetings are where to discuss matters”.

The CPPCC has been pressing ahead with its institutional development to ensure well-conceived standards and procedures, which has demonstrated the institutional efficiency of consultative democracy. Efforts have been made for earnest implementation of important documents

such as the Regulations of the Communist Party of China on Political Consultation Work, Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Strengthening and Improving the Work of the CPPCC Committees in the New Era, Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Strengthening the Development of Socialist Consultative Democracy, as well as Opinions on the Implementation of Strengthening Consultative Democracy of the CPPCC and Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Work of City and County CPPCC Committees released by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee. In 2018, amendments were made to the CPPCC Charter, which established Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as the guiding ideology of the CPPCC. The amendments to the CPPCC Charter in 2023 reaffirmed commitment to the integration of Party leadership, the united front, and consultative democracy, which constitutes the solid common ideological foundation for the CPPCC to strive in unity. Institutional development in a systematic manner based on the CPPCC Charter, with the systems of consultation as the mainstay, enhanced with full-fledged mechanisms and structures, has provided important

guarantee for the CPPCC to perform whole-process people's democracy.

The governance capability of a state or a system is reflected in how effective it is in solving real problems of the era. As pointed out by General Secretary Xi Jinping, "if people have the right to vote but not the right to extensive participation and if the people are only woken up during the election cycle but go dormant after voting, then that democracy is just a formality." Under the leadership of the CPC and drawing strength from the fine traditional Chinese culture, whole-process people's democracy in China enables democratic participation of the people in the various links of democratic elections, democratic consultation, democratic decision-making, democratic management, and democratic oversight, thus realizing the unity between the procedures and substances of democracy. The CPPCC is an institutional arrangement with distinctive Chinese characteristics and a great creation of socialist consultative democracy. Socialist consultative democracy is a form of democracy that is in line with China's national conditions and reflects the common values of mankind, which contributes Chinese wisdom to the enrichment and development of human political civilizations.

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Connecting the World for a Shared Future: Firmly Safeguarding Stable and Smooth Global Industrial and Supply Chains

Summary: Contributing to global economic recovery, development and prosperity, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade has made a platform of networked industrial and supply chains. In a strategic orientation towards joint prevention of shocks in the world market, as well as towards interactive development of new technology and energy, the author encourages the business community to assume a more significant role in the creation of a new market environment. This paper is aimed at pointing to the openness and cooperation of Chinese economy as an important driving force of development and progress. Inclusiveness and sustainability are a guarantee for joint prosperity, whereas the perspective is being sought in China's further political, economic and cultural opening and connecting more strongly with the global business community.

Keywords: industry, trade, global shocks, socialism with Chinese characteristics, communication platform, China's opening, partnership

In order to follow through on the important instructions of General Secretary Xi Jinping to safeguard stable and smooth global industrial and supply chains, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade held in Beijing from November 28 to December 2 the first China International Supply Chain Expo (CISCE). Prime Minister Li Qiang attended and delivered a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the CISCE & International Supply Chain Innovation and Development Forum. As the world's first national-level

exhibition themed on the supply chain, the CISCE, themed "Connecting the World for a Shared Future", aims to create a new window for promoting high-level opening up, a new platform for fostering a new development paradigm, a new vehicle for building an open world economy, and a new practice for building a community with a shared future for mankind. It was a pragmatic, effective, and fruitful global trade event, a positive contribution to global economic recovery, development and prosperity.

The Important Instructions of General Secretary Xi Jinping on Safeguarding Stable and Smooth Global Industrial and Supply Chains Point out the Direction for Deepening International Industrial Chain and Supply Chain Cooperation

The world today is undergoing changes unseen in a century that are accelerating at a faster pace. The global industrial and supply chains have experienced shocks. At the same time, a new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation is deepening. The global landscape for innovation and the international economic structure are seeing profound readjustments. Grasping the underlying trends of domestic and international industrial development, General Secretary Xi Jinping has put forward a series of new ideas, new proposals and new initiatives for keeping the global industrial and supply chains stable and smooth, which fully demonstrates the strategic vision of the leader of a major country.

Industrial and supply chains are important global public goods. As pointed out by General Secretary Xi Jinping, “Global supply chains, industrial chains and value chains are closely interconnected. Each country is a link in global cooperation, part of a community with shared interests and shared future”; “It is an important guarantee for global economic development to safeguard the resilience and stability of global industrial and supply chains”. These important instructions have made clear the significance of keeping the global

industrial and supply chains stable and unimpeded, raising the awareness that global industrial and supply chains are global public goods.

To consolidate and strengthen global industrial and supply chain cooperation is in the interest and an earnest expectation of all sides. In recent years, China has put forward relevant initiatives and statements on many occasions at multilateral platforms such as APEC, G20, the SCO, and BRICS, thus contributing Chinese wisdom, Chinese solution, and Chinese strength to keeping the global industrial and supply chains stable and smooth. In September 2022, China held the International Forum on Resilient and Stable Industrial and Supply Chains, and launched the “Initiative on International Cooperation on Resilient and Stable Industrial and Supply Chains” together with 6 partner countries including Indonesia. In September 2023, at the 26th ASEAN plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea Summit, China proposed the 10+3 Industrial and Supply Chain Match-up Conference. Going forward, we should firmly safeguard the public good nature of the global industrial and supply chains, promote resource coordination among countries on key industrial chains, take active part in building a resilient global industrial system, and provide more global public goods shared by all so as to help build an open world economy.

Global industrial and supply chains are facing a shake-up. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that “the global industrial system and global industrial and supply chains have demonstrated the trends of diversified layout, regional cooperation, green transformation, and accelerated

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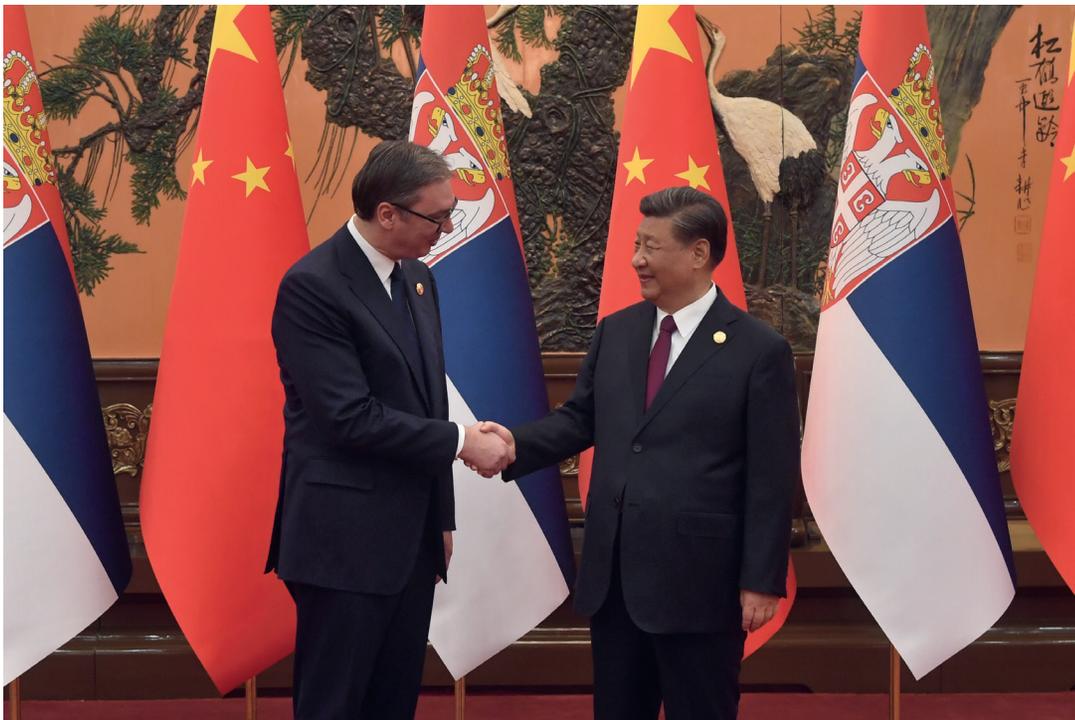
digitalization, which are in line with the laws underpinning economic development and underlying historical trends beyond the control of the will of the people.” This important statement is based on a deep grasp of the new situation and new changes concerning the global industrial and supply chains, which provides important guidance for the sustainable development of a global industrial system that is open and shared by all.

Over the past decades, economic globalization led by multinational corporations have evolved and developed rapidly, leading to accelerated integration of global industrial and supply chains and a supply chain network featuring the US-centered North America supply chain, the Germany-centered European supply chain and the Asian supply chain centering around China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. As things stand, the global industrial and supply chains are demonstrating new features. On the one hand, affected by rising protectionism, public health crisis, and geopolitical turmoil, there is the trend of politicization and security over-stretching in industrial and supply chain cooperation, with the risks of economic fragmentation; on the other hand, with accelerated evolution of the new round of scientific and technological revolution, digitalization and green transformation have begun to represent the direction for the future development of the global industrial and supply chains. Going forward, with the underlying laws and trends in mind, we should not only oppose “decoupling and the cutting-off of chains” in all its forms and promote integrated development of global industrial and supply chains, but also grasp the latest developments of the

scientific and technological revolution with an eye to promoting harmony between man and nature, facilitating green and low-carbon transition of the industrial and supply chains, and better tackling global challenges such as climate change.

We need to deepen global industrial and supply chain cooperation. As stressed by General Secretary Xi Jinping, we need to safeguard stability of industrial and supply chains, upgrade the level of industrial development and global economic participation, and promote shared development and prosperity. These words have laid out the routes to promoting stable global industrial and supply chains and injected strong impetus into building equal, inclusive and constructive partnerships in global industrial and supply chains.

Both a participant and beneficiary in global industrial and supply chain cooperation and a firm defender for their stability, China has contributed to ensuring smooth and unimpeded functioning of global industrial and supply chains and international economic flows. As the world’s second largest consumer market, China has continuously provided wider market access and facilitated imports, making it the second largest importer for 14 consecutive years. Major events such as the International Import Expo, the Guangdong Fair, and the CIFTIS, have achieved great success. The BRI has become a widely popular global public good and platform for international cooperation, which has brought global industrial and supply chain cooperation into greater depth and width. We will continue to expand high-level opening up, share with the world the new opportunities unleashed by China’s huge market, and help foster



President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, with President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, at the bilateral meeting before the Third Forum for International Cooperation "Belt and Road", Beijing, October 2023

Photo: Dimitrije Gol

a system of global industrial and supply chains with extensive participation that enables every country to tap into their advantages. We will help more developing countries to get deeply involved in global value chains and share the development dividends of the global manufacturing network.

We need to ensure that China's industrial and supply chains are safe and stable. As emphasized by General Secretary Xi Jinping, "industrial and supply chains must be able to hold up at crucial junctures, which is the defining feature of a major

economy". General Secretary Xi also called for "accelerating the building of a modern industrial system supported by the real economy" and "devising the layout of industrial and supply chains with a global vision and continuously improving their resilience and security". These instructions, which provide strategic and practical guidance, have laid out the fundamental requirements for enhancing the continuity and competitiveness of China's industries and promoting the deep integration of domestic and international industries.

China has the most complete categories of industries and supporting facilities as defined by the United Nations. The size of its manufacturing industry has topped that of the world for 13 consecutive years, with the added value accounting for nearly 30% of the world's total. Over 40% of its industrial products top the world. In recent years, it is fast advancing in middle- and high-end industries such as electric equipment, manufacturing equipment, etc. China is also leading in new energy development such as PV and other sectors. It has been among the first in the large-scale application of 5G and other mobile telecommunication technologies. It is a "world factory" for the global supply chain, thus providing important support for the smooth functioning of global industrial and supply chains. Facing the future, we will maintain and further enhance our advantages in terms of the comprehensive scope and supporting capacity of our industrial system to effectively pool global innovation factors, promote the integrated, smart and green development of industries, build a comprehensive, advanced and safe modern industrial system and continue with its deep participation in global industrial and supply chain cooperation.

The Successful Convening of the First CISCE has made it a World-Recognized Global Public Good Shared by All

Prime Minister Li Qiang attended and delivered a keynote speech at the Opening Ceremony of the CISCE & International Supply Chain Innovation

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and Development Forum, in which he followed on the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, elaborated on the significance of keeping the global industrial and supply chains stable and smooth, systematically talked about the active efforts by China to get deeply involved in global industrial and supply chain cooperation, and put forward four proposals on building even closer partnerships for global industrial and supply chains. He reaffirmed the key measures that China will take to pursue high-level opening up and encouraged the business community to play a bigger role in keeping the smooth functioning of global industrial and supply chains, thus injecting confidence and inspirations into building more resilient, efficient, and robust global industrial and supply chains.

Since 2023, CCPIT had been in close consultation with relevant parties in preparation for the CISCE. Roadshows were conducted in 23 provinces (municipalities, regions) and 30 countries and regions worldwide which were met with warm response. Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Uruguay President Luis Alberto Lacalle, as well as heads of five international organizations including the WTO and personnel in charge of relevant institutions and companies attended and addressed the Opening Ceremony of the CISCE & the International Supply Chain Innovation and Development Forum via on-line and off-line format. The CISCE was held under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the International Trade Center and the International Chamber

of Commerce. During the CISCE, representatives of the international business community issued the Beijing Initiative on the Connectivity of Global Industrial and Supply Chains. This fully demonstrates the common aspirations of all sides to build stable and resilient industrial and supply chains based on a broad consensus to pursue win-win and open cooperation. With the joint efforts and great support from all quarters, the CISCE was a full success and a great event linking the world and creating the future.

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The CISCE was an Expo with distinct features. It featured five exhibition areas for the industrial chain covering smart cars, green agriculture, clean energy, digital technology, and healthy life and a supply chain service exhibition, as well as six thematic forums and 360 supporting events. Representatives from 90 countries and regions and relevant international organizations used the platform to enhance communication, deepen cooperation, and seek development.

The CISCE has linked the upper, middle and lower reaches of the industries. 515 Chinese and foreign businesses and institutions took part in the Expo, which showcased advanced technologies and products as well as future development trends across the industrial chain. It was also a horizontal show of services provided by financial, logistics, and platform companies. Exhibitors of various industrial chains and supply chain service belong to the same “chain” like members of a big family. It was the impression of exhibitors that the quality of exhibitors, the number of professional audience and the outcomes had all exceeded expectations. Unlike traditional exhibitions where most exhibitors are mostly homogeneous and

thus competitive in nature, the businesses and institutions participating in the Expo were potential cooperation partners. As a result, through exchanges at the Expo, they had expanded their circle of friends along the industrial chain, extended the networks of partners in the supply chain, and pooled driving force for the innovation chain. A large percentage of the letters of intent were signed among the exhibitors.

The CISCE has integrated big, medium and small businesses. At the Expo were 53 Fortune 500 companies, 57 top Chinese companies, and 25 top 500 Chinese private businesses as well as “hidden champion” businesses that enjoy certain niches and “small but smart” SMEs. Companies in either leading or supplementing positions supported each other and formed close partnerships facilitating each other’s success. For instance, Apple participated in the event together with three Chinese partners with over 10 years of cooperation. In addition, the Expo was both highly professional and cross-sector. For example, vehicle manufacturers of the smart car chain have signed letters of intent with many SMEs belonging to the digital technology chain.

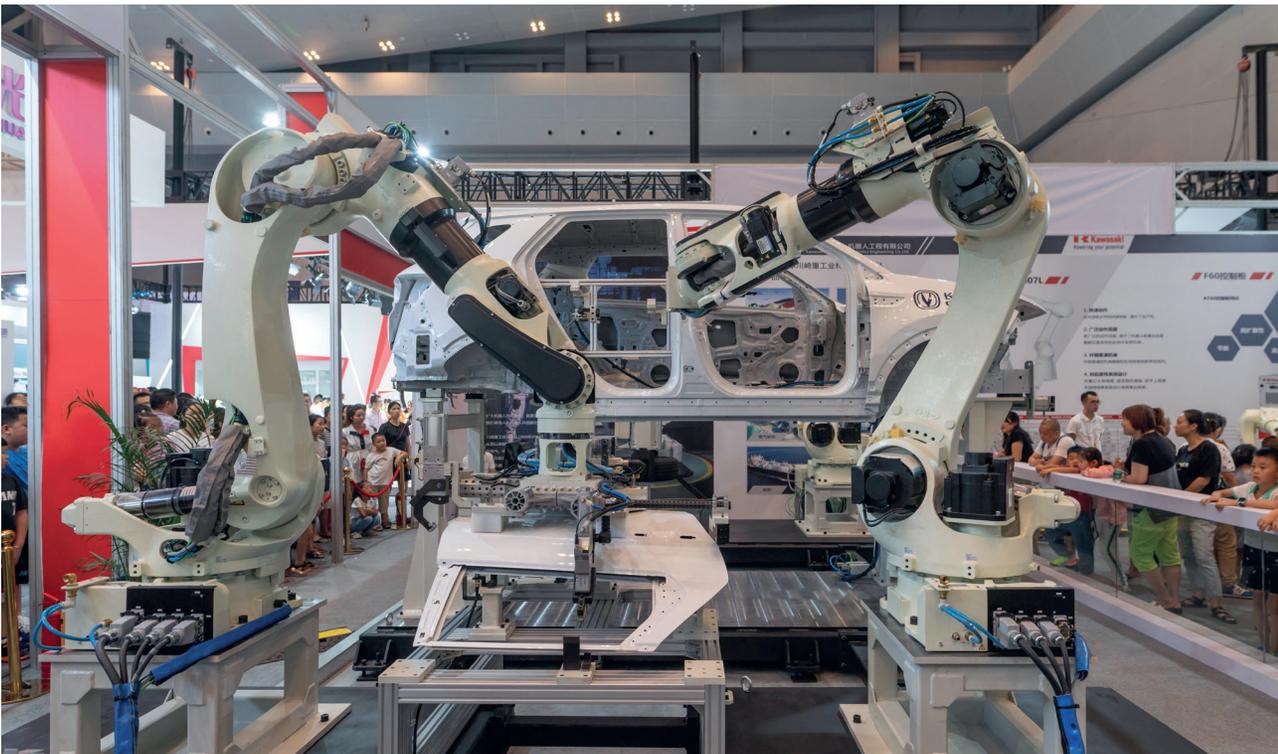
The CISCE has promoted coordination between production, teaching, research and application. The Expo, combining both scientific findings and actual scenarios of application, not only invited Chinese and foreign businesses, but was also open to research institutes, universities and colleges, and the general public. It brought together sector organizations of various industrial chains, global leading companies, and renowned experts and scholars to share the latest research findings and analyses on future development trends, explore new routes to

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enhancing industrial and supply chain cooperation and facilitate the translation of innovative technologies into real results. Nearly 700 researches from the Chinese Academy of Science and over 15,000 teachers and students from 13 institutions of higher learning visited or participated in the Expo, which brought the academic community face to face with the entrepreneurs where they shared their wisdom and ideas and explored opportunities for cooperation and set up bridges for highly efficient communication between the industrial, academic, and research communities.

The CISCE has deepened interactions between Chinese and foreign businesses. It has built a platform of cooperation for various players of global industrial chains. Chinese and foreign exhibitors demonstrated fruits of industrial and supply chain cooperation. For instance, GE and Sinopharm established a joint booth and launched their joint venture. Qualcomm Incorporated and China Mobile, Xiaomi, and iQIYI showcased their success stories of cooperation. More importantly, Chinese and foreign exhibitors used the industrial and supply chains as a media to present themselves and deepen



Robotic arms used in car manufacturing, Chongqing, PR China

Photo: Shutterstock

cooperation, making the supply chain one of win-win cooperation. 83.2% of exhibitors believed that the Expo has effectively facilitated global industrial and supply chain cooperation. CCPIT joined hands with its counterparts from Brazil, South Africa, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, and Hungary in organizing a series of trade events, which greatly promoted trade cooperation.

The CISCE was an Expo with great highlights, with uniqueness in terms of exhibition design, theme, logic, content and approach, which can be summarized as creative, international, professional and green.

Creative. The Expo set its eyes on the “chains”. In terms of the approach to exhibition, its focus was on the exhibition of “chains” and then the total ecology rather than particular products. In terms of the expected outcomes, its focus was on promoting long-term cooperation and shared development of businesses. It had expanded the “small logic” of the business’ growth in one industrial chain to the “big logic” of the development of the whole industries they belong to, which created new modes and new forms for exhibitions.

International. Foreign exhibitors account for 26% of the total, covering 55 countries and regions. American and European businesses took up 36%. Companies from South Africa, Canada, Japan, Vietnam, the African Union, the Arab League, Portuguese-speaking countries, and Latin American and Caribbean countries set up country-specific or regional booths. Exhibitors from BRI partner countries accounted for nearly half of the total. To demonstrate the open and inclusive nature of CISCE, CCPIT provided free booths for the Laos, Rwanda, Timor Leste and some other least developed coun-

tries. A delegation comprising representatives of 18 international organizations including the United Nations Development Programme, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and the International Labor Organization visited the exhibition.

Professional. The five industrial chains and the supply chain service exhibition, all focal points of attention for the business community, cover long links and are of fundamental and guiding significance. Through digital empowerment, scenario presentation, diverse interactions, and immersive experience, a panorama view of the supply chain was presented, making the abstract supply chain visible, understandable, and touchable. The Expo also established work stations for intellectual property and legal services and windows for intellectual property patent and trademark application, which saw zero complaint concerning the infringement on intellectual property rights. CATL and Dalian Ketian successfully got the application for patent and trademark registration approved on spot. This was the first time that an exhibitor had applied for intellectual property at a domestic exhibition, thus realizing “fast protection” for the intellectual property rights of exhibitors.

Green. In the whole process of defining the underlying logic for the exhibition, soliciting exhibitors, and exhibition hall development and operation, the CISCE has highlighted green, low-carbon and sustainable development. It launched the “zero carbon Expo” initiative, tailor-made carbon-neutrality solutions such as carbon credit and carbon inclusiveness. 100% green power was made possible through green power transactions among provinces. Green energy and the digital economy became key areas for the exhibitors and professional audi-

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ences. Volvo and Yunnan Aluminum Co. Ltd. signed a Memorandum of Understanding on sustainable aluminum value chain. New energy cooperation agreements were closed, such as the one between ITG and JA Technology.

The CISCE was an Expo with fruitful outcomes. It built a brand-new platform of openness for businesses from various countries to strengthen industrial and supply chain cooperation. It was a vivid demonstration of China's willingness to increase market opportunities, better align rules and regulations with international standards, stimulate greater driving force for innovation and create more opportunities for inclusive cooperation, sending the clear signal that China will get more deeply involved in building global industrial and supply chains. The Expo attracted 150,000 visits. There were as many as over 20,000 visitors at one single point. Delegations of over 100 ministries and local governments followed each other closely in visiting the Expo. According to incomplete statistics, relevant parties signed over 200 cooperation agreements and letters of intent, with a worth of over RMB 150 billion. A large number of Chinese and foreign businesses have expressed the wish to participate in the second CISCE. 44 exhibitors have already signed letters of intent for participating the 2024 CISCE.

Remarkable results in trade promotion. A system for matching suppliers and buyers was developed. A series of events were held for trade negotiations, supply-demand matching and on-spot procurement to facilitate cooperation between Chinese and foreign exhibitors. Targeted matching before the Expo was followed by in-depth exchanges at the Expo and follow-ups after the Expo. A third

of exhibitors have got to know over 10 supply chain cooperation partners through the event. Nearly 90% of the exhibitors believed that the CISCE effectively promoted their cooperation with businesses in the upper, middle and lower reaches of the industrial chain and with supply chain service businesses.

Eye-catching results in investment cooperation. The 2023 Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Industrial and Supply Chain Conference held a series of field visits to industries, launched a cross-region industrial chain map and a report on coordinated development of the region, thus building a new window and platform for coordination and cooperation between them. Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Hubei, Sichuan, Guizhou, Xinjiang, and Shenzhen held events to promote their featured products, creating platforms for global promotion and resource pooling.

Excellent results in pooling resources for innovation. Focusing on high-quality development, the CISCE has attracted the most representative, special and excellent champion businesses of the industrial chains. Highlighting scientific innovation, model innovation, and business form innovation, the Expo facilitated technological sharing and project matching. 47 Chinese and foreign businesses showed their new products, new technologies and new services for the first time at the Expo, which greatly promoted in-depth integration of the innovation chain, the industrial chain, the supply chain and the value chain.

Pragmatic and effective exchanges. Five members of the Chinese Academy of Science, the Chinese Academy of Engineering, over 90 representatives of international organizations, senior management of the Fortune 500 businesses and leading companies in various sectors attended thematic forums and

shared their insights and “CISCE wisdom”. CCPIT held the first Trade Promotion Think Tank Forum and released the Report on Global Supply Chain Promotion to share research results and seek win-win cooperation with the business and academic community. Many businesses leading in their industrial chains showed their complete supply chains for the first time at the Expo. SMEs presented their special products and services. The vast number of exhibitors used the platform to increase understanding, share ideas, trade products, and strengthen their weak links.

more global public goods, safeguard the resilience and stability of the global industrial and supply chains and shoulder our responsibility in building a modern socialist country and in building a human community with a shared future.

We will strive for safe and stable industrial and supply chains. Security and stability are the important precondition for realizing development. Aimed at combining trade and investment promotion with industrial development, CPPIT has made use of professional exhibitions to tap their potential for pooling industrial chains, and built platforms for international exchanges and cooperation that match supply with demand, link businesses in the upper, middle and lower reaches and bring together industrial and supply chains. In so doing, we contribute to building a modern industrial system and improving the resilience and security of China’s industrial and supply chains. We have been working to promote transformation and upgrading of foreign trade-oriented businesses, help them make the best use of trade rules and practices, cultivate a number of highly innovative leading companies and enhance the competitiveness of SMEs. We have organized overseas trade exhibitions, nurtured overseas brand names, and expanded the size of our exhibitions. In the process, we have focused on matching supply with demand, and helping businesses focus on increasing exports of strength products and to key markets. We will continue to provide the world with quality China-made products, stable Chinese supplies, and help build a secure and resilient global industrial system.

We will continue to build smooth and efficient industrial and supply chains. General Secretary Xi

Continuing to Deepen Industrial and Supply Chain Cooperation Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era

Over the past 70 plus years since its founding, grounded in China while facing the world, CCPIT has played an important role in building close bonds between Chinese and foreign businesses, facilitating international trade, and promoting the development of state-to-state relations. In the new era and on the new journey ahead, guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, we will continue to follow through on the major outcomes of the 20th National Congress of the CPC, stay firmly grounded in the “two imperatives”, keep in mind matters of national importance, focus on serving national strategies and serve Chinese and foreign businesses. We will continue to make a success of the CISCE, provide

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Jinping delivered a keynote speech at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in which he announced eight steps for supporting high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, bringing the BRI to a new stage of high-quality development. CCPIT will continue cooperation and coordination with relevant parties to follow through on the outcomes of the third BRF and the Belt and Road CEO Conference and help deliver the signed projects on the ground at an early date. We will work with our partners to deliver real results through our 393 bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for business cooperation, and promote bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation. Within the frameworks of China-ASEAN, China-Central Asia, China-Africa, China-Arab, and China-CELAC cooperation, we will organize high-level exhibitions and forums. We will work for the implementation of free trade agreements including the RCEP, usher in greater results in Belt and Road trade cooperation, and promote cooperation in new areas such as health, the green economy, the digital economy and innovation, which will improve the quality of global industrial and supply chains.

We will work to build open and inclusive industrial and supply chains. Openness and cooperation are an important driving force for development and progress. Inclusiveness and sustainability are the important guarantee for shared prosperity. As an important window for China's opening up, CCPIT will build on our strength of linking the government with the business community, and connecting China with the world, to smooth out supply and demand, improve the quality of trade and investment cooperation, and help businesses get more deeply involved

in the system of global industrial and supply chains. We will support overseas businesses to China for important exhibition and trade promotion events, facilitate the import of quality consumer products, advanced technologies, and important equipment, to expand room for the development of global industrial and supply chains. We will continue to give full play to the role of the Special Seminar of the CCPIT on Providing Services for Foreign-related Businesses, improve the existing mechanism for regular exchanges with multinational corporations and overseas chambers of commerce in China, and build a full-chain, one-stop, international business-related legal service system, with an eye to building market-oriented, law-based and first class business environment and bringing into fruition more quality foreign-funded projects.

We will continue to build mutually-beneficial industrial and supply chains. Industrial and supply chains are the most important global public goods, which calls for joint development, contribution, and governance of the international community. The business community is an important player in formulating international trade rules and in acting on the global governance of industrial and supply chains. The CCPIT has always taken upon itself to organize the Chinese business community to participate in the work of multilateral organizations and multilateral platforms. We have organized Chinese businesses to get deeply involved in the business community events under multilateral platforms such as APEC, G20, and BRICS as well as the work of international organizations such as the International Chamber of Commerce. These events have gone

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a long way in helping airing concerns about safeguarding and maintaining global industrial and supply chains, pooling consensus for cooperation, putting forward Chinese solutions that conform to Chinese interests and win international recog-

nition, and enhancing international macro-policy coordination on industrial and supply chains, thus contributing to the sound development of economic globalization and the building of an open world economy.

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One of exceptionally valuable exhibits from the display in the Nanjing Museum

Photo: Uroš Šuvaković

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Belt and Road Construction's Achievement of the Past Decade and Development Prospect

Summary: Ten years ago, with deep insight into global development trends and to promote common development and human progress, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the grand Belt and Road Initiative. Now it can be concluded that it is a successful and globally important project which has advanced world economy, but also created a brand-new model of international cooperative development. This text offers a series of concrete data: for example, China has signed MoUs for the Digital Silk Road with 17 countries, established bilateral cooperation mechanisms for "Silk Road" e-commerce with 23 countries and built 34 cross-border terrestrial cable systems and several international submarine cables. More importantly, numerous forms of integration have been realized between those countries, from cooperation in culture, education, tourism, science and technology to the construction and expansion of transport infrastructure. Thanks to the open and partnering relationship, the paradigm of international cooperation development has been changed, which announces a prospect of expanding the cooperation domain with new projects such as the "Green Silk Road", the "Digital Silk Road" and the "Health Silk Road". It implies a new way of thinking and approach to the values, rules and standards, and the promotion of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing, and Internet of Things.

Keywords: "Belt and Road", development orientation, global infrastructural investments, struggle for power, turbulent period, new cooperation paradigm

Ten years ago, with deep insight into global development trends and to promote common development and human progress, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the grand Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Over the past decade, the Belt and Road construction has not only forcefully advanced the global connectivity process and injected significant dynamics to the world economic recovery but also created a brand

new model of international cooperative development, and conducted innovative exploration for change on global governance, becoming a milestone of the history of human development, especially that of contemporary international relations as well as an important support for promoting the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and building a modern socialist country with Chinese characteristics.

Marked Achievements of Decade-Long Belt and Road Construction

Under the BRI framework, “five connections” complement one another, with “hard connectivity”, “soft connectivity” and people-to-people bonds bringing out the best in each other. Not only has the BRI achieved direct and real benefit that attracts the world’s attention, it has also made comprehensive long-term benefits for the future generations.

50 | First, the BRI has advanced China’s political, economic and social relations with partner countries. By June 2023, China has signed BRI cooperative documents with 152 countries in the world and 32 international organizations, covering more than three quarters of global countries and 60 percent of global population. By the end of August, it has signed 21 free trade agreements with 28 countries and regions, and the trade in goods between China and the BRI partners has expanded from US \$1.04 trillion in 2013 to US \$2.07 trillion in 2022, with an average annual growth of 8 percent. In 2022, the proportion of China’s total imports and exports with BRI partner countries reached 32.84 percent, 7.82 percentage points above that of 2013. Between 2013 and 2022, the total value of new project contracts signed by Chinese enterprises with the BRI partner countries and the turnover accumulated to US \$1.2 trillion and US \$800 billion respectively, accounting for a half of the total value of contracted foreign projects during the same period. The two-way investment between China and BRI partner countries accu-

mulated to US \$270 billion, and investment in Overseas Economic and Trade Cooperation Zones (OETCZ) in the BRI partner countries accumulated to US \$57.13 billion, creating 421,000 local jobs. The economic relations between China and BRI partner countries have improved resilience of each country’s supply chains. In 2022, China’s exports of textile products, electronic components, basic organic chemical products and automobile parts increased by 14.5%, 21.1%, 31.1% and 24.6% respectively, and energy and agricultural imports increased by 58.8% and 13.4% respectively. The BRI plays an important role in ensuring stable energy, food and key mineral supplies for all countries concerned.

Second, the BRI has advanced the global process of comprehensive connectivity. Over the past ten years, as the four-in-one connectivity of land, sea, space and cyber has moved forward in a solid way, a connectivity framework of “six corridors, six routes, and multiple countries and ports” has taken shape. The China-Europe Express freight trains increased from 80 trips in 2013 to 16000 trips in 2022, having connected over 110 cities in China and 216 cities in Europe by the end of June 2023. Since the China-Laos Railway became operational in December 2021, passenger trips have totaled 20 million, with cargo trips covering Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and Singapore. Goods categories have increased from over 100 including chemical fertilizer and general merchandise to begin with to over 1200 including electronics, photovoltaic and cold chain fruits. The New Western Land-Sea Corridor has taken shape with the Eastern, the Central and the West-

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ern railway main roads, radiating to 18 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities under direct jurisdiction of the central government, and 61 cities, while logistics and transportation network connecting 119 countries and regions, and 393 ports across the globe. China has signed MoUs of cooperation on the Digital Silk Road with 17 countries, established Silk Road e-commerce bilateral cooperative mechanisms with 23 countries, and built 34 cross-border terrestrial cable systems and several international submarine cables. More importantly, the China-Europe Express, the New Western Land-Sea Corridor, the China-Laos Railway and the Digital Silk Road have promoted integration among countries involved and thus created a still greater integration effect. Under the BRI framework, as cooperation in culture, education, tourism, science and technology, poverty alleviation, sports and medicine and public health has continued to deepen, people in the countries concerned have not only aligned with the BRI cooperation vision but also actively participated in the Belt and Road construction process, and increasingly become important BRI participants and contributors.

Third, the BRI has boosted world economic recovery. The Belt and Road construction has brought real economic development and people's well-being to the participating countries. For instance, China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park has attracted 107 enterprises from 15 countries, covering machine building, e-commerce, new materials, traditional Chinese medicine, artificial intelligence and 5G network development, and become the largest industrial park in the

Eurasian region. Since a Chinese conglomerate invested and took part in the operation of the Port of Piraeus in Greece, this largest Mediterranean port has been helped out of operational difficulties and rejuvenated, being praised by Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis as "a win-win landmark project". Since purchasing Smederevo steel mill in Serbia, another Chinese conglomerate has turned around the enterprise that had made losses for years running into a profitable one, saving 5000 local jobs and becoming the second largest exporter of the country. Yet another Chinese company contracted the construction of Puttalam power plant in Sri Lanka, solving the problem of electricity for 20 million people and providing 40% of power supply of the country. Engineering projects such as the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway, the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway and the Kamchiq Tunnel greatly cut back on local transport time cost. As the World Bank's Belt and Road Economics: Opportunities and Risks of Transport Corridors report goes, if fully implemented, BRI transport infrastructure can reduce travel time for economies along the transport corridors by up to 12%, increase trade by between 2.8% and 9.7% for the corridor economies, and increase real income by 1.2% and 3.4%, lifting 7.6 million people from extreme poverty and 32 million people from moderate poverty. According to a study by the Centre for Economics and Business Research of the United Kingdom (UK), by 2040, the BRI will contribute more than US \$10 billion to the GDP of over 50 BRI participating countries whereas the United States (US), in spite of not participating

in the BRI, will benefit a 1.4 percentage increase to its economic growth.

Fourth, the BRI has led innovation on the paradigm of international cooperation and global governance. Traditional international economic cooperation basically goes by the logic of “prioritizing institutions”, i.e., to set up institutional rules first and then to conduct cooperation according to the unified rules. There are three major problems of the institution-led cooperation: first, some of the institutions cannot guarantee equal rights for all countries; second, institutions in themselves are not enough to fully induce development vitality of all parties; and third, it is liable to lead to insufficient supply of public goods like infrastructure. The BRI transcends the traditional international cooperation model by combining rule-orientation with practical cooperation-orientation, combining top level design with “wading the river by groping for stones”, combining government function with market logic, combining infrastructure with financial innovation, and combining focusing on key points with openness and inclusion, underlining the wisdom of uniting knowledge and action, that results in unity of theory and practice. The BRI practice has led to paradigm shift of international cooperative development. In recent years, there has emerged a concentration of a large number of conceptualizations for international cooperation, taking reference of the BRI in partners, domains, ideas and paths of cooperation. The cooperation ideas of other developing countries such as the Bright Road Initiative of Kazakhstan, the Development Road Initiative of Mongolia, Laos’ strategy of turning a land-locked country into a land-linked one, and the Middle Corridor Initiative of Turkey

are all closely connected to the BRI, whereas the so-called alternatives like the “Blue Dot Network”, “Build Back Better World” and the “Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment” also take reference of the BRI experience. As a matter of fact, it is the general view of the international community that the BRI has taken the lead in leaving its deep footprint in global infrastructure construction, with multiple advantages in infrastructure, production capacity, fund and amenities, and the development trend of Belt and Road construction cannot be impeded by any externally competitive ideas.

Fifth, the BRI has increased the voice and influence of developing countries. The BRI has changed the history that developing countries could not but participate and be integrated into the institutional platforms created by the West, providing an important platform for the practice of promoting evolutionary “incremental change” to the international system, helping the emerging markets and developing countries increase their voice and influence on international affairs, and pushing the international order and global governance towards greater fairness and rationality. To date, the UN and other major international institutions like the G20, the APEC, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization deeply subscribe to the BRI cooperative vision, with membership of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank reaching 106 and its amount of financing reaching US \$38.8 billion, the Silk Road Fund providing investment and financing support to over 60 countries and regions, and the cooperative mechanisms centering on the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation having

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taken shape. Integration of development strategies and development planning between China and other developing countries under the BRI increasingly deepens, making economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial for all, and providing important opportunities and brand-new options for developing countries in the process of their independent pursuit of moderni-

zation. Other developing countries under the BRI uphold justice on international and regional hot spot issues, speaking up on issues relating to the COVID-19 virus origin-tracing, human rights, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Taiwan, having become staunch companions and supporters of China in promoting international justice and safeguarding its core national interests.



President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, with the HBIS Group Steel delegation led by the General Director of this company, Song Sihai, October 2022

Photo: Dimitrije Gol

New Situation in Face of High-Quality Joint Belt and Road Construction

As the evolution of world profound changes unseen in a century has accelerated in recent years, global political and economic patterns undergoing profound transformation, and world civilizations mutually enriching and stimulating one another, the Belt and Road construction shoulders more arduous historical mission and faces more complex environmental conditions.

54 | First, the world economic recovery and growth remain weak. As the world economic development is a major cycle whereas the COVID-19 pandemic is a minor cycle, the latter may have impact on the former in somewhat way but cannot change its general direction. The easing of the COVID-19 may alleviate the disorder in global industrial and supply chains and release pended development dynamics. However, from the macro point of view, the world economy remains in the period of switching over from old drivers to new ones, with the old development model being difficult to carry on and the new economic drivers being yet to mature, and it will undergo slow and medium-speed growth for a long time to come. At the same time, as the impact of political security factors may intensify, the Ukraine Crisis and major power contest have affected trade, investment, financial stability, food and energy security, and the backlash against globalization, unilateralism and protectionism are yet to wane. The world economy faces dual pressure of weak recovery and lingering inflation, with fragmentation of trade rules preventing cooperation from deepening,

division of economic and technology systems interfering development process of globalization, and climate change and extreme weather liable to cause a large-scale humanitarian crisis. Pushing forward the Belt and Road construction will help bring out complimentary advantage of industrial and supply chains between China and other developing BRI partners to continue, better cooperative potentials and inject more stability, certainty, balance and strong dynamics into global development.

Second, overall debt pressure on BRI participating countries increases. According to statistics of the International Monetary Fund, 70 low-income economies are in face of US \$326 billion in debt, half of which have fallen or will fall into a debt crisis. In the Asia-Pacific region, average government debt level is at its peak in 18 years, 19 of the regional countries being classified high risk ones of debt crisis. Scale of African debts has increased markedly over the past decade and more, reaching US \$696 billion by 2022, leaving 60% of African countries at high risk of debt distress. The peak period of repayment for developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region and Africa will come in a few years' time, and the world's largest mass debt crisis for developing countries in decades may occur, leading to economic crises and social turbulence in many countries. China is not a major creditor for middle- and low-income countries. According to the World Bank, debt increment of developing countries comes mainly from Western commercial creditors and multilateral financial institutions, bilateral governmental debts account for less than 30% and those owed to China, for less than 10%. However,

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as Chinese government loans take a large proportion of bilateral governmental debts for countries concerned and plus deluding influence of “debt trap theory”, relevant BRI project financing is under considerable public pressure. It is necessary for China and its BRI partners to guide the international community to understand the debt issue objectively and rationally, analyzing concrete debt composition, and both facilitating solution to debt issue for concerned countries and seeking sustainable investment and financing model so as to practice the philosophy of “teaching people how to fish while giving them fish”, and to help BRI partners upgrade endogenous dynamics for social and economic development and self-he-matopoietic ability.

Third, head-on external competition intensifies. External competition to the BRI boils down to three levels. First, putting forward so-called competitive alternatives, through the “Blue Dot Network”, “Build Back Better World” and the “Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment” to increase investment in Africa, Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Latin America, contest with China for global infrastructure market in either with me or against me thinking, and instigate “decoupling” industrial chains, de-sinicization and de-risking. Secondly, resorting to institutional rules to put soft shackles on the BRI in environment, financing and transparency so as to both block the process of Belt and Road construction and prevent the rules and standards in the practice of Belt and Road construction from becoming global rules and standards. Third, launching cognitive warfare against the BRI to continue producing fallacious arguments like debt

trap, rule substitution, new colonial expansion, resource plunder, digital infiltration and threat to values, to apply their advantage in agenda setting, narrative skills, media network and technology in creating international opinion to attack and smear the BRI's original philosophical purpose, construction results and development prospect. Seemingly objective and neutral, a small number of individual countries attempt to, through NGOs, rating agencies, management consultancies, attack the weak links of the BRI cooperation, twisting the facts, speaking in superlatives and spoiling the atmosphere.

Fourth, boundary between global development and security is becoming increasingly blurry. An important manifestation of the world entering a new period of turbulence and change is the rising weight of security, with the security logic excluding and extruding the development logic. The BRI is an initiative for cooperative development, with its results not only leading the local economic and social development but also producing positive effect for international peace and stability. However, certain forces hold on to the Cold War mentality and the logic of power politics, looking at the BRI from the bloc rivalry perspective, pan-politicizing economic cooperation, over-interpreting the concept of security, and challenging the BRI cooperation with the logic of geopolitics. Meanwhile, the Ukraine crisis, the Afghanistan issue as well as terrorism, telecom fraud, biosecurity, food and energy security also in a profound way affect the comprehensive deepening of the Belt and Road construction. As diverse issues are increasingly impossible to be avoided, it is necessary for the BRI cooperation

to actively shape a positive posture where development and security bring out the best in each other, actively resist impact of certain political and security logic, try its best to maintain the general direction of economic globalization, secure global industrial and supply chains, enhance international security cooperation and safeguard common interests of all parties in the BRI cooperation so as to accumulate conditions for resolving international hot spot and tough issues with practical cooperation.

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Continuing to Lead Theoretical and Practical Innovation for Global Common Development

The Belt and Road construction in practice has created a new paradigm of international economic cooperation, achieved new results of global common development, and become an important practical platform for building a community with a shared future for mankind. Looking to the future, high-quality joint Belt and Road construction will continue to lead theoretical and practical innovation for global common development, contribute more material and cultural public goods to the world, and help various countries advance modernization process in common effort.

First, facilitating development issue to return to the core of international agenda. At present, the world economic recovery remains weak, anti-globalization goes strong, development gap between the North and South widens, energy and food security faces challenge, the problem of unbalanced, insufficient and unsustainable global development protrudes, and development agenda is at risk of

being politicized and marginalized. China's practical experience illustrates that as development is the foundation and key for solving all problems, problems arising in the course of development can only be solved with further and better development. The fact that the Belt and Road construction has won warm response and active participation of the international community can largely attribute to the fact that it has got right on the major issue of human development, discovered the root cause of the issue, and found the key of development to solving issues. The Belt and Road construction upholds the development orientation, and makes all parties push development back to the core of international agenda and prevent against marginalization of the development issue. At the same time, the BRI is a comprehensive cooperative framework, involving an extensive range of entities, domains, industrial forms and models, and has encountered all sorts of problems and challenges in the practice of its construction, which makes it necessary to be pragmatic cooperation-oriented and developmental needs-oriented, solve urgent practical development problems for all parties, stimulates enthusiasm of all parties for cooperation through solving pain points and difficulties, whereby lasting driving forces for cooperation can converge.

Second, intensive cultivation of infrastructure and industrial cooperation. The practice of the Belt and Road construction in the past decade demonstrates that infrastructure and industrial cooperation is the focal point for developing countries to achieve development, and an important basis for preventing economy turning from substantial to fictitious. Building high-quality, sus-

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tainable, risk-resistant, rationally priced, inclusive and tangible infrastructure and fostering industries fitting local resource endowment and with competitive advantage helps developing countries be better integrated into global industrial, supply and value chains, enlarge their independence and voice, and achieve linked, common development. According to reports of relevant research bodies, in the future there will be an annual shortfall of global infrastructure investment of roughly US \$1 trillion and more, with overall demand in global infrastructure market exceeding supply, and therefore it is entirely possible for major countries to attain complementary advantages and make common efforts in promoting a global connectivity process. The BRI keeps focusing on infrastructure connectivity and production capacity cooperation, giving full play to China's advantage in infrastructure, production capacity and industrial supporting facilities and being able to provide driving force for economic development of BRI partners. At the same time, the BRI pursues the concept of opening and inclusion, being open to all concepts for global infrastructure cooperation, continuing to promote innovation on cooperative domains, models, paths and mechanisms, and inducing synergy of all parties in making joint efforts to expand global infrastructure and production capacity cooperation.

Third, exploring construction of long effect cooperation mechanisms in all domains. The Belt and Road construction is a century project that calls for continued exploration for optimum and sustainable cooperation models. The philosophical requirements of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, and of openness, green

development, clean government, high-standard, sustainability and benefiting people's livelihoods will guide the direction of high-quality joint BRI construction. These philosophical requirements will turn into concrete practice. Infrastructure is of strong public goods attributes, cannot rely only on the market logic and corporate strength, and needs governments to play their roles. Therefore, it is necessary to explore a sustainable infrastructure supply model, and give full play to government and enterprise synergy. As there are many projects of large investment, long cycle and slow results in the Belt and Road construction, the source of funding, if too unitary, would result in heavy financial pressure. Therefore, it is necessary to explore sustainable investment and financing model, attract investment from multilateral development agencies and financial institutions of developed countries, increase the proportion of equity financing, and deepen third-party market cooperation so as to form a virtuous circle of investment, development and income. For Belt and Road projects to be both economically gainful and perceptible to local communities it is necessary to extensively listen to people's interests and suggestions, comprehensively considering direct and real income, as well as long-term and comprehensive effect, explore sustainable mechanisms for benign social and economic interaction, summarize experience that can be replicated and promoted, remove barriers and divide between the economic logic and the social logic.

Fourth, coordinating the advancement of practical development and theoretical innovation. Just as the proposition of the BRI is in itself a theoretical and practical pioneering work,

the high-quality Belt and Road construction also firmly requires dynamics from innovation. It is necessary for the Belt and Road construction to expand new cooperation domains like the Green Silk Road, the Digital Silk Road, and the Health Silk Road, explore new cooperation models like inter-governmental cooperation, inter-firm cooperation and inter-local cooperation, advance new development in mindset, values, rules and standards, and promote new technologies like AI, big data, cloud computing, and internet of Things. It is necessary to serve the construction of new development paradigm, collaborate in implementing the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative, tap new potentials for global common development, and inject new dynamics into the

construction of a community with a shared future for mankind. At the same time, the BRI contains the profound wisdom of Chinese philosophy, and has transcended traditional Western theoretical frameworks on economics, development, and cooperation, broken blind superstition and path dependence, and achieved comprehensive innovation and transcendence in philosophical basis, value pursuit, and cooperation models, methods and paths. The BRI theoretical system and discourse system will continue to be enriched by practical development, giving Midas touch like theoretical support and opinion support for high-quality joint Belt and Road construction to move forward steady and go far, and providing ideological enlightenment and practical path for global common development and progress.



Drone flight over Shanghai, China

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Creating a New Era for Global Civilization Development by Deepening Exchanges and Mutual Learning

Summary: The international landscape has undergone deep changes in the past years, whereas the noise in the public opinion gives rise to the notions such as superiority, collision of civilizations, conflict of cultures etc. However, in the east of the world, China in the new era explores ways of interaction between nations and civilizations with its unique cultural spirit enriched by the concept of Chinese modernization and Xi Jinping's vision of the necessity of cooperation expansion among diverse civilizations. Committed to exchanges and integration of different civilizations and focusing on the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, China vigorously advances the connectivity of people while at the same time building cooperation networks in, among other things, education, health, sports and tourism. China's proposal for globalization in the post-pandemic era refrains from drawing ideological lines, not targeting a third party, nor striving for the formation of an exclusive bloc. Instead, China advocates respect of diversity and differences and works on building a community with the common future for whole humanity.

Keywords: "Belt and Road", cooperation, exchange and learning, dialogue, connectivity of goods, people and ideas

On March 15, 2023, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed for the first time the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting. The GCI, like the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, is another important public good provided by China in the new era to address common global challenges and build a shared future for humanity. This year marks the tenth anniversary of General Secretary Xi Jinping's proposal of building a community with a shared future for mankind and the Belt and Road Initiative

(BRI). The GCI has further expanded the means and pathways towards the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, enriched the ideological connotation of the BRI, and offered Chinese solutions and contributed Chinese wisdom to promoting the exchanges and mutual learning of civilizations as well as advancing progress of human civilization.

In recent years, the international landscape has been undergoing profound changes. The various conflicts among different cultures and civilizations have not yet been eliminated, and

noises hyping up the notions such as superiority of certain civilizations and clash of civilizations have been lingering in the international public opinion arena. However, in the east of world, China in the new era has been exploring ways of interaction among nations and civilizations with its unique cultural spirit. With the continuous development of Chinese modernization, China has forged its own unique vision on civilizations. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting: “As the future of all countries are closely connected, tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations play an irreplaceable role in advancing humanity’s modernization process and making the garden of world civilizations flourish.” Based on the features of the times and the development context of China, the GCI encapsulates the Chinese wisdom of state governance in the new era, follows the trend of world modernization and the law of human civilization development. With the GCI in mind, China will join hands with all countries to create a new era for global civilization cooperation through exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

Diversity of civilizations is a Necessary Law of the Development of Human History

Human history is one of plural civilizations prospering together in diversity. Interaction, collision and integration of different civilizations have brought about possibilities for progress of human

society and painted a colorful picture of the world moving forward. As early as remote antiquity, human beings created a variety of colorful original civilizations, including, among others, the Mesopotamia civilization, the Nile River Valley civilization, the Indus Valley civilization, the Yellow River and Yangtze River civilization, the Maya civilization, which all brimmed with unique splendors. 2000 years ago, Confucius and Lao-tzu in China, Socrates and Plato in ancient Greece and other great thinkers emerged, who were just like bright stars shining together and became high mountains that later generations look up to. The ideological propositions and ethical principles they put forward created cultural traditions of different ancient civilizations and jointly lit up the sparks of the age of reason in human civilization.

With the opening of new trade routes, individuals from different civilizations set foot on each other’s territory more frequently. The exchanges and cooperation among civilizations gave impetus to the progress of human society. The four great inventions of China were transmitted to Europe via the Arab world, which promoted the Renaissance and the religious reform and facilitated the emancipation of mind and social progress in Europe; Zheng He made seven voyages by his treasure-loaded ship to the Western seas and spread advanced technologies to the South Seas, which led to civilization and enlightenment of local communities; Matteo Ricci and Xu Guangqi jointly translated *Elements by Euclid*, which marked the beginning of the exchanges between Chinese and Western science. It can be seen that the exchanges and mutual learning of civilizations served as a basic form of human

social interaction in history, and had great significance for the common prosperity of human civilizations. Connectivity between regional civilizations and inclusion of global civilizations have provided an inexhaustible source of nutrients for the emergence of new philosophies and new ideas, pushing for the continued development of human civilizations in all forms.

However, the industrial revolution has led to rapid changes in balance of power between countries. With the expansion of colonialism, the diversity of world civilizations has been severely challenged. After two world wars, the world established the basic order and rules for international relations and entered a period based on independent nation states. After more than a hundred years of endeavors, a vast number of developing countries have finally embarked on their own modernization paths, and the collective rise of diverse groups has become an inevitable trend of world development. Consequently, many ancient civilizations have regained their vitality and confidence, bringing the world civilizations back to the track of diversified and inclusive development featuring open dialogue, mutual learning and drawing on each other's strengths. The diversity of human civilizations is bound to reappear, and the relations among civilizations are bound to return to equality. This is the general trend of human historical development and the aspiration of the people. General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed in the GCI that "We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilizations. Countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement,

mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority." China in the new era, guided by the vision of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among different civilizations, has become a practitioner and promoter of global civilization exchanges and mutual learning, contributing Chinese wisdom and Chinese strength to promoting diversity, coexistence and development of human civilizations.

Exchanges and Mutual Learning of Civilizations Have a Profound Bearing on Peace and Development of the World

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As human society enters the globalization era, the exchanges and communication among civilizations have been more intensive than ever before, providing a strong impetus for social development and progress. However, in recent years, the international political and economic situation has been rapidly changing, with anti-globalization thoughts being on the rise and all kinds of conflict happening frequently. In dealing with the multiple challenges facing the world, the significance of exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations has become more prominent.

Exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations are an important driving force for peace and development of the world. Facing never ceasing gunfire, haunting terrors and piling conflicts in today's world, neither Francis Fukuyama's "the end of history" nor Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" can change the crises and dilemmas of the contemporary mankind. These theories,

in final analysis, advocate the standards of Western civilization and deviate from the spirit of exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. The reality of today's world has proven that the attempts of putting a certain civilization above another, dividing the world into irreconcilable blocs and ignoring the possibility for harmonious coexistence among civilizations will gravely obstruct the relations among different countries and peaceful and stable development of international order. General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed that "We advocate the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilizations, and refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation." The common values of humanity provide fundamental guidelines for all parties. Refraining from imposing one's own values and models to others is a manifestation of political civilization and represents the historical trend of human development. Human history tells us that the attempt to establish a unified world with a single civilization is only an unrealistic fantasy. Only by respecting the political systems, economic systems and religious philosophies under different historical backgrounds, cultural traditions and special national conditions, and by enhancing people's recognition of harmony without uniformity and inclusiveness of civilizations, can mankind find a way of coexistence among civilizations that eliminates barriers and misunderstandings, resolves clashes and conflicts, and ensures lasting peace and common development of the world.

The exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations can help countries better inherit and develop their traditional cultures. Thousands of years of human civilizations have produced beautiful and colorful fine traditional cultures in different countries, which well ground profound cultural and ethical pursuit of all peoples and represent the unique cultural identity of different nations. The fine traditional culture of a country belongs not only to its nation, but also to the whole world. How to treat our own traditional cultures? This is a question that any country must address well in the modernization process. For this question, General Secretary Xi Jinping offered a clear answer in proposing the GCI, "We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations. Countries need to fully harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to the present times, and push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures." The exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations can help traditional cultures of various countries to spread widely to the world, and at the same time help them absorb the essence of various ideas and cultural elements, thus bringing these traditional cultures fully up to date and enhancing their vitality and influence.

Exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations will be the main driver for globalization in the post-pandemic era. As the international community is moving fast to remove the negative impact of COVID-19, the development and prosperity of the world call for mutual understanding, mutual exchanges, mutual learning and common development among different civilizations, so as to break the stubborn mindset of anti-globaliza-

tion. In face of global challenges, the wisdom and strength of civilizations are all the more needed to provide in-depth guidance for survival and development of all nations and all countries. China's proposal for globalization in the post-pandemic era refrains from drawing ideological lines, not engaging in values-oriented diplomacy, not targeting a third party, nor forming exclusive bloc. Instead, China advocates the respect for diversity and differences and works to build a community with a shared future for mankind. Building such a community is not only about close cooperation in the material dimension, but also about building a cohesive consensus in the cultural and ethical dimension and strengthening the bonds of identity. Through inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning, countries can enhance mutual understanding and mutual recognition, take into account the reasonable concerns of other countries while pursuing their own interests, and promote common development of all countries while seeking their own development.

China is a Firm Practitioner and Promoter of Exchanges and Mutual Learning among Civilizations

Since ancient times, China has forged a vision of diversity, tolerance and mutual learning on civilizations through its peaceful and friendly interactions with different countries and civilizations. The ancient Chinese sages have long realized that there is no such thing as a uniform standard for everything in the world. Therefore, the respect for diversity and

commitment to the harmonious coexistence have been transformed into the essence of thoughts and ideas nurtured in the ancient Chinese wisdom. It was observed in the Book of Rites that "All living things can grow in harmony without hurting one another, and different ways can run in parallel without interfering with one another".

This observation profoundly points out that the development of things is not possible without pursuing common ground while shelving differences and seeking openness and inclusiveness. During the Western Han Dynasty, the ancient Silk Road opened up by China not only served as a road of economic exchanges, but also a road of cultural exchanges and inter-civilization dialogue. The ancient Silk Road opened the window of interaction and dialogue between Arab and Western civilizations along the route. The connectivity of people, commodities and ideas greatly drove the common progress of civilizations along the Silk Road. At the same time, when facing the colorful external cultures, China opened the door of inclusion and integration with a broad mind. With the arrival of different cultures, an inclusive ideological and cultural system combining Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism came into being.

With the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as its diplomatic guidance, China adheres to the diplomatic guideline of seeking common ground while reserving differences, and is committed to engaging in inter-civilization exchanges and dialogues with all ethnic groups and regions on an equal and harmonious basis. Especially since the reform and opening up, China has held high the banner of peace and development, participated extensively in the dialogue and exchanges among

countries and civilizations with its independent foreign policy of peace. China has promoted joint cooperation through joint participation, maintained long-term friendly dialogue and cooperation with the majority of third world countries, and gradually established relatively stable diplomatic and dialogue relations with the world's major countries, especially with the Western countries. In the process of exchanges and mutual learning, China has always been committed to promoting South-South cooperation and North-South dialogue, and enhancing coordination and cooperation with emerging and developing countries. China has worked together with developing countries to seek opportunities and prospects for modernization and social progress.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping has set great store by the exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations and proposed a new vision on civilization, which outlines the way forward for the development of diverse civilizations. Taking into consideration both the domestic and international situation, China in the new era has successively put forward important ideas such as the initiative to build a community with a shared future for mankind, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, demonstrating China's broad mind and sense of responsibility to work for peace and development of the whole world.

Not only is China an advocate of civilization exchanges and mutual learning, but even more so its practitioner and promoter. Guided by the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, China has been advancing inter-civilization exchanges and dialogue through concrete actions.

Committing to the exchanges and integration of diverse civilizations and focusing on high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, China has been vigorously advancing Belt and Road people-to-people connectivity and has built cooperation networks in education, health, sports and tourism, among others. China has developed new models for dialogue and cooperation among civilizations. It has established a series of platforms for inter-civilization dialogue, including the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting, Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations, Conference on Dialogue between Chinese and African Civilizations. All these platforms have become mechanisms for open and equal communication among civilizations, providing lasting and strong impetus for deepening inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning. In February 2023, the Center of Chinese and Greek Ancient Civilizations was established jointly by China and Greece, setting a good example for exchange and mutual learning between Chinese and foreign civilizations.

Amid the once-in-a-century changes, the world is once again at the crossroads of history. The GCI proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping has built a bridge of inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning for upholding world peace and development. As another important intellectual contribution made by China to human civilizations, the GCI will move forward with China, a country moving closer to the center of the world stage, to have a profound bearing on the forms and pattern of human civilizations, usher in a new era of development of global civilization and present a beautiful vision for the world's modernization process.

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Global Economic and Trade Landscape Reshaping and High-Quality Belt and Road Cooperation

Summary: The global economic and trade landscape is changing, while methods of cooperation are being adjusted to trends. This paper is focused on the Belt and Road Initiative through reflections on the global tendencies and crises during the COVID-19 pandemic. Analyzing five new features of profound economic restructuring of the market, the author points to the rise of the developing countries and the increase in international investments, but also to the increasingly evident rise of digital services. Against the backdrop of deep planetary restructuring, the Belt and Road cooperation has an increasingly important role in the following aspects: first, it provides a strong impetus to global economic and trade growth; second, it taps into the huge potential of the global economic and trade cooperation because the participating countries will use their advantages and encourage mutual potentials through strategic and political connectivity; third, the participating countries build a global economic and trade partnership in the new era; and, fourth, they promote the reshaping of the global economic and trade governance system, which is underway.

Keywords: Belt and Road, market restructuring, politicization of economic and trade relations, scientific and technological parks, new direction of global business operations

At present, a new round of revolution in science, technology and industry is developing profoundly. The global economic and trade development pattern and cooperation mode are also under crucial adjustments. These have brought new challenges and opportunities for promoting trade connectivity included in the Belt and Road In-

itiative, and have also endowed the initiative a new role in the reshaping of the global economic and trade landscape. With the deepening of the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, global economy and trade will develop towards the goal of benign interaction in a stable, balanced and coordinated way.

New Features of Evolution of the Global Landscape of Economy and Trade

In recent years, driven by external shocks and internal momentum transformation, the global landscape of economy and trade has entered a period of profound restructuring, showing five new features.

The first is the differentiation among economies on global economic and trade growth. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the rise of de-

veloping countries has accelerated. Despite the severe impacts of the 2008 international financial crisis and the pandemic of COVID-19 in 2020, the growth rates of emerging markets and developing economies are still generally higher than those of developed economies. In terms of international trade and investment, emerging markets and developing economies have also experienced better growth and a rising international profile. The same applies to the development of international direct investment.

The second is the digitization of global trade and economic patterns. Among global technological



The President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić and the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Serbia Chen Bo with the Chinese team of medical specialists for the fight against COVID-19, Belgrade, May 1, 2020

Photo: Zoran Žestić – Photo Tanjug

innovations, the information and digital fields witnessed most of the technological breakthroughs. With the increasingly widespread application of digital technology, new industries, new forms and new models are emerging, driving rapid growth in the digital economy and trade. Meanwhile, cross-border digital service trade has also shown rapid growth momentum. Developed economies occupy a dominant position in global digital trade, but digital trade in developing countries has grown faster in recent years. The proportion of developed economies' exports of digital transmission services trade in 2021 accounted for 77.9% of the world, a decrease of 8.3 percentage points from 2005.

The third is the decarbonization of the global economic and trade structure. The development of a low-carbon economy has far-reaching implications for global trade and investment. In terms of trade, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions has increasingly become the goal and mission of countries' trade practices. The proportion of high-pollution, high-carbon-emission and high-energy-consumption products in global trade will continue to decline. Although low-carbon trade is in line with the concept and goal of sustainable development and is in the interest of all countries in the long run, in the short term, the foreign trade of developing countries with lower levels of technology and development will face more tests and challenges. In terms of investment, environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards are increasingly accepted and applied by the international community, so traditional investment and financing methods continue to transform. At the same time, many countries

have imposed restrictions on specific investment fields and industries, and have raised investment standards and environmental responsibility of enterprises.

The fourth is the politicization of global economic and trade relations. Some developed economies are keener to view economic and trade relations from the perspective of geopolitics and national security. They paint normal economic and trade relations with thick political color and hype up the so-called threat of economic and trade security on domestic and diplomatic occasions. In the area of trade, some developed economies have frequently taken advantage of their dominant position in the global trading system to launch unilateral actions against other countries, impose economic sanctions and provoke trade wars, seriously interfering and disrupting normal trade exchanges. In the area of investment, some developed economies have abused security concepts to restrict normal foreign capital inflows, and have taken targeted restrictive measures against some countries and enterprises, increasing the instability, uncertainty and unpredictability of cross-border investment.

The fifth is the weaponization of the global economic and trade mechanism. Due to the deliberate obstruction of certain countries, the reform of governance mechanisms of such as the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank and the G20 has been slow. These mechanisms have not only failed to maintain the global economic order, but also been reduced to a tool or even a weapon for a handful of countries to engage in geopolitical games and suppress other countries.

The New Role of Belt and Road in the Restructuring of Global Economic and Trade Landscape

Along with the proposal and practice of the Belt and Road Initiative, the economic and trade development of the participating countries has entered a new stage. Against the backdrop of the profound restructuring of the global economic and trade landscape, Belt and Road cooperation is playing an increasingly important role in the following four aspects.

68 | First, it provides a strong impetus for global economic and trade growth. At present, global economic and trade exchanges have been seriously hampered, and the level of trade and investment liberalization and facilitation has failed to keep pace with the requirements of global economic and trade development. It also has declined in some fields and industries. As the Belt and Road Initiative continues to make progress, the level of trade and investment liberalization and facilitation in the participating countries has been rising, creating favorable conditions for fostering the momentum of trade growth and enhancing the effectiveness of investment. Initiative on Promoting Unimpeded Trade Cooperation along the Belt and Road launched by China sets promoting trade growth, energizing two-way investment and promoting inclusive and sustainable development as the three major objectives of economic and trade cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative. It also promotes and expands trade exchanges through trade facilitation, the development of new business models, and the promotion

of cooperation in service trade, and strengthens investment cooperation, so as to jointly fulfill the commitment to promote the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This initiative has received positive responses and participation from more than 80 countries and international organizations. At the same time, the Belt and Road Initiative emphasizes cooperation in scientific and technological innovation, and actively promotes the research and development, as well as application of technologies of the participating countries, so as to create impetus and vitality for economic and trade growth through technological progress.

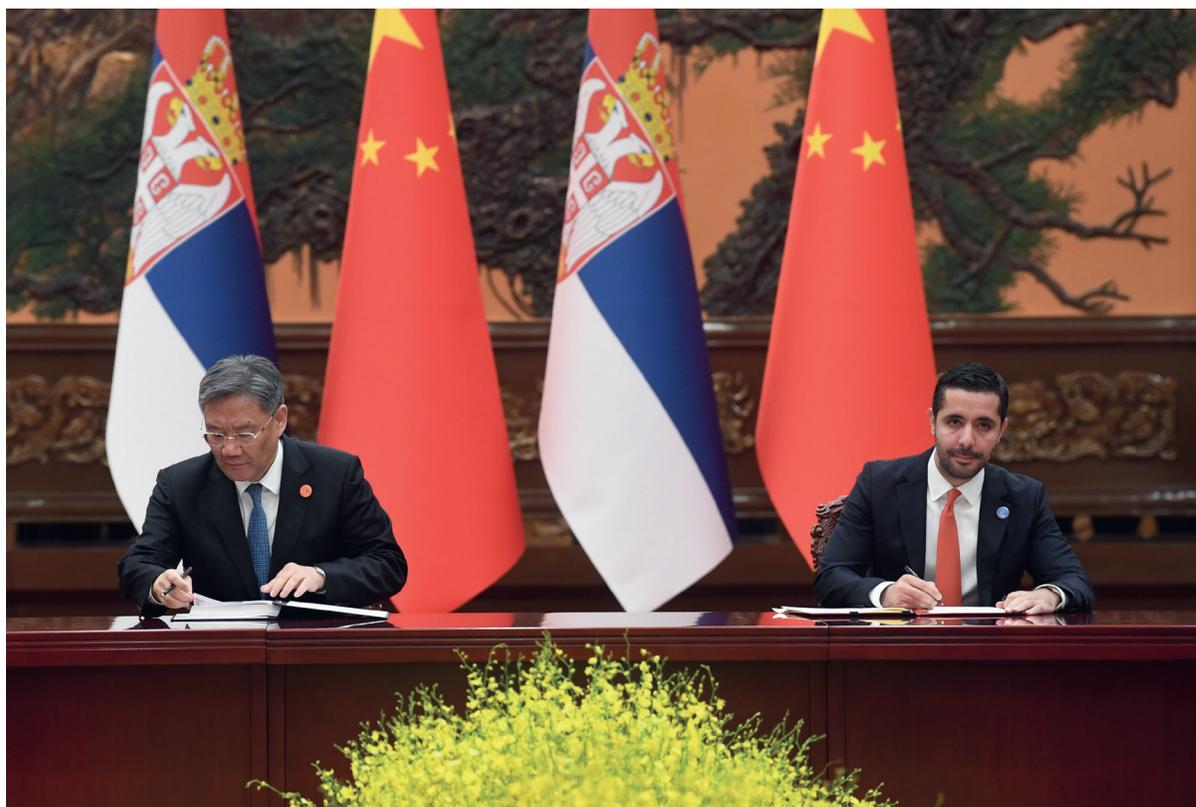
Second, it taps the huge potential of global economic and trade cooperation. Under the Belt and Road international cooperation framework, participating countries will give full play to each other's advantages and stimulate each other's potential through strategic and policy connectivity, and turn economic complementarities into practical results of economic and trade cooperation. According to a World Bank study, the Belt and Road Initiative could increase the scale of trade among the participating countries by 4.1%, and this trade-boosting effect could triple if relevant trade reforms and transportation infrastructure upgrades are further pursued. In terms of investment, the cumulative two-way investment between China and the participating countries from 2013 to 2022 will exceed \$270 billion. In terms of construction projects, from 2013 to 2022, the cumulative new contract value of China's contracted projects in participating countries exceeds \$1.2 trillion, and the cumulative completed turnover is more than

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800 billion US dollars, accounting for more than half of the total. The joint construction of the Belt and Road will give full play to the complementary economic effects to China and the participating countries. Its function in boosting the scale and cooperation of global economy and trade is more and more evident.

Third, it is building a global economic and trade partnership in the new era. Under the impact of unilateralism, protectionism and trade bullying, the alienation of global economic and trade relations has intensified, and the “you lose, I win, and the winner takes all” concept is widely spread. Escalating conflicts and confrontations in



Minister of Trade of the People's Republic of China, Wang Wentao and Minister of Domestic and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Serbia, Tomislav Momirović, sign the Agreement on Free Trade between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Beijing, October 2023

Photo: Dimitrije Gol

the economic and trade fields are casting a shadow over global economic and trade cooperation. Under the Belt and Road international cooperation framework, the participating countries conduct economic and trade exchanges on the basis of the principle of equality and voluntariness, and are committed to promoting an open, inclusive, win-win economic and trade partnership. Through extensive consultations and consensus-building, the countries have built an increasingly close partnership network. They base their economic and trade cooperation on political and strategic mutual trust, so they have reversed the tendency to instrumentalize and weaponize economic and trade relations. The Belt and Road Initiative advocates for the establishment of cooperative relations based on the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. It provides important support for benign interactions of global economic and trade partnership. The participating countries have also actively joined in the process of regional and global economic integration and have promoted the negotiation, signing and implementation of many new bilateral and regional free trade agreements which have provided institutional safeguards for deepening economic and trade exchanges among the countries concerned.

Fourth, it has promoted the reshaping of the global economic and trade governance system. In recent years, the global economic and trade environment and relations have continued to deteriorate, and the deficits in democracy, institutional rules and accountability of global economic

and trade governance have worsened. A handful of countries have resorted to unilateralism by replacing international rules with domestic legislation, replacing collective consensus with unilateral decision-making, putting their own interests above the common global interests, and practicing trade bullying in the name of multilateralism. In the current economic and trade governance system, the voices and decision-making rights of the vast number of developing countries have been seriously infringed upon, and their legitimate interests have not been duly safeguarded by the system. At the same time, universally recognized international rules in such areas as digital trade, low-carbon trade and sustainable investment and financing have yet to be formed, and some hegemonic countries have taken the opportunity to internationalize their domestic rules and implement the so-called “long-arm jurisdiction”. Against this backdrop, developing countries’ demand for reforming the existing global economic and trade governance system has become increasingly strong, which has entrusted the Belt and Road cooperation with the function to promote the reshaping of the global economic and trade governance system. Relying on its international cooperation platform, the participating countries adhere to genuine multilateralism, practice the concept of global governance of “extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits”. They actively participate in, promote and lead the process of reforming the global economic and trade governance system through pragmatic economic and trade cooperation.

Promotion of the Restructuring of the Global Economic and Trade Landscape via High-quality Belt and Road Cooperation

Aiming at high standards, sustainability and benefiting people's livelihoods, the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation will further consolidate the foundation of connectivity cooperation, expand new space for international cooperation, strengthen the risk prevention and control network, and strive to realize a higher level of cooperation, higher efficiency of inputs, higher quality of supply, and more resilience of development. In the field of economic and trade cooperation, the participating countries will respond to the development trend of global economy and trade to face up to the challenges of global economic and trade cooperation, relying on the Silk Road of Innovation, the Digital Silk Road, the Green Silk Road and the Silk Road of Rules to continue the efforts for restructuring of the global economic and trade landscape.

First, the high-quality cooperation for the Silk Road of Innovation will give new momentum to global economic and trade relations. The Silk Road of Innovation is the source of power for the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. It is also an inevitable choice for shaping new dynamics in global economic and trade relations. In recent years, China and the participating countries have deepened cooperation and exchanges in science and technology innovation, accelerated the matching and sharing of innovation elements, and forged ahead high-quality cooperation for the Silk Road

of Innovation, with the systematic and synergistic nature of the overall layout of cooperation in science and technology innovation getting stronger and stronger. Under the framework of the Belt and Road cooperation, China has launched a large number of policies, measures and projects, and actively promoted the construction of joint laboratories, cooperation in science and technology parks, technology transfer etc., which have laid an important foundation for other participating country to promote industrial upgrading, optimize the trade structure, and shape the momentum of trade growth. As of June 2023, China has established scientific and technological cooperation relations with more than 160 countries and regions, and signed science and technology agreements with 117 countries, most of which are Belt and Road participant countries. China has also joined more than 200 international organizations and multilateral mechanisms, and has taken the lead in launching and accelerating China's international "big science" programs. With the continued promotion of the high-quality cooperation of the Silk Road of Innovation, the level of scientific and technological innovation of the participating countries will be raised accordingly, and their roles in creating new driving forces for economic and trade growth will also be put into full play.

Second, the high-quality cooperation for the Digital Silk Road will explore new modes of global economic and trade interaction. The global digital economy and e-commerce have been developing rapidly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Cross-border e-commerce has witnessed big growth among

the participating countries in their efforts to expand economic and trade cooperation. To promote the cooperation for a high-quality digital Silk Road and create a more efficient new model of economic and trade cooperation, China has actively accommodated the e-commerce development goals and demands of all parties to create an efficient e-commerce platform. As of June 2023, China has signed e-commerce cooperation documents with 29 countries and established bilateral e-commerce cooperation mechanisms. As the cooperation for the high-quality digital Silk Road continues, the global economic and trade model will undergo profound changes in the Belt and Road participant countries and even around the world.

Third, the high-quality cooperation for the Green Silk Road will expand the new path of global economic and trade cooperation. Under the Belt and Road international cooperation framework, the participating countries have advocated the principle of green investment, established the BRI Green Development Coalition, and set up a green investment fund. In order to effectively respond to the epidemic, the Green Silk Road is developing rapidly, and key industries such as ecological protection and clean energy are facing new opportunities of development. In 2021, China and 31 partners launched the Initiative for Belt and Road Partnership on Green Development, making commitment to build no more new coal-power projects outside China. It also took the lead in announcing the establishment of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund with 1.5 billion Yuan. In the fields of new energy, energy

conservation and environmental protection, and new infrastructure construction, the Belt and Road cooperation has been expanding continuously and creating huge development space for trade and investment cooperation in related fields. Low-carbon trade and green investment have increasingly become an important path for participating countries to explore the potential of and improve the quality of economic and trade cooperation.

Fourth, the high-quality cooperation for the Silk Road of Rules will build a new system of global economic and trade governance. In recent years, participating countries have enhanced the alignment of standards and rules used both in their own countries and internationally, but the global economic and trade governance rules in emerging areas such as digital and low carbon are still in the exploratory and nascent stage, and negotiations on rules for cross-border data transmission, privacy protection, and market access for digital services under the framework of the WTO and other multilateral mechanisms and frameworks are still underway. Given that these emerging areas represent the future trend of development of economic and trade cooperation, the establishment of relevant rules will lead to significant changes in the global economic and trade governance system. Therefore, the high-quality cooperation for an open, fair, just and non-discriminatory Silk Road of rules and the construction of a globally oriented network of high-standard free trade zones will promote the global economic and trade governance system to evolve in a more just and rational direction.

Economic cooperation of the Republic of Serbia and the People's Republic of China

Summary: In the past decade, the cooperation between Serbia and China has become a key factor in the economic development of our country. Serbia is the first country in Central and Eastern Europe to establish a strategic partnership with China in 2009. A special momentum has been recorded since 2013, while in 2016 this was raised to the level of comprehensive strategic partnership, which represents the backbone of our extremely successful cooperation. The rise of bilateral relations, as China is currently one of the most important economic partners of Serbia, measured both by the volume of commodity exchange and the value of Serbian exports, as well as by the value of investments and joint projects, has been significantly contributed to by the steel friendship of the two countries and strong political support at the highest level by the President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić and the President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping.

Keywords: People's Republic of China, economic cooperation, foreign direct investments, Chinese companies

The research subject of this paper is a versatile analysis of the bilateral economic cooperation of the Republic of Serbia with the People's Republic of China, particularly from the moment of establishing the strategic partnership of the two countries. The aim of the paper is to examine the volume, structure and dynamics of the bilateral economic cooperation of the Republic of Serbia with the People's Republic of China and to point to the developmental impacts of the rapid growth of this cooperation. For that purpose, adequate measures

of the descriptive statistical analysis were used, including the graphic presentation of data and statistical index for measuring the structure and dynamics of the analyzed phenomena trends.

Introduction

At the same time, the cooperation between Serbia and China proceeds intensively in multilateral and plurilateral forums of cooperation, especially within the Chinese initiative of the new silk road – “Belt

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and Road” from 2013, as well as through the China–CEEC mechanism. For the purpose of further improvement of the cooperation between Serbia and China, in October 2023 a strategic document was signed – the Medium-Term Action Plan for the joint construction of the “Belt and Road” initiative for the period 2023-2025. These initiatives and forums open up the possibility for the development of the economic cooperation on a large scale of different areas and for further strengthening of the comprehensive strategic partnership.

Chinese investments in Serbia had a strong growth in the previous period, while from 2010 to the end of Q3 2023 they have amounted to EUR 4.76 billion. In the period since 2012, when the share of Chinese foreign direct investments in Serbia was only 0.1%, with the total realized FDI inflow of EUR 1.3 million, in only ten years China was ranked in the first place by foreign direct investments in Serbia, by investing EUR 640.4 million in 2021. In 2022, China invested as many as EUR 1.4 billion in Serbia, which accounts for one third of the total foreign direct investments in Serbia during that year. Chinese investments, besides being concentrated on car industry, energy and mining, metalworking industry and electrical industry and employing directly almost 30 thousand people, they are evenly distributed in the region, which significantly contributes to the regional economic development.

The commodity exchange increased concurrently with the growth of Chinese investments in Serbia and the implementation of joint infrastructural projects. The total value of the commodity exchange in the period 2012-2022 increased by 4.5 times. At the same time, Serbia’s exports to

China went up by as many as 187.5 times, i.e., from USD 6.4 million in 2012, in the past ten years it has reached the amount of USD 1.2 billion in 2022. For several years to date, three largest exporters from Serbia to the world have been the Chinese companies Serbia Zijin Copper, Serbia Zijin Mining and HBIS Group Steel. The recently signed Free Trade Agreement between Serbia and PR China, after entering into force, will give an additional momentum to the improvement of the economic cooperation, increasing the competitiveness of the Serbian economy, Serbian exports, production and employment, inclusion of Serbian companies in Chinese and international chains of supply, as well as to increasing joint investments.

Moreover, re-opening of the direct airline of the company “Air Serbia” with China in 2022 contributed further to the improvement of the economic cooperation, as well as encouraged tourist exchange of these two countries.

Global environment and economic results

The bilateral economic cooperation of Serbia and China is being strengthened in a rather unstable global environment, characterized by uncertainty in the further development of geopolitical circumstances, the situation in the energy sector and growth perspectives of the most important economic partners, as well as the increasing inflation pressures and stricter conditions in the international financial market. However, regardless of all these, both countries are achieving good economic results (MoF, 2023a, MoF 2024).

Thanks to the results achieved in the previous period, the Republic of Serbia has shown its readiness for adequate and timely reaction in order to alleviate and remove economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. In that context, an extensive package of support to economy and citizens was elaborated and successfully implemented. It is important to emphasize that the economy of the Republic of Serbia did not suffer substantial damage and shocks as those more powerful economies did. The life standard of Serbian citizens has been preserved, while the unemployment rate is at the same level as before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, with the concurrent continued growth of the available income of population and preserved economic capacities. At the same time, the Republic of Serbia was among the first countries to provide mass vaccination to its citizens, as well as rapid and efficient suppression of the pandemic. In this context, it is also necessary to stress the importance of the selfless help and support given to the Republic of Serbia by PR China in these challenging times.

The period of Serbian economy restructuring towards reducing external and internal imbalances is best described by the data about the decreased deficit of the current balance of payments, which was reduced from 10.9% GDP in 2012 to 6.9% GDP in 2019 and to below 2.6% GDP in 2023 (Mof, 2023a, MoF 2024). Moreover, inflation was also reduced by the responsible fiscal and monetary policy, so that in the period 2015–2023 the average annual inflation growth was 4.4%, which is comparable to the EU member states (Mof, 2023a, MoF 2024). The investments have proved to be the crucial factor for “unlocking” the growth process. The investment level in Serbia in 2023 is estimated to have

exceeded 23% GDP (Mof, 2023a, MoF 2024). These are primarily investments in the exchange sector of economy, such as manufacturing industry, because they ensure international competitiveness of economy, and thus sustainable economic growth. Among five economies of the Western Balkans as non-EU countries, about 60% FDI inflow came to Serbia (Mof, 2023a, MoF 2024). It led to the expansion of the economy's export capacities, and thus the share of the exports of goods and services in GDP rose from 35.8% in 2012 to 59.8% in 2023 (Mof, 2023a, MoF 2024). Positive economic trends resulted in significant improvements in the labour market. The unemployment rate has been rapidly reduced in the past ten years, and in 2023 it was 9.5%, which is at the same time one of the best results in the region (Mof, 2023a, MoF 2024).

After ten years we may proudly analyze the achieved results, but also plan future steps. Serbia is positioned as the leader in the region, with one of the most rapid rates of economic growth in Europe. Maintaining macroeconomic stability and improved economic perspectives have regained the trust of the investors, reduced the risk premium and increased the credit rating of Serbia. In 2015, this resulted in the initiation of the investment cycle which will change the image of Serbia in the future period and create foundations for strong economic growth in the future.

The investment cycle initiated in 2015 had a significant impact on economic growth until the outbreak of the global pandemic and the energy crisis. In the five-year period, from 2015 to 2019, the actual growth of fixed investments amounted to 63.9%, and their share in GDP went up from 15.9% GDP in 2014 to 22.5% in 2019 (Mof, 2023a). During

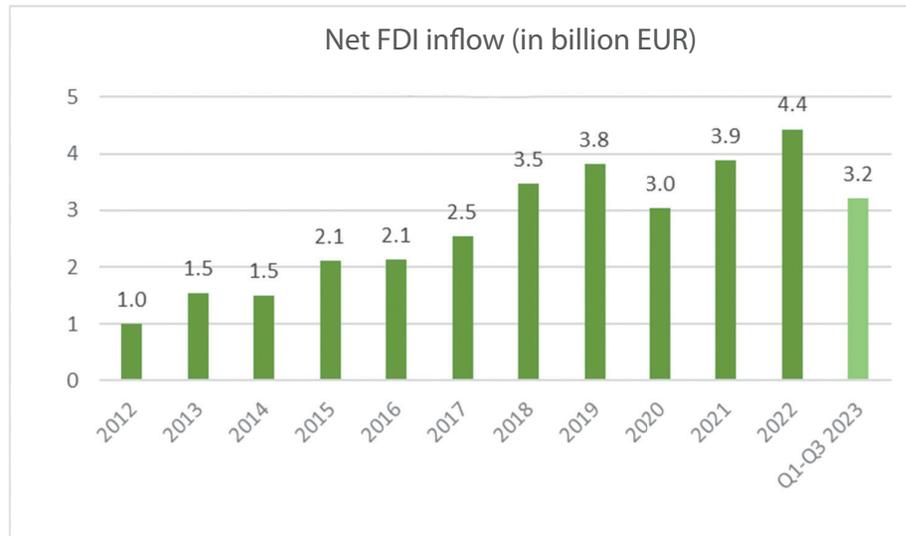


Chart 1. Net inflow of foreign direct investments to the Republic of Serbia from 2012 to Q3 2023

Source: NBS

that period, foreign direct investments amounted to EUR 14.1 billion, out of which EUR 4.1 billion was invested in manufacturing industry, EUR 1.8 billion in the financial sector, EUR 2.3 billion in construction business, EUR 1.2 billion in trade, EUR 1.4 billion in traffic, EUR 0.8 billion in real estate, etc. (Mof, 2023a).

Stability has become the new reality in Serbia, which has been confirmed by different international institutions. Investors, financial institutions and credit agencies rate Serbia as a country that successfully responds to various challenges from the international environment. Serbia has achieved impressive economic results thanks to its adequate economic policy, by supporting strong economic growth, low inflation and public debt reduction.

Increased income, employment growth and improvement of the standard of living are the evident results of this policy. According to the data of the National Bank of Serbia, foreign exchange reserves and inflows from foreign direct investments reach record levels. Good macroeconomic foundations led to the increasing credit rating of Serbia twice in the long run, despite the crises from the international environment, and its credit rating is now one step from the investment credit rating.

Although 2023 was a challenging year because of the global circumstances, Serbia showed significant resilience. The world still felt the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic and the energy crisis in Europe, which was followed by strong geopolitical tensions, the conflicts in Ukraine and

in the Middle East, which caused huge energetic uncertainty, high global inflation and substantial worsening of the economic growth prospects at the global level. Despite great uncertainty, Serbian economy proved to be quite resilient, which was reflected, first of all, in the maintained macroeconomic stability, with favourable prospects for economic growth and the preserved status of Serbia as a desirable investment destination.

Thanks to the adequate economic policy, in challenging international circumstances, economy growth of 12.2% was achieved in the period 2020-2023 (MoF, 2023a). According to the official statistical data, the year of 2023 witnessed the increasing gross domestic product of 2.5% thanks to the service sector, primarily the preserved labour market, as well as increased production capacities in industry, because in the previous years, we applied responsible economic policy to make Serbia an attractive investment destination (MoF, 2024). This is best corroborated by the NBS data about the realized foreign direct investment inflow amounting to EUR 4.5 billion in 2023 (NBS, 2024b). Furthermore, the greatest growth was achieved by the energy sector, agriculture and construction, thanks to the intensified realization of infrastructural projects. In the labour market, favourable trends continued and, in the form of further employment growth, unemployment reduction was accompanied with the actual growth of earnings. The average salary was nominally increased by 14.8% in 2023, while the actual increase in earnings was 2.4% and accompanied the actual growth of overall economy (MoF, 2024). Assuming that the decrease in global inflation pressures and the recovery of the Euro-zone will occur, and also due to the expected further acceleration of

the realization of the planned investment projects in the field of traffic, energy and public utility infrastructure, the Ministry of Finance anticipates the accelerated growth of the gross domestic product to 3.5% in 2024 (MoF, 2023a). An important growth factor will be personal consumption as a result of the higher standard of the population, as well as investments in fixed funds which increase the production potential and overall factor productivity.

In the period from 2020 to 2023, marked by strong external shocks, foreign direct investments in the amount of EUR 15.9 billion were directed to Serbia, half of which was invested in the production and export-oriented sectors (MoF, 2023a). By activating new production capacities, new workplaces have been created and the level of earnings has been raised, while the growing budget income has ensured stable and unobstructed functioning of education, healthcare, security sector and other state functions.

“In the past fifteen years, China has been the main motor of the world’s economy growth, contributing with 35% to the nominal growth of the world’s GDP” (Prasad, 2023). Since 2010 China has been the second economy in the world as the largest producer and exporter, and the second largest importer, while it also has the largest foreign exchange reserves (Prasad, 2023).

Despite the unstable global environment, in 2022 China achieved the growth of GDP of 3%, and in 2023 it exceeded the projected growth of 5%, achieving the growth of GDP of 5.2% (EC, 2023).

The scope of China’s foreign trade exchange with the world exceeded USD 5.8 thousand billion in 2023, which strengthened China’s position as the largest foreign trade partner at the global level

for seven consecutive years, while the international market share of Chinese exports is expected to remain stable at 14% (SCIO, 2024). China’s commodity exchange with the countries within the “Belt and Road” initiative had an increase of 2.8% in 2023 as compared to 2022, with the share of 46.6% in China’s total foreign trade exchange (SCIO, 2024). China’s largest trade partners include ASEAN, the EU and the USA (SCIO, 2024). In the conditions of an uncertain global climate, China has begun improving foreign trade through the application of new models and it invests further efforts to attract foreign investments and the realization of new projects (SCIO, 2024).

Bilateral economic cooperation

The bilateral economic cooperation is constantly on the rise. China is one of the most important economic partners of Serbia worldwide, and certainly the most important partner in Asia, both by the volume of commodity exchange and the volume of Serbian exports, and by the value of investments (RZS 2024a, NBS, 2024a).

The commodity exchange between Serbia and China has had a trend of constant growth in the past ten years, both in terms of exports and imports. The total value of the commodity exchange

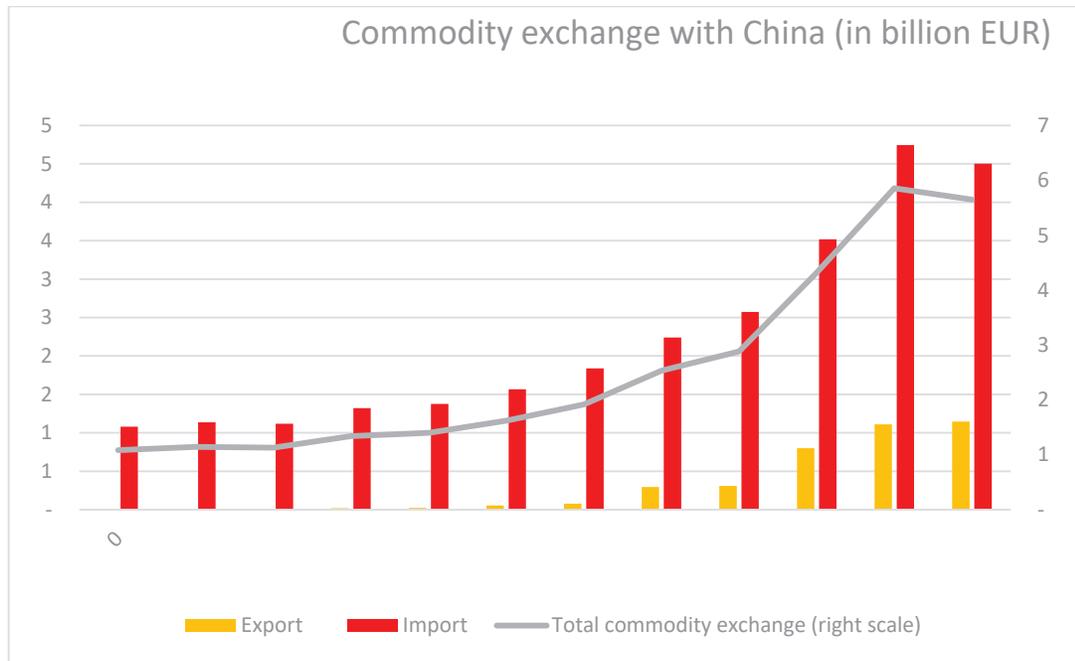


Chart 2. Commodity exchange between the Republic of Serbia and PR China in the period 2012–2023 in billion EUR

Source: RZS

in the period from 2012 to 2022 has increased by 4.5 times (RZS, 2024a). At the same time, Serbia's exports to China have increased as many as 187.5 times, i.e., from USD 6.4 million in 2012, in only ten years it reached the amount of USD 1.2 billion in 2022. (RZS, 2024a).

In 2023, China was our second largest foreign trade partner in the world with the realized EUR 5.6 billion of foreign trade exchange, out of which EUR 1.2 billion accounted for our exports to China (increase of 4.1% as compared to the previous year) and EUR 4.5 billion accounted for our imports from China (decrease of 4.9%) (RZS, 2024a).

If we exempt the EU member-states and CEF-TA members from the list of the most important export markets for Serbia in 2023 as our traditional export markets, in the remainder of the world the exports to the Chinese markets were the largest; thus, in 2022 China was in the ninth place on the list of our most important export markets, while in 2023 it rose to the seventh place (RZS, 2024a). In the structure of our exports to China, copper ore and concentrates, and refined copper were predominant (about 90% of exports, or, more precisely, these products accounted for 92.3% of exports in 2023), followed by simply processed wood and electrical devices for circuits etc., while the structure of the goods imported from China is much more diverse – telecommunication equipment, AOP machines and units, electrical machines and devices, electrical devices for circuits etc. (RZS 2024a, MoF, 2024).

The commodity exchange increased concurrently with the growth of Chinese investments in Serbia, as well as with the implementation of joint infrastructural and other capital projects. With the share of 93% in Serbia's exports to China, in 2022

the following companies were absolutely dominant: Serbia Zijin Bor Copper d. o. o. from Bor and Serbia Zijin Mining. These two companies, besides HBIS Group Serbia Iron & Steel d.o.o. from Belgrade, are at the same time the leading exporting companies from Serbia to the world (MoF, 2024).

The Free Trade Agreement between Serbia and China, signed in October 2023, will enter into force in the middle of 2024, after the completion of all the necessary procedures (Free Trade Agreement, 2023). It is the first free trade agreement signed by China with a country in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, Serbia became the 29th partner with which China has concluded a free trade agreement (MOFCOM, 2024). This Agreement ensures the preferential status for the goods from Serbia and will be extremely important for further improvement of the comprehensive strategic partnership of the two countries and for strengthening the cooperation within the "Belt and Road" initiative.

The Free Trade Agreement between Serbia and China has been devised by the rules of the World Trade Organization, with China being its member, and it includes stage liberalization of goods (MOFCOM, 2024). Trade liberalization has been agreed for the maximum transition period of fifteen years, so that in the first year of its implementation immediately after the Agreement enters into force, a total of 60% tariff lines will be liberalized (Free Trade Agreement, 2023). Other tariff lines have transition periods of 5, 10 and 15 years until full liberalization, while only a smaller number of products in the mutual trade have been exempted from this process – slightly under 10% tariff lines (Free Trade Agreement, 2023).

Trade liberalization included in the Free Trade Agreement, by abolishing and gradually reducing customs rates until their complete abolition, will ensure substantially higher competitiveness of our products in the Chinese market, whereas there are great expectations in relation to agricultural and food industries. This Agreement will contribute not only to the improvement of trade exchange, but also to new investments, inclusion of the Serbian companies in Chinese and international chains of supply, increasing competitiveness of Serbian economy, as well as significant direct and indirect increase in employment, through the creation of a preferential business environment for economic operations.

According to the NBS data, Chinese investments in Serbia are intensively increasing (NBS

2024a, NBS 2024b), so China has been the largest foreign investor in Serbia for three consecutive years (NBS 2024a, NBS 2024b). In the period 2010–2023/9 m, China is ranked second by the total inflow of investments in Serbia, with the amount of EUR 4.76 billion (NBS, 2024a). In 2021, with EUR 640.4 million, China was ranked in the first place by foreign direct investments in Serbia (NBS, 2024b). During 2022, China became the largest investor in Serbia with the impressive investments amounting to EUR 1.4 billion (NBS 2024b). This accounts for one third of the total foreign direct investments in Serbia during the same year (NBS. 2024b). For the sake of comparison, in 2012 that share amounted to only 0.1%, with the realized total FDI inflow of EUR 1.3 million (NBS, 2024a).

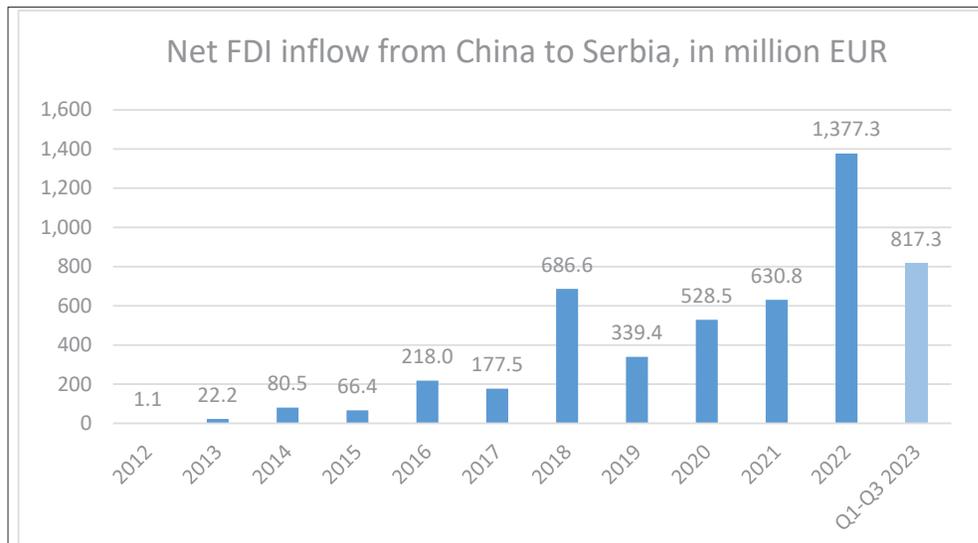


Chart 3. Net inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) from PR China to the Republic of Serbia, in million EUR

Source: NBS

Arrival and investments of large Chinese companies in Serbia have significantly contributed to Serbia's economic development, and the investors from China are the leading Serbian exporters to the world today (MoF, 2024). Chinese investments in Serbia are characterized by a special element of regional dispersion, because they are realized throughout Serbia (Subotica, Novi Sad, Ruma, Zrenjanin, Belgrade, Obrenovac, Loznica, Šabac, Smederevo, Bor, Valjevo, Kragujevac, Jagodina, Aleksinac, Prokuplje etc.), which significantly affects the encouragement of employment and economic activities at the local level and increasingly even regional development.

Chinese companies in Serbia currently employ more than 28,000 workers, particularly in the sectors of car industry, mining and energy, metalworking industry and electrical industry (Prime Minister of the RS, 2023). Among those Chinese companies that with their investments in Serbia employed the largest number of workers are Zijin Mining, with more than seven thousand employees (Zijin Coper Mining, 2024), HBIS Group, with more than five thousand employees (HBIS Group, 2024) and the companies Mei Ta (PKS, 2024), MINTH Group Limited (PKS, 2024) and Hisense Group / Gorenje (RAS, 2023) with more than one thousand employees respectively. The largest scope of Chinese investments and the number of employees in the Chinese companies have been recorded in car industry, which is exceptionally important for Serbia's economic growth, having in mind that it provides an opportunity of integrating Serbian companies in European and global chains of supply in this industry.

Among the Chinese companies operating in the Serbian market, the largest Chinese investor and also the leading Serbian exporter is the company Serbia

Zijin Mining Group, which has invested USD 2.6 billion in Serbia (Zijin Coper Mining, 2024). This company is one of the largest enterprises in Serbia and the pillar of development of Bor and Majdanpek; in Serbia it operates through two companies, Serbia Zijin Cooper and Serbia Zijin Mining (Zijin Coper Mining, 2024). In the short period since their arrival in the Serbian market (2018), these companies have become the second largest Serbian exporters (MoF, 2024). This company makes substantial efforts to modernize the mines and introduce new technologies in order to further increase copper production, which may turn Serbia into the largest copper producer in Europe (Zijin Coper Mining, 2024). According to the company's own data, the cooperation has been established with more than 1,500 local suppliers and, since its arrival, the company has indirectly contributed to the opening of more than 8,000 work places in Serbia (Zijin Coper Mining, 2024).

HBIS Serbia is a company present in Serbia since 2016 and has more than 5,000 workers in its factories in Smederevo (for the production of hot and cold rolled steel sheets) and Šabac (for the production of white sheets) (HBIS, 2024). After the HBIS Group took over the steelworks in Smederevo, it soon turned losses into profits and in 2018 became the largest exporter in Serbia.

Chinese companies are present in the free zones in the Republic of Serbia. Total investments of the Chinese companies in the free zones in the period 2016-2022 were EUR 1.3 billion and they employed more than 7,000 workers (MoF, Free Zones Administration, 2023). During 2023, the Chinese company Yusei Machinery began its operations in the region of the "Vranje" Free Zone (location in the City of Niš) (MoF, Free Zones Administration, 2024).

The favourable business climate is further enhanced by the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement regarding Income and Property between the Federal Government of the FR Yugoslavia and the Government of the People's Republic of China, which has been in effect since 1 January 1998 (Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, 1997). On 1 January 2023, this Agreement was further improved through its amendments based on the solutions from the Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (Combined text of the Multilateral Convention, 2018). In addition, there is the Agreement on Mutual Encouragement and Protection of Investments between the Federal Government of the FR Yugoslavia and the Government of the People's Republic of China, in effect since 1996 (Agreement on Protection of Investments, 1996). Both bilateral agreements, of exceptional importance for investors, prove the existence of the traditional economic cooperation between these two countries.

A positive effect of Chinese investments on the accelerated development of Serbian economy is outstanding and it is evidently illustrated by many other examples of economic cooperation.

Credit-financial cooperation is a significant element of support in the realization of bilateral projects in Serbia, whereas the Chinese Yuan is a currency traded in Serbia's domestic currency market as well. The presence of the Chinese companies includes the presence of Bank of China in the Serbian market since 2017, as the first Chinese bank operating in the Balkans (Bank of China, 2024). It is yet another indicator of the exceptional potential of the development of economic cooperation and further incentive for Chinese investments in Serbia. Intensive cooperation in relation to credit

arrangements concluded with the Chinese EXIM bank, which constitute the financial lever for improving bilateral economic cooperation, has been further strengthened by the cooperation with the China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation – SINOSURE (MoF, 2023c).

Besides foreign direct investments from PR China, which substantially contribute to the growing exports of Serbia's economy, a large number of projects are implemented with the Chinese partners in the field of road and railway infrastructure and energy, according to the 2009 Agreement on economic and technical cooperation in the field of infrastructure (Agreement on economic and technical cooperation in the field of infrastructure, 2020). The development of traffic infrastructure is Serbia's development priority because new roads and railways will significantly contribute to further economic development and competitiveness of Serbian economy, opening new work places and better quality of the standard of living of the population.

A large number of projects have been successfully realized with the Chinese partners, for example: reconstruction and modernization of the segment of the railway Rasputnica–Rakovica–Resnik (Government of the RS, 2017a) and construction of “Mihajlo Pupin” bridge on the Danube (City of Belgrade, 2015), the first reconstruction stage of TPP Kostolac (Government of the RS, 2017b) and construction of several segments of the motorway Corridor 11, E-763 (Belgrade – South Adriatic), Obrenovac–Ub, Ub–Lajkovac and Lajkovac–Ljig, Surčin–Obrenovac, which have been operational since 2019 (Government of the RS, 2019); modernization of Belgrade–Budapest railway (segment Belgrade–Novi Sad) which was opened

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in March 2022 (Government of the RS, 2022a) and New Belgrade–Surčin (City Municipality of New Belgrade, 2023) and the Belgrade bypass (segment from Straževica tunnel to Bubanj Potok), which was opened on 28 July 2023 (President of the RS, 2023b).

The most important projects which are currently being implemented include the construction of road infrastructure, namely the segment of the motorway E-763 Preljina–Požega, Fruška Gora corridor (Koridori Srbije, 2024), sector B of the Belgrade bypass (MCTI, 2024), the Novi Sad bypass with the bridge on the Danube (MCTI, 2022), the

construction of railway infrastructure – reconstruction and modernization of the section of the railway Novi Sad–Subotica–state frontier with Hungary (MCTI, 2024), and within the construction of Belgrade underground railway, the removal of the old Sava bridge and the construction of the new one, as well as the design, backfilling and construction of the depot in Makiš (JKP Beogradski metro i voz, 2024), energy sector projects – construction of block 3 in TPP Kostolac B (Government of the RS, 2022b) and construction of the solar power plant Saraorci/Smederevo (Government of the RS, 2023),



Minister of Finance Siniša Mali signs the Contractual Agreement for Design and Construction of Makiš Depot for the underground railway in Belgrade with Chinese Company “Power China”, September 2023

Photo: Rade Prelić

as well as public utility infrastructure projects, for example the project for the Heat Transmission Line Obrenovac–New Belgrade (City of Belgrade, 2023), project “Clean Serbia” (Clean Serbia, 2024) and the project of waste waters collection and purification in the central sewage system of the City of Belgrade (Government of the RS, 2020).

For the purpose of further improvement of the cooperation between Serbia and China, a strategic document was signed in October 2023 – the Medium-Term Action Plan for the joint construction of the “Belt and Road” initiative for the period 2023-2025 (MoF, 2023b). This Medium-Term Action Plan shows the willingness of both sides to improve their bilateral cooperation within the “Belt and Road” initiative in the oncoming three-year period.

“The Medium-Term Action Plan is the continuation of the successful cooperation in the past and a turning point in its improvement in the following fields: traffic and public infrastructure, agriculture, trade and commerce, mining and energy, green development, investments, finance, education, digital economy, culture, youth and sport, tourism, healthcare, health and safety at work, disaster management, science, technological development and innovation, digitization and E-administration, customs and tax administration, cooperation with local self-government units, and other fields. The Action Plan also includes a list of priority projects of common interest, both the above-mentioned ongoing projects of road and railway infrastructure, mining and energy, and

the activities related to the cooperation in the field of education and healthcare” (MoF, 2023b).

Conclusion

From the viewpoint of financing the future growth and development, the bearers of economic policy encounter numerous challenges. The realization of the economic policy goals in the forthcoming period faces a number of obstacles. It is necessary to preserve macroeconomic stability, create conditions for faster economic growth and improvement of the quality of our citizens’ life. Our vision is presented in the plan “Serbia 2027 – Leap into the Future”, which gives an incentive to further economic growth and improvement of the standard of living.

In the conditions of world instability, the Republic of Serbia has decisively chosen to further strengthen the cooperation with the long-standing friends such as People’s Republic of China. Despite the geographical distance, our countries share common values and goal – the welfare of our nations. Therefore, it is not surprising that our economic cooperation has had a constant upward trend. China is present in all our most important economic enterprises, such as the strengthening of the traffic infrastructure, Belgrade underground railway and the construction of the EXPO 2027 complex (Expo27, 2023), because our cooperation is supported by our steel friendship.

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Preparatory works on the construction of the Makiš Depot for Belgrade's underground railway, one of the largest infrastructural projects in Serbia

Photo: Dimitrije Gol

Is China (really) slowing down?

(American arguments against China's further rise)

Summary: Aware of the fact that China is a country whose rise points to the potential development of a sufficient level of ability to threaten American hegemony in the world, American authors are more and more frequently proposing a thesis that contemporary China is finally – slowly, but certainly – lagging behind in economic terms, which most likely leads to its return to the previous state – subordinacy on the global stage. The paper first presents the motive why the authors approach these considerations, while subsequently four groups of arguments of American authors against China's further rise are identified (demographic trends, economic stagnation, institutional problems and collapse of globalization). Finally, through the discussion about the presented arguments, the third chapter gives an answer to the question whether China is really slowing down.

Keywords: hegemony, power, emerging powers, China, United States of America

Introductory considerations

After the Cold War (1991), no matter whether it was ended due to the exhaustion and self-destruction of the Soviet Union or the “victory” of the United States of America, the world entered a stage of history called “a unipolar moment” by many authors, particularly those in the West (Krauthammer, 1990/1991; Mastanduno, 1997; Sheetz, Mastanduno, 1997/1998; Wohlforth, 1999; Smith, 2002; Layne,

2006; Shifrinson et al. 2023). Its main feature was the domination of the USA in practically all dimensions of international economy, politics and ideology. At the same time, a debate began about how long this “unipolar moment” would last. While some authors predicted its fast and spectacular end, others insisted on its stability and long term. In that spirit, some even spoke of the “end of history” achieved in value terms, from which the direction could be anticipated of the postmodern ideological

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alliance of Hegel and (neo)liberalism (Cvetković, 2023). Three decades later, it seems that neither the former nor the latter were right: the unipolar world has not disappeared, although it is (not) certain that it still exists as such. Moreover, it is not certain either whether the United States is the most powerful country in the world *in military terms* (Brooks, Wohlforth, 2023). Besides clear indicators that it is no longer the case (the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and in the Middle East), the real reason for the radical change in the structure of the global order most probably lies in the unbelievable economic (and partly military) rise of China in the past decades.

As a reminder, at the beginning of the 1990s, China was little or almost not at all spoken about as a potential challenger to the predominance of the United States (Cvetković, 2018). However, today China is an inevitable topic of any debate about the present and the future of the international system, i.e., the “world order”. Together with other countries of the BRICS (primarily Russia and China, but also Brazil, Saudi Arabia etc.), it is a newly-emerging competitor to the former domination of the USA and the centuries-old global rule of the West. Furthermore, China is a sort of a flagship of that alliance, because exceeds all expectations in terms of its economic and military growth from year to year, rapidly approaching the United States.

That is why the question of the sustainability of China’s continued rise and its ability to threaten American hegemony are the main topics in geopolitical texts by American authors. They agree that the possibility of power transition is more likely than before, that the shadow of the security dilemma is already spreading in the practical-polit-

ical circles, and that the danger of falling into the Thucydides Trap is increasing on a daily basis. Of course, all the above-mentioned is still in the domain of assumptions having in mind that China has not yet reached the level of necessary capabilities for the “great shift”, whereas, to tell the truth, it does not even express any wish “play such a game (of power)”. At the same time, there is an impression that the American authors virtually compete in providing arguments for the thesis that “China is slowing down strength”, and that, therefore, the position of the actual hegemon will not be threatened.

The central aim of this paper is not to establish the validity and truthfulness of such claims (by American authors), but to systematically present key US arguments against China’s further rise. For that purpose, the paper is organized into three separate parts: in the first part, the authors’ motives are analyzed with the arguments towards the desired failure of China (the theses about the questions of power transition and the potential Thucydides Trap), while the second part contains the consideration of the key American arguments against China’s further rise. Finally, in the third part, we will look at the strength of the presented arguments, pointing to their problematic aspects, without delving into the examination of a deeper causality of those claims.

What do authors fear?

No matter how hegemons may seem untouchable at certain moments, they are not unchangeable. On the contrary. History shows us constant cycles of hegemons’ rise and fall (Kennedy, 1999).

The moment we have lived in so far was somewhat more specific in comparison to the rest of modern history because the United States used to be much more untouchable than earlier hegemon. However, that moment is not the end of the history of great powers' rise and fall either. The unipolar moment today has already lost one of its primary features – unambiguous unipolarity. When William Wohlforth presented his arguments for the stability of the unipolar moment, the first argument was that America is unambiguously the strongest country of the international system (Wohlforth, 1999). This argument is no longer valid, if nothing else, for the fact that an increasing number of authors point out that we live in the multipolar world. The relative power of the United States *vis-à-vis* other countries in the international system is no longer so great. We can identify two reasons for it. First, long and expensive wars waged by the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan have relatively degraded American power. Second, and more importantly, since the end of the Cold War China has experienced enormous and continued growth both in economic and in military terms.

Although researchers of the US foreign politics also pointed to the problem of the dissipation of American power, this reason was comparatively simple for resolution because it was still in the hands of Washington. However, the second reason was not, and Washington could not do much to rein China's growth. After three decades of being able to tailor the world's politics on its own, the United States is now in the situation that China's growth has questioned its ability to do so. That is why there is such a fear from China's growth. Nevertheless, we must admit that not all researchers are afraid of

China's growth. Seen in broader frameworks, some of them would even like it. However, this paper is focused on those who are afraid of it. In addition, there is another reason why the US authors fear China's rise, and that is the possible occurrence of a hegemonic war.

Joseph Grieco, John Ikenberry and Michel Mastranduno define a hegemonic war as "a war whose outcome determines the country which will have a predominant influence in the international system in the years or decades to come" (Grieco et al., 2015, p. 140). Those are the wars such as Napoleonic wars or the Second World War, in which a rising country and the former hegemon enter an open and extremely destructive conflict. The mechanism which is most often pointed out as the driver of a hegemonic war is power transition. The idea of power transition was presented by Abramo F. K. Organski in 1958. Essentially, power transition is the name of the process when a change occurs in the in the power relationship between the hegemon on one side and a rapidly growing country on the other side, which causes a hegemonic war (Organski, 1968). The belief that power transition between the USA and China is already underway has been present in academic literature for almost two decades. However, what these authors often fail to see is that the theory of power transition does not insist on the inevitable occurrence of a hegemonic war, but only on a (substantially) higher likelihood of its occurrence (Organski, Kugler, 1980, p. 19).

That is when the idea of the Thucydides Trap emerges, first presented by Graham Allison in 2012, and elaborated in further detail in his eponymous book from 2017. The very name of this idea

clearly points to the phenomenon of a hegemonic war since it is an allusion to the Peloponnesian War and the conflict between Sparta and Athens. In many aspects, the Thucydides Trap is actually a neologism for the theory of power transition, except for one key aspect – while the theory of power transition stresses a much higher probability of a war, the Thucydides Trap points to the (near) inevitability of a hegemonic war. According to Allison, in about 75% analyzed cases through history, whenever a rival country threatened to overtake the hegemon, it resulted in a hegemonic war (Allison, 2017).

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This is exactly the scenario feared by researchers – that China's rise, which is evident, will cause a hegemonic war due to power transition and the Thucydides Trap. As we have pointed out, all of the above-mentioned is a view held mostly by researchers from the United States of America. That is why there is an implicit connotation in the majority of observations that accountability for a potential conflict inevitably lies in China's rise. However, such logic is wrong for two reasons. First, it happens, no matter how rarely, that the rise of one country does not necessarily produce a hegemonic war. Although Allison also identifies it in his research, a much more elegant explanation was provided by Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin. According to Itzkowitz Shiffrin, there is a difference between a predator power on the rise and an emerging and a rising country which supports the current hegemon (Itzkowitz Shiffrin, 2018). Regardless of whether the emerging power has limited or broad means at its disposal, if it is not predatory to the current hegemon, it will not strive for a hegemonic war (Itzkowitz Shiffrin, 2018).

Another reason is less theoretical and rather purely logical in its nature. The growth of a rising country proceeds in the context of the international order dominated under the other power. If such order is absolutely unsuitable to it, how is it possible that the rising country has developed at all? We may speak of the degree of satisfaction with the existing order, but we are far from concluding that the imperative of the emerging power is the change of the order. Because of that, we may rather say that the Thucydides Trap occurs in a power on the rise is predatory, but also if the dominant power fears losing its position. Hence, logically seen, the specific accountability for a potential hegemonic war may lie in both countries, depending on the context of power transition.

What the authors hope for: arguments against China's further rise

What researchers fear is based on the assumption that China will be a predatory power (this assumption is more than questionable and China's acting so far does not point to it). Back in 2005 China published the White Book about the Chinese peaceful development road, in which it explicitly expressed its intentions. There is also the "Belt and Road" project, including three global initiatives presented in the past ten years. Therefore, this is rather a "we-against-them" logic, with which American researchers insist on China's bad intentions. The theses about China's predation contain many elements founded on authors' subjective observations and not on clear and unambiguous data. Actually, the

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only clear and unambiguous fact is exactly China's rise – the fact whose interpretation is questioned by American authors.

In fact, not all of them agree about this matter. For example, Michael Beckley and Hall Brands insist that an emerging power, as long as it continues its rise, will not constitute a predatory power (Brands, Beckley, 2022). Their logic is identical to ours because it derives from an answer to the question why a state which favours *status quo* would aspire to change it through war. This very *status quo* helped it be an emerging power. Although here there is no consent, Beckley and Brands go a step further in their conclusions, stating that a hegemonic war occurs exactly when the era of the emerging power's rise comes to an end. It is only then that the emerging power sees the only exit from stagnation in starting a hegemonic war. Their term "Peak China" emphasizes this very eventuality. However, the same logic can also be applied reversely. More precisely, a hegemon may decide that the stagnation moment of the emerging power may exactly be the one when a war can remove a potential challenger. In theoretical terms, there is nothing inherent in the predation theory so as to see it exclusively as an explanation for the emerging power's acting. The same logic can also be applied to a hegemonic country.

In the event of both eventualities, it is a fact that there are very few mechanisms, except for an open war, by which the United States could stop China's rise. Therefore, what the US hopes for is that the era of Chinese rise has come to an end. In that way, according to them, all fears mentioned in the previous chapter would be avoided. In any

case, we must not forget that the previous lines are founded on the already mentioned assumption about the end of China's growth. Is it really the case? On the grounds of which arguments do American researchers support their claims/hopes? In principle, American authors' arguments about China slowing down may be classified into four broader categories. According to the first category, China's slowing down is a product of demographic trends. According to the second, China's slowing down is a product of economic stagnation. According to the third, China's slowing down is a product of institutional problems, while according to the fourth, China's slowing down will be a product of the collapse of globalization. The first three categories of arguments derive from the well-known thesis that foreign politics starts at home, while the fourth category relies on the structural level.

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a) Demographic trends

The first group of arguments used by American authors to support the thesis of the end of the era of Chinese growth are demographic trends. Throughout the 20th century, China was the most populous country in the world, whose demographic trends constantly indicated further growth. However, at the end of the 1970s, China introduced one-child policy as a method of slowing down its demographic growth and thus avoid the problem of too fast and too large population growth – this policy was observed until 2015. This policy enabled the stabilization of population growth, but at the same time caused potential problems in the future.

American authors note that one-child policy had significant implications which partly led to China's rise during the 1990s. In that period, generations with only one child emerged probably for the first time in history, while their parents were the last generations with several children. Therefore, the first generation of China's citizens with only one child faced a specific situation. First of all, they shared the costs of keeping up their parents with their siblings, while they had minimal costs of upbringing their own children. This made it possible for the share of the working-age population largely exceeded the share of the kept population. The implications and effects of such policy are evident, first of all, in the fiscal and economic spheres because they provided both individuals and the state with a significant surplus of funds which could be directed towards consumption and further development – which partly contributed to China's rise (Beckley, Brands, 2021; Brands, Beckley, 2022, pp. 32-33).

The argument about such demographic trends leading to China's slowing down is presented today, when there is a reversal in the demographic balance (Lynch, 2020; Chen, 2021; Eberstadt, Vardery, 2021; Beckley, Brands, 2021; Brands, Beckley, 2021; Brands, Beckley, 2022, pp. 34-36; Fuxian, 2023; O'Hanlon, 2023; Sharma, 2023; French, 2024; Fontaine, 2024). American authors point out that today's generation of Chinese citizens is in a completely reversed situation in comparison to their parents. Since today's generation of parents grew in the circumstances in which one-child policy was rejected, they often have more than one child. On the other hand, since they were mostly only

children in the family, they have no one to share the costs of keeping up their parents. Thus, the couples in today's generation do not bring up one child and do not share the costs of keeping up four parents (husband's and wife's parents). Namely, they independently keep up four parents and often more than one child. That is why American authors predict that the effects of demographic trends will be fully reversed in China. While they encouraged growth in the previous generation, in this generation they will encourage slowing down because there will be no surplus funds, but there will be more costs to be borne both by individuals and by the state.

b) Economic stagnation

It is evident that the second group of arguments regarding economic stagnation is often associated by American authors with the previous group of arguments. In the discussion about potential effects produced by demographic trends and demographic disbalance, we have pointed out that they affect the surplus funds both of Chinese citizens and China as a state. The economic stagnation argument most often relies exactly on the assumption that, due to increasing costs of the kept population and lower income because of the smaller share of the working-age population, China cannot afford the identical rate of investments in trade, and its citizens cannot keep up with the consumption pace which encourages domestic economy. That is why these arguments can be found in the majority of researchers, who also point to demographic trends as

a reason of China's slowing down (Beckley, Brands, 2021; Brands, Beckley, 2021; Brands, Beckley, 2022, pp. 36–38; Mueller, 2021; Fuxian, 2023; O'Hanlon, 2023; Sharma, 2023; Huang, 2023; French, 2024; Fontaine, 2024).

However, other aspects should also be taken into account. Brands and Beckley stress that, apart from the reduction in its population, China is also facing the reduction in resources, as pointed by other authors as well (Brands, Beckley, 2022, pp. 36-38; Mueller, 2021). Here, the question of economic stagnation is associated with the environmental degradation. According to these authors, the epoch of incredible rise has led to the pronounced consumption of natural resources, which consequently produces the need for importing food and energy products, as well as negative trends in air quality and food and drinking water safety (Mueller, 2021; Brands, Beckley, 2022, p. 37). In line with the above-mentioned, China's economic stagnation is a product not only of the disbalance in consumption and investment, but also of the fact that it faces additional external costs regarding the environment and imports of resources and energy products.

c) Institutional deficiencies

The third category of arguments against China's further rise is not as present as the first two, but it is still present. It relies on the theoretical observation of Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson that nations fail because of bad institutions (Acemoglu, Robinson, 2014). In fact, these American authors

argue that China is slowing down because its state institutions are becoming “worse and worse”, i.e., less functional. The most prominent advocate of these arguments is Minxin Pei, who in a series of publications ever since 1997 has emphasized that China is faced with a crisis of institutions, predicting that it will inevitably slow down due to it (Pei, 1997; 2002; 2016; 2017). However, it is not a lonely case (Mertha, 2012; Mueller, 2021; Brands, Beckley, 2022). In fact, the group of arguments regarding institutional problems may be divided into three segments.

The first segment refers to the accountability problem. The American authors' argumentation about China failing due to institutional problems is often reduced to the thesis that communist countries do not have a mechanism of controlling state institutions which would prevent their abuse and remove mistakes. Essentially, the Chinese institutional apparatus is not subject to citizens' control and, thus, it will inevitably lead to the failure of these institutions, and to China's slowing down. What is interesting to note here is that American authors list extremely few concrete cases to corroborate this argumentation. Most often, the situations taken as an example are those when the top leadership of the Communist party of China decides to remove from position individuals within administration. However, can this not be a control mechanism in the resolution of institutional problems?

The second segment refers to the corruption problem. Building on the previous segment, China has a corruption problem which is largely the product of the absence of accountability. To put it

simply, if there is a system without accountability towards the public, members of institutions tend more to become corrupted than in the situation when accountability towards the public exists. Although it is true that Chinese administration faces periodical corruption-related problems, it is still far from the endemic character ascribed to them by American authors. The third segment refers to the absence of inventiveness deriving from the centralization of administration. In fact, having in mind that China's politics and economy, just as in the case of other communist countries, are subject to central planning and governance, American authors point out that it limits the inventiveness of Chinese institutions, particularly at lower levels. Because of China's large size and numerous population, American authors suppose that planning and governance from one centre cannot correspond to the situation in the field throughout the country, which leads to the worse effect of the acting of institutions and thus to China's slowing down.

d) Collapse of globalization

The last group of arguments is also the rarest among the authors (See, e.g.: Brands, Beckley, 2022; Iglesias, Matthes, 2023; Martin, 2023; Schuman, 2023; Yuan, 2023). In their essence, these arguments rely on a simple observation that the era of Chinese rise began with globalization, primarily in economic terms. China's continued two-digit economic growth during the 1990s was a product of the fact that China was integrated in the

global market and operations, and thus managed to increase and strengthen its economy through larger imports. That is why the above generalization among American authors is often reduced to a thesis that China's rise (primarily economic) depends on its trade with the Western countries. Therefore, China's slowing down comes from the gradual collapse of the idea of the globalized world without "frontiers"; since such world limits China's ability of further growth.

The group of arguments regarding the collapse of globalization is actually two-fold. On the one hand, it relies on the consideration of economic flows of production and trade, which is in line with the above-mentioned observation about China's earlier rise. On the other hand, it also relies on the geopolitical trends which in China create an increasingly hostile geopolitical environment. Globalization is both an economic and a social and political phenomenon. Accordingly, the return of dividing lines on any grounds also brings along disturbances on other grounds. What we witness, particularly after the COVID-10 pandemic, is the fact that economic flows and supply chains were pronouncedly affected by the pandemic suppression policies in different countries. At the same time, and even before this process, there were evident negative trends in geopolitical terms as well, with the Western countries trying to suppress China as much as possible, creating a hostile geopolitical environment for it.

From the perspective of such trends, China faces larger restrictions in basing its economic and trade growth on the benefits of globalization, which it used to do successfully in the past. That is the core

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of this group of arguments against China's further rise, having in mind that the collapse of globalization – determined by disruptions of global supply chains and an increasingly hostile geopolitical environment – limits their ability to base economic growth on a positive trade balance. What is more, this group of arguments also relies on the assumption that China's local market is insufficient to encourage further economic growth. However, according to American authors, it does not change the fact that China is slowing down because it will no longer be able to encourage its growth by a positive foreign trade balance with the Western countries.

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The answer to this question is one of those moments where we can only say “yes” – yes, but! Looking from the perspective of everything China has done in the past three decades, China is really slowing down its pace. However, is it really possible to expect any country to grow as continuously as China in the past fifty years or so? Generally speaking, progress is much faster at the beginning of an enterprise than at its end. Sportsmen will be able to run faster at the beginning than at the end of the race; students will gain more knowledge than professors. A useful analogy is reaching the speed of light in astrophysics. The theory of relativity tells us that the closer the matter (which has mass) approaches the speed of light, the more energy is needed for continuing acceleration. Accordingly, it is not realistic to expect China to be able to continue the pace of its growth indefinitely.

The above lines are not an apology of the American authors' listed arguments against China's further growth. Namely, all the listed arguments by American authors are rather the rationalization of the evident trend of China's growth slowing down because isolated cases are raised to the level of causality. To put it more simply, the fact that China is no longer growing at the pace it was growing in recent past is not a product of the presented arguments but of the fact that it has reached the level of the Western countries. If we look at each of the above arguments outside the context, we could equally apply them to any highly-developed country in the world. Here we come to the paradox of the presented argumentation – if the same can refer to all the most developed countries of the world, how is it possible that only China, according to them, is slowing down? That is why it is necessary to look at each category of arguments once again, but taking into account the above-stated paradox.

The fact that one-child policy led to less favourable demographic trends in China. However, it does not by any means refer only to China. All the most developed countries of the world are at the same time the countries with the most unfavourable demographic picture. The European Union member states, Japan and South Korea have the oldest populations in the world. A possible exception is the United States of America, but only because its demographic trends rely on a high inflow of people from other countries – which may bring along a new number of problems. The situation in Canada is similar as well. The demographic disbalance is associated with the degree of a country's development, which corroborates our

claim that the slowing down of China's growth is due to the fact that it has become one of the most developed countries in the world. Nevertheless, what distinguishes China from other countries is that their demographic disbalance is a product of the politics that has changed. In China's case, demographic disbalance is rather a consequence of necessary consolidation than of a "natural" process. In the same way, just as the process has been reversed, it has been changed as well, and thus China may serve as an example of how the degree of a country's development is not necessarily accompanied with demographic disbalance. Having in mind the initiated mechanisms and the rejection of one-child policy, this "argument" may die down in the near future.

On the other hand, economic stagnation is a problem accompanying the majority of the most developed countries. When we say "stagnation", we do not refer to complete absence of economic growth, but to its slowing down. This argument is the closest to the analogy of reaching the speed of light since it is a rather demanding procedure to maintain any growth at the times when the degree of economic growth has reached the current global peak. That is why, even this argument corroborates the thesis that China's alleged slowing down is a consequence of the fact that it has taken its place among the most developed countries of the world. However, even in the conditions of economic stagnation, as we have put it, Chinese economy is still growing faster than other most developed countries of the world. This growth is not two-digit as before, but now it would almost be in the domain of science fiction. Clear, continued and sustainable economic growth is evident and it exceeds other

most developed countries of the world. Hence, this argument, if seen from a different perspective, is in favour of China and not against it.

The question of institutional problems is also something in common to all the most developed countries of the world. Whenever there is sufficient wealth in a country, there will be those who will abuse their position for the purpose of their personal gain. It refers equally to democratic and to communist countries. That is why it can refer both to China and to all other countries of the world. On the other hand, when speaking of this argument, it is a situation when isolated cases are raised to the level of regularities which are more noticeable in other most developed countries of the world. Furthermore, we must not forget one important thing. The challenge in establishing institutional problems is that their resolution leads to the larger visibility of this issue in public. If there is an active struggle against something, then such struggle makes the problem more visible. No country will ever remove institutional problems, but they are often more visible in those countries actively fighting against them.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that globalization is a two-way street. Therefore, its collapse affects equally China and other countries. To conceive the collapse of globalization as an argument for China's slowing down means that the whole world is slowing down. On the other hand, it is a wrong thesis that China's benefit from globalization lies solely in its exports of semi-products. In the past years, China has begun producing and exporting final products with a high added value, such as electronics and cars. Therefore, the claim that the rest of the world will easily transition to

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the production of semi-products as a support to their own production of final products refers to China as well. Their line of argumentation relies on the obsolete logic of the 1990s. At that time China really produced semi-products and its growth really relied on the exports of those products. However, at that time China was not what it is today. That is why we need to ask who will be actually more affected by the collapse of globalization.

Summing up all the above-mentioned, it is evident that China is no longer growing at the same pace as in the past. However, it is not a sign of its weakness but, on the contrary, a consequence of its development. In other words. The arguments in favour of "China's fatal slowing down" are more a sign of its strength than of any essential weakness. It is a simple fact that it has become fully equal to the formerly much more developed countries. When we further elaborate the arguments and apply them to other countries of the world, we reach two important observations. Firstly, the argument of slowing down refers to all the most developed countries of the world, and, secondly and more importantly, China is coping with this challenge better than other most developed countries of the world. Hence the claims about the era of China's rise coming to an end are not only wrong, but they indicate that slower growth may faster take China to the top.

Conclusion

The American-Chinese rivalry will certainly "paint" international security in the years to come. This

claim has become almost an axiom. However, the nature of their rivalry is a much greater issue than simply pointing out who "good" or "bad guys" are. There is a strongly rooted opinion among Western researchers that China's growth will inevitably lead to the Thucydides Trap and, thus, to the outbreak of a hegemonic war between it and the United States. Pointing a finger to negative and positive ones does not serve any purpose except for clearly stating who would be responsible for something like that.

The only "exit" seen by American authors is China's slowing down. The reason for it is obvious. Even at this pace of growth, China will inevitably overtake the United States as the most powerful country in the world. Faced with the fact that the USA is limited in its own growth, as well as that it can do little to prevent China's further growth except in an open conflict, American authors see the only exit in China's slowing down. They base their arguments against its further rise on four key categories of arguments. The first category is of demographic nature which emphasizes that one-child policy has led to a decline in China's population and, more importantly, to demographic disbalance between the working-age and the kept population. The second category is of economic nature and it emphasizes that the fact that Chinese economy is no longer growing at a two-digit pace clearly points to its slowing down. The third category is of institutional nature and points out that problems in administration stop China's rise. The last, fourth category is of structural nature and relies on the thesis that the collapse of globalization will lead to China's slowing down.

Nevertheless, the paradoxical situation in which the above-listed arguments may refer to all

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most developed countries of the world takes us towards two conclusions: that China's slower rise is only the reflection of the fact that it has reached the level of the most developed countries in the world and that, in such circumstances, China is better coping with the challenges of further rise

than other "great powers". Therefore, instead of focusing of the potential "failing", it is necessary to focus on its rivalry with the USA should remain only the rivalry, and not become an open conflict, i.e., war. However, as always, this will not be decided only by direct actors.

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BOTH THE WORLD AND CHINA. Handmade tapestries by Qinghai Shengyan Carpet Group Co, Ltd, situated in the Central District of Xining City. The Jia'ya Tibetan carpet waving was included in the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006.

Photo: Uroš Šuvaković

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New decade of the Belt and Road Initiative: Strategic positioning of Serbia-China relations and opening of a new chapter

Abstract: This paper explores in detail the key concept of the Belt and Road Initiative, which represents a pillar of PR China's foreign policy. The paper focuses especially on the analysis of Serbia's strategic position in the new decade of the global initiative, highlighting the importance of deepening cooperation with PR China. In light of the challenges faced by Serbia, including pressures regarding the recognition of so-called Kosovo and joining anti-Russia sanctions, Serbia's relations with the European Union, NATO, and leading Western countries are increasingly strained. Under such circumstances, it becomes an imperative for Serbia to search for new opportunities for development by boosting cooperation with China within the Belt and Road Initiative. This paper thoroughly analyses Serbia's strategic position, stressing its significant contribution and the benefits of participating in the Belt and Road Initiative. Also, it explores the potential for deepening cooperation between PR China and the Republic of Serbia, focusing on five key pillars: political coordination, development of infrastructural links, promoting efficient trade, improving financial cooperation, and intensifying cultural exchange. Special emphasis is put on eight new campaigns that could further reinforce this cooperation in the new decade of the Initiative. Furthermore, from the aspect of developing talents and building an ecosystem, the paper announces a new direction of future development of Serbia-China relations, providing theoretical support and strategic guidance for intensifying cooperation between the two countries in the next decade of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, Serbia, strategic positioning, Serbia-China relations

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Introduction

In the field of international relations, there is a recognizable lack of deeper understanding of Chinese foreign policy, its comprehensive and systematic approach. A comprehensive methodological approach is necessary for a thorough examination of Chinese diplomatic strategy and activities, which, however, still does not dominate academic discourse, especially not in Serbia. It is customary to view Chinese cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries, the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as Sino-Serbian relations as separate entities. However, from a broader perspective of Chinese foreign policy, these segments are interconnected and together have a significant impact on global political and economic structures. This macro perspective is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of China's role and strategy in the global political-economic landscape and requires us to focus, instead of individual events or policies, on systemic and comprehensive understanding.

In the current complex global context, China's foreign policy system has demonstrated its uniqueness and effectiveness. From adopting traditional ally relations with the USSR at the beginning of the establishment of the People's Republic of China to the contemporary emphasis on independent, self-reliant, and mutually beneficial partnerships, China's diplomatic strategy and practice have undergone significant transformations. These changes in China's foreign policy approach not only demonstrate its detailed un-

derstanding and adaptation to changing circumstances in international relations but also affirm its determination to actively contribute to shaping a world community that shares a common destiny. Through these transformations, China aims to promote new types of international relations characterized by mutual respect, fairness, and shared prosperity.

Traditional international alliance relations often focus on the military, political, or economic interests of a limited number of states, which can result in increased contradictions and conflicts between countries. Unfortunately, history is full of examples of wars and conflicts caused precisely by such allied interests. Among them are the NATO aggression in 1999, which resulted from NATO expansion to the east, as well as the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine, events with which the Serbian people are very familiar. These examples highlight the limitations of traditional alliance relations in maintaining long-term peace and stability. Through its foreign policy and philosophy, China seeks to overcome these challenges, emphasizing the weaknesses that traditional alliances bring.

Serbia, as a militarily neutral country, also has its own unique experiences and perspectives on alliance relations. This paper will analyze Serbia's strategic position, emphasizing its significant contribution and the benefits derived from the partnership with China in order to preserve Serbian independent, sovereign, and freedom-loving policy.

1. Evolution and practice of the Chinese foreign policy system before the “Belt and Road” Initiative

1.1. Global Partnership Network (全球伙伴关系网): Flexibility and inclusiveness of Chinese Diplomacy

The fundamental element and key unit of the Chinese diplomatic system is the partnership model, which aims to overcome the limitations of traditional alliances by establishing a broader and more flexible network of collaborators. This approach promotes peaceful development of international relations. Such partnership is not confined to any specific sphere or format but is based on principles of mutual respect, equality, and mutual benefit, with the ambition to foster common development and prosperity.

Xiang Haoyu, a distinguished researcher at the Institute of Asian and Pacific Studies at the Chinese Institute of International Studies, believes that China adopted a policy of non-alignment as early as the early 1950s, and after the end of the Cold War further clarified its diplomatic guidelines with the principle of "forming friendships without forming alliances" (结伴不结盟), thus initiating a practice of building partnerships (Xiang, 2023). Since the 1990s, China has developed various forms of partnerships with numerous countries, including comprehensive strategic partnerships (全面战略伙伴关系), cooperative partnerships, etc. (合作伙伴关系). These partnerships range from bilateral to multilateral arrangements, re-

flecting the flexibility and inclusiveness of Chinese diplomacy. Forming partnerships between China and countries or regions such as Serbia, Pakistan, Russia, the European Union, and the African Union serves as a typical example of this successful practice. At present, there are more than 20 types of partnerships, with nearly 100 countries carrying the title of "partner" in bilateral relations, and over 80 pairs of relationships involving the term "strategic" (ibid.).

Additionally, it is important to note that alongside common forms of partnerships, such as comprehensive strategic partners and comprehensive cooperative partners, there exists also special bilateral relationship positioning. These special forms of positioning typically reflect unique political, economic, and strategic considerations between countries, such as the frequently mentioned new model of major power relations between China and the United States (中美新型大国关系). This model is designed to avoid traditional conflicts and confrontations among major powers, aiming for cooperation with mutual benefits. Relations between the PRC, as the largest developing country, and the USA, as the largest developed country, have a significant impact on global political, economic, and security development. The proposal of a new model of major power relations aims to promote continuous healthy and stable development of Sino-American relations through enhanced communication, expanded cooperation, and managing differences.

The fundamental characteristics of the Chinese partnership system are equality, openness,

cooperation, and mutual benefit. Unlike traditional alliances, partnerships do not require homogeneity but strive for a common language while respecting differences, thus expanding the scope and depth of cooperation. This model of relations can effectively avoid zero-sum games and promote harmony and stability in the international community.

1.2. The N+1 cooperation mechanism: a new model of regional cooperation

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While the system and network of partnerships tend to be based on bilateral relations, the N+1 cooperation mechanism is a model of regional multilateral cooperation. Key examples of this model are the China-Central and Eastern Europe Cooperation Mechanism and the China-ASEAN 10+1 Cooperation Mechanism. The aim of this model is to share resources and complement advantages through cooperation among multiple countries in a specific region. The N+1 cooperation mechanism not only expands China's diplomatic horizons but also injects new vitality into the partnership system, making it more flexible and diverse.

1.3. Mechanisms of BRICS and SCO: Attempt and practice of a platform for developing countries

The mechanism of BRICS, as an international cooperation platform established by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, represents a significant attempt to create an economic platform led by

major developing countries. These five countries constitute the fundamental economic pillars in their regions, distinguished by exceptional market capacities and wealth of natural resources. In the field of security cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), jointly established in 2001 by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, is a new attempt to resolve disputes and preserve international security.

Although structurally different from bilateral partnerships and regional cooperation mechanisms like N+1, the BRICS and SCO mechanisms share a similar spirit in promoting international cooperation and common development.

The establishment of the BRICS and SCO mechanisms demonstrates the common aspiration of developing countries to achieve greater influence and presence in the processes of globalization. Through cooperation within these two mechanisms, they aim to strengthen mutual economic and security ties, effectively address global challenges, and promote the development of an international system that is fairer and more balanced.

Compared to bilateral partnerships, which primarily focus on cooperation between two states, BRICS and SCO prioritize multilateral and multipolar cooperation and collective action.

When compared to regional cooperation mechanisms like N+1, BRICS and SCO are characterized by greater representativeness. While regional cooperation mechanisms like N+1 focus on enhancing cooperation within a specific geographical area, BRICS and SCO transcend regional boundaries and bring together developing countries from different continents. This approach allows developing countries to broaden

their international vision, strengthening their contribution and influence in global decision-making processes.

2. Introduction to the Belt and Road Initiative and the establishment of the community of shared destiny for mankind

2.1. The Belt and Road Initiative: A culmination of promotion of international connectivity

Since its launch in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative has grown into a key element of Chinese foreign policy. This initiative, drawing inspiration from the ancient Silk Road of China, has not only facilitated trade and cultural exchanges between East and West but has also become a symbol of mutual enrichment and peaceful coexistence throughout history.

The initiative represents not only a significant bridge for establishing partnerships with countries around the world but also the culmination of previous bilateral partnerships, N+1 cooperation mechanisms, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and BRICS. Its primary purpose is to promote international connectivity, strengthen economic cooperation, and cultural exchange among participating countries. Therefore, the Belt and Road Initiative is not conceived as an isolated endeavour but is based on China's longstanding and solid bilateral and multilateral partnerships with countries worldwide. "Today, the Belt and Road Initiative has become internationally recognized as a platform for cooperation at all levels" (Jinping, 2022).

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(1) Five Pillars as the foundation of the first decade of the Belt and Road Initiative

The Five Pillars - political coordination (政策沟通), infrastructure connectivity (设施联通), promotion of effective trade (贸易畅通), enhancement of financial cooperation (资金融通), and strengthening cultural exchanges (民心相通) - represent the basis for a comprehensive framework of cooperation within the Belt and Road Initiative. These aspects are interrelated and supportive, providing not only a robust foundation for intensive cooperation among participating countries but also an impetus for regional economic integration and development. Political coordination enables governments to reach consensus and pave the way for cooperation; infrastructure development physically connects countries, bringing them closer together; efficient trade promotes the free flow of goods and services, strengthening economic dynamics; financial cooperation provides crucial financial support for projects; while cultural exchanges and interpersonal contacts strengthen friendships and understanding. This integrated framework of cooperation is crucial for maintaining stable progress and achieving fruitful results within the Belt and Road Initiative.

(2) Eight steps as the direction for the new decade of the Belt and Road Initiative

The Five Pillars have brought concrete achievements in cooperation among participating countries during the first decade of the Belt and Road Initiative. Looking towards the future, the "eight

steps" will guide the development of the Belt and Road Initiative in the next decade, aiming for higher levels and broader areas of cooperation.

President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China, on 18th October, 2023, at the opening of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, announced China's support for the high-quality implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative through eight steps. These actions include building a multi-dimensional connectivity network for the Belt and Road (构建“一带一路”立体互联互通网络), supporting the establishment of an open world economy (支持建设开放型世界经济), implementing practical cooperation (开展务实合作), promoting green development (促进绿色发展), advancing technological innovation (推动科技创新), supporting people-to-people cultural exchanges (支持民间交往), building the road of integrity-based cooperation (建设廉洁之路), and improving the international cooperation mechanism (完善“一带一路”国际合作机制) (Jinping, 2023).

While the five pillars have laid a solid foundation for cooperation within the Belt and Road Initiative, the eight steps further deepen and broaden the scope and direction of cooperation, adapting to the needs and challenges of the new era. Together, they promote the profound development of this initiative.

2.2 Community of Shared Future For Mankind as the final link in the Chinese foreign policy system

The concept of the Community of Shared Future For Mankind (CSFM - further referred to as CSFM)

began to develop even before the Belt and Road Initiative. Professor Zhang Ji from Fudan University believes that this concept stems from the continuous development of Chinese foreign policy strategies since the founding of the People's Republic of China. It encompasses five principles: peaceful coexistence, advocating for the establishment of a new international political and economic order, avoiding division based on ideologies, commitment to the path of peaceful development, and striving for a harmonious world. The specific origin of this concept lies in the proposal of "convergence of interests" and "community of shared interests" at the beginning of the 21st century (Zhang, 2019).

Over time, the concept of a Community of Shared Future (CSF) has become a more precise description of global interdependence. In September 2011, the CSF concept was first mentioned in the *China's Peaceful Development* whitepaper. From around 2012, this term has been increasingly used, reflecting a growing consensus within the international community on the need for joint resolution of challenges and promotion of cooperation for mutual benefit.

After several years of developing this concept and practical research, in 2015, President Xi Jinping clearly outlined the vision of *building partnerships for mutual benefit and creating a Community of Shared Future for Mankind* (Jinping, 2015) in a speech at the United Nations headquarters. This speech not only promoted the term CSF in the international community but also marked its formal adoption as a key element of Chinese foreign policy.

Thus, China has developed a comprehensive diplomatic system, resembling a carefully woven network. In this system, bilateral partnerships are

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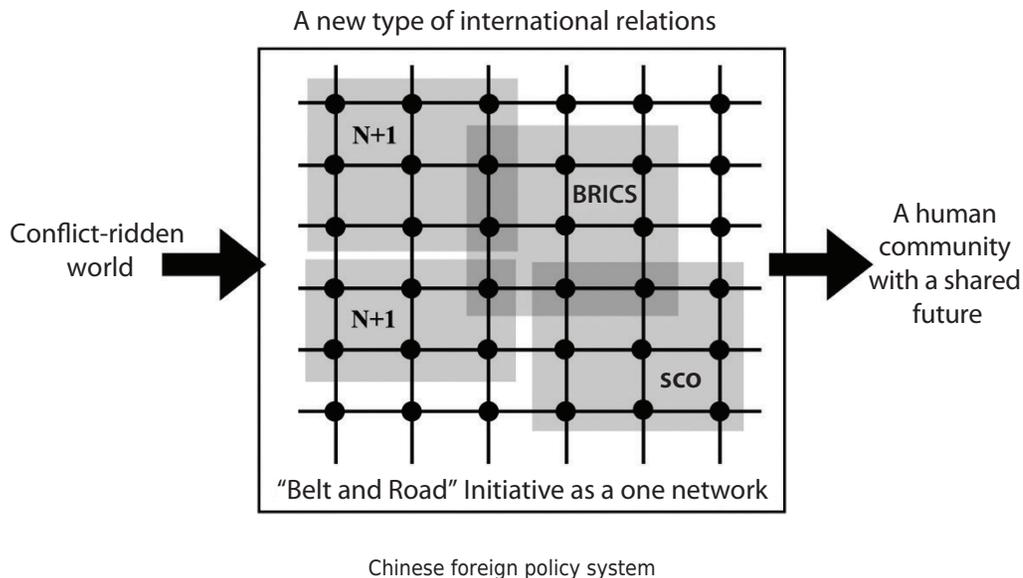
the basic units, serving as fundamental nodes of the network that lay the groundwork for broader cooperation through stable bilateral relations. Multilateral relationship mechanisms such as BRICS, SCO, and N+1 act as key frameworks of this network, playing a connecting role in regional and functional cooperation and closely linking various bilateral partnerships. The Belt and Road Initiative acts as the main artery of the network, tightly connecting participating countries, regions, and mechanisms, allowing for a clear definition of China's strategic positioning and understanding of the significant role it should play on the global stage. And, finally, the concept of CSF, as a macro-plan, provides goals and direction for this network – a new type of international relations (新型国际关系).

The concept of CSF emphasizes interdependence and common interests among nations, advo-

cating for a cooperative approach where everyone benefits, while also maximally respecting the principle that countries, regardless of size, strength, or wealth, are equal, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations and respecting the right of nations to choose their own development path. The philosophy of CSF is against the mentality of the Cold War, interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and double standards (Yang, 2022), offering a Chinese solution to promote the construction of a fairer and more rational international order.

In the drawing, each circle represents a bilateral partnership between China and individual countries, while squares represent multilateral mechanisms (such as BRICS, N+1, or SCO). The lines represent the Belt and Road Initiative that connects them.

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3. Serbia: A shining example of the Belt and Road Initiative

After a comprehensive analysis of the Chinese foreign relations system, we need to engage in an exhaustive discussion about the position Serbia occupies in this significant global initiative. Additionally, we must clearly define our strategic positioning and clarify the important role we should play in this broad context.

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3.1. Serbia's disrupted EU integration strategy

Serbia, as a European country, undoubtedly holds significant geographical context when discussing its strategic position within the Belt and Road Initiative and the Chinese foreign policy system. In analyzing Serbia's role, the dynamics between the EU and Serbia naturally become an inevitable topic – more precisely, this dynamic directly relates to Serbia's political and economic stance on the Euro-Asian continent. Therefore, when discussing Serbia's relationship with the Belt and Road Initiative and the Chinese foreign policy system, it is necessary to thoroughly examine the current state of relations between the EU and Serbia in order to precisely understand the demands of strategic positioning.

Since the change in the ruling political structure in 2000, Serbia has officially designated accession to the European Union as a significant goal of its foreign policy. The government and the public generally believed that EU membership would not only bring significant economic benefits to Serbia

but also help in modernizing its domestic political and legal system. However, over time, due to slow progress in the accession process and frequent problems within the EU itself, public support for EU accession began to decline. Especially when the EU, together with NATO-led United States, started persistently demanding that Serbia recognize the independence of the separatist province of Kosovo and join sanctions against Russia, these factors further deepened Serbian dissatisfaction and public scepticism towards the EU.

According to a 2021 survey conducted by the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG), the percentage of residents in Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia willing to join the EU was 94%, 83%, 83%, and 79%, respectively. In Serbia, support for EU accession was the lowest in the Balkans, with around 53% in favour and 43% against. One year later, in 2022, the percentage of support for EU membership dropped to 35%, marking the first time in recent years that euro scepticism has prevailed to such an extent. The survey also showed that Serbian respondents prioritized economic cooperation over membership, as EU membership seemed increasingly unattainable: 25% believed that Serbia would join in the next decade, while 44% considered it entirely unachievable (BiEPAG, 2021).

The economic role of the EU as Serbia's largest trading partner and a source of investment is crucial from the perspective of Serbian economic interests. However, the prospects of Serbia's accession to the EU remain unclear. On the one hand, due to internal problems within the EU, stringent conditions imposed on Serbia, and Serbia's

dissatisfaction with EU policies, the attractiveness of the EU for Serbia is gradually declining. On the other hand, Serbia actively seeks to diversify its diplomatic and economic cooperation to find new anchors on the international political scene. The challenge of balancing national sovereignty with economic development has become a significant strategic challenge for Serbia. In short, Serbia faces many challenges and uncertainties on its path to the EU, a sentiment widely shared by the Serbian people.

3.2. The past decade: Deep integration and development of Serbian-Chinese relations within the Belt and Road Initiative

Against the backdrop of tense political relations with Western countries, Serbia has actively begun to cooperate with China, Russia, and other developing countries to preserve its independent policy and maintain a balanced stance on the international political scene. Since the Serbian Progressive Party came to power in 2012, relations with Eastern countries have been thoroughly renewed and elevated to a higher level.

In the context of Serbian-Chinese relations, the partnership has reached unprecedented heights after decades of development. The Belt and Road Initiative has provided Serbia with a greater number of options for shaping its foreign and economic policies. This initiative has gained popularity in Serbia because it not only contributes to a new impetus in the country's economic development but also represents a model of cooperation that differs from the Western one. By intensifying

cooperation with countries like China, Serbia hopes to reduce its economic dependence on the EU, thereby enhancing its negotiating power and international influence.

Within the Belt and Road Initiative, bilateral projects between Serbia and China are focused on infrastructure and energy sectors, including industry - steel production, highway construction, mining, railways, automobile industry, and urban water drainage systems. These projects encompass initiatives such as the Hungary-Serbia railway line, the Smederevo Steel Mill, the "Danube Corridor" highway, waste water collection and treatment systems, and the exploitation of mines in Bor. Chinese investments undoubtedly had a positive effect on the Serbian economy, coinciding with the growth of Serbia's gross domestic product in recent years. Moreover, Chinese investments in infrastructure projects are directed towards directions that European investment groups currently cannot or do not want to develop, but are crucial for Serbia's national development. From this perspective, cooperation between Serbia and China unequivocally represents a lifesaving opportunity for Serbia.

In this context, China has become Serbia's second-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade volume reaching \$3.55 billion in 2022, representing an increase of 10.1% compared to the previous year. This includes \$2.18 billion in imports from China and \$1.37 billion in exports to China. In 2023, China and Serbia signed a historic Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The Chinese Ministry of Commerce highly praised this agreement, emphasizing that it represents China's first FTA with a Central and Eastern European country and the twenty-second FTA with countries and regions worldwide, making Serbia

the twenty-ninth free trade partner of China. The signing of the FTA between Serbia and China is an important step in implementing the consensus between the leaders of the two countries, a significant initiative to expand the global network of high-standard free trade areas, and a key achievement of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. (Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2023).

In addition to economic interests, China and Serbia also share deep spiritual, cultural, and intangible connections. These intangible connections enrich the continuous development of bilateral relations, contributing to the uniqueness of the "ironclad friendship" between China and Serbia. This friendship has a deep historical foundation, where the two countries have gradually built a close relationship of "shared happiness and sorrow," facing challenges and difficulties together, such as the bombing of the Chinese Embassy during the NATO aggression in 1999. This friendship is not only a collection of common interests but also a cooperative relationship based on mutual understanding and trust. Over the years, the peoples of both countries have developed a deep friendship through economic and cultural exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation.

At a crucial moment for the continuous development of Sino-Serbian relations and the Belt and Road Initiative, Serbia also played a role in the official establishment of the Belt and Road Institute. This research institution was established through joint efforts of the Serbian Government, the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, and the University of Novi Sad in 2021, gathering resources and talents from various sectors. During the

same year, during a meeting between Serbian Foreign Minister Selaković and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the two countries reached an agreement to strengthen strategic cooperation, qualitatively advance the further development of the Belt and Road Initiative, and practically implement key mutually significant projects. The Chinese side also expressed clear support for the Belt and Road Initiative. Since its establishment, the Institute has been supported by leading Chinese companies such as China Mining and China Copper as founding members, which has significantly contributed to its development. In 2023, at a crucial moment in the transition between the old and new decades of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Institute became a member of the Silk Road Think Tank Association (SiLKS) launched by the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Over the past years, the Institute has signed more than 50 cooperation agreements with institutions, companies, universities, and other organizations across Europe, Asia, and Africa. With the aim of promoting the development of relations between China and Central and Eastern Europe, the Institute has been involved in organizing more than 50 significant intergovernmental exchanges, often taking a leading role.

3.3. The next decade: Building a talent infrastructure and ecosystems

When considering the new decade of development of the Belt and Road Initiative, it is crucial for China and Serbia to deepen cooperation through eight

actions, explore new areas, and open new chapters - especially in the domain of talent infrastructure. The first decade of the mentioned Chinese initiative enabled the connection between Serbia and China in the industrial infrastructure. As we move into the next decade, a focus on talent becomes a central aspect of the "infrastructure" to sustain, expand and enhance these achievements.

Improving talent development and induction, as well as building a high-quality talent pool, are key to the sustainable development of bilateral relations. In terms of talent development, China and Serbia can strengthen exchanges and cooperation in education, jointly developing talent development programs and curricula. Through student exchange, joint educational programs, and other methods, the two countries can encourage students to exchange and cooperate in culture, technology, and other sectors. In addition, both countries can expand cooperation in professional education and technology transfer, which would provide more high-quality talents for enterprises of both countries.

Regarding talent attraction, China and Serbia can adopt more favourable policies and measures to attract a larger number of exceptional talented individual to work and live in their own countries. Apart from that, the two countries can collaborate on establishing talent centres and developing innovative policies that would secure additional intellectual support and guarantees for talent, useful for businesses and research institutions in both countries.

Aside from that, China and Serbia should systematically completely utilize Chinese entities in Serbia, such as large Chinese companies, the

Belt and Road Institute, Confucius Institutes, and Luban workshops. By relying on industrial advantages, with large companies at the centre, both countries can gradually expand their influence on to the academic sphere and, ultimately, on to the entire society, creating a positive ecosystem. The aim of this mechanism is to promote deep cooperation between Chinese companies, Chinese and Serbian universities, institutions, and media in order to achieve a synergistic effect. Such a system not only provides a platform for talented people to demonstrate their skills, enabling them to use, maintain, deepen, and transform existing industries and infrastructure, but also strengthens the five pillars, further expanding and implementing the eight actions. By focusing on people, both countries should encourage the implementation of a variety of smaller projects, moving from individual points to lines, and from lines to areas, thereby encouraging comprehensive development. Also, we hope that other countries along the Silk Road will establish similar ecosystems, which would enable the global connectivity of ecosystems and take advantage of the Belt and Road Initiative in connecting different parts of the world.

In summary, when speaking about the development of a new decade of the Belt and Road Initiative, the cooperation in the infrastructure talent field between China and Serbia will become more intense and important. By improving talent development and its introduction, as well as creating a high-quality talent pool, both countries will significantly contribute to the further deepening of bilateral relations, as well as the promotion of global peace and development.

4. Conclusion and discussion: Balancing between the planned EU integration and the Belt and Road Initiative

As a developing country, Serbia naturally aspires toward a world with more diverse and inclusive values, systems, and norms, including the five pillars and eight actions of the Belt and Road Initiative as well as the frameworks of the EU, as well as the United Nations 2030 vision. This poses two main questions: How do we align relations between the East and the West and how do we balance between EU integration strategy and Serbian-Chinese relations focused on the Belt and Road Initiative?

EU, as an entity that advocates regional integration, has been striving to improve the quality of life of its members for a long time through coordinated cooperation, and to strengthen its economic, political and strategic impact globally. Still, this process is not without issues. Internal contradictions and weaknesses of the EU, especially when it comes to decision-making autonomy, have become pronounced, and affect primarily smaller countries and those who strive for membership. Such countries must carefully weight their ambitions for economic development in relation to the need to preserve political independence and satisfy EU's political criteria (Filipović, 2022).

In this context, the Chinese foreign policy system, which is centred around the Belt and Road initiative, offers Serbia a new opportunity for cooperation. Unlike the cooperation model promoted by the EU, the Belt and Road initiative focuses more on economic cooperation and mutual benefits, with-

out political preconditions. The current conflict in Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict further highlight the weaknesses of Western international mechanisms, such as the lack of objective rationality in managing international crises and making decisions based solely on the interests of the great powers. This way of acting not only threatens global balanced development, but also puts pressure on the economic and political sovereignty of smaller states.

Therefore, while Serbia is considering the European integration process, it must strategically think about new methods and directions for deepening cooperation within the Belt and Road initiative, exploring new opportunities for economic development, while at the same time preserving national interests and independent policies. This balanced strategy not only reflects Serbia's thoughtfulness in the context of current international political and economic trends, but also demonstrates its wisdom in maximizing benefits in a complex international environment.

In the context of the Chinese foreign policy system, the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Serbia, also known as the iron friendship, stands out as a unique and firm relationship among all international systems of cooperation. The cooperation between the two countries is not just widely encompassing, but it is also being deepened on various levels, akin to two tightly intertwined, firmly joined segments.

At the regional level of multilateral relations, Serbia unambiguously shines as a positive example on the cooperation scene within the China – Central and Eastern Europe mechanism. Not only is it exhibiting a high level of cooperation enthusiasm,

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it also confirms its status as an active member of the mechanism through practical activities.

In the context of BRICS and SCO, even though Serbia as the most influential country in the Balkans is not an official member, the people have shown strong interest in this multilateral cooperation framework.

As a vital element of the “Belt and Road” Initiative, Serbia plays a key role in the promotion of interregional connection and functions as a bridge connecting the East and the West, facilitating trade and cultural exchange.

Finally, Serbia is actively realizing the idea of a community of mankind with a common destiny through cooperation for mutual benefit, by joining forces with other countries. Not only do deep friendship and cooperation between China and Serbia provide tangible benefits for the both peoples, they also serve as an example of a harmonious coexistence to the global community. This iron friendship presents a powerful impulse for a joint development of China and Serbia in all areas.

Ding Chun, Zhang Mingxin and Ji Haonan from the Fudan Institute of Belt and Road and Global Governance, emphasized in their article entitled “Competition and Cooperation As Part of Belt and Road Initiative from the Perspective of China and Europe – Evolution, Causes and Impact on Europe” that China and Europe are coexisting in the state of competition and cooperation, which will continue in the future. However, China and European countries have achieved fruitful results within the Belt and Road Initiative, by collecting valuable experiences. There is a stable basis for cooperation between China and Europe (Ding, Zhang, Ji, 2023). It is believed that, in the face of various unstable factors, in the new decade of the Belt and Road Initiative, China and Serbia will start a new chapter together. It will not only build closer bilateral relations, but also positively contribute to the stability and prosperity of regional relations, as well as relations between China and Europe, working together to build and preserve the idea of a community of humanity with a common destiny.

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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, urbicide 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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Opinion review

A Leader with the Vision of the Shared Future of Humanity

Xi Jinping: *On Building a Human Community with a shared Future*
Albatros Plus, Belgrade, 2023, 664 pages



*Remembrance of what happened in the past becomes
a teacher for what will happen in the future.
Chinese adage*

Summary: A shared future of humanity is the guiding idea of Chinese President Xi Jinping, as proved by numerous examples from his political practice, from his taking over the presidential function to date. A comprehensive and visionary approach of the Chinese president deserves attention, and that is why it is necessary to speak and write about it, particularly having in mind the idea of global peaceful progress and an open invitation to the countries worldwide to join common development and progress. Chinese President is aware that without developed China there is no developed world and vice versa, and that is why he puts huge efforts in the trade, economic, social, technological and political development of China and in the ideas of openness and cooperativeness with other countries in the world. Relying on traditional Chinese values and remembering the past, President Jinping committedly acts in the present with a vision of the prosperous future.

Keywords: Xi Jinping, China, world, peaceful development, future of humanity

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Building a shared future of humanity is a profound, far-reaching and comprehensive vision of Chinese President Xi Jinping who, ever since taking over the function, has exactly and in a visionary manner taken the whole world into consideration, offering everyone a friendly hand with the aim of global progress and prosperous future. With a responsibility of a statesman, President Xi Jinping approached the development of China in political, trade, economic, military and social aspects, believing that stable and strong China may help global development and prosperity. This reflects the Chinese president's broadmindedness because he believes that without a developed world there is no developed China and *vice versa*. He has emphasized the above-mentioned for many years now, thinking that all countries are important – both the developed and strong ones, such as Russia and the United States of America, and the developing ones, such as African and Asian countries. The participatory approach of the Chinese president sums up and reflects universal values of humanity, for example peace, development, freedom and fairness, which shows that China participates actively and responsibly in the creation and maintenance of the global development concept and that it ensures the necessary energy for achieving world peace and stability. In order to succeed in it, China led by President Jinping is strengthening the necessary foundations for peaceful development, showing that the Chinese nation is a peaceful nation hoping for world peace and stability. In that respect, President Jinping has emphasized on many occasions in his speeches that without peace neither China nor the world can develop successfully, and that

without development neither China nor the world can have lasting peace. The Chinese nation has for centuries been aware that “the state which wages a war will disappear in the end” (Jinping, 2023, p. 135). Hence peaceful development as a permanent orientation and tireless aspiration of the Chinese nation towards peace.

The importance of other countries in the context of China's peaceful orientation is proved by numerous visits and statements of President Jinping. After taking his duty, the Chinese president first visited Russia. On that occasion, he pointed to the friendly relations, emphasizing that a strong and functional Chinese-Russian relationship is “an important means of preserving international strategic balance, peace and stability” (Jinping, 2023, p. 19). During that visit, as the president of one of the most powerful countries in the world, Jinping opened up an important question at the global level, saying that people of all countries had to decide about the destiny of the world. With national and state responsibility, the Chinese president said that “things within the sovereignty of one country may be resolved only by the government and people of that country”, while “world problems may only be resolved, through negotiations, by the nations and governments of all countries” (Jinping, 2023, p. 18). He sent a clear message to the world during the first meeting with the former president of the USA, Barack Obama, saying that “the Chinese dream refers to the aspiration of making our country prosperous and strong, of recovering our nation and enabling the achievement of happiness for our people. That is a dream of peace, development, cooperation and universal wellbeing”

(Jinping, 2023, p. 51). We should not forget that the Chinese management observes five principles of peaceful coexistence and points out the struggle for equality of all sovereignties, the preservation of common security, the advancement of common development, two-way beneficial cooperation and mutual learning. These principles embody Chinese tradition in which peace has a special place. Therefore, President Jinping often reminds the whole world of the principles of democracy in international relations, the principles he diligently advocates as well.

President Jinping's far-reaching vision was presented at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2012, when two goals of the country's development were established: the first goal is to double GDP by 2020, and the second one to make the country prosperous, strong, democratic, harmonious and culturally advanced by the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China in 2049. In order to achieve the established goals, China has determined its economic, trade, cultural and social development as an imperative, founding it on two principles: openness and cooperativeness. We bear witness to China having fulfilled the first goal regarding the increased GDP, and that it is diligently working on the fulfilment of the second, comprehensive goal, supported by the responsibility and seriousness of the Chinese president.

In accordance with the principle of openness and cooperativeness, Jinping has approached all countries, pointing out that China will pursue independent foreign politics, connecting interests of the Chinese people with the interests of peoples

throughout the world, for the purpose of balanced governance of economy and increased economic growth. Therefore, common acting and cooperation are necessary for the balanced growth of the world's economy, which is quite precisely emphasized by the Chinese president when he says that "convergence of interests is necessary for the balanced growth of the world's economy" (Jinping, 2023, p. 55). The most important contribution to the growth of the world's economy is reflected in the "Belt and Road" initiative, which was announced in 2013 (Yongliang, 2021).

Remembering his home province of Shanxi, President Jinping spoke about the old Silk Road as a centuries-long link between different civilizations of the East and the West, and the axis of development and cooperation. In this way, he aspiringly announced a new "Belt and Road" cooperation model, emphasizing that China did not strive for dominance in regional relations, but tried to establish a practical cooperation, empower political communication, remove trade barriers, increase monetary circulation and ensure good and friendly relations. In addition to the land road, China is dedicated to the construction and development of the Maritime Silk Road founded on the principles of openness and inclusiveness, thus showing the commitment to common development and advancement of the world's economy. President Jinping's clear vision is reflected in the attitude that reforms and innovations are key to long-term development. Innovations are quite important, particularly in the fields of new technology and artificial intelligence, and that is why the Chinese president has invited BRICS countries

“to strengthen cooperation in the field of information security and Internet management, to work together on creating a safe, peaceful cyberspace” (Jinping, 2023, p. 276). Therefore, common development, open development, development based on innovation, and mutual connectivity of economies are the principles about which the Chinese president often speaks and selflessly implements in practical economic, trade and political affairs. The above-listed is reflected in the neighbourhood diplomacy and development of friendship as a permanent principle, which is particularly important for achieving two century goals and the Chinese dream of the national recovery. Apart from neighbourhood diplomacy, President Jinping, aware of the changeability and dynamics of international relations, points out that Chinese diplomacy must confirm the large country’s status and develop a global perspective. Since the 18th National Congress, Xi Jinping has given “huge significance to theoretical innovations about the Party’s political diplomacy, and recommended a theory of this type of diplomacy with the recognizable features

of the modern era and Chinese characteristics, thus providing theoretical support to the Party’s political diplomacy so that it can better serve Chinese wisdom and solutions” (Xiaohu, 2021, p. 36). That marks the beginning of the third stage of diplomatic transformation aimed at making “the advanced country’s diplomacy” grow into “the leading country’s diplomacy” (Cungang, 2021, p. 42). Having in mind that a global power is the one using hard and soft power means in a respectable manner (Despotović & Glišin, 2021), there is no doubt that China is going ever more rapidly towards that position in international relations.

President Jinping’s committed and tireless work, wisdom and far-sightedness based on rich Chinese tradition and memory, have resulted in colossal trade, economic, political, social, military and technological progress of China, which continues its struggle for building a prosperous shared future of humanity because, as an old Chinese adage goes, “A single flower does not make spring, while one hundred flowers in full bloom bring spring to the garden”.

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Xian warrior sculpture made of terracotta, in the vicinity of Xian, the city in the Province of Shaanxi

Photo: Milica Dragić

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The editorial board of the journal *Napredak* will only consider articles which are in accordance with these Instructions. The journal publishes only new and original articles. The editors will accept papers *in extenso* which have previously partially been published at a scientific gathering, under the condition that this is duly indicated by the author. Any attempt at plagiarism or self-plagiarism will be sanctioned (banning the author from publishing his/her work in this journal for a length of time which corresponds to the severity of the plagiarism; the institution with which the author is affiliated, and the appropriate professional organizations will also be informed of the wrongdoing).

Papers are published in the Serbian language (only Cyrillic alphabet) and English. The editorial board encourages authors to submit papers in both languages.

The editorial board maintains the right to proof-read and edit all the papers, in accordance with best practices and Serbian/English language standards. After presenting their papers, authors are required to submit a statement signed by all the authors and co-authors asserting that the paper has not been published either partially or wholly in another publication. The

statement on the particular contribution of each author must be signed by every author, scanned and sent with the manuscript, as additional documentation. This is to ensure that all authors are made responsible for the fulfilling of all the conditions. After this, the paper goes through the editorial process.

Accepted papers are published in the order the Editorial Board establishes, on the suggestion of the Chief Editor and Executive Editor. In the case of Thematic Issues, the Chief Editor and Executive Editor will take into consideration the suggestions of the guest editor of the Thematic Issue, before sending the paper to the Editorial Board. The journal *Napredak* publishes papers in the field of social sciences and related multidisciplinary papers that shed light on society.

The papers are categorized in accordance with the 2009 *Act on the editing process of scientific journals* adopted by the Minister of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

Papers can be:

Scientific articles:

1. Original scientific papers.

These papers expose previously unpublished results of the author's per-

sonal research, conducted according to scientific standards. The length of the body of these papers must not exceed 28,800 characters with spaces. This number does not include the name, middle initial, surname and affiliation of the author, the title of the article, the summary (up to 800 characters with spaces), key words (up to 5 words or phrases), the list of references, footnotes;

2. Review. Contains an original, detailed critique of a scientific problem or area, in which the author has established his/her credentials, confirmed also by the presence of self-citations. The body text of a review must not exceed 28,800 characters with spaces. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

3. Brief or previous statement. This is an original full format scientific paper up to 18,000 characters with spaces in length, or a preliminary paper. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

4. Scientific critique, or polemic. (discussion on a given scientific subject, exclusively on the basis of scientific arguments) and reviews. The length of these papers is up to 10,000 characters

with spaces. This type of paper must include the name, middle initial, surname and affiliation of the author, as well as a summary up to 400 characters with spaces in length, key words (up to 5 words or phrases), a list of references. These elements are not included in the total number of characters allowed.

Expert papers:

1. **Expert paper** is an article which presents information that contributes to the study of social phenomena but not necessarily based on the scientific method. These papers must not exceed 18,000 characters with spaces. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

2. **Informative contribution** (editorial, commentary, information on the work of the Foundation which is the publisher of *Napredak*, etc.). These texts are shorter, with a length of up to 12,000 characters with spaces. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

3. **Review** (book, research, scientific event, etc.). The length is up to 7000 characters with spaces. The use of photographs is encouraged (images of book covers, photographs of events, etc.). Images count as 500 characters with spaces. A review does not contain a summary or key words but must include references.

The journal *Napredak* will not publish papers that contain less than 5 references. The Editorial Board encourages authors to use journal references of a more recent date, if possible.

All types of papers can contain photographs, graphs, tables, and other illustrations. Every illustration counts as 500 characters with spaces. The

Editorial Board encourages the use of illustrations, especially graphs and tables, to present data which do not have to be repeated in the body, but just referred to. Every table must have a number (1 – n) and title, while every image (graph, photograph...) must have a number (1 – n) and caption.

The authors and co-authors suggest the category of the manuscript. This is also done by the reviewers, but the final decision on the categorization is made by the Chief Editor and Executive Editor of the journal.

The manuscripts must contain standardized abbreviations, but not in the title or abstract. The full name with its abbreviation in parenthesis is given when first mentioned. Abbreviations are permitted further on in the text, both in the abstract and in the paper itself. Abbreviations must not be used in the conclusion of the paper (not abstract).

In the case of a paper written in the Serbian language, foreign names are transcribed, and the original name given in parentheses the first time they are mentioned in the text. In the case of papers written in the English language, names are given in the original format or transcribed (eg. Chinese or Arab names). Foreign phrases are written in the original format, in italics, and if necessary, their translation and meaning are given in a footnote.

Manuscripts must be submitted as a Word Document, line spacing 1.5, A4 paper size single sided, margins 2.5 cm, justified alignment, font size 12pt, Times New Roman. Bold and italics should be avoided and can be used in subheadings. The Summary, Key words, and footnotes are single spaced, 1.0.

Submitted manuscripts are sent

(without author's name) to at least two reviewers/editors. Comments and suggestions of the editors and reviewers (not giving the reviewer's name) are sent back to the author.

After undergoing a peer and editorial review, the paper is sent back to the author. All changes must be made within the space of three days. During this phase it is not possible to make significant changes but only correct minor typing and similar mistakes. If the corrected text is not returned to the Editorial Board within three days, the Editorial Board will assume that the author has no further comments. The manuscripts of papers approved for publication are not returned to the author.

Preparing a manuscript

Manuscripts are prepared in accordance to APA citation format. Parts of the paper are: title page, abstract and key words, body, acknowledgements (optional), references, appendices (tables, images). Pages must be numbered (upper or lower right corner), starting with the first page.

1. Насловна страна

a) The title of the paper should be brief, clear and informative, in the Serbian or English language, without abbreviations and it should correspond to the contents of the paper. Headings and subheadings should be avoided. If the paper is the result of research conducted during a project or if the authors feel the need to express their gratitude to a supporting institution or individual, this can be done in a footnote at the end of the title.

b) Above the title, in the upper left corner, in large letters, the author

suggests the category. Below this is the name, middle initial and surname of the author and co-authors. Scientific papers can have up to two co-authors. The Editorial Board encourages authors to publish papers written by one author. Papers with more than two authors/co-authors will not be considered. After the surname of the author/co-author it is necessary to place a numbered footnote (starting from 1), which gives the professional title of the author/co-author and his/her electronic address (email). The author/co-author responsible for corresponding with the Editorial Board is required to provide telephone numbers (mobile, landline) and postal address (with the words “for correspondence purposes”), besides his/her electronic address. The footnote(s) for each of the author(s)/co-author(s) states the year of birth of the author(s) (e.g. born in 1968.)

c) Below the name of each author/co-author it is necessary to give their affiliation. In the case of institutions with complex organizations, all levels of organization must be stated, from the highest to the lowest (e.g. name of university, name of faculty, name of department), the location of the institution and the country in parentheses.

2. Summary and key words

On the second page of the paper, it is necessary to provide a structured summary in Serbian and English, written concisely and including the Introduction/Aim, Basic Premise, Methods (research methods, basic procedures, sampling), Results (most important), and Conclusion. It is necessary to underline new and important aspects of the research. A structured summary must not exceed 800 characters with

spaces. In the case of scientific critiques, polemics and reviews, a summary must not exceed 400 characters with spaces.

The summary must be followed by Key words, not exceeding 5 concepts or phrases.

Papers categorized as reviews do not require an abstract but it is necessary to provide the following information on the book (event) being reviewed, in the following order: Name and Surname of author (in the case of an Event, the name of the event organizer); title of the book in italics (or title of the Event in italics); place of publication; publisher; year of publication (place of event, time of event), total number of pages (not applicable to Events). A photograph of the book/event reviewed must be submitted in JPEG or TIFF format as an attached file, minimum resolution 300x300 pixels.

Example of review:

Stjuart Prajs: Izučavanje medija. Klio, Beograd, 2011, 749 p.

Example of event:

European Sociological Association: 13th ESA Conference(Un)Making Europe: Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities. Athens (Greece), 29.08 - 01.09.2017

3. Body of text

The body of the paper starts at the third page. It is suggested but not required that original scientific papers and reviews, especially if they are based on empirical research, be structured thus: Introduction/Aims of research; overview of methodology; results; discussion; conclusion. For scientific pa-

pers categorized as “Brief Statements” and “Scientific critique, polemics, reviews”, structuring is not required.

Tables, graphs and images are incorporated into the body, except in the case of a book or event review where the photographs are submitted as a separate file.

Illustrations, maps, photographs, graphs and other images are submitted in JPG or TIFF format, minimum resolution of 300x300 pixels.

Every illustration (table, graph, drawing...) must be numbered and captioned (center alignment) in the following way:

- The title of the table is given above.

Example:

Table 1: Average values of ethnic distance

- Graphs, photographs and other illustrations are captioned below.

Example:

Graph 1: Average values of ethnic distance scores

Tables should be simple, in black and white, no shading. Indentations and alignment in tables must be produced via automatic formatting, not by manually adding spaces.

All types of graphs must be black and white, and with the use of different types of lines.

3.1 Citing and referencing other authors in the body

In accordance with the APA Citation standard, citations are given EXCLUSIVELY in the body, in bibliographical parentheses.

The use of footnotes is allowed only for the purposes of comments, in order to avoid loading the text. It is on the author's discretion to decide to provide in a footnote additional information (e.g. email of author, acknowledgements, etc.), brief explanations regarding certain terms and concepts (e.g. the meaning of a lesser-known Latin proverb), biographical data of importance for the understanding of the text (e.g. providing biographical information on a theorist in order to better understand the context). Footnotes can be used to comment or critique the position of other authors (e.g. regarding their inconsistent views on a subject), to provide an illustrative example or interesting comment regarding another author or for the purpose of directing the reader towards another author's work.

Bibliographical references are always given in the Latin alphabet. In the Literature section, only one place of publication is given, even if the publication itself names several.

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Work by one author (Lukić, 1995a, p. 209) (Lukić, 1995a, p. 30)

Work of one author published in the same year as previously cited work (Lukić, 1995b, p. 30) (Lukić, 1995b, p. 20)

Work by two authors (Haralambos & Heald, 1989) (Haralambos & Heald, 1989)

Work by three to five authors
FIRST MENTION: (Marković, Golenkova, Šuvaković, 2009); **SECOND AND OTHER MENTION OF SAME WORK:** (Marković et al, 2009)

Work by more than seven authors (Mihailović et al, 2012) (Mihailović et al, 2012)

GROUP (INSTITUTION, ORGANIZATION) WITH A RECOGNIZABLE ABBREVIATION

(Republički zavod za statistiku [RZS], 2020) (RZS, 2020)

GROUP WITHOUT RECOGNIZABLE ABBREVIATION (Centar za profesionalni razvoj zaposlenih u obrazovanju, 2020) (Centar za profesionalni razvoj zaposlenih u obrazovanju, 2010)

Included within bibliographical parentheses should be the surname of the author, the year of publication and if necessary the number of the page. If there is more than one author with the same surname, especially if they are cited or referenced in the paper, the APA standard clarifies that the initial of each author be provided before the surname.

If a page number is provided in bibliographical parentheses (in the case of a direct quote), it is separated with a comma, preceded by the abbreviation "p.". In some cases, it is not necessary to provide page numbers (if the entire work is referenced, or the idea contained within; that is, if there is no direct quote).

Example:

In his text Petrovic enters into a polemic with several methodologists and researchers of social phenomena, pointing out their schematism in the interpretation of statistical data, as well as their lack of knowledge of the concept of "civil society" (Petrovic, 2020).

For sources and literature in foreign languages it is possible to use "et al" instead of the Serbian "i dr.". It is also

possible to use "&" instead of "and" in Anglo-Saxon literature.

In the case of citing several authors at the same time, according to the APA standard, the author's names are given within one set of parentheses, in alphabetical order.

Example:

Not an insignificant number of authors believe that globalization is a historical process that started centuries ago (Bžežinski, 2015, p. 14; Chumakov, 2010, p. 49; Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 257; Robertson, 1992, pp. 58-59; Hatibović, 2002; Šuvaković, 2004, str. 53)

Quotations are given within a sentence. However, if the quotation contains more than 40 words it is necessary to separate the quotation in a new paragraph (automatic), with speech marks. The bibliographical parentheses is given after the last punctuation mark. The rest of the text that follows is in a new paragraph.

Example:

"The basic elements of the gay movement correspond to the chief aspirations of (post)modern capitalism. The emphasis in personal or collective identity is transferred from its locus in the system of production on "lifestyle" (consumer behavior model). Hence, the popular (hypnocratic) culture contains so little information on class identity, while sexual identity is given the central position of social and personal attention. The more people's needs for freedom can be satisfied in the area of work or politics, the more "freedom" in consumer behavior and lifestyle is advocated in the public (cultural) sphere. This

includes “sexual freedoms”. (Antonić, 2014, p. 210)

Continuing with our research, we reached the clear and unambiguous conclusion...

3.2 References in the Literature section – an overview of common cases

3.2.1 General remarks

The Literature section is the same for both versions of the paper. The titles of the references are always in the English language, even if the source was not originally written in the English language but, for example, in Serbian. In this case, it is necessary to give the original language in brackets (e.g. [In Serbian]). References are given in alphabetical order (Serbian Latin). If only foreign authors are cited, references are given in British alphabetical order. If works from different languages are referenced, they are arranged in Serbian Latin alphabetical order. Letters which do not exist in Serbian Latin (W, Q, Y, X) are given last.

Serbian surnames should be written in Latin and Serbian diacritic signs should be used.

If more than one work by an author is cited, then the works are listed by date of publication (from oldest to most recent).

If the author published one work individually, the second work as a co-author, the third with two other authors, it is necessary to first list the work written individually, then the work written with one other author, then the work written with two other co-authors. Alphabetical order should be followed when giving authors' surnames.

If works of one author published in the same year are referenced, they should be listed with letters added to the years (2019a) (2019b), etc.

3.2.2 Monographies

Surname, Initial. (year of publication). *Title of monography in italics*. Place of publication: Name of Publisher.

If there is more than one city with the same name (in the case of cities in different states of the USA), it is necessary to provide the state name after the city.

If the monography is available online it is encouraged to provide a link, with the comment “Available at”

Example:

Antonić, S. (2014). *Power and sexuality: the sociology of the gay movement*. Istočno Sarajevo: Sociološko društvo Republike Srpske. Available at [sahttps://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:7605/bdef:Content/download](https://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:7605/bdef:Content/download) [In Serbian]

Lukić, R. (1995a). Basics of sociology. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, BIGZ [In Serbian]

Lukić, R. (1995b). Political parties. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, BIGZ [In Serbian]

3.2.3 Articles in serial publications

Surname, Initial. (year of publication). Title of article. *Name of journal* vol. (issue no. in year): pages from – to.

If the paper has a DOI, this is given at the end; if the paper is available online it is encouraged to provide a link, with the comment “available at”

Example:

Antonić, S. (2013). Social mobility in socialist Serbia: a revisionist

approach. *Sociološki pregled*, XLVII (2), 145–170 Available at [http://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/0085-6320/2013/0085-63201302145A.pdf#search="Antonić Slobodan"](http://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/0085-6320/2013/0085-63201302145A.pdf#search=) [In Serbian]

Vuletić, V, Stanojević, D. (2013). Social Networks - Networks of Old School Ties. *Kultura*, (141), 37-52. doi:10.5937/kultura1341037V [In Serbian]

The Editorial Board strongly encourages authors to give the DOI of papers published in journals instead of the URL or http:// address.

3.2.4 Articles published in thematic collections, chapters in monographs, statements in proceedings

Surname, Initial. (year of publication). Title of article. In: Name initial and surname of editor with (ed. or eds. in parentheses). *Name of publication in italics*. (pages from – to). Place of publication: Name of Publisher.

Example:

Petrović, J. (2014). Note on the so-called. the new French sociology and its methodological consequences - a review of the most important issues. In: J. Petrović, D. Đorđević (eds) *Research of social phenomena: methodological considerations* (213-222). Niš: Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Nišu; Mašinski fakultet Univerziteta u Nišu [In Serbian]

3.2.5 Daily newspaper articles

Surname, Initial. (year, month, day of publication). Title of article. *Title of Newspaper in italics*, p. X

Example:

Vuletić, V. (2017, July 13). Region and barriers. *Politika*, p. 28 [In Serbian]

3.2.6 Texts in periodicals (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, annual publications)

Surname, Initial. (year, month, day of publication). Title of article. *Title of publication*, issue no., pages from – to. (NO ABBREVIATION to “p.”)

Example:

Čomski, N. (2009, September, 4). Victims of the Imperial Mentality of the West (interview). *HMH* 3041, 19-21. [In Serbian]

3.2.7 Citing unpublished doctoral dissertation or master thesis

Surname, Initial. (year of defense). *Title of dissertation in italics*. (doctoral dissertation / master’s thesis). Name

of institution where the thesis was defended, place [In Serbian].

3.2.8 Citing a doctoral dissertation available in database

Surname, Initial. (year of defense). *Title of dissertation in italics* (doctoral thesis / master’s thesis). Name of institution where the thesis was defended, place. Available at [In Serbian].

