

COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED FUTURE FOR MANKIND, AND HOW THIS CONCEPT IS RELATED TO THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

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China's foreign policy initiatives have been influential in the evolution of the present world order and multipolar system of international relations. In the second decade of the 21st century, China put forward the concept of a community with a shared future (later succeeded by the notion of a community with a shared future for mankind) and announced its Belt and road initiative. In this study we examine how both are related, and intersect in the humanitarian sphere. We propose an interpretation of a community with a shared future for mankind as a notion that informs China's present foreign policy. We also explain how it is related to the Belt and road initiative.

Keywords: community with a shared future for mankind; Belt and road initiative; global governance; Xi Jinping; China's foreign policy; humanitarian sphere; humanitarian strategies.

КОНЦЕПТ «СООБЩЕСТВО ЕДИНОЙ СУДЬБЫ ЧЕЛОВЕЧЕСТВА» И ЕГО ВЗАИМОСВЯЗЬ С ИНИЦИАТИВОЙ «ОДИН ПОЯС – ОДИН ПУТЬ»

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Установившийся мировой порядок и многополярная система международных отношений находятся в непосредственной зависимости от внешнеполитических инициатив Китая. Во втором десятилетии XXI в. китайской стороной были выдвинуты идеи о построении сообщества единой судьбы (впоследствии трансформировавшегося в сообщество единой судьбы человечества) и реализации инициативы «Один пояс – один путь». В представленном исследовании обе концепции рассматриваются как взаимозависимые и пересекающиеся в гуманитарной сфере. В ходе исследования проанализирована трактовка концепта «сообщество единой судьбы человечества» и доказана его роль в реализации инициативы «Один пояс – один путь».

Ключевые слова: сообщество единой судьбы человечества; инициатива «Один пояс – один путь»; глобальное управление; Си Цзиньпин; внешняя политика Китая; гуманитарная сфера; гуманитарные стратегии.

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Introduction

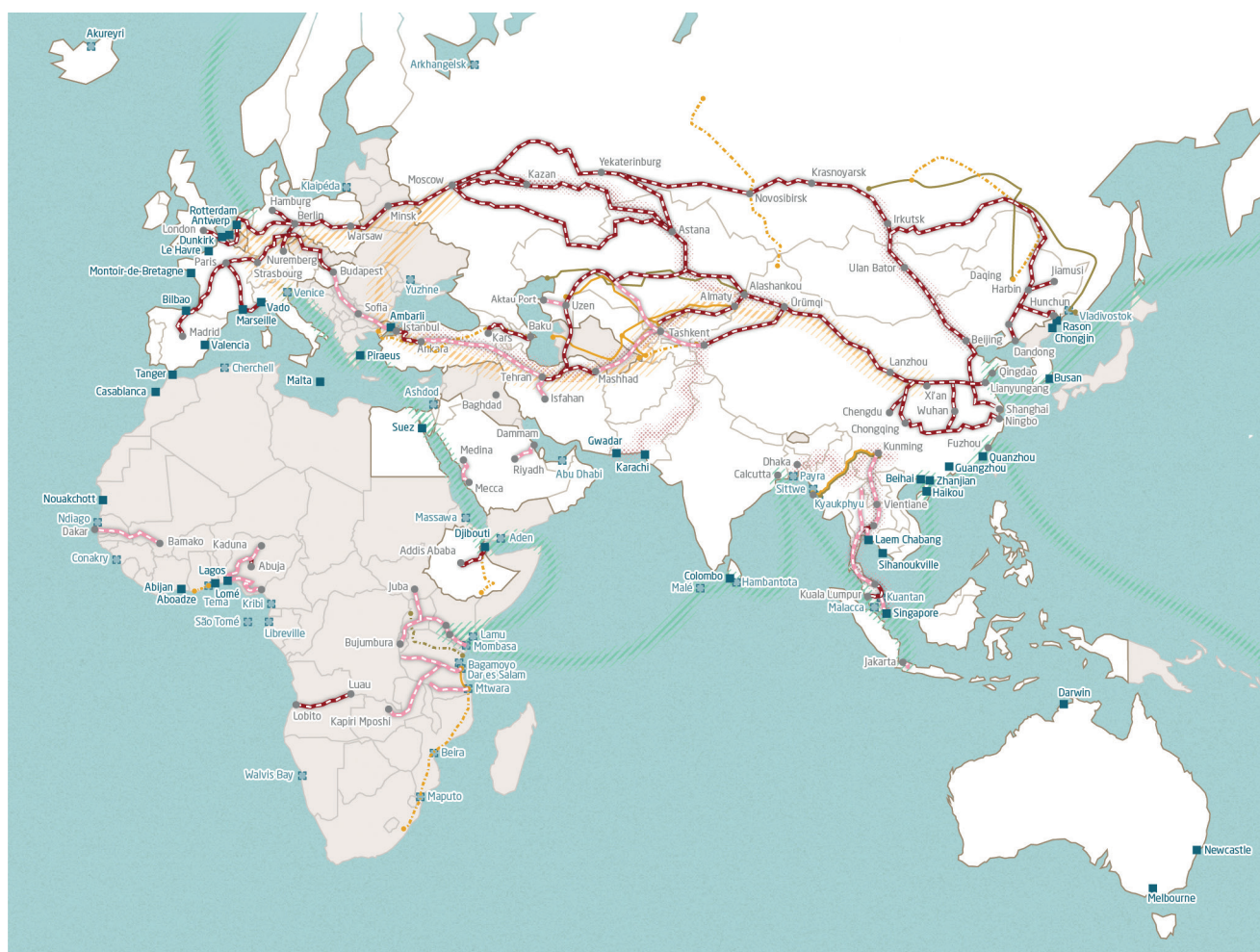
Xi Jinping, the president of the People's Republic of China (PRC), used the term “community with a shared future for mankind” (and its precursor, “community with a shared future”) multiple times in many of his speeches. He put forward the idea of a community with a shared future in his speech at the 18th Congress of the Communist party of China (CPC) in November 2012. In 2011 the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China published a white paper titled “China's peaceful development” that elaborated on this idea.

The Institute of Party History and Literature of the CPC Central Committee cites evidence of the growing recognition and acceptance of this concept as a guiding notion for the modern system of international relations, including references to the community with a shared future for mankind in a United Nations resolution on the 55th UN Commission for Social Development, Resolution 2344 of the UN Security Council,

and resolutions of the 34th and 37th sessions of the UN Human Rights Council.

In his speech at the Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan in October 2013, Xi Jinping announced the initiative for the Silk road economic belt. Following his visit to Indonesia in 2013, Xi Jinping addressed the Council of People's Representatives, calling on the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to “join efforts to form the Maritime silk road of the 21st century” [1, p. 396]. The above statements laid out a policy framework for the subsequent conceptualisation and implementation of the Belt and road initiative (BRI). It is shown in the figure below.

Xi Jinping's concurrent references to the community with a shared future for mankind and the Belt and road initiative indicate that both concepts are related and reflect China's strategic vision of the prospective structure of the international order.



Map of the main routes of the Belt and road initiative
Source: Mercator Institute of China Studies¹

¹Mapping the Belt and road initiative: this is where we stand [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://merics.org/en/tracker/mapping-belt-and-road-initiative-where-we-stand> (date of access: 14.12.2021).

In the Republic of Belarus, the paradigmatic framework of the Belt and road initiative research is presented in the works of A. M. Baichorov [2], J. I. Malevich [3], D. A. Smolyakov [4] and others. It was the subject of several major academic fora, notably, the conferences “The Belt and road initiative: opportunities for Belarus”, “The development of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation in higher education within the Belt and road project”, and “Three decades of Belarusian-Chinese relations and building a community with a shared future for mankind”. In the Russian Federation A. V. Lukin [5], S. G. Luzyanin [5], A. G. Larin [6], E. I. Safronova [6], V. E. Petrovskii [6], addressed specific aspects of this initiative. Notable Chinese scholars who considered the economic and humanitarian implications of the Belt and road initiative include Yang Minghong [7], Su Huiyang [8], Zhang Weiwei [9], Chen Zhaohe [10; 11], Zhu Lei [12], Zhang Yunling [13], Luo Yujie [14], Wei Pengju [15]. Professor Yang Minghong conducted a systematic study of the relationship between the Belt and road initiative, published in the monograph “Building a community with a shared future for mankind along the Belt and road initiative: dialogues between Chinese and foreign think tanks”.

Despite a significant body of research and multiple theoretical interpretations of the foreign policy initia-

tives of the PRC, the relationship between the Belt and road initiative and the community with a shared future for mankind received relatively little attention from Belarusian political scientists.

In this paper, we place the Belt and road initiative in the context of the idea of a community with a shared future for mankind.

The relationship between the two concepts and their paradigmatic implications for the humanitarian foundations of Chinese policy constitute the subject matter of this work.

We aim to define the directions of this relationship. Subsequent to this aim, the tasks of this research are as follows:

- to form a comprehensive understanding of a community with a shared future for mankind as a strategic concept of China’s foreign policy, from Xi Jinping’s policy statements and the theoretical insights of Chinese political scientists;
- to explicate the humanitarian focus of both notions and their interdependence in the humanitarian sphere;
- to delineate the basic features of a new system of international relations and the system of global governance, as desired by China, from our analysis of both concepts.

Results

From shared future to the shared future for all mankind. The world as a community of future for mankind is an ambitious vision of the Chinese leadership. It informs several major international efforts of the PRC, primarily the Belt and road initiative.

The community with a shared future for mankind puts forth a new paradigm of social development on the international stage, grounded in shared responsibility and well-being.

Xi Jinping presents the concept of a community with a shared future as consistent with the natural course of history and the evolution of interethnic and interstate interactions: “The course of history is unstoppable. Those who follow it prosper, and those who resist it, perish. When we look back on world history, we see that all who have ever engaged in external armed aggression and expansion have inevitably failed in the end. This is the law of history. World prosperity and stability create opportunities for China, and China’s development creates opportunities for the world. Whether we can succeed in our pursuit of peaceful development depends in large part on whether we can turn global opportunities into opportunities for China and Chinese opportunities into opportunities for the world, and whether we can move forward with positive engagement with the world and achieve a mutual benefit and win-win” [16, p. 3]. From the perspective of the Chinese leadership, China’s relationship with the world follows the “world-China” model, in which every element of the world system is

interdependent. In this conception, China differentiates itself from the rest of the world, by referring to China and the rest of the world as two distinct poles.

The understanding of a community with a shared future has evolved. Between 2013 and 2015 the political leadership of the PRC advocated for such a community for China and Africa, China and ASEAN, China and the Arab world, China and Sri Lanka, China and India, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Taiwan Strait. Here are several examples from Xi Jinping’s statements: “China and Africa have always been and remain a community with a shared future” [16, p. 19], “...by joining forces, we can build a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future to bring more benefits to both sides and all the peoples of the region” [16, p. 62], “...a more cohesive community with a shared future for China-ASEAN is in line with the trend of the era in the pursuit of peace, development, cooperation and a win-win, meets the common interests of the peoples of different countries in Asia and around the world, has a wider space and huge development potential” [16, p. 66].

Official statements of the PRC leadership thus describe the origins of the “community with a shared future” concept: “Progressive movement towards a multipolar world, economic globalisation and the informatisation of society have made the interests, destiny and security of all countries closely intertwined. As a result, a community with a shared future has emerged...” [16, p. 129].

At the annual conference of the Boao forum for Asia on 28 March 2015, Xi Jinping further detailed China's vision and addressed the forum's participants with a call to action [16, p. 255]. Until 2015, China referred to only some communities as sharing a future, but starting from the spring of 2015, it extended this notion to all mankind. Almost simultaneously, on 28 March 2015, China published the first official document with a comprehensive description of the Belt and road initiative which is Action plan on the Belt and road initiative.

A comprehensive definition of a community with a shared future for mankind. It is possible to define the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind from the policy documents of the PRC, statements by members of the country's leadership and diplomats, and texts of the Chinese theorists of international relations and foreign policy.

The former ambassador of the PRC to Belarus Cui Qiming and the Chinese scholar Son Jing define a community with a shared future as a diplomatic concept grounded in the laws of social development and referring to the convergence of states' interest in the progressive expansion of the space for the pursuit of common interests, driven by the awareness of shared responsibility grounded in the sense of shared benefits, ambitions, obligations and future [17, p. 70].

Yang Minghong defines a community with a shared future as a concept situated in time and space. From the perspective of time, it reflects the changing perception of world development and shared responses to the common obstacles affecting the progress of nations and peoples. From the perspective of space, it expresses a vision of a cohesive community of states sharing a common image of the future for mankind. When states develop, individually and collaboratively, as regions, continents and as parts of global space, they form communities with shared future at different levels [7, p. 65–66].

Fu Ying, a Chinese diplomat and fellow at the Centre for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University, argues that a community with a shared future for mankind rests on one basic principle. "The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, as proposed by Chinese president Xi Jinping, embodies the great wisdom that is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and demonstrates our clear political stance. The essence of the proposition is that global challenges should be discussed and resolved by countries working together, and that common interests should be maintained by all.

It will require that countries work together to achieve this goal, but as the saying goes, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step"².

For Fu Ying, the essential aspects of a community with a shared future for mankind are cooperative security, joint development and political inclusiveness. He writes: "Cooperative security is a more realistic vision than collective security as it avoids the old-fashioned friend-or-foe division of the world and is oriented toward the greater goal of protecting the security and interests of all"³. He then proceeds to interpret the notion of joint development: "China intends to translate into practice the vision of joint development and a "community with a shared future" through its Belt and road initiative, by working together with all countries to address the disparities in development and create a new prosperity within the Eurasian region"⁴.

Fu Ying argues that the idea of a community with a shared future can be put into practice successfully only with political inclusiveness. With a wide diversity of countries and the unique evolutionary paths that they have taken to achieve the best outcomes in development, no single model can be equally successful or universally applicable. However, the underlying political principle of a community with a shared future is the acceptance of diversity: nations can follow different paths towards the same goals, building vibrant cultures, democracy, and prosperity"⁵.

Wang Yiwei, a Chinese political scientist and student of the Belt and road initiative, argues that the new international order being formed by China is nothing other than a community with a shared future for mankind – an embodiment of the Chinese understanding of power, emphasising equality and justice"⁶.

A junior researcher at the Centre for Russian Strategy in Asia of the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences V. O. Gorbachyova rightly remarks: "...the space of "a shared future" with China will encompass countries that lie within the Chinese sphere of political, economic and cultural, and will be cemented by China's major initiatives such as the Belt and road that facilitate cooperation within the framework of inter-country unions and associations, and their conjugation"⁷ (hereinafter translated by I. A. Chuvilov).

The humanitarian sphere, the community with a shared future for mankind and the BRI. The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind relates to the *humanitarian sphere* of world politics. Furthermore, *humanitarian orientation* and emphasis

²Discussing changes in the international order [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://cpifa.org/en/cms/book/250> (date of access: 11.12.2021).

³Fu Ying. China's vision for the world: a community of shared future [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/chinas-vision-for-the-world-a-community-of-shared-future/> (date of access: 11.12.2021).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Maedell J. The "community of common destiny" in Xi Jinping's new era [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-community-of-common-destiny-in-xi-jinpings-new-era/> (date of access: 23.12.2021).

⁷Единая судьба для всех [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <https://nkibrics.ru/posts/show/5c4081116272697aca6f0000> (дата обращения: 14.12.2021).

on the non-economic forms of international transactions are two key aspects of its originality. The success in making the concept a reality depends on the pursuit of the humanitarian components (or strategies) of the Belt and road initiative.

The objectives of the Belt and road initiative are economic, political and cultural. The economic objectives relate to uninterrupted trade, easing of monetary flows and expansion of road connections, while the political objectives include stronger political coordination. In the cultural domain, the Belt and road initiative promises to bring peoples and countries together by facilitating contacts in the humanitarian sphere.

It seems reasonable to assume that the cultural domain – pertaining to the humanitarian sphere of international relations – is the point of intersection between the Belt and road initiative and the community with a shared future concept. Authors of the collective monograph titled “Community with a shared future for the youth of the Belt and road initiative” describe how the Belt and road initiative gave rise to a range of new concepts such as “Silk road man,” “Belt and road man,” “Silk road envoy” [8, p. 3].

In a speech before the members of the 18th CPC Central Committee Politburo on 29 April 2016 Xi Jinping emphasised the key role of the humanitarian sphere in the Belt and road initiative. He said that “...humanitarian exchanges and cooperation are also an important part of building the Belt and road. To truly build the Belt and road, it is necessary to form an atmosphere among the peoples of the countries along the Belt and road in which the peoples of all participating countries can appreciate, understand and respect each other. The rapprochement of peoples’ aspirations is an important part of building the Belt and road as well as its humanitarian basis. We should promote economic cooperation and humanitarian exchanges in parallel, pay special attention to the intensive development of culture and humanities, respect the culture, history, mores and customs of the peoples of various countries, and strengthen friendly ties with the peoples of the countries along the Belt and road to lay a broad social foundation for building the Belt and road. It is necessary to strengthen security cooperation with countries along the Belt and road and strive to build a community of common interests, shared responsibility and a common destiny, and jointly create an enabling ground for it. Increased attention must be paid to the work of guiding public opinion, publicising the Belt and road initiative in various forms and an appropriate manner, disseminating information about the implementation of the initiative widely, and creating a favourable public opinion environment for its implementation” [16, p. 423–424].

Political scientist Zhang Weiwei proposed the concept of culture and cultural self-confidence, reflecting the centrality of culture as an “all-embracing” dimension of the foreign policy of a state in the humanitarian sphere, and a key element of China’s expanding inter-

national influence. Zhang Weiwei predicts the rise of Chinese culture in the world as a result of China’s rapid movement to the centre stage of the world’s political and economic life. He refers to the successful work of the Confucius institutes, in conducting international festivals of Chinese culture, art, music, film and TV outside China [9, p. 11].

Speaking at a meeting on diplomacy in China’s neighbouring states on 24 October 2013, Xi Jinping emphasised the use of soft power as a means of strengthening China’s international position: “Dissemination of ideas across the neighbouring countries should be strengthened, public and popular diplomacy and humanitarian exchanges should be enhanced, to strengthen and expand the social base and the foundation of people’s support for the long-term development of our country’s relations with neighbouring countries. The key to the rapprochement among countries is the sympathy of the people. It is necessary to promote multifaceted humanitarian exchange, deepen friendly ties in areas such as tourism, science and education, interregional cooperation, creating a wide circle of friends and positive ties. It is necessary to familiarise other countries with our domestic and foreign policy course, our policy guidelines, to tell the world about China, and to communicate its voice to the world. The Chinese dream must be reconciled with the aspirations of the peoples of neighbouring countries for a better, more prosperous life and the prospects for regional development, ensuring that the seed of the community with a shared future germinates and takes root in the neighbouring countries”. [16, p. 81].

In his definition of soft power, J. Nye proposed refers to “the ability to get what you want through attractiveness rather than through coercion or payments”, noting that “soft power” arises from “the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies” [18, p. 10]. In the humanitarian sphere, where the Belt and road initiative intersects with the notion of a community with a shared future for mankind, soft power becomes the fundamental mechanism for implementing China’s vision. Chinese political scientists affirm the culture-centeredness of soft power, as distinct from the Western understanding. In some of their latest works, they use the term “soft power of culture” interchangeably with the term “soft power” [12, p. 7]. Increasingly, China is looking to soft power to strengthen its global influence.

The groundedness of the notion of a community with a shared future for mankind is in Chinese traditional culture. The idea of such a community is seen as a symbol of Chinese civilisation for the global contribution of the PRC [10, p. 718].

Chinese president Xi Jinping outlined the following guiding principles for cooperation between states and peoples in the cultural sphere:

- maintaining cultural diversity (“...It is necessary to deal rationally with the differences between the culture

of one's own country and the cultures of other countries, realise the uniqueness of the culture of all countries and peoples, adhere to the principles of striving for unity while maintaining differences and borrowing strengths to offset the weaknesses. It is unacceptable to attack or deny other cultures" [16, p. 198–199];

- universal respect for the cultures of all countries and peoples ("...All countries and peoples must value and protect the spiritual component of their own culture, as well as recognise and respect the spiritual components of the culture of other countries and peoples" [16, p. 199]);

- interest in other cultures and cultural exchange ("...In the course of its long evolution, Chinese civilisation has absorbed much that is useful through contacts with other civilisations and has itself made an important contribution to the progress of human civilisation. The opening of the Great silk road, the mass arrivals of envoys from Japan to China during the Sui and Tang dynasties, the journeys to the West for Buddhist sutras by the monks Fa-Hsien and Xuan-Tsang, the seven maritime expeditions of Zheng He, and many other events are vivid examples of mutual contacts and the exchange of experience between Chinese and foreign cultures. Confucianism was originally a Chinese philosophical system, but has long since spread throughout the world" [16, p. 200]);

- scientific research into cultural traditions (...“In the study, research and use of traditional culture, people must relentlessly put the ancient at the service of the modern, develop the new based on a critical approach to the old, make accurate selections in accordance with modern practices and the requirements of the time...”) [16, p. 201].

The concept of global governance. The idea of a community with a shared future for mankind and the Belt and road initiative are linked to the concept of *global governance*, also fundamental to Chinese foreign policy in the Xi Jinping era. Chinese president defines the principles of global governance as follows: “Changing the system of global governance is impossible without guiding ideas. The demand for a more just and more rational global governance cannot be realised otherwise than by absorbing all the outstanding achievements of human civilisation. It is necessary to give a new impetus

to the innovative development of global governance ideas, actively seek the positive philosophy and concepts of governance in the depths of Chinese culture that would be consonant with the present day; continue to enrich such concepts as building a community with a shared future for mankind, promote mutual consultation, joint construction and sharing of achievements as a principle of global governance. It is necessary to build up our capacity and increase strategic investment, deepen global governance theory studies, and give top priority to training global governance professionals” [16, p. 323–324].

The concept of global governance envisions a new international reality, in which tectonic shifts of power among the geopolitical poles will usher in a new era in international relations. At the 70th session of the UN General Assembly on 28 September 2015 Xi Jinping remarked: “We must inherit and develop the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, create a new type of international relations, the core of which is mutually beneficial cooperation, build a community with a shared future for mankind” [16, p. 315].

In a similar vein, Chen Zhaohe argues that the Belt and road initiative starts a new wave of globalisation, promoting economic development and productive exchange among the civilisations; and creates a window of opportunity for the reform of the system of global governance, a new global order and a diverse community with a shared future for mankind [11, p. 830].

China's commitment to this new system of international relations global governance, the key elements of which include communities of shared future for mankind and the Belt and road initiative, was affirmed in the following statement of Xi Jinping: “China calls on the world to build together a community with a shared future for mankind, create a new type of international relations grounded in mutually beneficial cooperation. We call for the democratisation of international relations, the proper understanding of justice and benefit, and the peaceful resolution of differences and conflicts among states through dialogue and consultation. We will stand with all the nations to protect world peace, and promote equality, and justice, and shared prosperity” [16, p. 340].

Conclusion

The idea of a community with a shared future for mankind expresses China's present vision of international relations as an interdependent system in which the destinies of peoples are intertwined and mutually subordinated to facilitate universal success and progress.

Based on our analysis, the idea of a community with a shared future for mankind is grounded in the following founding principles:

- mutual understanding and respect, multilateral interaction in the humanitarian sphere (culture, education, art) and exchange among civilisations;
- coordinated political contacts and practices;
- unhindered and mutually beneficial economic contacts;
- guarantees of security (including in the humanitarian, political, and economic domains).

The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind is directly related to the Belt and road

initiative. Both concepts intersect in the humanitarian sphere, encompassing exchange and interaction in culture, arts, education, science, and popular diplomacy.

Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China is aspiring to a new international order and system of international relations, in which the principle of global gover-

nance plays a conceptually leading role. Conceptually, this order and system are grounded in the principles of global governance. Therefore, China's vision for the reform of the international vision is informed by three interconnected concepts which are a community with a shared future for mankind, the Belt and road initiative and global governance.

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