

Theory on the Development of Civilizations

——Building a New Vision of Civilizations with
Development at the Core

Xinhua Institute
September 2025

Contents

Preface	2
 Chapter One	
The Contemporary Value of the Theory on the Development of Civilizations	5
I. Wherein will human civilization be heading	5
II. The Emergence of the Theory on the Development of Civilizations	9
 Chapter Two	
The Practical Basis of the Theory on the Development of Civilizations	13
I. Promoting Prosperity Through Material Civilization to Advance Civilizational Development	13
II. Steering Overall Development with Political Civilization to Pioneer New Frontiers for Civilizational Advancement	14
III. Nurturing Cultural Confidence Through Cultural-Ethical Advancement to Enrich Civilizational Progress	16
IV. Reshaping Social Governance Through Rule of Law Civilization to Reinforce the Foundation for Civilizational Progress	18
V. Restructuring Development Paradigms Through Ecological Civilization to Safeguard the Foundation of Civilizational Progress	20
VI. Promoting Civilizational Progress with Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity as a Guide	21
 Chapter Three	
The Internal Logic of the Theory on the Development of Civilizations	24
I. Independence and Self-Reliance: Taking Charge of the Destiny of Civilizational Development	24
II. Diversity and Symbiosis: Stimulating the Driving Forces of Civilizational Development	26
III. People-Centered Approach: Consolidating the Foundation for Civilizational Development	27
IV. Reform through Innovation: Sustaining the Vitality of Civilizational Development	28

Chapter Four

The Practical Enlightenment of the Theory on the Development of Civilizations30

- I. Putting People First as the Value Orientation of Civilizational Development ...30
- II. Upholding Fundamentals and Pursuing Innovation as the Scientific Path to Civilizational Development31
- III. Openness and Inclusiveness as the Driving Force of Civilizational Development32
- IV. Harmony and Coexistence as the Right Path to Civilizational Development ...34

Conclusion:

Illuminating the Path of Human Civilization with the Light of Development36

**Diversity spurs interaction among civilizations,
which in turn promotes mutual learning and their
further development.**

—Xi Jinping^①

^①Xi Jinping Delivers a Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations, Chinese government website, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-05/15/content_5391787.htm

Preface

In today's world, a cold current of deglobalization is surging. The ship of human civilization is rocking among the hidden reefs of ideologies such as "Civilization Superiority", "Clash of Civilizations", and "Institutional Confrontation". Geopolitical rivalry and regional conflicts have exacerbated the global governance deficit while the fueling of "small-circle" politics and "value-based alliances" further squeezes the space of civilization diversity.

What path should the human race take? In this regard, China's choice and actions are drawing worldwide attention. At this critical juncture, Chinese modernization shines just like a morning star that illuminates a new path through the haze of "West centrism" in promoting the continuous progress and prosperity of human society through the advancement of civilization.

Diversity spurs interaction among civilizations, which in turn promotes mutual learning and their further development. In his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations in 2019, President Xi Jinping proposed four propositions^① to strengthen exchanges and mutual learning. At the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting in March 2023, President Xi put forward and elaborated in depth on the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), stating: "We are ready to work together with the international community to open up a new prospect of enhanced exchanges and understanding among different peoples and better interactions and integration of diversified cultures. Together we can make the garden of world civilizations colorful and vibrant."^② The Global Civilization Initiative is yet another significant public good provided by China to the international community following the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Security Initiative (GSI), contributing Chinese wisdom and moral inspiration to advance human civilization and address global common challenges.

Chinese civilization, with its inherent genes of integration, has remained robust, evolved through innovation, and further developed through continuous exchanges and fusions, giving birth to a brand-new theory of the integration of civilizations.^③ Integration constitutes the purpose and sublimation of development while development forms the foundation and impetus of integration. However, not all kinds of development lead to civilization. Under the West-centric development theory, the binary narrative of "civilization versus barbarism" is the root cause of instability and turmoil. Global prosperity and stability cannot be built on the basis of the poor made poorer and the

① Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations, Chinese government website, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-05/15/content_5391787.htm

② Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting, Xinhuanet, https://www.xinhuanet.com/2023-03/15/c_1129434162.htm

③ Xinhua Institute: "On the Synergization of Civilizations— A New Proposition for Chinese Civilization-Based on Its Distinctive Characteristics and Values", Oct. 2024

rich getting richer. Only the development shared by all nations is genuine development.

The essence of Chinese modernization lies in a dual process of “civilizational development” and “developing civilization”. China’s development is not only a “civilizational development”, but also a “development of civilization”. While elevating development to civilization, it further propels the advancement of civilization itself to a new historical height.^①

Standing at the historical crossroads, using the genes of Chinese civilization as the warp and the practice of Chinese modernization as the weft, humankind is weaving a new theoretical landscape for civilizational development. By upholding the theory on the development of civilizations, we can penetrate the haze of “West-centrism” and build from the edge of the precipice of “clash of civilizations” under Huntington’s pen a rainbow bridge toward a community with a shared future for humanity and compose a symphony of civilizational coexistence and mutual prosperity.

The theory on the development of civilizations is the secret code for the several thousand years of success of Chinese civilization and a vivid interpretation of China’s current development. Throughout its long process of inheritance and development, Chinese civilization has maintained its continuous vitality by keeping its distinct cultural attributes with a high degree of cultural awareness and firm cultural confidence, consistently demonstrating Chinese features, style, and grandeur. Chinese civilization possesses strong cultural subjectivity and robust vitality as it supports the Chinese nation in independent exploration of the path to modernization and provides the fundamental grounds for cultural confidence.^② In its progress, Chinese modernization is deeply rooted in China’s finest traditional culture, embodies the advanced nature of socialism, and draws upon all outstanding achievements of human civilization, presenting a new vision distinct from Western modernization models. It is a brand-new form of human civilization. Tracing the theoretical origins of the theory on the development of civilizations helps address contemporary issues in China’s civilizational progress and make useful explorations for the synergized development of world civilization.

Propelled by the theory on the development of civilizations, we must demystify the path dependence on “modernization as Westernization” to provide legitimate arguments for diverse modernization pathways. By reconstructing the global development agenda, we can bridge the North-South development divide through the principle of “extensive consultation, joint contribution, and benefit sharing”. Through innovating international relations paradigms to replace civilizational conflict with inclusiveness, we provide theoretical building blocks for constructing a community with a shared future for humanity and, ultimately, propel the ship of human civilization forward through turbulent waves.

The greatest truths are simple and action paves the way. In this world, there is no uni-

①Feng Ziyi: From “Development” to “Civilization”, *Marxist Studies*, No. 8, 2024

②Qian Chengdan: The Generation, Continuation and Modernization Transformation of Civilization, *Qiu Shi*, No.24,2024.

versal development model or unchanging path for progress. The theory on the development of civilizations, by safeguarding cultural subjectivity with independence and self-reliance, anchoring civilizational development in governance for the people, expanding the inclusiveness of civilization through pluralistic coexistence, and stimulating the innovation of civilization via transformative renewal, has formed an entirely new paradigm for human civilization.

Chapter One

The Contemporary Value of the Theory on the Development of Civilizations

In the post-World War II years, the framework of global governance was gradually established, with the United Nations Charter as the cornerstone for the maintenance of world peace and the Security Council's consultation mechanism gradually showing its effectiveness. In the tide of globalization, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade promoted the flow of global commodities.

Yet, as the stellar trajectory of civilization was about to extend into broader horizons as it should, certain countercurrents disrupted the harmony. At present, economic globalization has encountered headwinds as isolationism, protectionism, unilateralism, and hegemonism are running amok. Some countries one-sidedly stress maximization of their own interests and force through measures that harm others without benefiting themselves, such as “decoupling and disrupting industrial-supply chains”, “building small yards with high fences”, and “inward-looking exclusionism”, causing severe and damaging effects worldwide.

Moreover, certain countries have long been pursuing cultural hegemony. They take their own cultural values as the standard, willfully disparage the cultures of other countries, and attempt to influence and change other countries' ideology and social structure through cultural infiltration and other means so as to realize cultural domination and political control.

At the same time, the “clash of civilizations theory”, “civilization hierarchy theory”, “universal value theory”, and “West centrism” have resurfaced to be used for flag-waving and drum-beating in support of Western countries' deprivation of other countries' right to development through hegemony.

In what way will human civilization continue its development?

I. Wherein will human civilization be heading

Deficits in peace, development, security, and governance are growing unabated. Human society is facing unprecedented challenges, with all problems pointing to the human civilization deficit.

1. Escalating geopolitical rivalry: sustained rise in civilizational exclusivity. Now, the resurgence of anti-globalization has resulted in a deluge of narrow-minded nationalism and religious extremism, adding to the pile of old problems. Geopolitical conflicts are erupting and spreading worldwide: A new round of Palestinian-Israeli conflict persists with a worsening humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip; the tensions between India and Pakistan have once again intensified over the Kashmir question...

In the face of conflicts, instead of promoting negotiations for peace, some major

powers have inflamed conflicts and even use proxy wars to reap huge profits by selling weapons as a “hard currency” .

The data disclosed by the U.S. Department of State show that U.S. arms sales abroad reached a record high of \$238 billion in 2023, a 16% increase over those of the previous year. In Europe in 2023, Rheinmetall’s revenue grew by over 12% 2023, BAE Systems by 9%, and Thales by 4.9%. The UL tank track manufacturer William Cook recorded a 20% increase in revenue in 2023, with a further 40% increase projected for 2024.^①

The root causes of conflicts—territorial water sources, customs tariffs for commodities, and religious convictions—are complex and multifaceted, yet behind them all, one can find traces of the covert role of an exclusive civilization mindset that replaces cooperation and negotiations with zero-sum games and substitutes harmonious coexistence with the law of the jungle, leading to a plethora of one-sided, extremist, and ruthless behavior in international exchanges and rule-breaking “bandit mentality” . Meanwhile, the exclusive competition of some countries has further led to the continuous cropping up of security problems in such areas as outer space, deep oceans, polar regions, and cyberspace.

2. Weak economic growth: the path of civilization development remains rugged. Development is the foundation for the progress of human civilization and the key to resolving all the current contradictions and problems. In recent years, however, the world economy has continued to show signs of insufficient growth momentum and sluggish recovery. Unilateralism and protectionism have intensified, hindering the multilateral trading system while measures like “building walls and erecting barriers” and “decoupling and supply chains disruption” have seriously undermined the security of global industrial and supply chains.

Since the beginning of 2025, the United States has further weaponized tariffs by imposing non-economic sanctions on other countries, disrupting the global economic order. Many scholars believe that the current “tariff war” has “far exceeded historical norms” , with the United States raising tariff rates at some point to their highest levels in over a century, so much so that it was about to trigger the first global trade war since the 1930s.^②

The shockwaves of the tariff war have most severely impacted developing countries and emerging market economies. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has warned that the United States’ wrong practice of reckless imposition of tariffs will undermine developing nations’ potential to fully participate in global trade and offset their efforts at industrial modernization and economic diversification. Certain countries’ economic bullying practices have denied countries in the

①Xinhua News Agency: "News Investigation: The Great Boom of NATO's Military Industry Behind the Escalating Regional Conflicts", April 25, 2024.

②Xinhua News Agency: "the 'Initiator of the Global Trade War'—International Media and Experts Criticize the United States for Abusively Imposing Tariffs", April 27, 2025.

Global South their legitimate right to development.

A set of data starkly illustrates such a predicament: in its latest Global Economic Prospects, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised down its global economic growth forecast for 2025 to 2.8%, 0.5 percentage points lower than its January projection in January this year. The latest report released by the World Trade Organization (WTO) on April 16 indicates that, under the current tariff landscape, the volume of global trade in goods in 2025 is projected to decline by 0.2%, nearly 3 percentage points lower than the forecast under the "low-tariff" baseline scenario.

In addition to creating short-term pressure on world economic growth, the prevailing trade protectionism will also cause lasting structural damage, which may lead to a deceleration in the global innovation engine, increasing trade barriers to green technologies, and an impeded global sustainable development process.

3. Escalating social division and turbulence: widening rifts of civilizational identity. After three years of effort, Omar Sophie, a student from South Asia, was finally given admission to Columbia University's School of Journalism with a scholarship. Just as he was on the verge of departure after quitting his job, the U.S. government suspended new visa interviews for international students. In April 2025, the new U.S. administration further targeted Harvard University, restricting international student visas under the pretext of "national security concerns" and suspending entry for foreign citizens studying or participating in exchange programs at Harvard.

Such tragedies as Sophie's are continuing to unfold. Behind the obstructed academic exchanges lie man-made civilizational barriers. While conflicts persist in some regions of the world, the social division within human societies is quietly intensifying. As the United States stirs up global turmoil, its domestic social division and identity rifts have continued to deepen in recent years. Reports from some social research institutions show that disagreements over fundamental values in American society today have reached a historical high. This rift in civilizational identity renders social tensions highly susceptible to escalation—from the Black Lives Matter movement and the Capitol Hill riot to frequent mass shootings and large-scale protests in Los Angeles, reflecting deep-seated differences in civilizational identity.

In Europe, some countries also suffer deeply from civilizational identity fractures. With the massive influx of immigrants, the clashes between local and foreign cultures have continued unabated. Differences in religious beliefs and lifestyles have become sources of volatile social tensions. A study by the German Marshall Fund of the United States expresses the view that the civilizational identity division in some European countries has weakened social cohesion, allowed far-right groups to rise and stoke xenophobic sentiments, further destabilizing social harmony and escalating social division and turbulence. Globally, the widening civilizational identity rifts are showing an ever clearer trend and are in reality compressing the space for equal dialogue and cultural exchange between civilizations.

4. Dysfunctional global governance system: multicivilizational coexis-

tence is challenged. The global governance system is a critical framework for coordinating national interests and promoting inter-civilizational dialogue to address common challenges facing humankind as a whole. Today, faced with persistent problems such as climate change, transnational pandemics, and terrorism, this system is revealing more and more weaknesses, with civilizational dialogue mechanisms facing the risk of a systemic breakdown.

The Paris Agreement is humankind's unified plan for post-2020 global climate action as it is designed to limit global average temperature increase to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and possibly to 1.5°C through greater efforts. However, the reversals of commitments and action in emission reduction by certain countries have seriously undermined the foundation for confidence in international environmental cooperation.

In the realm of judicial cooperation, transnational crime shows clearly systemic failures in global governance. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), transnational cybercrime caused an annual economic loss of over hundreds of billions of dollars. In the face of cases involving cryptocurrency money laundering and transnational telecom fraud, among others, the huge disparities in national jurisdictions and legal systems across nations have resulted in inefficient coordination.

In addition, cases of the failing global governance system in addressing global public health emergencies and transnational natural disasters are not far and few between, posing great challenges to world peace and development. It is imperative to reshape and build a highly efficient collaboration mechanism.

5. A sharp increase in cybersecurity risks: the civilization order faces severe shocks. Challenges to the civilizational order are still spreading in virtual spaces. Frontier technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotechnology are advancing at an accelerating speed, carrying the potential to trigger systemic transformations. The late former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger observed that AI could alter human cognitive processes—a seismic shift unseen since the invention of the printing press.

Technological advancement is always a double-edged sword. The development of artificial intelligence, for instance, inevitably exacerbates the risks and challenges in ways such as privacy leaks, information misuse, and the digital divide. As Nobel laureate in Economics and Columbia University professor Joseph E. Stiglitz noted, AI technology is increasing global inequality, distorting information ecosystems, and may potentially trigger worse social crises. Now, the AI industry is monopolized by tech giants while private enterprises' profit-driven nature conflicts with societal interests, rendering Adam Smith's "invisible hand" mechanism ineffective.^①

Furthermore, certain Western developed countries are, on the one hand, leveraging

① Joseph E. Stiglitz: Professor of Economics at Columbia University, speech delivered at Guanghua School of Management, Peking University, March 20, 2025.

their technological and industrial edge to expand their infiltration in artificial intelligence applications. On the other hand, they have continued to form exclusive “small circles” for AI governance through various platforms and monopolize the discourse power in the governance arena by concentrating the power to shape international AI rules within a few countries. Developing countries have been rendered as passive recipients. Not only do they face AI’s direct impacts on industrial chains and the workforce, but they may even find themselves completely excluded from the construction of AI governance frameworks.

The risks hidden in virtual space are permeating every dimension of human society in an unprecedented way and with relentless pervasiveness. While technological breakthroughs in virtual space applications have brought human production and life into new domains, having even constructed entirely new dimensions of human civilization, the virtual space is also filled with disruptive energy. Numerous virtual behaviors and events are testing the basic human values and ethical principles, and have even evolved into civilizational-level challenges.

II. The Emergence of the Theory on the Development of Civilizations

In the world of today, human civilization stands at a historical crossroads and the development model of modern civilization is encountering a deep-rooted crisis: The Western-led path of modernization, while creating material prosperity, has brought the world into a systemic predicament, including ecological collapse, deepening social division, and loss of spiritual value. Capitalist civilization’s dogma of “growth supremacy” has driven global wealth inequality to historical peaks; technological rationality has encroached upon human values and trapped humanity in the vortex of instrumental rationality; unilateralism and hegemonic thinking continue to create conflicts between civilizations, threatening the shared future of the human race.

The essence of these problems lies in the fact that the civilizational development paradigm formed since the Industrial Revolution is hard put to meet the new requirements for human survival and development in the 21st century. The world urgently calls for the emergence of a new form of civilization.

The theory on the development of civilizations is a new civilizational perspective that centers on the right to development, has its roots in the genetic foundation of Chinese civilization, and relies on practices of the Chinese path to modernization. Its core breakthrough lies in viewing modernization as a historical process of civilizational self-renewal rather than a simple replication of a specific civilizational paradigm; in this theory, the “enduring vitality” genes of Chinese civilization are transformed into a development-centric civilizational outlook through practices such as the extensive consultation, joint contribution, and benefit sharing principles for the Belt and Road Initiative and the emphasis on the right to development as contained in the Global Development Initiative.

The theory on the development of civilizations is a reconstruct of ontology of civilization as applied to the right to development. It is a break through the instrumental perception of “development” in traditional modernization theories, elevating the right to development to the core position of civilizational continuity. It emphasizes that development is not merely a technical process of material accumulation but, more importantly, an ontological expression of the civilization value system. Through practices such as poverty eradication and common prosperity, China has proved that developing countries can achieve civilizational ascent without replicating Western models. It also exposes the deep-seated crisis of “development alienation” caused by the excessive pursuit of capital accumulation in Western modernization, thereby establishing a value framework centered on human subjectivity for civilizational continuity.

The theory on the development of civilizations is a modern transformation of the genes of Chinese civilization. Rooted in the characteristics of Chinese civilization—“continuity, innovation, unity, inclusiveness, and peace”, it revitalizes these traits through creative transformation, including reconstructing the relationship between humanity and nature through “harmony between heaven and humanity”, promoting mutual learning among civilizations through “harmony without uniformity”, establishing “universal harmony” as the common vision of human civilization, and activating transformative genes through the example of “Though Zhou was an ancient state, its mission remains renewed”. What’s more, the integration of the cardinal principles of Marxism with China’s concrete practices and with China’s finest cultural traditions has given birth to a new form of human civilization, proving that traditional wisdom and modern innovation can be organically unified to pioneer a new paradigm for preserving traditions while innovating in the inheritance of civilization.

The theory on the development of civilizations represents a systematic transcendence of the Western modernization paradigm. It deconstructs the historical narrative of “West centrism” and reveals the universality of non-linear development paths: China completed a century-long Western industrialization process in just several decades and the scale of its digital economy has jumped to rank second globally—a convincing testimony that developing countries can overtake on a bend by leveraging the “late-mover advantage”. At its core lies the reconstruction of the civilization evaluation criteria—the right to development is prioritized as the essential element of civilizational subjectivity and global governance is moved from “capital dominance” to “development first”, offering developing countries an entirely new choice for “non-Westernized” modernization.

The theory on the development of civilizations is a reconstructive force in the global civilizational order. It replaces hegemonic logic with cooperation on the right to development; it promotes the transition of the international order from “zero-sum game” to “symbiotic win-win” through practices under the Belt and Road Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Development Initiative, Global Civili-

zation Initiative, Global Governance Initiative, etc. China's 30% rate of average annual contribution to global economic growth and the participation of over 150 countries in Belt and Road cooperation provide evidence of the strong vitality of the cooperation based on the right to development. More than that, the civilizational perspective it advocates, i.e., "All civilizations can appreciate each other's beauty while valuing their own and achieve common development", bridges differences through inter-civilization dialogue, laying a practical foundation for transcending the "clash of civilizations" theory in the effort to build a community with a shared future for humanity.

The theory on the development of civilizations unifies historical inevitability and practical guidance. It is not only a summary of the five-thousand-year inheritance pattern of Chinese civilization—proving through its iterative evolution from agricultural to digital civilizations that "development is the foundation of civilization's survival", but also a systematic response to the dilemma facing civilization in the globalization era. Cases such as Vietnam's economic takeoff by learning from China's experience and Ethiopia's ascent to become one of the fastest-growing economies through its "African-style reform and opening-up" are ample proof that the theory on the development of civilizations is both historically grounded and capable of providing developing countries with actionable pathways for civilization advancement, which clearly demonstrates the global applicability of Eastern wisdom.

Historian Arnold Toynbee predicted: Humanity's hope lies in the East and Chinese civilization will lead the world. The essence of this foresight is not the succession of power structures, but an innovation of civilizational paradigms. The Theory of the Synergization of Civilizations^① and the theory on the development of civilizations constitute the dual interpretation by China of the new era pertaining to the progress of human civilization: In terms of logic, both are rooted in a profound understanding of "the diversity of civilizations". The former focuses on "inter-civilizational relations", emphasizing that the richness of human civilizations stems from the differences in historical accumulation, value systems, and practical paths among diverse civilizations, and that these differences are not the source of conflict, but rather a "genetic repository" for the advancement of civilizations. This theory answers the question as to why different civilizations need to and can coexist. The theory on the development of civilizations centers on "how civilizations achieve progress through coexistence", positing that "civilizational development" is inherently a historical evolution process achieved through self-renewal by different civilizations on the basis of maintaining their uniqueness. It answers the question as to how civilizations themselves evolve. Like two wings of a bird or two wheels of a carriage, these theories critique the confrontational logic of the "clash of civilizations" while transcending the closed mindset of the "theory of civilizational isolationism", collectively providing theoretical guidance and practical pathways for human civilization to transition from "confrontation and oppo-

①Xinhua Institute: "On the Synergization of Civilizations— A New Proposition for Chinese Civilization-Based on Its Distinctive Characteristics and Values", Oct. 2024

sition” to “coexistence and shared prosperity” .

This is not a replacement of civilizations, but their sublimation; it is not the end of history, but its unfolding. On this path, China serves as both an explorer and a guide—grounded in its five millennia of civilization with the great transformations of the new era as its footnotes.

Chapter Two

The Practical Basis of the Theory on the De-velopment of Civilizations

Chinese civilization is radiating vibrant vitality through the creative practices in the new era. Its contribution of a unique model of Eastern wisdom to the progress of human civilization has transcended the mere accumulation of achievements in a singular dimension and formed a path for systematic civilizational advancement characterized by economic prosperity, political integrity, effective governance, cultural self-confidence, social stability, ecological beauty, and promotion of peace through diplomacy.

I. Promoting Prosperity Through Material Civilization to Advance Civilizational Development

Material civilization embodies the development level of productive forces. The vicissitudes of civilizational development of humankind have always been closely intertwined with the levels of material prosperity and economic development, shaping the forms and trajectories of civilizations through their interdependent and dynamic evolution. Venice declined due to the loss of its commercial hub status following shifts in shipping routes; China's Song Dynasty reached a cultural pinnacle through thriving maritime trade and burgeoning commodity economy; the Great Depression in the world a century ago triggered major geopolitical changes....

Since first proposing the major theory on “new quality productive forces” during a local inspection tour in September 2023, to a systematic articulation of such productive forces at a group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, to emphasizing “fostering new quality productive forces in light of local conditions” at the “Two Sessions” (i.e. annual session of the National People's Congress and that of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference)...., President Xi Jinping has demonstrated keen insights into and a firm grasp of global economic and scientific-technological trends by creatively setting forth the significant thesis on developing new quality productive forces, which constitutes an important achievement in the evolution of Xi Jinping Thought on Economy. A series of original concepts including the “new development stage”, “new development concept”, and “new development pattern” have promoted economic growth and driven civilizational progress, guiding China in its high-quality economic development.

The South- to- North Water Diversion Project delivers abundant water resources from the Yangtze River Basin to water-scarce regions in North and Northwest China, fundamentally safeguarding the survival bottom line of both agricultural and urban civilizations—hailed as a modern-day version of “Yu the Great Taming the Waters”. The West-to-East Power Transmission Program converts hydropower and thermal energy from China's western regions into clean electricity, which is transmitted to the

eastern regions via UHV power transmission technology, driving civilizational transformation and leap-forward development through optimizing the energy mix.

Under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Economy, China has achieved historic accomplishments in its economic development: its GDP has grown substantially, cementing its position as the world's second-largest economy; the poverty eradication campaign registered a complete victory, meeting the UN poverty alleviation goal 10 years ahead of schedule; China's scientific and technological innovation capabilities improved significantly, with some fields transitioning from following to overtaking and leading; China's edge in manufacturing has continued to be ever stronger; its digital transformation has been accelerating; a new development pattern is being formed at a faster pace; the quality and resilience of economic development have continued to grow. All this has turned China into a stabilizer and engine of growth for the world economy.

Economic development and material prosperity have transformed China and are reshaping the world. In 2024, China's GDP grew by 5%, contributing to nearly 30% of global economic growth; with China serving as a major engine for world economic growth, China released to the world dividends of its super-sized market.^① China has provided development assistance to over 160 countries, joined hands with more than 150 countries in building the Belt and Road Initiative, and worked with over 100 countries and multiple international organizations including the UN in promoting cooperation under the Global Development Initiative. It has invested and mobilized nearly USD 20 billion in development finance, and launched over 1,100 projects, injecting momentum into the development and revitalization of countries in the Global South countries through practical actions.

Only by infusing economic development with greater momentum for civilizational progress can human civilization continue to reach new heights in its future journey. China has not only achieved an economic takeoff but, more importantly, advanced the progress of human civilization. Marcos Cordeiro Pires, Professor of International Political Economy at São Paulo State University, Brazil, believes that from sharing development opportunities with other countries to seeking equitable development opportunities for all, "China is becoming a provider of global public goods and a driving force for the reform of governance systems."

II. Steering Overall Development with Political Civilization to Pioneer New Frontiers for Civilizational Advancement

In Shanghai, China, the "People's City Council" practices "propositions, deliberations, and governance by the people", pooling public wisdom to tackle challenges: dismantling barriers in public spaces, enabling QR-code historical building tours,

^①Wang Yi: Keynote Speech at the China Session of the 61st Munich Security Conference, Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjzb_zzyjh_673099/202502/t20250215_11555652.html

and easing the 20-year traffic congestion in old neighborhoods along the Huangpu River—writing a graphic footnote for the “People’s City” vision with an easy stroke. Zhejiang’s “Fengqiao Model”, born in Zhuji, has been further developed and expanded in the new era through the integration of traditional culture into modern social governance, creating a vivid practice. In the remote Yunnan Province in China’s Southwest, from dispute mediation around firepits to rural water supply projects, from cross-border ecological co-governance to human habitat improvement, over 4,900 “court-yard consultation” sessions have unfolded, aiding the resolution of more than 13,000 livelihood issues.

These monumental yet meticulous great practices outline the essential attribute of socialist democracy—whole-process people’s democracy. It enables “what the people desire” to coalesce into a national will through the broadest possible political participation, allowing “where the nation goes” to reciprocate people’s expectations through governance efficacy. Covering over 1.4 billion people, whole-process people’s democracy empowers the people’s party to overcome various difficult issues, successfully addressing the issue of how a unified multi-ethnic country perceives and approaches the modernization process.

Globally, democracy as a common value of the human race manifests itself in diverse forms of realization owing to varying historical traditions and national realities, proving Western liberal democracy is by no means the end of history. Precisely because it is steeped in the knowledge that “the political rise and fall determines the destiny of a civilization” as a law of history that the Communist Party of China has led the Chinese people in pioneering Chinese-style democratic practices, forging a new path for enriching and developing human political civilization.

A five-thousand-year continuous civilization with its unified national structure enduring to this day, China has since time immemorial possessed a comprehensive and unique set of experience in national governance and administration. “Viewing democracy as both an ideology and a value represents one of the most defining features of China’s political development in modern times.”^① While democracy can take different forms, genuine democracy should enable the people to derive maximum benefit from government actions, and “China’s democracy is precisely such a practice.”

Rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese civilization and tempered through China’s modernization practices, whole-process people’s democracy—with its distinctive “whole-chain, all-dimensional, and full-coverage” features—transcends the dilemma of electoral centralism found in Western-style democracy, creating a new form of socialist political civilization that is “the most extensive, genuine, and effective”. It has not only reshaped the governance logic of a mega-sized country, but also opened new horizons for the diversified development of human political civilization with Eastern wisdom.

The essence of democracy is “rule by the people”. Yet, bourgeois democracy, con-

^①Zheng Yongnian: *Democracy: China’s Choice*, Zhejiang People’s Publishing House, April 1, 2015 edition, Preface p. 4.

fined by the logic of capital, ultimately degenerates into “democracy for the few”. In fundamental contrast, whole-process people’s democracy centers on highlighting the principal position of the people, elevating the traditional Chinese governance wisdom that “the people are the foundation of the state” to a modern national institutional system. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the people are the source of power—they are full participants throughout governance practices.

Whole-process people’s democracy is the most extensive, authentic, and effective democracy. Through the important institutional vehicle of the people’s congress system, the fundamental political principle of “the people as their own masters” is applied across the vast national territory, enabling recommendations from remote mountainous regions to directly reach the national legislative body while diverse interests are transformed into the “greatest common denominator” through institutionalized channels. For instance, the consecutive implementation of 14 Five-Year Plans—a medium-to-long-term governance model spanning over 70 years—is rarely seen globally. In May 2025, the preparation of the 15th Five-Year Plan was open to solicitation of public views again, receiving over 3.11 million suggestions by netizens within a single month. Whole-process people’s democracy makes the operation of a country more democratic and science-based one.

While some countries create turbulence through “export of democracy”, China adheres to the principle of “appreciating one’s own beauty while sharing others’ beauty for collective excellence”. As humankind stands at the crossroads of civilizational dialogue, the core insight of the China solution lies in the following: Genuine democracy should be based on respect for diversity among civilizations, enriching the genome of human political civilization through equal exchange and mutual learning. For its part, whole-process people’s democracy, through its practice, undoubtedly infuses new hope into building international relations that feature mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation while illuminating the path forward for humankind’s exploration of a better institutional future.

III. Nurturing Cultural Confidence Through Cultural-Ethical Advancement to Enrich Civilizational Progress

The coordination of material progress and cultural-ethical advancement is an important feature of Chinese modernization and an essential attribute of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The civilizational values demonstrated by China’s development primarily stem from the country’s unique approach and original creations in its own development trajectory. Realizing the Chinese Dream is a twin-winged development process encompassing both material and cultural-ethical progress. “While modern high-rises proliferate across our land, the edifice of the Chinese national spirit must also stand tall and proud.”^①

^①Xi Jinping: Speech at the Forum on Literature and Art Work in Qiushi Journal, No. 20

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, China has experienced significant growth in economic strength, scientific and technological capabilities, and comprehensive national power, writing a new chapter of two miracles—rapid economic growth and long-term social stability which have laid a more solid material foundation for Chinese modernization. Currently, profound changes unseen in a century are evolving at an accelerated pace across the world and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has entered a critical period. The closer we approach the goal of national rejuvenation, the greater the need for powerful spiritual strength. In this context, culture is civilization in action while civilization is culture in precipitation. UNESCO points out that “development can be ultimately defined in cultural terms and the flourishing of culture is the highest end of development”. Throughout the history of human development, those countries that maintained long-term prosperity and strength not only created powerful material civilizations, but also often forged cultural civilizations that led their eras.

Based on insights into the development landscapes of global culture and human civilization as well as a firm grasp of the trend of historical development and the practical requirements of the new era, Xi Jinping Thought on Culture was formally set forth in October 2023. This important thought outlines in a creative manner a series of new concepts, viewpoints, and propositions for cultural advancement, including “adhering to the ‘Two Integrations’”, “strengthening cultural confidence”, “fostering a new form of cultural life”, “promoting mutual learning among civilizations”, and “upholding the cultural subjectivity of the Chinese nation”. It reveals that the new cultural life of Chinese civilization results from the evolution of the basic tenets of Marxism and China's fine traditional culture from “mutual compatibility” to “mutual achievement”, thereby elucidating the historical laws of human cultural development at a deeper level.

Ne Zha's blockbuster box office success, Black Myth: Wukong's captivation of global fans, and Village Basketball Association and Village Super League's launches with spectacular momentum—diverse forms of cultural products continue to bring pleasant surprises. The Chinese Civilization Exploration Project yields frequent archaeological breakthroughs, with national museums attracting 1.49 billion visits in 2024. The great enthusiasm in traditional culture behind the Hanfu (Han Dynasty attire) craze and the fervor of classical studies radiate with cultural confidence through the words and deeds of China's younger generation. Guided by core socialist values, citizens understand propriety and distinguish honor from disgrace. Rural cultural advancement efforts drive the change of outdated customs and habits while education in ideals, convictions, and civic morality continues to elevate the level of social civilization in both urban and rural areas.

Human modernization is aimed at not only economic, political, and social dimensions, but civilizational and cultural advancement as well. The Communist Party of China leads the Chinese people in a continuing strive to advance Chinese modernization, which encompasses the renewal and transformation of the form of civilization, endows Chinese civilization with new vitality and the strength of modernity, and generates and

develops a new form of cultural life.^①

The performance of the Chinese folk song *Mo Li Hua* (Jasmine Flower) in Élysée Palace in France, the rendition of the Italian classic *Nessun dorma* at China's National Centre for the Performing Arts, the stationing of the Chinese archaeological team at the Monjakatepe relic site in collaborative excavation with Uzbekistan to reconstruct the trajectory of human civilization, and the establishment of the China-Hungary Center for Mutual Civilizational Learning between Civilizations and the Chinese School of Classical Studies at Athens—through these exchange and mutual learning activities, Chinese civilization continues to enrich and contribute to the “flourishing garden of human civilizations”.

Qaiser Nawab, Chairman of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development, expressed the belief that China's engagement in cultural diplomacy, promotion of South-South cooperation, and adherence to the principle of win-win development—whether through the Global Civilization Initiative or the Belt and Road Initiative—declares to the world that our shared past guides our shared future.

IV. Reshaping Social Governance Through Rule of Law Civilization to Reinforce the Foundation for Civilizational Progress

The rule of law is the cornerstone of societal civilization and the yardstick that measures its progress. Throughout the vast history of human civilizations, prosperity and strength have flourished in a country where the rule of law prevailed while disorder and public discontent emerged where the rule of law was inadequate. History repeatedly bears testimony to the fact that when law forms the framework of civilization, society grows into a healthy organism; otherwise, even the most brilliant civilization will ultimately collapse.

A rising rule of law brings about national prosperity; a strong rule of law guarantees national strength. China, having profoundly grasped this law of history, has formed Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law in the new era. This theoretical framework clearly defines the overarching goal of comprehensively advancing national governance according to law, incorporating original theories for national governance and state administration, such as “the path of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics”, “governing and administering state affairs in accordance with the Constitution”, and “sound laws and good governance”. It represents an inheritance and innovation of traditional culture for the rule of law and the related models through historical and strategic thinking. It emphasizes coordinated advancement of law-based national governance, exercise of state power, and government administration.

It strikes a balance in the relationships between reforms and the rule of law, efficiency and fairness, order and vigor, and inheritance and innovation. It emphasizes the need

^①Deeply Comprehending and Grasping the Three Dimensions of the New Form of Cultural Life, People's Daily, Page 09, June 13, 2025.

to focus efforts to build a legal implementation system featuring sound legislation, strict law enforcement, impartial administration of justice, and universal compliance with the law, thereby promoting the modernization of China's governance system and capabilities.

The ancient Roman jurist Cicero has a famous statement in *De Legibus*: “*Salus populi suprema lex esto* (The welfare of the people shall be the supreme law)” —a principle which is precisely the explanation China's practice of the rule of law today.

China has established “comprehensively advancing law-based governance” as a fundamental state strategy and enshrined it in its Constitution, compiling the first civil code in the new republic's history bearing the title of “the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China”. Foundational, comprehensive, and overarching laws in critical areas such as national security and health have been successively enacted; legislation in key fields, including ecological protection, education, and technology, has undergone systematic and thorough revision; breakthroughs have been made in emerging areas such as cyber information and biosecurity—continuously refining the socialist system of laws with Chinese characteristics. China's case registration system reform ensures “all cases are filed and all petitions addressed” while the judicial accountability reform mandates “those who adjudicate render judgments, and those who render judgments bear responsibility”. Strengthened judicial protection of property rights instills the principle that “those with constant property maintain constant hearts”. The upgraded version of the Fengqiao Model for conflict resolution in the new era resolves disputes at their nascent stages, making China one of the countries with the lowest rates of homicide, criminal offenses, and firearm-related crimes. Society is both dynamic and orderly, pioneering a new paradigm of “Chinese Governance”.

Confronting the profound transformation of the global governance system, China consistently advocates promoting global good governance through international rule of law. From facilitating the Paris Agreement on climate change to proposing the Global Initiative on Data Security, from promoting the conclusion of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to signing the Beijing Convention on the Judicial Sale of Ships, China has deeply participated in formulating rules in areas such as international counter-terrorism, anti-corruption, climate change, and data security, advancing the establishment of a fair, rational, and transparent international rules system.

In May, 2025, senior representatives from nearly 60 countries and approximately 20 international organizations signed in Hong Kong the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation, marking the birth of the world's first intergovernmental legal body led by Asian, African, and Latin American countries. The South China Morning Post hailed it as “a major milestone for the global legal community”. “Promoting peace and facilitating talks”, this dispute mediation mechanism rooted in China's traditional culture of “harmony and reconciliation” not only represents a modern continuation of China's rule of law civilization, but more importantly, it offers the international community a brand-new public good in le-

gal governance as well. Today, China is reinforcing the cornerstone of the civilizational order by expanding dialogue dimensions andreconstructing the rule of lawparadigms. Zimbabwean economist Munyaradzi Paul Mangwana noted that China’ s contribution of wisdom and strength to improving international rule of law constitutes a crucial step toward building a community with a shared future for humanity.

V. Restructuring Development Paradigms Through Ecological Civilization to Safeguard the Foundation of Civilizational Progress

A thriving ecology begets a prospering civilization; ecological degradation begets civilizational decline. To a certain extent, the history of human civilization is an evolutionary history of balancing the ecological carrying capacity and civilizational development. Ancient Babylon declined due to soil salinization caused by irrigation; Ancient Egypt lost its granary advantage due to ecological degradation in the Nile River Basin; the Loulan Civilization vanished entirely before the encroaching desert....

It was through profound insights into the rationale that “a thriving ecology begets a prospering civilization” that China proposed Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization. This thought encompasses a series of original theories for ecological protection and civilizational progress, such as “the socialist approach to eco-civilization” , “Beautiful China” , “community of life” , “green development” , and “ecological governance” . It represents an innovation of traditional approaches to ecological management through dialectical and systems thinking, with an emphasis on the proper handling of the relationships between economic development and environmental protection, partial and overall interests, long-term and short-term goals, as well as government and market roles. It stresses coordinated advancement of carbon and pollution reduction, greenery expansion, and economic growth in the search for a dynamic equilibrium among the multiple objectives of economy, society, and the environment.

Today, on the edge of Xinjiang’ s Taklimakan Desert, a 3,046-kilometer meandering “Green Great Wall” has finally been completed. This ecological barrier, built by hundreds of thousands of people in a span of more than 40 years, has locked the shifting sands that swallowed the ancient Loulan Kingdom, ending the millennia-old lament of “desert advances, humans retreat” .

In China, ecological civilization has not only been incorporated into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China, but also enshrined in the 2018 Amendment to the Constitution of the People’ s Republic of China. The Ecological Environment Code (Draft) currently under compilation, will establish the most rigorous regime for the rule of law in the field of ecological conservation. China leads the world in installed capacity of wind and solar power, having achieved a 6% economic growth with approximately a 3% increase in energy consumption between 2013 and 2023. The establishment of the ecological conservation redline system has drawn in over 30% of the country’ s land mass. China pioneered the concept of “a community of all life

on Earth” , which has been incorporated into the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Confronting the profound changes unseen in a century, China is joining hands with other countries in the world to paint a blueprint for a green planetary homeland, using as a painting brush the civilizational development philosophy of “harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature” . The Belo Monte UHV project protects biological corridors in the Amazon Rainforest; desert drip irrigation technology helps alleviate the Aral Sea crisis and protects the cradle of Central Asian civilization. China actively leads the international cooperation on climate change response and has become a major participant, contributor, and leader in advancing global ecological civilization.^①

When the wind-blown sands of the Taklimakan Desert halt their footsteps beneath the Green Great Wall, the Chinese nation has been able to not only safeguard its civilizational flame, but also demonstrate the survival principles of human civilization, consolidate the foundation of civilizational development, protect the space for developing civilization, and reshape the historical perspective of eco-civilization. U.S. scholar Clifford Cobb noted: China has re-welded ecology with civilization, charting a path for the post-industrial world—only by anchoring development in ecosystem sustainability can human civilization traverse the next five millennia.

VI. Promoting Civilizational Progress with Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity as a Guide

At this critical historical juncture, as we reflect on the past, examine the present, and look into the future, humankind's exploration of civilizational advancement sees no end and its endeavors to build a better world will not cease. Regardless of how the world may evolve, one fundamental fact cannot be changed: i.e., there is but one planet Earth in our universe and the human race shares one common home. In this world, the interconnectedness and interdependence among nations have deepened to an unprecedented extent. We live in the same global village, within the same temporal and spatial realm where history and reality converge, increasingly becoming a community with a shared future characterized by intertwined interests and inseparable bonds.

Meanwhile, the human race finds itself in an era of incessant challenges and ever growing risks. Wherein should the world head? Peace or war? Development or regression? Openness or isolation? Cooperation or confrontation? These are the pressing questions of our times confronting all peoples.

China is the “China” of the world, and the world is the “world” with China’s presence. Chinese civilization is a “civilization” within the flourishing garden of human civilizations. From the vantage point of humankind’s historical development process, President Xi Jinping deeply contemplated major issues concerning the future

^①Li Hongwei: Signature Concepts and Original Contributions of Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, People’s Daily, March 10, 2025

destiny of humankind, such as “what kind of world to build and how to build it?” and set forth the important concept of “building a community with a shared future for humanity”. This endeavor is aimed at building a world of lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness and inclusiveness, and cleanliness and beauty. Its implementation path involves promoting global governance through extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit. Its universal guidance lies in practicing the common values of humankind. Its fundamental support stems from fostering a new type of international relations. Its strategic direction is derived from implementing the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative, and Global Governance Initiative. Its practical platform is high-quality cooperation for the Belt and Road Initiative. This thought prompts cooperation among countries to address challenges and achieve common prosperity, steering the world toward a bright future of peace, security, prosperity, and progress.

In June 2025, the 75052 China-Europe Railway Express was departing slowly from Jiaozhou Station in Qingdao, Shandong. This broke the 110,000 mark in the cumulative total of China-Europe freight train trips, with \$450 billion worth of goods delivered. Two millennia earlier, camel caravans had measured the Silk Road with their footsteps; today, “steel dragons” gallop along the Asia-Europe golden corridor. By now, 155 countries have joined the Belt and Road cooperation family. In 2024, China's trade with BRI partner countries grew against the global trend by 6.4%. Along this “path to happiness” that benefits the world, “Made in China” products effectively meet the production and consumption demands of partner countries while quality specialty products from these countries keep flowing into the Chinese market.

All under heaven are one family; we share weal and woe on the same globe. The vision of a shared future for humanity has been incorporated into multiple UN General Assembly resolutions and multilateral documents; the goals of having a community with a shared future in cyberspace, climate change, public health, etc. have been established; over 120 countries and international organizations support the Global Development Initiative; 82 countries have joined the GDI Group of Friends, and 119 countries and international organizations endorse the Global Security Initiative; the Global Civilization Initiative provides intellectual nourishment for the peaceful and harmonious co-existence among different civilizations. The Global Governance Initiative had a warm welcome and positive response by all parties.... Building a community with a shared future for humanity has become a great cause that enjoys wide support, with a growing number of countries joining the ranks for building this community for a shared future.

From the deepening and substantiated advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, which promotes development in partner countries, to facilitating the historic reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, mediating a ceasefire agreement in northern Myanmar, and safeguarding world peace..., building a community with a shared future for humanity has evolved from a conceptual proposition into a scientific system, expanded from a Chinese initiative to an international consensus, and turned from a beautiful vi-

sion into practical outcomes, demonstrating robust vitality. As Gennady Zyuganov, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, stated, the concept of building a community with a shared future for humankind is highly attractive to everyone and has had a beneficial influence on the entire world.^①

^①Xinhua News Agency: "International Figures Highly Appraise the Communist Party of China's Active Promotion of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind", dispatched on November 1, 2022.

Chapter Three

The Internal Logic of the Theory on the Development of Civilizations

From Dayu's (a legendary ruler of China's first dynasty some 4,000 years ago—explanation by the translator) harnessing of floods to satellites flying into space, from the ancient Silk Road to the Digital Silk Road, Chinese civilization has consistently responded to the call of the times with an epic journey, charting a course of development distinct from those of other civilizations in the world. Across both history and the present, the continuity and advance of civilization have always followed four intrinsic logics: independence and self-reliance, diversity and symbiosis, a people-centered approach, and reform through innovation. These principles, like the codes embedded in the genes of civilization, guide civilizations toward achieving constant breakthroughs in the face of challenges.

I. Independence and Self-Reliance: Taking Charge of the Destiny of Civilizational Development

Throughout human history, no nation or civilization has ever achieved development and greater strength by relying on external forces or by blindly following in the footsteps of others.

Marx observed: "This does not prevent the same economic basis—the same from the standpoint of its main conditions—owing to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc. from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances."^① The fact that different countries and nations display their richness and diversity as they face different historical contexts and external conditions determines the difference in their models of modernization and different paths of civilizational development.

It is the people of a country that are in the best position to tell what kind of modernization best suits them. Developing countries have the right and ability to independently explore the modernization paths with their distinctive features based on their national realities."^② Only when countries and nations adhere to independence and self-reliance and anchor their development and rejuvenation on their own strength can they have the destiny of civilizational progress firmly held in their own hands. For any culture to stand firm and go far, and to possess leadership, cohesion, creativity, and influence, it must maintain its own subjectivity instead of being controlled or manipulated by others. Cultural subjectivity is the premise of the independence and self-reliance of

^①Collected Works of Marx and Engels, Vol. 25, p. 892

^②Xi Jinping: "Join Hands on the Path Towards Modernization—Keynote Address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting"

civilizational creativity.

The reason why Chinese civilization remains the only uninterrupted ancient civilization in human history and why the Chinese nation has remained tall among the nations of the world despite countless trials and tribulations lies primarily in the enduring spirit of independence and self-reliance which has sustained the Chinese people through the ages. Nurtured by China's fine traditional culture, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has always regarded the spirit of independence and self-reliance as a founding principle. Through its own strength and prolonged struggles, the CPC has successfully charted a path to modernization with Chinese characteristics and created a new form of human civilization. The rejuvenation of Chinese civilization has not only enabled the nation to master its own destiny, but also provided new revelations to more countries.

The diversity of historical conditions determines the variety of modernization paths to be chosen by different countries, contributing to the rich variety of human civilizations. "For today's developing countries, to achieve modernization, it is not only impossible to completely replicate the paths once taken by developed countries in the West, but it is also inevitable for each developing country to find a development path that is in keeping with its own national realities and to create a modernization model suited to its specific context. This does not mean, however, that all developing countries must follow an identical development path or the same development model. There are both commonalities and differences among developing countries." ^①

History tells us that any civilization that relies on external forces or simply copies the model of another country will ultimately falter amid storms and turbulence. A civilization depends on the diligent labor and innovation of its own people to progress and grow stronger and requires a combination of the stimulation of the internally generated driving force with the peaceful use of external resources for its renewal. But learning from other civilizations cannot be equated to simple copying or replication. From the end of World War II to the early 1990s, some developing countries, regardless of their own national realities and historical conditions, copied in a wholesale manner the Western model. The result was that it proved incompatible with local contexts and plunged the vast majority of people into the predicament of prolonged economic stagnation and socio-political turmoil.

The world develops in multiple directions and world history does not advance in a linear fashion. By proceeding from their own realities, being rooted in their own soil, reflecting the will of their own people, and adhering to the principle of maintaining self-reliance and selectively adopting what is useful while assimilating and absorbing the fruits of all advanced civilizations that are favorable to them, civilizations will have ever broader prospects for development. We believe that the garden of world civilizations will surely become more colorful, vibrant, and full of vitality.

^①Qian Chengdan and Chen Fengjun: *The World's Modernization Process (South Asia Volume)*, Jiangsu People's Publishing House

II. Diversity and Symbiosis: Stimulating the Driving Forces of Civilizational Development

The prosperity of civilizations has never stemmed from self-appreciation in isolation, but from the confluence of myriad streams. Amid the camel bell rings along the Silk Road, Chinese silk and papermaking techniques were spread westward while Indian Buddhism and Arabic astronomical knowledge were disseminated eastward, sparking creativity through the encounter of different civilizations. The splendor of multinational costumes in Chang'an during the Tang Dynasty and the inter-civilizational dialogues of the Ming and Qing periods both attest to the wisdom of symbiosis embodied in the principle of “harmony without uniformity”.

China is a unified multi-ethnic nation; diversity within unity is a defining feature of Chinese civilization. The history of China is one of different ethnic groups blending into a pluralistic yet unified Chinese nation and of all ethnic groups jointly creating, developing, and consolidating a great unified motherland. The solidarity and integration of all ethnic groups and the convergence of diversity into oneness stem from cultural inclusiveness, economic interdependence, and emotional affinity, and from the inherent motivation of Chinese nation toward unity and solidarity. It is precisely for this reason that Chinese civilization possesses unparalleled inclusiveness and assimilative capacity, enabling it to endure and flourish with deep roots and strong vitality.

The Chinese nation is one that embraces inclusiveness and accommodates diversity. Throughout its long history, it has continuously learned from others and transformed what is good from other civilizations into part of its own, thereby shaping a national character with distinctive Chinese features. From the Eastward Spread of Buddhism and the Confluence of Islam and Confucianism in ancient times, to the Eastern Spread of Western Learning, the New Culture Movement and the introduction of Marxism and socialism into China in modern times, and further to the all-round opening up since the reform and opening-up, Chinese civilization has continuously renewed itself and grown stronger through inclusiveness.

“Things are born to be different.” 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. There is no such thing as a superior or inferior civilization, and civilizations are different only in identity and geographic location. All the rich and diverse human civilizations have their own values and there is no single identical political system model in the world. So the coexistence of civilizations and cultures is the norm.^① Emphasizing the recognition and respect of a country and a nation’s own civilizational achievements does not mean self-isolation, still less self-supremacy. Diverse civilizations should not become a source of global conflicts, but rather a driving force

^①Xi Jinping: Xi Jinping Holds Joint Meeting with German and EU Leaders, Xinhua News Agency, Sept. 14, 2020

for the progress of human civilization. We should adopt a learning attitude toward all civilizations created by human society, and carry forward those cultural values that transcend time, space, and national boundaries, possess eternal appeal, and retain contemporary relevance.

“A delicious soup is made by combining different ingredients.” In today’s world, African drum culture interacts and coexists with modern music, Nordic concepts of social welfare inspire global governance, and China’s Belt and Road Initiative benefits the people across many nations. Mutual learning among civilizations is reshaping shared values of humanity. Diversity spurs interaction among civilizations, which in turn promotes mutual learning and their further development. This is the mainstream of the current era and the inevitable trend of world civilizational development. Only through exchange and mutual learning can civilizations enrich themselves; only those capable of engaging in such exchange and mutual learning can develop profound substance and a deep foundation, thereby demonstrating formidable vitality and dynamism.

Human history is one of civilizations living and prospering together in diversity. Countries, regions and ethnic groups with varied histories, religions and customs have offered inspirations to each other and together contributed to a diverse and colorful world.

III. People– Centered Approach: Consolidating the Foundation for Civilizational Development

From Protagoras’ s assertion that “of all things man is the measure” to Kant’s “man is an end in himself, not the means to the ends of others” , humanity has perpetually sought the ultimate value of civilizations. Marx and Engels criticized capitalist society where man was no longer a slave to man but a slave to things, and proclaimed that “in place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” ^①

“In the matters of governance, the people should come first.” It is the pursuit of all civilizations to protect the life, value and dignity of every person. Chinese civilization has always emphasized the importance of respecting and caring for others. From Confucius who declared that “benevolence has been the greatest priority of governance since ancient times” to Mencius who said, “Finding talents for the country is what benevolence is all about,” to Xunzi who believed that people were “most valuable” and Mozi who called on us to “love others as we do ourselves regardless of social status or wealth” —each of these great thinkers stressed the intrinsic value of the person.

“The people are the foundation of a country and only when the people lead a good life can the country thrive.” Since its founding, the CPC has held high the banner of

^①Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Vol. 1, p. 422

“striving for democracy and human rights,” and clearly declared its commitment to “saving the nation and people” and “serving the people”. Over a century, the CPC has stayed true to its original aspiration and founding mission of seeking happiness for the Chinese people, and led them to great victories in revolution, construction, and reform, sharing the future with people, and staying truly connected to them. The CPC has enabled the Chinese people to become masters of the country, of society, and of their own destiny. At the same time, their right to subsistence, right to development, and other fundamental rights have been constantly advanced.

Unlike the capital-centered Western model, China has consistently adhered to the people-centered development philosophy in advancing modernization to ensure that development is for the people and by the people and that its fruits are shared by the people. China has resolved the problem of absolute poverty, and ensured a more complete and lasting sense of fulfillment, happiness, and security for the people. The essential requirements of Chinese modernization is the modernization of the people, and the ultimate goal of Chinese civilizational development is to realize the free and comprehensive development of individuals. The CPC has applied the people-centered philosophy to all aspects of national governance, making the happiness of the people a National Priority.

The prosperity and stability would not be possible in a world where the rich become richer while the poor are made poorer. Instead, true development is development shared by all nations. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx criticized the alienated labor. Chinese modernization, however, takes the comprehensive development of the people as a criterion, revealing the ultimate answer to civilization progress: ensuring that the fruits of development enhance the dignity and happiness of every individual.

IV. Reform through Innovation: Sustaining the Vitality of Civilizational Development

Throughout thousands of years of human civilizations, some have flourished only briefly before fading away, while others have grown and thrived with vitality. Of the world’s four ancient civilizations, some were interrupted or vanished in the course of history while only Chinese civilization has survived with an unbroken lineage of state and historical record continuing to this day. Civilizations either end or perish by their own decision, or continue and are renewed by their own decision. This is because when a civilization reaches a certain stage of development, the loss of its capacity for innovation leads to the end of its vitality; conversely, the continuation of its vitality depends on the vigor of its innovative capacity.”^①

“If you can improve yourself in a day, do so each day, forever building on improvement.” These striking words inscribed on the towering wall greet each visitor at the

^①Zhang Qingwen and Fu Yongju. “The Capacity for Self-Renewal in Chinese Civilization”. *Chinese Social Sciences Today*, July 5, 2023

new building of the Yinxu Museum in Anyang City, Henan Province. Chinese civilization is one that thrives on reform and renewal, ever radiant with vitality. The Chinese nation has always stayed on the right course without following the beaten track and respected traditions but not obsolete practices. This fundamentally explains why Chinese civilization has been able to continually renew itself and sustain vitality throughout history. From the Philosophies in the Pre-Qin period, the Confucian Classics in the Han dynasty, the Metaphysics in the Wei and Jin dynasties, to Buddhism and the Integration of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism in the Sui and Tang dynasties, the Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties... Throughout its long history, Chinese civilization has experienced several booming periods of intellectual prosperity, playing a leading role in the world most of the times.

Since modern times, the introduction of Marxism into China has transformed the country significantly while China's fine traditional culture, invigorated by the power of Marxist truth, has gained new vitality and undergone modern transformation. Through arduous struggles, the CPC has successfully led the people in opening up a Chinese approach to modernization and creating a new form of human civilization. This pioneering achievement has resolved many challenges in human social development, breaking away from the old path of Western modernization centered on capital, characterized by polarization, inflated materialism, and external expansion and plunder. It has broadened the avenues for developing countries to pursue modernization and offered a new option for those states and nations worldwide who aspire to boost development while maintaining independence and self-reliance.

The best way to carry forward history is to create new history, and the greatest tribute to human civilization is to create a new form of human civilization. The modern transformation of civilization requires not only safeguarding its roots of spirit but also responding to the questions of our times through innovation, opening up new prospects amid both continuity and change.

Many developing countries are also able to start from their own national realities, draw on the outstanding achievements of human civilization, and explore new paths to modernization, thereby accomplishing civilizational renewal and modern transformation.

Standing on the right side of history and human progress, we must all the more recognize that only by upholding the unity of independence and openness, making people's well-being our ultimate goal, and fostering innovations while carrying forward inheritance, can we enable civilizational development to transcend the trap of a clash of civilizations. In this way, different civilizations can blend through dialogue and flourish through innovations, jointly writing a new chapter in the history of human civilization.

Chapter Four

The Practical Enlightenment of the Theory on the Development of Civilizations

In the 21st century, human civilization faces two systemic challenges. On the one hand, with the decline of Western-centrism and the unipolar hegemonic order, the theories of the “end of history” and the “clash of civilizations” are becoming bankrupt. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of globalization and anti-globalization, compounded by a triple crisis of governance deficit, development deficit, and trust deficit plus the existential threats of climate change and loss of control over technological ethics, etc., compel the human race to search for a path of civilizational development that transcends the myth of “Western paradigm” and abandons “zero-sum” thinking.

The theory on the development of civilizations holds that genuine progress of civilization lies in returning inward to the dignity of humanity, exploring outward the boundaries of civilization, and upholding its origins while opening new horizons to ignite vitality through inclusiveness of diversity, ultimately to advance toward the grand process of mutual flourishing of all things and a world of great harmony. This is not only China’s choice, but also a contribution of Eastern wisdom to human civilization at the crossroads, pointing the way beyond confrontation and division toward a bright future of peace, development, cooperation, and win-win outcomes.

I. Putting People First as the Value Orientation of Civilizational Development

The core of civilizational development lies in “people”, rather than in “things” or “tools.”

Throughout the long course of human civilization, the hierarchy of values placed on people versus things has always been a key indicator of the direction of civilizational development.

French economist Thomas Piketty pointed out that in the 1840s, while capital thrived and industrial profits grew, labor income stagnated. As the same scenario of capital returns exceeding the growth rate of output and income continues to play out in the 21st century, capitalism has unconsciously generated uncontrollable and unsustainable social inequity. This “thing-centered” model of development alienates human beings as mere instruments for capital appreciation, trapping workers in the paradox of “the more they create, the poorer they become”.

In the modernization process of the West, the infiltration of capital into all areas of society has pushed the “thing-centered” outlook on development to its extreme. From Wall Street’s financial capital manipulating the global economy, to tech giants using algorithms to intensify social stratification, and to political power being kidnapped by interest groups, the value of human existence has been continuously

squeezed by capital, technology, and power. In contrast, it is Chinese modernization, with the pursuit of “common prosperity for all” as its central goal, that offers a living interpretation of the value orientation of “putting people first”. The battle against poverty lifted a nearly 100-million rural population out of poverty, the rural revitalization strategy is aimed at narrowing the urban – rural divide, and pilot zones for common prosperity are exploring new models of shared development. These practices have broken the fate of “the rich get richer” that characterizes Western modernization.

Today, when technologies such as artificial intelligence and gene editing are advancing at an accelerated pace, the value orientation of “putting people first” has acquired a greater sense of urgency. If technology and capital are allowed to expand without restraint, humankind could face even deeper levels of alienation. Only by upholding the principle of “putting people first” can civilization avoid losing control in the waves of technological revolution and realize harmony between humans and nature, between humans and society, and within humans themselves.

The beacon of civilizational progress must always illuminate humans themselves. While Western civilization struggles in the dilemma of “reification,” Chinese modernization, through its practice of “people first”, has opened up a new path for the development of human civilization. The success of this value orientation is in essentially a return to the very essence of civilization—enabling material wealth, technological progress, and institutional innovation to truly serve people and enable them to realize their full potential, rather than becoming alienating forces that dominate them.

From economic booms to cultural exchanges, from conceptual innovation to global governance, China has consistently been upholding, with openness and inclusiveness, the vision of “everybody cherishing others’ culture as doing to his or her own, the world will become a harmonious one”. This has brought more harmony and stability to a world with intertwined changes and turbulence, injected new vitality into human civilization, and written a Chinese chapter in the history of civilization amid the surging tides of the 21st century.

II. Upholding Fundamentals and Pursuing Innovation as the Scientific Path to Civilizational Development

The paths to modernization are diverse and the vitality of civilizational development lies in innovative progress that is rooted in tradition while oriented toward the future.

Although the road to the modernization of human society is manifold, since the 19th century the West has claimed that all civilizations must modernize along the “Western road”. Historical practice, however, has offered a profound rebuttal: Latin American countries copied Western liberal economic models, which led to mounting difficulties in development; some Middle Eastern countries transplanted Western political systems, which resulted in social fragmentation and national turmoil; many African countries imitated the West in following its development paths and were mired in peren-

nial poverty and instability. The fundamental failure of this “Western paradigm” lies in reducing civilizational development to the mechanical transfer of technology and institutions while neglecting the historicity and uniqueness of the core of civilization.

True civilizational progress is a process of building on one’s own cultural foundation while critically assimilating the outstanding achievements of the human race rather than simply imitating or transplanting a particular model. The breakthrough significance of Chinese modernization lies precisely in the wisdom of upholding fundamentals and pursuing innovation, breaking the myth that “modernization equals Westernization” and opening up a scientific path of civilizational development that revitalizes tradition and creates new forms of civilization through the dialectical unity of inheritance and innovation. As Tan Chung, a sinologist of Chinese descent, observed, unique civilizational heritage and accumulation have endowed the Chinese people with a distinctive spiritual temperament. As a vast civilizational system, China will coexist with the Western system for a long time to come. Civilization is both the accumulation of historical creation and the soil of present-day innovation.

As an ancient Chinese saying goes, “If wealth be attainable by proper means, I would go for it even as a carter.” The path to China’s civilizational development precisely elevates the personal ethic of “seeking wealth through proper means” to a civilizational paradigm of “big country development with moderation”. This practice—rooted in its own civilization while creating a new one—has shaken off the reliance on the Western path of “tradition versus modernity” dualism and broadened the paradigm of civilizational evolution, greatly reinvigorating Chinese civilization. It has addressed the many challenges that traditional civilizations face in modern society, enabled their rejuvenation, and contributed new wisdom, lifting Chinese civilization to a new historical height.

From cuneiform in Mesopotamia to today’s digital civilization, the history of human civilization is one of evolution in upholding fundamentals and pursuing innovation. We must jointly advocate prioritizing the inheritance and innovation of civilization, tapping fully into the contemporary value of each nation’s historical culture, and promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional cultures in the modernization process. Only by consolidating our foundations through commitment to fundamentals and opening new horizons through innovation can civilizations remain vibrant in the tides of our times and contribute together to cultivating a flourishing garden of civilizations for our global human community with a shared future.

III. Openness and Inclusiveness as the Driving Force of Civilizational Development

Openness and inclusiveness are inexhaustible drivers of civilizational development whereas closure and exclusiveness inevitably lead to stagnation and decline.

In history, the prosperity of the Silk Road, the great changes in the Age of Exploration, and even the process of modern globalization all bear profound testimony to the

immense vitality brought about by openness. Conversely, any civilization that seeks to build high walls and shut itself off—no matter how brilliant it once was—will eventually lapse into stagnation and decline.

Today, a certain country pursues unilateralism, erecting technological barriers and practicing cultural hegemony through its monopoly in science, technology, and military supremacy, severely obstructing the process of global exchange among civilizations. Such a “bloc” mentality is behind the deliberate creation of division, suspicion, and confrontation. It not only harms the interests of other countries, but also constrains the country’s own development and runs counter to the laws of civilizational progress. As UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Miguel Ángel Moratinos noted: The concept of cultural or civilizational hegemony is outdated. Excluding diversity is not only wrong, but also irrational. Dialogue must replace confrontation to become the dominant mode of international interaction in the 21st century.^①

Chinese civilization was born on Chinese soil, yet it has always drawn upon and integrated the strengths of other civilizations in the world. Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has embraced other civilizations with an open mind that is broader than any sky. Buddhism, originating in ancient India, was introduced to China in the eastward transmission and, after long-term evolution, was integrated with indigenous Confucian and Daoist cultures till eventually forming a uniquely Chinese Buddhist culture. It left a profound impact on the religious beliefs, philosophical ideas, literature and art, and rites and customs of the Chinese people. The more than 5,000 years of history of Chinese civilization is ample proof that species, technologies, resources, peoples, and even ideas and cultures alike develop and progress through constant dissemination, exchange, and interaction.

In today’s world, the human race faces a host of global challenges such as the climate crisis, technological divide, and public health issues. Solving these problems is absolutely beyond the competence of any single country or civilization and requires all countries to join hands in cooperation with an openness and inclusive attitude. Only by discarding “small yards and high fence” and practicing the principle that “all living things grow side by side without harming one another” can we create a future of shared prosperity within a global community of shared future.

“Upholding openness and inclusiveness necessitates more active and proactive efforts to learn and draw upon all outstanding achievements of civilization created by humankind.” History and reality provide ample proof that openness and inclusiveness are the lifeline and source of power of civilizational development. All forms of enclosed and exclusive “blocs”, no matter how they are packaged, are invariably shackles that restrict the flow of ideas, the allocation of resources, and common progress. Only by resolutely dismantling barriers, embracing the world, engaging in mutual learning,

^①Xinhua: “Dialogue is the only way to resolve conflicts, differences and disputes,” said UN Alliance of Civilizations High Representative, June 11, 2025

and letting the drivers of development flow freely, integrate, and blend in an open and inclusive environment can the creativity and vitality of civilizations be thereby continuously unleashed, continuing to guide human civilization toward a more prosperous and advanced future.

IV. Harmony and Coexistence as the Right Path to Civilizational Development

The human race is a community with a shared future; win – win cooperation is the only choice for the survival and prosperity of civilization.

The “bloc confrontation” model shaped by Cold War thinking essentially distorted civilizational differences into a zero-sum logic of competition for survival, resulting in arms races and geopolitical conflicts. The confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact yesteryear twice brought humankind to the brink of a nuclear war. Worse, the “clash of civilizations” theory that came out toward the end of the 20th century further presumed cultural differences to be an irreconcilable source of conflict. This zero-sum mentality is an outdated logic that sows division, provokes conflict, and obstructs cooperation. It runs counter to the future requirements of civilizational development.

Harmony and coexistence are a crystallization of the wisdom of Chinese civilization and represent the inevitable choice in addressing global challenges. It emphasizes harmonious coexistence, coordinated cooperation, mutual benefit and win-win results, and shared prosperity among different actors. Its pursuit is a positive-sum game, that is, creating incremental gains through cooperation to achieve common development. To break free from the zero-sum logic means to abandon the hegemonic logic and power politics, seek the greatest common denominator in development, establish rules of virtuous interaction in competition, and promote a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security.

“Aspiring for harmony and seeking great unity” has been the spiritual pursuit and way of life of the Chinese nation for millennia. The construction of the high-quality “Belt and Road” promoted by China, with livelihood projects launched in more than 150 countries, is building new civilizational ties of economic symbiosis and cultural exchange through infrastructure connectivity. Such practices transcend the zero-sum logic of traditional geopolitics, proving that harmony and coexistence are not merely a concept, but an operable and verifiable path of civilizational development. As British philosopher Bertrand Russell commented, “...something of the ethical qualities in which China is supreme, and the modern world most desperately needs. Among these qualities I place first the pacific temperament,...”

“Mutual respect, unity, harmony and coexistence are the right path for the development of human civilization.”^① As humankind will be standing at the historical stage of

^①Xi Jinping,: “Xi ’ s Congratulatory Tetter to Inaugural Liangzhu Forum ”, Xinhua News Agency, December 3, 2023

the third decade of the 21st century, global challenges such as climate change, biosecurity, and the ethics of artificial intelligence are striking at the very foundation that underlies the survival of human civilization, causing a sense of unprecedented urgency. In this context, the concept of “harmony and coexistence” nurtured in Chinese civilization transcends geographical and temporal boundaries, demonstrating its intellectual power of penetration as the guiding ideal of civilizational development. It not only transcends zero-sum thinking, but also, through the wisdom that “all living things grow side by side without harming one another”, provides both the value foundation stone and the practical pathway for building a global community with a shared future for humanity.

The beacon of human civilization should not shine upon battlefields of conquest and domination, but rather guide the voyage toward coexistence and shared prosperity. From the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism, which helps achieve common development among riparian countries through shared water resources and joint ecological governance, to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), which forged global consensus on biodiversity protection, humankind has demonstrated the practical wisdom of a community with a shared future. These exploratory endeavors prove that only by embracing harmony and coexistence, and replacing confrontation with cooperation can we realize the harmonious coexistence and sustainable development of human civilizations.

The practical revelations advanced by the theory on the development of civilizations are a profound reflection on and transcendence of the old development models characterized by materialism, Western-centrism, confrontational thinking, closure and exclusiveness, and zero-sum games since the onset of the modern times. They represent both a deep insight into the laws of civilizational development and a practical action guide for overcoming the dilemmas facing civilizations today. At a historical juncture of civilizational rise and decline, the theory offers humankind a viable solution to transcend the trap of civilizational conflict and build a global community of shared future, and provides developing countries with a new choice—to pursue a development path that both follows the universal laws of modernization and embodies distinctive national characteristics.

Conclusion:

Illuminating the Path of Human Civilization with the Light of Development

Looking back along the long river of history, the 5,000-year accumulation of Chinese civilization shines like a beacon—illuminating its own path forward while providing a wellspring of wisdom for the development of human civilization. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has, through inheritance and innovation, blazed a unique path of development. This new form of human civilization is not a simple imitation of Western models, but a creative transformation rooted in the soil of Chinese civilization and responsive to the challenges of the times. It offers the world an Eastern approach that transcends binary oppositions and tackles thorny global issues.

Today, with intertwining challenges such as climate change, wealth disparity, and technological ethics, the human race needs civilizational dialogue and the sharing of wisdom more than ever before. The theory on the development of civilizations, with its abundance of profound practical achievements, proves that development need not come at the expense of the environment, modernization need not replicate the logic of capitalism, the true meaning of democracy lies in meeting the people's aspirations for a better life, and technological progress should serve the common well-being of humanity. From the connectivity of the Belt and Road to the pragmatic cooperation under the Global Development Initiative, from firm commitments to carbon neutrality to the inclusive sharing of technological innovation, China is putting into practice through action the civilizational ideal that "A just cause should be pursued for the common good".

In the face of civilizational clashes and confrontations, Chinese civilization has always been characterized by harmony and coexistence. It does not contain the idea of seeking conquest or replacement, but advocates mutual learning among different civilizations through exchange and growth through dialogue. This development-centered outlook on civilization transcends the narrowness and prejudice of Western-centrism and lays a value foundation for building a community of shared future for humanity. Like the surging Yellow River and Yangtze River, Chinese civilization has continuously drawn strength from openness and inclusiveness and maintained vitality through upholding fundamentals and pursuing innovation.

Under the overarching theme of the times, i.e., building a community with a shared future for humanity, the theory on the development of civilizations not only responds to the global question of "Wherein is civilization heading?" but also provides an Eastern answer to "What is development for?" It reveals to us the following: The future of human civilization lies not in the expansion of a single model, but in the integration of diverse wisdoms; the true meaning of development lies not in zero-sum compe-

tition, but in win – win coexistence through cooperation. This theoretical cognition will provide lasting intellectual momentum for humankind to address common challenges and achieve sustainable development in the 21st century.

Looking to the future, the theory on the development of civilizations will continue, through the depth of its practice and the warmth of its values, to contribute Eastern wisdom to the world. It is not a monologue of one civilization, but a chorus of human civilizations; it is not the monopoly of a single path, but the coexistence of multiple paths of development. When all countries join hands to transcend the barriers of civilization and meet the challenges of our times together, the human race will ultimately compose even more splendid chapters in the symphony of civilizations that are harmonious yet diverse.