China’s Proposition to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind and the Middle East Governance

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Abstract: The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind is a new concept that the Chinese government has advocated after the 18th National Congress of the CPC, aiming to develop a new structure of international relations and upgrade the global governance model. As a Chinese proposition that reflects China’s wisdom, this concept is based on the long-standing cultural tradition and the advanced Chinese ideological system, representing a new perspective for international cooperation and international order and the new concepts of development, security and civilization. This proposition offers the right direction for the ongoing efforts to improve global governance. The governance in the Middle East is a weak link in global governance, but it is a critical factor for improvement. As a rising power, China is playing an increasingly prominent and constructive role in the Middle East governance. China’s proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind and the “Belt and Road” initiative does not only fit very well in the diverse cultural context of the Middle East, but also support the realistic needs of the people there. The proposition, as well as the initiative, will surely drive the improvement of governance in the Middle East and help the region solve issues hindering development and achieve lasting and universal peace.

Key Words: Community of Shared Future for Mankind; Belt & Road Initiative; China’s Wisdom; Middle East Governance; Global Governance

Introduction

The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind is a direct response to global trends and the universal need for world peace, and reflects the global efforts to address various challenges. From the global perspective, this proposition answers...
some fundamental questions concerning the future of mankind like, what is wrong with the world. What can we do? It represents China’s wisdom concerning global governance.

The Middle East has suffered heavily from poor governance, social unrest and violence, partly due to the interference of superpowers and terrorism. The people have paid a dear price for the uncertainties that have hindered development. The question remains as to what is wrong with this part of the world. “Where should the Middle East be headed? This is the question the international community keeps asking.” The question that troubles the world, like governance of the Middle East, is a critical link in the global governance. Issues concerning the Middle East, like peace and security issues, the refugees, terrorism, and issues affecting economic and social progress, are all inextricably linked with the underlying questions of global governance. The issues of the Middle East have to be resolved before the global governance can succeed and bear pleasant fruits.

The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind addresses both global governance issues and Middle East governance. As a comprehensive governance concept that advocates lasting peace, universal security and harmonious symbiosis, this Chinese proposition will spearhead the formation of new concepts of global order, security, development and civilization, and therefore, pave the ground for China’s positive participation in Middle East governance, creating realistic values for promoting lasting peace in the Middle East.

I. The Proposition to Build A Community of Shared Future for Mankind: A Manifestation of China’s Wisdom in Promoting Global Governance

1. Initiation of the proposition

The proposition to build a community of shared future for humanity is a new concept that the Chinese government has raised with an aim to build a new framework of international relations and promote and improve global governance. The White Paper on China’s Peaceful Development, published in 2011, announced that China is committed to upholding world peace and promoting common development and prosperity for all countries, identifying new dimensions in the common interests and values of mankind, and looking for new ways to handle multiple challenges through cooperation among countries and realize inclusive development.

The report to the 18th National Congress of the CPC in November 2012 says, “Mankind has only one earth to live on, and countries have only one world to share. We call for promoting equality, mutual trust, inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutually beneficial cooperation in international relations and making joint efforts to uphold international fairness and justice. In promoting equality and mutual trust, we should observe the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and support equality among all countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor. We should advance democracy in international relations, respect sovereignty, share security, and uphold world peace and stability. In promoting inclusiveness and mutual learning, we should respect diversity of civilizations and development paths, respect and safeguard the rights of all

peoples to independently choose their social system and development path, learn from others to make up for our shortcomings, and advance human civilization. In promoting mutually beneficial cooperation, we should raise awareness about human beings sharing a community of common destiny. A country should accommodate the legitimate concerns of others when pursuing its own interests; and it should promote common development of all countries when advancing its own development. Countries should establish a new type of global development partnership that is more equitable and balanced, stick together in times of difficulty, both share rights and shoulder obligations, and boost the common interests of mankind.”

Since 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping and top government officials have mentioned the Chinese proposition of building a community of shared future for mankind on many occasions. On January 18, 2017, Xi Jinping gave a speech at the United Nations Geneva headquarters entitled “Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind”, which was an expanded, systematic and comprehensive elaboration of the proposition. It is presented as an imperative agenda for the international community and described as a great process that would last generations until the realization of the ambitious goals. Xi urged the global community to “pass on the torch of peace from generation to generation, sustain development and make civilization flourish: this is what people of all countries long for; it is also the responsibility statesmen of our generation ought to shoulder. And China’s proposition is: build a community of shared future for mankind and achieve shared and win-win development.” This speech finalizes and completes the Chinese proposition for improving global governance. In the report delivered by Xi at the 19th National Congress of the CPC (Communist Party of China) (October 18, 2017), the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind has been emphasized as an important part of the thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era.

2. Cultural basis of the proposition

The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind has a solid cultural and spiritual basis. It is not only based on China’s cultural heritage, but also reflects the interaction and fusion of Chinese and global civilizations. Largely, the proposition is a natural extension of China’s national governance.

First, the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind is based on China’s cultural tradition that advocates universal fraternity and an outcome of the Chinese national wisdom. Under the Confucian principle, a natural ease (harmony) is to be prized and diversity is valued. In terms of diplomacy and international relations, this principle stresses friendship and inclusiveness. The underlying rules are: 1. “Not to do to others as one would not like to be done to oneself.”


\[\text{\textcopyright See Part XII of the Report: “Following a Path of Peaceful Development and Working to Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind”.}\]

\[\text{\textcopyright Yang Bojun, } \text{\textit{Lun Yu Yi Zhu (Annotations to Analects of Confucius), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2006, p.8.}}\]

\[\text{\textcopyright Ibid, p.159.}\]
you would not wish done to yourself”⁵; 2. “The poor should try to help themselves, while the successful should help make the world better”⁶; 3. People should consider “all within the world (four seas) as their brothers”⁷; and, 4. “The man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others”.⁸ In short, one should have the ambition to bring harmony to the whole world and try to make the world a better place for all. This lofty ambition is a natural fruit of the Chinese civilization that has remained robust for thousands of years, while China has never been so close to this vision as it is today when the top leadership proposes the Belt and Road initiative. The Chinese civilization has never been so fully integrated with global civilizations. The Chinese people have never been as full of confidence and self-esteem as a member of the global community has. Arnold J. Toynbee, a British historian and philosopher, had attached great value to the Chinese civilization, predicting that China would play a significant role in the process of global political and civilization progress. The Proposition to build a community of shared future for humanity and the “Belt and Road” initiative exactly reflects the Chinese ambition and commitment to global improvement.

Second, the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind is also based on the great practices of China from revolution to economic development, especially the diplomatic practices and their guiding philosophy after 1949. For almost a century, the CPC has led the nation through revolution and economic development, and has come up with a system of new governance ideas and concepts in this process. The CPC is committed to the wellbeing of the whole nation and even the world. In some sense, the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind is a combination of the national commitment and the international commitment, of patriotism and internationalism, which is a Chinese and contemporary innovation of Marxism. As President Xi said in a speech, “The CPC and Chinese people pledged long ago to make a newer and bigger contribution to human development. Having experienced bitter sufferings in the past, the CPC and Chinese people know the value of peace and development, and see it as our sacred duty to promote the peaceful development of the world. China will participate actively in developing the international governance system, contribute Chinese wisdom for improving global governance, and work with the peoples of all countries in pushing the international order and global governance system towards a more just and equitable direction. Preserving world peace and promoting common development are the core tenets of China’s foreign policy. Having always promoted world peace, contributed to global development, and safeguarded the international order, China is ready to seek a broader convergence of interests with all countries, with a view to establishing a new model of international relations based on mutually beneficial cooperation, and forming a community of shared future and interests for all mankind.”⁹

Third, the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind reflects the

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⁵ Ibid, p.188.
⁷ Ibid, p.140.
common aspiration of the international community, and complies with the basic principles the Charter of the United Nations for fostering international relations, including the equality of States, mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs and peaceful coexistence. In his speech at the Geneva Office of the United Nations, President Xi said, “As modern history shows, to establish a fair and equitable international order is the goal mankind has always striven for. From the principles of equality and sovereignty established in the Peace of Westphalia over 360 years ago to international humanitarianism, affirmed in the Geneva Convention 150-plus years ago; from the “four purposes and seven principles” enshrined in the UN Charter more than 70 years ago to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence championed by the Bandung Conference over 60 years ago, many principles have emerged in the evolution of international relations and become widely accepted. These principles should guide us in building a community of shared future for mankind.\(^\text{1}\) It is therefore apparent that the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind is more about the future of the whole world and humanity at large. It is a distillation of experience and lessons learned from the past success and failures of global governance in the past centuries, especially after two World Wars. Based on the past and looking towards the future, this proposition offers a new perspective on global governance and new wisdom to bring breakthroughs to the status quo.

3. **Ideological content of the proposition**

Representing the Chinese wisdom to improve global governance, the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind transcends national, ethnic, racial, cultural, religious and ideological boundaries. It proposes a new framework of perspectives on international partnerships and international economic and political order, as well as concepts of development, security and civilization, and points to a correct path and direction for addressing the challenges facing mankind, securing lasting peace in the world and achieving sustainable development. In this sense, the proposition has a rich ideological content.

First, politically, this proposition insists on sovereign equality and dialogue among States. Underlying the proposition, “China believes that all countries are equal, irrespective of size, strength, and wealth. It respects the right of all countries to choose their own path of development, upholds international equity and justice, and opposes the act of imposing one’s will on others, interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and using one’s strength to bully the weak.”\(^\text{2}\) This proposition opposes the Cold War mentality that rests on the doctrine of zero-sum game and winner taking all, and the law of jungle where power determines everything. “China proposes that all countries work together to turn pressure into impetus, turn crisis into opportunity, and replace confrontation with cooperation and exclusive gain with mutual benefit. What kind of international order and governance system best suits the world, and best suits the people all countries? This is something that should be decided by all countries through consultation, and not by a single country or small minority of countries.”\(^\text{3}\) The proposition to build a community of shared future for

\(^1\) Xi Jinping, “Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind—Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China, At the United Nations Office at Geneva”.

\(^2\) Xi Jinping, “Speech at the Congress of Celebrating the 95th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China”.

\(^3\) Ibid.
mankind underlines democracy in international relations and excludes hegemony or monopoly of power over the world by a single country or a small party of countries. All members of the international community must adopt international rules, all countries involved must manage international affairs, and all individuals on this planet should share the fruits of development.

Second, in terms of security, all countries must share the responsibility and benefits of security. The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind includes a new outlook of shared, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and requests joint efforts to build a universally and sustainably safe and beautiful world free from nuclear power. The international community should try to resolve and eliminate the refugee crisis through addressing the worsening geopolitical conflicts and getting rid of the ground for terrorism. As President Xi said, “No country in the world can enjoy absolute security. A country cannot have security while others are in turmoil, as threats facing other countries may haunt itself also. When neighbors are in trouble, instead of tightening his own fences, one should extend a helping hand to them. Fighting terrorism is the shared responsibility of all countries. In fighting terror, we should not just treat the symptoms, but remove its root causes. We should enhance coordination and build a global united front against terrorism so as to create an umbrella of security for people around the world.”

Third, economically, the proposition echoes the principle of win-win cooperation, shared development and shared prosperity. The belief underlying the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind is that development is a top priority for all countries and globalization is an irreversible megatrend. Every country should be committed to a world where economic growth is driven through innovation and transformation, and no protectionism exists to hinder the realization of connectivity and shared prosperity. President Xi urged that, “we should strengthen coordination and improve governance so as to ensure sound growth of economic globalization and make it open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all. We should both make the cake bigger and share it fairly to ensure justice and equity.” The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind also entails the commitment to green low-carbon development and sustainable development that will finally create a clean and beautiful world where man and nature co-exist in harmony.

Fourth, culturally, the underlying principle is all civilizations are equal and can learn from and enhance each other. The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind is based on the great tradition advocating peace and friendship among civilizations, in particular the spiritual legacies of the Silk Road. Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized that, “We should respect the diversity of civilizations. In handling relations among civilizations, let us replace estrangement with exchange, clashes with mutual learning, and superiority with coexistence.” The Chinese virtue of valuing friendship, inclusiveness, mutual enhancement and mutual benefit is manifest in the “Belt and Road” initiative, which hopes to reunite people along the road and the belt to form

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© See Part XII “Following a Path of Peaceful Development and Working to Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” in the report delivered by the Chinese President Xi Jinping at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October 18, 2017.
deeper international partnerships to address common challenges and achieve common prosperity. The “Belt and Road” initiative anticipates an open and inclusive world where governance is near perfect at both the global and regional levels and all countries join hands to achieve the common development goals in peace and friendship. In such a world, all nations respect each other and all civilizations engage each other in harmony and symbiosis.

China’s concept of a community of shared future for mankind is a reflection on the historical lessons and embodies a righteous belief that the jungle law is not fit for human development. It also holds that the exercise of power is not the right option for achieving global peace, and it is not human to impose the will of any individual nation on another. Not any civilization or culture is superior to the rest, but every civilization or culture is unique due to historical and regional differences. Commitment to diversity and inclusiveness is critical to mutual growth, rather than zero-sum competition. As President Xi argued, “Diversity of human civilizations not only defines our world, but also drives progress of mankind. There are more than 200 countries and regions, over 2,500 ethnic groups and multiple religions in our world. Different histories, national conditions, ethnic groups and customs give birth to different civilizations and make the world a colorful one. Diversity of civilizations should not be a source of global conflict; rather, it should be an engine driving the advance of human civilizations. Every civilization, with its own appeal and root, is a human treasure. Diverse civilizations should draw on each other to achieve common progress. We should make exchanges among civilizations a source of inspiration for advancing human society and a bond that keeps the world in peace.” Therefore, China’s proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind represents a new concept of relationship among civilizations and the guideline for dialogues. It is helpful for creating a new model for inter-civilization exchange and will usher in a new age of global fusion.

The proposition to build a community of shared future for humanity represents a new humanistic approach to globalization, encompassing global development and global governance, which insists on win-win partnership and mutual development. This great wisdom from China will benefit all countries and their people. The proposition and the underlying or entailed principles and concepts combined have won high applause and extensive acceptance in the international community, as they put up the bright beacon for global peace and development. On February 10, 2017, the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind was first made part of the United Nations resolution. On March 11, 2017, the same proposition was included in the UN Security Council resolution; and on September 11, 2017, the proposition’s underlying principle of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration consultative was incorporated in the UN General Assembly resolution on the United Nations in global governance.

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1 Xi Jinping, “Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind-Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China, At the United Nations Office at Geneva”.
II. The Proposition to Build A Community of Shared Future for Mankind:
The Chinese Proposal for Improving Middle East Governance

1. The proposition as a guiding vision for China’s participation in the Middle East governance

The right vision is essential for right actions and leads to the right outcome. As President Xi told the League of Arab States, “China follows the path of peaceful development, an independent foreign policy of peace and a win-win strategy of opening-up. One of our priorities is to take an active part in global governance, pursue mutually beneficial cooperation, assume international responsibilities and obligations, expand convergence of interests with other countries and forge a community of shared future for mankind.”

Guided by this vision, China is now an active and all-round participant in the Middle East governance. Taking a realistic and yet forward-looking approach, China insists that the issues of the Middle East must be addressed strategically and systematically and long-term results must be considered. In January 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran, and gave a speech at the headquarters of the League of Arab States, and roughly at the same time, China’s Arab Policy Paper was issued for the first time, which called for peaceful, innovative and strategic governance actions. Both President Xi’s speech and China’s Arab Policy Paper envisioned a long-term partnership between China and the Arab States, and provide an overarching guiding post for China’s participation in the Middle East governance.

China’s participation in the Middle East governance, both in terms of motives, guiding vision or approach, is unlike the presence of any other big powers. As President Xi told the League of Arab States, “With regard to China’s policy measures toward the Middle East, China decides its position on issues on the basis of their own merits and the fundamental interests of the people in the Middle East. Instead of looking for a proxy in the Middle East, we promote peace talks; instead of seeking any sphere of influence, we call on all parties to join the circle of friends for the “Belt and Road” Initiative; instead of attempting to fill the vacuum, we build a cooperative partnership network for win-win outcomes.” President Xi stressed that China “should be builders of peace, promoters of development, boosters of industrialization, supporters of stability and partners of people-to-people exchanges in the Middle East.”

In fine, China’s participation in the Middle East rests on the partnership with the Middle East States and the international community at large to address the tough issues and achieve long-term peace and development.

2. China’s participation in the Middle East governance: Focusing on the root issues affecting peace in the region

Some fundamental issues affect the Middle East governance and global governance. That is why President Xi told the League of Arab States, “The Palestinian issue should not be marginalized, still less should it fall into oblivion. It is an issue of fundamental importance to peace in the Middle East. To end to the conflict, the international community should not only promote the resumption of talks and implementation of peace agreements, but also uphold fairness and justice. One cannot do without the other. Without fairness and justice, peace accord can only bring about a cold peace. The international community owes the Palestinians a just solution that is long overdue. All political foundation of Two-State Solution; 2) Taking a mutual, across-the-board, cooperative and sustainable approach to security; 3) Further coordinating the international efforts to form synergy for achieving peace; and 4) Implementing comprehensive measures to achieve peace through development.

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The Chinese Proposal for Improving Middle East Governance

Ibid.


Ibid.
but also uphold fairness and justice. One cannot do without the other. Without fairness and justice, peace accord can only bring about a cold peace. The international community should stick to the principle of fairness and justice, and address historical injustice as soon as possible. China is always committed to the righteous cause of the Palestinians. On July 18, 2017, Xi met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas who made a state visit to China. In their talk, President Xi made a four-point proposal: 1) Enhancing the political foundation of Two-State Solution; 2) Taking a mutual, across-the-board, cooperative and sustainable approach to security; 3) Further coordinating the international efforts to form synergy for achieving peace; and 4) Implementing comprehensive measures to achieve peace through development. The four points clearly underpin China’s stance with regard to the Palestinian issue: China firmly supports the Two-state Solution, and hence supports the Palestinian people to establish an independent State of Palestine within the “1967 borders”, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and possessing full sovereignty rights; insists that UN Security Council Resolution 2334 must be implemented concerning Israeli Settlements in Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem; calls for prevention against violence targeting civilians; and urges to accelerate the political process to address the Palestinian issue to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Palestinian issue is a scar on the human conscience, and has not healed after 70 years. It is a chronic disease that hinders both the Middle East and global governance. This has to be resolved before the Middle East can earn its lasting peace and the world gain all-round stability. On September 21, 2017, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at the UN General Assembly, “The Palestine issue has been stuck on the UN agenda for 70 years. The international community owes the Palestinians a just solution that is long overdue. All settlement activities on the occupied territories and all violence against civilians must stop immediately. Efforts should be made to steadfastly advance political settlement based on the two-state solution and to restart peace talks as early as possible. We need to think out of the box to facilitate peace through development and help the people in the region to lay the groundwork for peace.” For a very long time, China has stood very firm on the fairground regarding the Palestinian issue as well as many other Middle East issues, insisting that issues should be resolved through political dialogues, and actively bringing relevant parties together to peace talks. China’s righteous and constructive stance has won wide praise in the Middle East and the global community.

3. China’s participation in the Middle East governance: Focusing on the general security and stability of the Middle East

China’s proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind implies that good global and regional governance is possible only when the international community is committed to partnership, innovation, legal rule and mutual benefit. The Middle East has long been troubled by conflicts and war, and the ensuing social unrest. Terrorism has made the security situation very fragile. In recent years, Middle East security issue has interconnected with other issues and other regions, and has taken various forms, deterring

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1. Ibid.
the peace and development of the Middle East and posing a severe challenge to the global governance as well. Therefore, China insists that effective Middle East governance requires resolution of the regional security issue by a new mutual, systematic, cooperative and sustainable approach. States in this region and the rest of the world must work together to bridge gaps and resolve crises through political dialogues, and turn the region into a community of shared interests and shared future.

Terrorism is a poison for all humanity and a cause of troubles in the Middle East. Nations should exterminate it for the sake of the wellbeing of this planet. As an important means to improve governance in the Middle East, China’s security partnership with the Middle East countries will be steadily enhanced to support their antiterrorist efforts, and help them upgrade their safeguarding capabilities. China opposes and condemns terrorism of any form, and insists that the root problems as well as the symptoms must be addressed at the same time. Any country is condemnable which adopts dual standards, claiming to be anti-terrorist on one hand, but using and assisting terrorists for their own purposes on the other hand. Terrorism must not be linked with any specific ethnic group or religion, and international cooperation is a prerequisite for successful combat against terrorism. As China’s Arab Policy Paper states, “counterterrorism operations should comply with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international norms, and respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries.”

Almost every issue in the Middle East is a hot issue: the Syrian war, the Yemeni crisis, the confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the Qatar diplomatic crisis, the fighting among Libyan tribes, the independence referendum of Iraqi Kurds, the religious and secular opposition, to the sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Such conflicts test the political wisdom of the Middle East states and the international community.

China, a friend of all Middle East countries, has consistently called for the resolution of hot issues in this region through political dialogues, and has helped bring parties in question together to peace talks. As President Xi said in his speech to the League of Arab States, “The key to addressing differences is to enhance dialogue. Use of force offers no solution to problems, neither will zero-sum mentality bring enduring peace. The process of dialogue could be protracted, and may even suffer setbacks, but it entails minimal adverse after-effects and produces the most sustainable outcome. Parties to the conflict should begin dialogue, identify their biggest common interests, and focus on advancing the process of political settlement. The international community should respect the will and role of those directly involved, the neighboring countries and regional organizations, instead of imposing a solution from outside. For dialogue to succeed, there is need for utmost patience and flexibility.” Obviously, only fair political dialogues with the awareness of the imperative to build a community of shared future and shared benefits can solve the intricate issues in the Middle East and achieve lasting peace and stability in this region.

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4. China’s Participation in the Middle East Governance: Addressing the Development Issue

The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind combines China’s development with the development of the world, especially the development of countries along the “Belt and Road,” representing China’s commitment to joint and mutual development. The Middle East countries generally lag behind in development and connectivity. On March 17, 2017, the UN Security Council adopted the resolution on Afghanistan by unanimous vote, calling on the international community to strengthen regional economic cooperation through the Belt and Road initiative and build a community of shared future for mankind. This is the first time that the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind has been included in the UN Security Council for its relevance with the governance of a Middle East country. That means the proposition has realistic significance for the Middle East governance and development.

China believes that “the key to overcoming difficulties is to accelerate development. Turmoil in the Middle East stems from the lack of development, and the ultimate solution will depend on development, which bears on everyone’s well-being and dignity.”(1) Therefore, as a participant in the Middle East governance, China pays close attention to the regional development. China will not only serve as a peace builder but also a facilitator of development and industrialization in the Middle East. This is why China has proposed to connect with the Middle East countries strategically through the Belt and Road initiative, in particular the Arab states in this region. The backbone of the connection is energy partnership; the backbone is supported by two wings: infrastructure construction and trade facilitation; and three high-tech areas are specified as the breakthrough points: nuclear power, satellites and alternative energies. This “1+2+3” partnership framework is expected to drive and accelerate the industrialization process in the Middle East. China’s Arab Policy Paper has drawn up the new blueprint for all-round, multi-level and wide-ranging China-Arab cooperation.

China believes that development determines the solution of other issues and China’s experience is that development requires reform. Therefore, it is critical for the Middle East countries to properly understand and handle the relationships among development, reform and stability. For the Middle East people, China is a paradigm for settling the issues between development and stability. In recent years, many Middle East countries have further strengthened their ties with China, expecting to extend the areas of partnership with China, to understand China better and to learn more from China. Therefore, during his visit to the headquarters of the League of Arab States, President Xi announced that China would set up a China-Arab research center to facilitate sharing governance and economic development experience. The research center was officially opened in Shanghai in April 2017, and has organized the first Seminar for Arab Officials. As many as 24 officials from 17 Arab states attended the seminar where they better understood China’s internal governance and international policies through presentations and field visits, and therefore developed deeper insights into “Belt and Road” initiative and the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind.

The consolidation of the China-Arab economic relationships in recent years, as well as the growth of bilateral and multilateral partnerships indicates clearly that China is

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(1) Ibid.
transferring its commitment to peaceful development and mutual benefit to the Middle East. It also shows that it is taking real actions to promote development in the Middle East in an effort to answer the question obsessing the international community as to where the Middle East is headed. China’s participation in the Middle East governance, particularly the implementation of “Belt and Road” projects in this region, will surely fuel the peaceful development in the Middle East, offer the Middle East people new hope and accelerate the mutual development of the Middle East countries.

5. China’s participation in the Middle East governance: Advocating mutual learning, cooperation and symbiosis of different civilizations

China’s proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind reflects China’s commitment to the diversity of civilizations and belief in dialogues among civilizations as an effective means to fend off conflicts. China’s participation in the Middle East governance depends largely on this commitment and belief. In fact, China values the heritage, development and innovation of the Middle East, and rejects cultural hegemony and prejudices like the false belief in the inevitable clash of civilizations, or the superiority of a certain civilization, or the central status of a certain civilization. China insists on making joint efforts with the Middle East countries to promote civilizational diversity in the world. As President Xi told the League of Arab States, “Cultural diversity gives life to our planet. The Middle East is the meeting place of ancient human civilizations and home to diverse and splendid civilizations and cultures. China will continue to support unswervingly Middle East and Arab states in preserving their ethnic and cultural traditions, and oppose all forms of discrimination and prejudice against specific ethnic group and religion. The Chinese and Arab civilizations each have their own systems and distinctive features, yet they both embody the common ideals and aspirations of mankind for development and progress, and they both champion such values as moderation, peace, forgiveness, tolerance and self-restraint. We should promote dialogue among civilizations in a spirit of inclusiveness and mutual learning and explore together values in our respective cultural tradition that remain relevant today as positive guidance for good relations. The regions covered by the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative are vibrant in people-to-people exchanges. The close ties between our peoples must be nurtured through constant efforts.”

In recent years, China and the Middle East countries have conducted a widening range of cultural exchanges, and bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms and platforms have grown and matured in a diversity of fields like culture, radio, film and television, press and publishing, think tanks, academics, education, women, youth and tourism. Frequent people-to-people contacts and various forms of cultural exchange activities are helping push China closer to the people of the Middle East. The West’s “China threat” theory, “clash of civilization” ideology and Islamophobia are gradually losing hold among the Chinese and the Middle East people.

China holds that, to improve the Middle East governance, it is necessary to make greater efforts to prevent extremism, racism and populism from creating “fault lines” between civilizations, and stop various forces from causing new conflicts and provoking disputes and clashes between different religions and religious sects. As President Xi said,

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China “calls for exchanges between nations and civilizations for mutual understanding, rather than mutual resentment. It is important to remove, rather than erect, walls between each other, take dialogue as the golden rule and be good neighbors with each other.”(1) China “will promote dialogue between civilizations and promote exchanges between different religions. We will build bilateral and multilateral platforms for religious exchanges, advocate religious harmony and tolerance, explore cooperation on eradicating extremism, and jointly contain the breeding and expansion of extremism.”(2) In the same speech, President Xi proposed to hold a roundtable meeting on inter-civilization dialogue and eradicating extremism within the framework of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, and the first meeting was held in Chengdu, China, from August 15-17, 2017 with the attendance of officials, scholars and religious leaders from China, Arab countries and the League of Arab States. They reached wide consensus through discussions on “inter-civilizational dialogues on the platform of the ‘Belt and Road’ initiative” and “anti-extremism governance and China-Arab partnership to eradicate extremism”.

6. The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind and the cultural tradition of the Middle East and the people’s realistic needs: A good match

The Middle East is a hub of great civilizations and a traditional venue for the meeting and exchange of different ethnic groups, different cultures and religions, which has generated a great tradition in the Middle East. The House of Wisdom of the Islamic golden age, as well as its Translation Movement and academic contributions, is a great example of mutual learning and inclusiveness of different civilizations. The torch of the great Middle East tradition has illuminated Europe shrouded in darkness in the Middle Ages, and led the old continent to Renaissance. In the Middle East, the predominant Islamic civilization has always advocated dialogues and respected differences. The Quran iterates that people in the world are all children of Adam in spite of their different religions and skin colors, and therefore people should understand each other better and be kind to each other. The Quran says, “O mankind! We (Allah) have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another.” (49:13)(3) The prophet Muhammad’s primary message is that peace and love should prevail in the world and embrace every individual, as the Quran says, “And We (Allah) did not send you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy to the worlds.” (21:107)(4) In his Hadith(report), the prophet Muhammad compares mankind to a group of people in the same boat who share the same fate. Everyone must help each other through any difficulty they may face, and stop anyone from punching the boat for water and risking the life of his fellows. Obviously, the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind accords perfectly with the cultural spirit and tradition of the Middle East and also with the Islamic belief in mercy and

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(1) Xi Jinping, “Work Together for a Bright Future of China-Arab Relations-Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People’s Republic of China At the Arab League Headquarters”.
(4) Ibid., p.167.
universal brotherhood.

In today’s world, peace and development are mainstreams and, because of the rapid globalization process, people are growing interdependent. The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind looks at the future of humanity, calls for world peace, and advocates connectivity among countries through communication. The Middle East, having gone through so many human tragedies, is still subject to the law of the jungle predominate by revenge, violence and conflict. Many Middle Eastern countries are weak in governance and development, and people suffer from social unrest; some countries have also suffered from war that has torn apart countless families and forced millions of people to leave their homes as refugees. In fact, the Middle East people are looking forward to peace and stability, and they want to share development and prosperity people in other parts of the world now enjoy. People are looking for a change in the Middle East. As President Xi insisted, “The people here want less conflict and suffering, more peace and dignity.” In this sense, the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind philosophy best serves the need of people in the Middle East for peace and development, and fits perfectly for the improvement of the Middle East governance. It has great practical significance for securing lasting peace in the Middle East. Therefore, Middle Eastern people at large will accept and welcome it.

Conclusion

The proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind and the “Belt and Road” initiative are both positive inputs in the current mainstream pursuit of peace and development. They are answers to the questions that obsess the global community and the Middle East. They represent China’s strategic vision of global governance and international relationship, which is based on a solid cultural and ideological ground. They include new perspectives on international cooperation and international political and economic orders, and give the concept of globalization more humanistic content. They support both the long-cherished aspirations of the Chinese nation, but also the common expectations of people all over the world, including the Middle East. They fit the UN agenda for sustainable development and the realistic needs of the Middle East people. No doubt, the proposition to build a community of shared future for mankind will guide China’s diplomatic efforts, particularly the commitment to achieving sustainable peace and development in the Middle East. While trying to realize the “Belt and Road” initiative together with interested countries, including countries in the Middle East, China will join hands with and go along all the way with the Middle Eastern countries to solve their common problems that have hindered their development, and promote good governance in the Middle East to help the Middle Eastern people realize their dream of sustainable peace, universal security and common development.