



Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

World Forum on China Studies

**Harmony and Peace: Implications of China's Development for
the World--Keynote Speech by Professor Wang Ronghua,
President of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, at the 2nd
World Forum on China Studies**

Respected guests, dear friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great delight to see scholars from around the world gathered in Shanghai in this best season of the year for the 2nd World Forum on China Studies. On behalf of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, the host of the forum, I would like to express my warm welcome and sincere thanks to all the participants for your kind presence.

The World Forum on China Studies is intended to function as a platform for the free exchange of ideas among scholars of all nations, so that achievements in the field of China Studies can be popularized widely and progress of the research can be facilitated effectively. Two years ago, the 1st World Forum on China Studies was held, and discussions themed on the Chinese principle of “harmony but not uniformity” greatly increased mutual understanding and expanded consensus among international academic groups on a host of topics addressed. The first forum was such a success that many scholars, shortly after the conclusion of the event, began to inquire about the following forum, ardently expecting another meeting of the minds.

The past two years have, of course, witnessed numerous new developments in China. Indeed, a series of innovations have been made in the theories of the Chinese-styled socialism, like the overarching concepts of “scientific approach to development”, “harmonious society”, “peaceful development”, “harmonious world”, and so on. It is on this basis that this second forum has taken up the theme of “China and the world: for harmony and peace”, as a deepening of the last theme of “harmony but not uniformity”, whereby the implications of the Chinese development for the whole world can be explored in an in-depth manner.

Since the initiation of its reform and opening-up, China has vastly increased its connections to the outside world, with its people's awareness of the world profoundly strengthened and interchange between Chinese culture and world cultures growing steadily. That China is an integral part of the world has become a keen perception of virtually every Chinese. In searching for development, we have consistently felt the expectations of China by the rest of the world, and at the same time are attempting to contribute our wisdom to the international community.

The international community today is considering this question: what will China's development bring to the world? Our most laconic answer is two key words: harmony and peace. Our cultural tradition, our social system as well as the ideals that we pursue all determine that "harmony" is both our core value and our natural policy option, just as peace is both our lofty expectation and our code of conduct in international relations. Development in China can be facilitated only by promoting harmony and safeguarding peace, and can proceed only in this direction. In the following, please allow me to elaborate a little bit on the connotation of China's development.

China's development is oriented towards the modernization of the country, whereby problems in China can be solved on its own for the benefit of the international endeavor of seeking peace and development. Over the past three centuries since the Industrial Revolution, Western powers rose typically by means of overseas expansion often connected with wars, so much so that the state of peace around the world were disrupted from time to time. Determined to embark upon a new course of emergence, China has based its development primarily on the notion of "putting its own house in order" by depending on its own efforts, doing well its own things. This strategy has proved successful, since the past two decades or so have seen the remarkable improvement in people's living conditions, and especially poverty reduction for about 300 million population. Lifting such a big number of people from poverty within such a short period of time is in every sense a substantial contribution to the human cause of peace and development. And this is a prominent example highlighting how "China influences the world constructively by reforming itself".

Two features are easily identified in China: massive territories; and wide development gaps among different regions. These two features provide a broad space for China's internal-focused development, making China in many ways a tremendous market on its own. Development in this country means the gradual process of achieving a high level of equilibrium and the steady realization of common prosperity for all through more efficient allocation of factors of production, cross-regional migration and effective interest adjustments, first of all, in the domestic setting. China experienced unprecedented social restructuring in the past twenty-odd years in terms of urbanization, social transformation and institutional reform. A huge market, dynamic, open, integrated and orderly, is taking shape across the board, constituting a

fundamental basis for the 1.3 billion people to produce and share wealth, both physical and spiritual. Particularly noteworthy has been the skillful handling of the nation-wide mass migration involving hundreds of millions of people, unusual in China's own history or other parts of the world. Modernization process in numerous countries would often involve the steady gathering and destructive release of migration pressures, resulting in violent expansions. China, however, has upheld the notion of "valuing people", and combined migration with the reduction of urban-rural dualism and regional imbalance, thus capitalizing on migration pressures in the interest of optimizing resource allocation and driving economic growth. The Chinese-styled comprehensive urbanization, which includes the development of rural towns and countryside reconstruction, perhaps opens a new path for tackling globally daunting problems related with population migration.

Development in China has, through opening up its market and integrating its factors of production into the world economy, provided business opportunities and sources of wealth to all. In the context of economic globalization, human resources in China have been turned into competitive production capabilities, thus attracting the flow of international production factors to China. Hence changes in the international division of labor, prices around the world, and the global system of supply and demand. The "China factor" in the world economy is expanding the volume of the global market on the one hand, and on the other hand, helping to curb the cost rise and any consequent worldwide inflation. With its economic weight of less than 5% of the global total, China has made a contribution of over 20% to the new expansion of the global economic growth and 30% to the new expansion of the global exports. That China can play such a role of a powerhouse in the global (and even more significantly Asian) economic growth is because it has great comparative advantages, especially in labor, and great economic potentials. To capitalize further on such advantages and potentials, it is imperative that order, harmony and sustainable development be maintained in the first place. When it stimulates its domestic consumption and thus increases its market volume, China is actually also promoting the expansion of the world market volume, aside from facilitating its domestic stability and prosperity.

China's development is achieved by learning, exploration, innovation, and construction. Having vast territories and a super-large population as well as long-time poverty, China is still very imbalanced among different regions in terms of the level of development. Development in China cannot escape the constraints of national conditions; nor can it proceed in isolation without being influenced by international factors. The given conditions both domestic and international mean that we must act very cautiously while being resolute and determined in reform, opening-up and development. Frankly speaking, in probing our road of peaceful development, we still lack adequate knowledge of the world market, and lack experience and expertise in operating in this market. So, we need to learn from success stories and failure cases as well in other countries. Learning is always intended to lead to our own innovation, whether in technology, in culture, or in institutions. The process of learning,

innovation and finally to the resolution of problems in China is certainly a process of interactions between China and the outside world, a process of showing the world our special characteristics, a process of presenting the Chinese wisdom, and a process of making our contribution to our own region and the rest of the world.

Dear friends, modernization in every country has invariably carried with it the cultural tradition and historical legacy of the nation. When such traditions and legacies are integrated into modernization, and then, into the world civilization, the special pattern, road and features of development take shape in the country. Naturally, such features of the Chinese culture as self-discipline, not going to extremes, emphasizing morality and tolerance, and not doing to others what you do not wish to be done to, leave their long-lasting imprints on the Chinese way of development, and will perhaps become even more obvious with the passage of time. Numerous concepts and values of the past can be transformed into new thinking relevant to the current day situation if there is a process of adaptation and rejuvenation. For example, the concept of “harmonious society” recently highlighted is just a latest product in the combination of classical philosophies and modern socio-political notions.

Confucianism rests its theory on two core concepts: “benevolence” and “harmony”, with “benevolence” mostly applying to interpersonal relations, and “harmony” applying more to social and political aspects. *The Book of History*, one of the “Five Classics” in China, advocates the ideal of “masses enlightened in benevolence and states united in harmony”, believing that benevolence and harmony give rise to eternal peace under the sky. To be sure, the “masses” and “states” mentioned here are not exactly the peoples and countries of this contemporary world. However, these two phrases from the earliest Chinese history book can really be acclaimed as a pioneering effort to seek “social harmony and world peace”. “Harmony” has, following the exalted expression in *The Book of History*, become a long-running treasured value in the legacies of the Chinese cultural tradition. Similarly, *The Book of Rituals*, another classic of Confucianism, is quoted as saying “when humanity under heaven becomes one community, great laws prevail.” Here, “community”, together with related values like trust and concord, is highlighted as the highest code of conduct. To realize a world community of peace, concord, and harmony, there are required trust, responsibility and tolerance. Despite the twists and turns in Chinese history, such values and concepts have remained at the bedrock of the Chinese culture, shaping the Chinese national spirit and casting the personality of Chinese individuals. Awakened by the contemporary development, these legacies now become rich intellectual resources for building a harmonious society and a harmonious world.

Building a “harmonious society” is both a natural requirement at this stage of socioeconomic development and a historical task not to be evaded. The core of a harmonious society is “valuing people”, which means that the comprehensive development of people should be the driving force and final objective for any development effort. The building blocks of a harmonious society include social equity,

interest coordination, social insurance, helping vulnerable groups, protection of the environment, secured mean of livelihood for all, public participation, good governance and transparency, etc. Only when harmony is ensured at the micro-level can there be a coordinated macro-level harmony among different social groups and different regions, and can we see a balanced development strategy enforced where economic, social, political, cultural and other aspects promote each other in a virtuous circle. It goes without saying that this multi-linear development objective presents to us a far more serious challenge than the more or less one-dimensional economic growth. However, this is a venture worth taking, since only comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development involved in the construction of a harmonious society can really live up to the test of history and reality. Indeed, only in this way can we say that we are being responsible to the world and to our posterity.

In line with the construction of a harmonious society in the domestic context, we propose to be committed to a “harmonious world” in the international context. If “peace” is the basic code of conduct underlying the relations among nations, “harmony” is a lofty value guiding the co-existence and common development among different international interests. Apparently, “harmony” is a further development or a deepening of “peace” in international relations. The Chinese have been a pioneer in proposing the construction of a harmonious world, but this is not an accidental fancy idea, nor a make-shift diplomatic strategy. Instead, it is a quite natural growth of the traditional Chinese culture, and a resurrection of the consistent policy that China practiced in international interactions. As early as the Ming Dynasty, Mateo Ricci, the Italian missionary in China admitted after studying the 4000-year Chinese history, and especially after comparing the Chinese and European history, that the Chinese were very contented with their status quo and cherished no ambition of overseas conquest. He also remarked that he had never seen any episode of Chinese history ridden with overseas expansion or conquest.

The People’s Republic of China, following its founding in 1949, has endorsed and practiced a consistent policy of peaceful diplomacy. In the 1950s, Zhou Enlai played a crucial role in formulating the well-known “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”; in the early 1980s, Deng Xiaoping proposed to implement “independent and peace-oriented diplomacy”; and since the turn of the century, the Chinese leadership has pledged to take a “path of peaceful development”, characterized by good-neighborhood. The continuity in the strategies of different generations of Chinese leaders demonstrates fully that China, in facing a complex world situation, has always regarded peace as a top priority and a most worthy goal, and this owes in no small way to their cultural orientation. China today is rapidly getting integrated to the international system and the world market against the background of fast globalization. As a responsible big country and a stakeholder in the international structure, China is seeking more lofty, more profound, and more broad-minded values and concepts. “Harmonious world” then becomes our inevitable option.

The thinking of “harmony” has now been turned into a basic value of the Chinese, encompassing visions of the whole nation and directing the interactions between China and the rest of the world. When such values and concepts find their way into the Chinese international behavior, China will be no other type of country but one of responsibility and trustworthiness. As a matter of fact, its efforts in this direction are already well recognized by the international community, whether in stabilizing the region, safeguarding world peace, strengthening the multilateral trading system, or in international humanitarian assistance. China’s aspirations and actions for a “harmonious world” come from our values, our ideals, our principles, and our visions.

Needless to say, there are still conflicts of interests, values, civilizations, races and ethnic groups as well as countries on this planet, or in other words, there are a myriad of unharmonious phenomena. But we are dedicated to the proposition and implementation of building a “harmonious world” in a world that is yet not harmonious. This is because we believe firmly that the Chinese culture is an integral part of the world civilization, just as the Chinese people is an organic component of humanity living in one global village; we believe firmly that in this highly diversified world, different civilizations, different nations, and different values can well communicate with each other, understand each other, accept each other, and appreciate each other; and we believe firmly that the human race has one common future, common fundamental interests, and common ultimate concerns.

Dear friends, it is certainly a process of twists and turns to evolve from an unharmonious world into a harmonious one. Chinese sages incarnated long ago the persisting spirit of “long and arduous is the journey, never shall I stop in my explorations.” We should follow and highlight this spirit of persistence in craving for a harmonious society, a harmonious world, and seeking to make greater contribution to the welfare of humanity.

Finally, may I wish this world forum on China studies reap a bumper harvest in its harmonious atmosphere of academic interactions; and may I wish all of our respected guests and friends enjoy a very wonderful time in Shanghai!

Thank you!

(The speaker is the Vice Chairman of Shanghai Committee of CPPCC, China, and Director, Organizing Committee of the World Forum on China Studies)

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