



Transcending western individualism: Ubuntu and Confucian thought as philosophical foundations for a "community with a shared future for mankind"

Dr. Taling Tene Rodrigue

Department of Film & TV Research, Institute of African Studies, College of African Countries and Regional Studies, Zhejiang Normal University, Yingbin road Jinhua Zhejiang, China

Abstract

This article examines how Ubuntu and Confucian thought provide robust non-Western philosophical foundations for conceptualizing global community, emphasizing mutual respect, relationality, and shared destiny as alternatives to Western individualism. Through comparative philosophical analysis and empirical examination of China-Africa relations, the study demonstrates that these relational ethics offer viable frameworks for addressing contemporary global challenges including climate change, health inequalities, and economic injustices. Ubuntu's communitarian maxim "I am because we are" and Confucianism's emphasis on Ren (仁, benevolence) and Li (礼, ritual propriety) converge in prioritizing collective well-being over atomized self-interest. The article analyzes their theoretical implications for global governance, explores their relevance within the Global South paradigm through dependency theory critique, and examines their practical manifestation in China-Africa cooperation under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This philosophical complementarity, embodied in China's "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" vision, demonstrates how non-Western ethical paradigms can reshape international relations toward multilateralism, mutual benefit, and solidarity. Ultimately, the paper concludes that by transcending the limitations of individualism, the communal ethics inherent in Ubuntu and Confucian thought provide essential conceptual tools for addressing pressing global challenges, thereby giving substantive meaning to a shared human future.

Keywords: Ubuntu, confucianism, global south, china-africa relations, community with shared future, global governance

Introduction

The contemporary global order confronts unprecedented challenges that expose fundamental limitations in the philosophical paradigms undergirding international cooperation. Climate change accelerates unabated despite decades of multilateral negotiations; economic inequality widens both within and between nations; pandemic responses reveal fractures in global health governance; and geopolitical tensions threaten the precarious architecture of international institutions. These interconnected crises share a common thread: they demand collective action, yet predominant frameworks for conceptualizing international relations remain anchored in Western liberal individualism—a tradition that privileges autonomy, individual rights, and market-based solutions over relational responsibilities and communal well-being. This ontological starting point, which conceives of persons as discrete, self-sufficient agents whose social ties are voluntary and contractual rather than constitutive, has proven inadequate for mobilizing the solidarity required to address challenges whose solutions depend fundamentally on recognizing our shared vulnerability and interdependence (Ikpeh 2025) [23]. Against this backdrop, this article proposes that two major non-Western philosophical traditions—Ubuntu from Sub-Saharan Africa and Confucianism from East Asia—offer conceptual resources for reimagining global community in ways that transcend individualist paradigms. Ubuntu, encapsulated in the Nguni aphorism "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" ("a person is a person through other persons"), articulates a relational ontology wherein personhood is constituted through relationships rather than existing prior to them (Mbiti 1969) [35]. Similarly, Confucianism conceives

of the "self" not as an autonomous rational agent but as a nexus of relationships defined by social roles, cultivated through practices of Ren (仁, benevolence or co-humanity) and Li (礼, ritual propriety or social harmony), oriented toward harmony (和, he) at familial, communal, and cosmic scales (Li 2008) [31]. Both traditions, despite arising from distinct historical and cultural contexts, converge in rejecting the individualist premise that moral agency inheres in isolated selves, instead grounding ethics in the quality of relationships and communal flourishing.

The significance of these philosophical frameworks extends beyond academic comparative philosophy. China's "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" (renlei mingyun gongtongti, 人类命运共同体), first articulated by President Xi Jinping in 2013 and subsequently adopted into the Chinese Communist Party's constitution in 2017, explicitly draws upon Confucian concepts of datong (大同, great harmony) and tianxia (天下, all under heaven) to propose an alternative vision for global order emphasizing win-win cooperation, mutual respect, and common prosperity (Xi 2023; Wang 2021) [59, 63]. Concurrently, Ubuntu has gained prominence in African discourses on development, governance, and international solidarity, informing approaches to restorative justice, public health, and environmental stewardship. The China-Africa partnership, particularly through institutional mechanisms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), represents a domain where these philosophical convergences find practical expression in South-South cooperation.

This article advances three central arguments. First, Ubuntu and Confucian thought provide theoretically robust alternatives to Western individualism by articulating relational ontologies wherein interdependence precedes and constitutes individual existence, thereby offering philosophical grounds for prioritizing collective well-being and mutual responsibility in global governance. Second, these philosophical frameworks align with post-colonial critiques of Western-centric development paradigms, as articulated in dependency theory and Global South scholarship, by legitimizing non-zero-sum cooperation, respect for diverse pathways to development, and rejection of conditionality in international assistance. Third, empirical analysis of China-Africa relations demonstrates both potential and challenges inherent in translating these philosophical principles into practice, revealing how Ubuntu-Confucian complementarity can inform more equitable international partnerships while acknowledging structural challenges including debt sustainability, sovereignty concerns, and asymmetric power dynamics. The conclusion synthesizes these arguments and proposes avenues for further research.

Philosophical Foundations of Ubuntu and Confucianism

The philosophical traditions of Ubuntu and Confucianism, though originating in distinct cultural and historical contexts, offer profound and convergent critiques of atomistic individualism. Both anchor human identity and moral purpose within a web of social relationships, providing sophisticated frameworks for understanding communal responsibility.

1. Ubuntu: Relationality and Shared Humanity

Ubuntu represents a family of closely related African philosophical and ethical traditions rooted in Bantu languages and cultures, though its influence extends throughout sub-Saharan Africa under various linguistic formulations (botho in Setswana, utu in Swahili, hunhu in Shona) (Ramose 2002) [44]. At its core, Ubuntu articulates a communitarian moral ontology wherein personhood—understood not merely as biological humanity but as moral and social status—is achieved through participation in relationships of mutual recognition, care, and reciprocity. This relational conception finds its most concise expression in John Mbiti's (1969) [35] axiom: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (p. 108). This formulation inverts the Cartesian "cogito ergo sum" that grounds Western philosophy, replacing rational self-certainty with relational co-constitution as the ontological starting point.

Several key principles structure Ubuntu philosophy:

First, Ubuntu interdependence's principle posits that human existence is fundamentally defined by interconnectedness. It emphasizes interdependence as the fundamental condition of existence, rejecting the possibility of the self-sufficient individual in favor of recognizing that human flourishing depends essentially on others' flourishing. This interdependence extends beyond human-to-human relations to encompass ancestors, unborn generations, and the natural environment, constituting what Murove (2009) [39] terms "afro-eco-communitarianism."

Second, Ubuntu communal personhood's principle foregrounds dignity and respect as universal entitlements rooted in shared humanity rather than individual achievement, captured in the principle that every person

deserves recognition simply by virtue of belonging to the human community. Communal personhood is famously encapsulated in the maxim "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu"—a person is a person through other people (Mbiti 1969) [35]. This concept asserts that personhood is not an intrinsic quality of an isolated individual but is achieved and affirmed through active participation and belonging within the community.

Third, Ubuntu reciprocal care's principle prescribes reciprocity and solidarity as ethical imperatives. This principle emphasizes that individual well-being is inseparable from the well-being of the community, mandating actions of compassion, empathy, and solidarity. Ramose's work emphasizes that Ubuntu is not merely a descriptive worldview but a normative framework for justice, law, and social order rooted in relationality (Ramose 2022) [2]. The "no one is safe until everyone is safe" directly instantiates Ubuntu's reciprocal cares principle.

2. Confucianism: Harmony through Relational Roles

Confucianism, originating in the teachings of Kongzi (孔子, Confucius, 551-479 BCE) and developed by subsequent thinkers including Mengzi (孟子, Mencius, 372-289 BCE), Xunzi (荀子, 313-238 BCE), and Neo-Confucian scholars like Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200), constitutes one of East Asia's most influential philosophical and ethical traditions, shaping Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, and other cultures' conceptions of personhood, family, governance, and cosmic order. While diverse in its historical manifestations, Confucianism consistently articulates a relational conception of the self-wherein personhood is defined not by intrinsic properties like rationality or autonomy but by the roles one inhabits and the quality of relationships one cultivates.

The central virtue in Confucian ethics is Ren (仁), variously translated as benevolence, humaneness, or co-humanity. The character itself combines the graphemes for "person" (人) and "two" (二), etymologically suggesting humaneness emerges in the space between persons rather than residing within isolated individuals. Confucius defines Ren variously throughout the Analects as loving others (12.22), desiring to establish oneself by establishing others (6.30), and manifesting virtues including loyalty (zhong, 忠), filial piety (xiao, 孝), and reciprocity (shu, 恕). Ren thus names both a particular virtue of care for others and a comprehensive excellence encompassing all moral virtues when fully realized. Crucially, Ren is cultivated through relationships, particularly within the family, extending outward through concentric circles to encompass all humanity and, ultimately, all things in the cosmos (Mencius 7A:15; Tu 1985) [57]. Complementing Ren, Li (礼, ritual propriety) designates the structured practices, ceremonies, and norms through which Ren finds concrete expression in social life. Originally referring to religious rituals and court ceremonies, Li encompasses all forms of propriety from daily etiquette to state governance. The Analects emphasizes that Ren and Li are inseparable: "If one is not Ren, what can Li accomplish?" (3.3), yet mastering Li cultivates Ren: "Restrain yourself and return to Li for one day, and all under heaven will return to Ren" (12.1). This dynamic captures Confucianism's pragmatic emphasis on practice over abstract principles: moral excellence develops through habitually enacting proper roles within structured

relationships rather than through rational reflection on universal maxims.

The Confucian self is fundamentally a "role-bearing self" constituted through the social positions one occupies: child, parent, sibling, friend, subject, and ruler. These roles are not merely external obligations imposed on a pre-existing autonomous self but are constitutive of who one is: to be a person is to be someone's child, someone's parent, a member of a community. The "Five Cardinal Relationships" (wu lun, 五伦)—ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder sibling-younger sibling, and friend-friend—provide the archetypal structure for this relational personhood (Mencius 3A:4). Importantly, these relationships are reciprocal: each party has corresponding duties, such that a ruler must govern with benevolence to merit subjects' loyalty, and a father must care for children to deserve their filial piety (Li 2008) [31].

Harmony (he, 和) represents Confucianism's ultimate ideal, manifesting at multiple scales: internal psychological harmony of virtues, familial harmony of roles properly enacted, social harmony of ritually ordered community, and cosmic harmony of human conduct aligned with natural patterns (Li 2008) [31]. The Doctrine of the Mean articulates this vision: "When the states of harmony and equilibrium are realized to the highest degree, heaven and earth will attain their proper order, and all things will flourish" (Legge

1893, 1.5) [30]. Importantly, Confucian harmony does not demand uniformity; the Analects distinguishes between him (和, harmony through blending differences) and tong (同, sameness through eliminating differences), endorsing the former: "The noble person harmonizes without being the same; the petty person is the same without harmonizing" (13.23). This "harmony with diversity" principle legitimizes pluralism within ordered hierarchy.

3. Comparative Analysis of Ubuntu and Confucian Relational Ethics and Communal Responsibility

3.1 key parallels

A comparative analysis reveals deep conceptual synergy between Ubuntu and Confucianism. Both exhibit remarkable convergences despite arising independently in vastly different geographical and historical contexts, suggesting these relational frameworks may address universal dimensions of human sociality overlooked by individualist traditions. Both philosophies fundamentally reject the notion of a pre-social, autonomous individual. In Ubuntu, one's humanity is affirmed by recognizing and caring for the humanity of others. In Confucianism, one's character is cultivated by fulfilling relational duties with sincerity and propriety.

The following table illustrates the main key parallels:

Philosophical Concept	Ubuntu	Confucianism
The Self	Relational and achieved: The self is a "node in a network of relationships". Personhood (umuntu) is achieved through communal participation.	Relational and role-based: The self is constituted by the social roles it inhabits (parent, child, ruler, subject). Moral competence develops through family feeling.
Source of Morality	Community: Moral duties arise from the inherent interconnectedness of the community. "I am because we are" implies that my well-being is tied to ours.	Social Roles & Harmony: Moral duties are defined by one's roles and the rituals (li) that maintain social harmony. Filial reverence (xiao) is the foundational moral training.
Ethical Goal	Social Harmony & Well-being: The aim is to foster mutual care, empathy, and solidarity to ensure collective flourishing and restorative justice.	Social Harmony & Order: The goal is a well-ordered society where individuals fulfil their roles virtuously, guided by benevolence (ren) and structured by ritual propriety (li).
Justice Conception	Restorative and relational: Focused on repairing social harmony and mutual well-being rather than punishment alone.	Restorative emphasis: Justice involves maintaining harmonious relationships and addressing root causes rather than purely punitive measures.

While Ubuntu emphasizes on ontology of being-with-others, Confucianism provides a structured "cultural grammar" for becoming a moral person, both arrive at the same conclusion: the foundation of a just and stable society is not the isolated individual, but the responsible, interconnected, and caring community.

3.2 Keys Divergences

Yet significant differences emerge upon closer examination :

First, Confucianism embeds relationality within explicitly hierarchical structures—parent over child, ruler over subject, elder over younger—where virtue consists partly in accepting and properly enacting asymmetrical role responsibilities. Ubuntu's relationality, while acknowledging seniority and respecting elders, emphasizes more egalitarian interdependence wherein all members of the community possess equal moral status as humans, with personhood achieved through reciprocal recognition rather than submission to authority.

Second, Confucianism provides highly specified role descriptions and ritual practices (Li) through which virtue manifests, whereas Ubuntu offers more general principles of respect, dignity, and solidarity whose concrete application depends on context.

Third, Confucianism historically focuses on state governance and political order, with the family serving as microcosm and training ground for ruling, while Ubuntu centers more on kinship and community maintenance, with political implications remaining somewhat underdeveloped in traditional discourse (though post-colonial African philosophy has increasingly addressed governance) (Gyekye 1997) [20].

These differences partly reflect contrasting historical conditions: Confucianism emerged during China's Warring States period (475-221 BCE) as a response to political fragmentation, hence its emphasis on hierarchical order and ritual as mechanisms for stability (Schwartz 1985) [51]. Ubuntu developed within small-scale, kinship-based societies where survival depended on mutual aid and where political hierarchy was less institutionalized, hence its

emphasis on egalitarian reciprocity. Notwithstanding these differences, both traditions offer conceptual resources for critiquing Western individualism and envisioning alternative foundations for global ethics.

Ubuntu-Confucian Relational Frameworks vs Western Liberal Framework

1. Contrast with Western Liberal Individualism

Western liberal political philosophy, tracing from Hobbes through Locke, Kant, Rawls, and contemporary rights theorists, grounds moral and political order in the concept of the autonomous individual as the fundamental unit of moral concern. This tradition conceives of persons as possessing inherent rights—to life, liberty, property, and various civil liberties—prior to and independent of social relationships, which are then voluntarily entered through consent, contract, or mutual advantage (Rawls 1971) [46]. The role of political institutions, on this view, is to protect individual rights while remaining neutral among competing conceptions of the good life, allowing each person maximum freedom to pursue their own ends constrained only by equal freedom for others. This individualist ontology generates characteristic approaches to global governance:

First, international cooperation is conceptualized primarily as mutually beneficial coordination among sovereign states (themselves understood as aggregations of individual citizens), justified by national interest or Pareto-improvement rather than intrinsic moral obligation to distant others.

Second, global justice debates frame obligations primarily in terms of respecting rights—civil, political, and increasingly socio-economic—understood as entitlements inhering in individuals qua rational agents.

Third, solutions to global problems tend to emphasize market mechanisms, individual responsibility, and technical fixes over structural transformation or collective mobilization. Ubuntu and Confucianism challenge these premises at multiple levels.

Ontologically, relational philosophies deny that autonomous individuals exist prior to relationships; personhood emerges through social embeddedness, making interdependence ontologically prior to independence. This reversal implies that obligations to others are not secondary duties contingent on voluntary agreements but constitutive of selfhood: caring for others is caring for the relationships that make one who one is.

Ethically, relationality generates particularist obligations that resist liberal impartialism: one's strongest duties run to family, community, and compatriots, extending outward in concentric circles rather than applying uniformly to all humans. Yet this particularism avoids parochialism through the principle that cultivating local relationships develops capacities for care that ultimately extend to universal concern.

Politically, relational frameworks reconceive sovereignty and international order. Rather than absolute sovereignty founded on state autonomy, Ubuntu-Confucian perspectives suggest "relational sovereignty" wherein states' legitimacy depends on fulfilling duties to their peoples and respecting interconnectedness with other polities. The Chinese concept of tianxia (天下, all under heaven) envisions world order as a harmonious family of nations with differentiated but reciprocal obligations, contrasting with Westphalian

anarchic equality (Zhao 2006) [65]. Ubuntu's emphasis on restorative justice over retributive punishment suggests alternative approaches to international conflict resolution prioritizing reconciliation and relationship repair over punishment (Tutu 1999) [58].

Illustrative table of Ubuntu-Confucianism vs Western Liberal Individualism in Global Governance

Governance Aspect	Liberal Individualist Framework	Ubuntu & Confucian Relational Framework
Primary Actor	The autonomous, rights-bearing state/individual	The interconnected, role-bearing community
Basis of Cooperation	Contractual agreements and calculated self-interest	Inherent moral duty, reciprocal care, and the pursuit of harmony
Concept of Justice	Retributive and rights-based; focused on legal process	Restorative and relational; focused on repairing social harmony and mutual well-being
View of Freedom	Freedom from interference (self, atomistic liberty)	Freedom to achieve flourishing within the community (molecular, relational liberty)

In a word, this contrast is not merely academic; it fundamentally reshapes the ethical imperatives for tackling shared global crises. A relational approach moves beyond the logic of sovereign self-interest to a logic of shared destiny and collective responsibility.

2. Limitations and Challenges of Relational Frameworks

Ubuntu-Confucian relational frameworks face several challenges when applied to global ethics:

- First, the "partiality problem". The central question here is: if moral obligations originate in proximate relationships—such as family and community—how can these duties extend meaningfully to distant strangers in ways that motivate genuine global solidarity? Both Ubuntu and Confucian traditions theoretically endorse a graduated expansion of care, moving outward from familial bonds toward universal humanity. However, translating this principle into practice proves considerably difficult. The psychological tendency to prioritize those closest to us, combined with deep-seated cultural particularities, creates substantial barriers to achieving the equity and impartiality that global ethics demands.
- Second, the "non-egalitarianism problem". This challenge stems from structural features embedded within both traditions. Confucianism historically organizes social relations through hierarchical principles—notably the "Five Cardinal Relationships" (wulun)—which prescribe differentiated roles and duties based on age, status, and position. Similarly, traditional Ubuntu, while emphasizing communal solidarity, has often operated within patriarchal structures that privilege male authority and heteronormative family configurations. These hierarchical and gendered dimensions create fundamental tensions with contemporary egalitarian commitments, particularly regarding gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights (Manzini 2018) [33]. The problem is not merely one of outdated cultural practices that can be

easily discarded; rather, hierarchy and role differentiation are often constitutive of how these ethical systems conceptualize proper human relationships. Consequently, advocates of Ubuntu-Confucian global ethics face a critical question: can these frameworks be reformed to accommodate egalitarian principles without undermining the relational foundations that give them distinctive moral force?

- Third, the "structural operationalization problem". The persistent difficulty of translating philosophical ideals into concrete institutional design. While both traditions offer rich normative visions of ethical relationality, they originated primarily as guides for interpersonal conduct and local community governance—not as blueprints for large-scale institutional architecture. This creates a significant operationalization gap. Contemporary global governance demands specific, enforceable mechanisms: legal frameworks with jurisdictional clarity, policy instruments with measurable outcomes, and bureaucratic structures with defined accountability chains. Ubuntu's emphasis on consensus-building (*indaba*) and Confucian reliance on moral cultivation of virtuous leaders (*junzi*) do not readily convert into the procedural, rule-based systems that characterize modern international institutions.

In sum, these relational frameworks retain considerable promise for enriching global ethical discourse. Yet realizing this potential requires neither uncritical adoption nor dismissive rejection, but rather the patient work of philosophical refinement, empirical testing, and institutional innovation. The challenge is therefore twofold: first, identifying which Ubuntu-Confucian principles can feasibly scale beyond face-to-face communities; and second, designing governance structures that preserve the relational and virtue-centered character of these traditions without sacrificing the transparency, consistency, and enforceability that effective global institutions require. Without addressing this implementation deficit, Ubuntu-Confucian global ethics risks remaining an aspirational discourse rather than a transformative institutional reality.

The Dynamics of the Global South and Non-Western Paradigms

1. Post-Colonialism and Dependency Theory

Understanding Ubuntu and Confucianism's relevance for global governance requires situating them within broader Global South critiques of Western-centric international order. Dependency theory, developed by Latin American and African economists in the 1960s-1970s, including Prebisch (1950) [42], Frank (1967) [19], Rodney (1972) [47], and Amin (1976) [5] challenged modernization theory's assumption that "developing" countries could follow Western industrialization pathways to prosperity. Instead, dependency theorists argued that "underdevelopment" was actively produced through colonialism and persists through neocolonial structures that subordinate Global South economies to core capitalist powers (Frank 1967; Amin 1976) [5, 19].

The dependency framework identifies several mechanisms of subordination:

- **First, unequal exchange:** Global South countries export low-value raw materials while importing high-

value manufactured goods, with terms of trade persistently favoring core economies (Prebisch 1950) [42].

- **Second, technological dependence:** innovations occur in core countries, leaving periphery countries reliant on imported technology and perpetually lagging (Amin 1976) [5].
- **Third, financial extraction:** debt servicing, profit repatriation by multinational corporations, and capital flight drain resources from periphery to core (Rodney 1972) [47].
- **Fourth, structural adjustment:** international financial institutions impose neoliberal policy conditionalities—privatization, austerity, deregulation—that undermine local industries and social safety nets. Collectively, these mechanisms produce the "development of underdevelopment" wherein Global South poverty results not from isolation but from specific forms of integration into global capitalism (Frank 1967) [19].

Post-colonial scholarship extends dependency theory's economic analysis to epistemological and cultural domains. Theorists including Said (1978) [50] and Mbembe (2001) [34] examine how colonialism and its afterlives operate through discursive power, positioning Western knowledge systems, values, and institutions as universal while marginalizing non-Western alternatives as "traditional," "backward," or "particular" (Said 1978) [50]. This epistemic violence justifies ongoing interventions—humanitarian, developmental, military—framed as bringing progress to societies deemed deficient by Western standards. Decolonial thinkers such as Achille Mbembe, etc. argue that genuine liberation requires not merely political independence but epistemic decolonization: recovering and valorizing indigenous knowledge systems, rejecting Western universalism's pretensions, and articulating alternative modernities grounded in non-Western philosophies (Mbembe 2001) [34].

2. Ubuntu and Confucianism as Epistemic Decolonial Resources

Ubuntu and Confucianism function as potent decolonial resources by providing non-Western philosophical foundations for alternative development paradigms that resist Western-centric assumptions. By articulating distinct conceptions of personhood, community, and political order, Ubuntu and Confucianism enable what post-colonial scholar's term "epistemic decolonization": the recovery and refinement of indigenous philosophical resources capable of grounding genuinely pluralist approaches to modernity.

2.1 Ubuntu's Communitarian Vision: A Third Way Beyond Western Dichotomies

Ubuntu's communitarian ethic fundamentally challenges the individualist anthropology that undergirds both liberal capitalism and socialist collectivism as conventionally conceived in Western thought. This ontological reorientation offers what Mogobe Ramose (2002) [44] characterizes as a "Third Way," grounded in African social organization and irreducible to Western ideological dichotomies. Archbishop Desmond Tutu captured Ubuntu's

decolonial significance with characteristic eloquence: "Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language... It is to say, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in what is yours'" (Tutu 1999, p. 31) [58]. This linguistic irreducibility is philosophically instructive—Ubuntu resists easy translation precisely because it operates from fundamentally different premises about selfhood, society, and moral obligation.

▪ **Political Application: Restorative Justice as Alternative Legal Practice**

Post-apartheid South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): The Post-apartheid South Africa's TRC exemplified Ubuntu's political application in transformative governance. The TRC prioritized restorative justice and collective healing over retributive punishment, departing decisively from Western legal norms that emphasize individual culpability and punitive sanctions (Tutu 1999) [58]. This institutional innovation demonstrated that Ubuntu could move beyond philosophical abstraction to inform concrete governance mechanisms addressing profound historical injustice. Beyond the TRC, Ubuntu has profoundly shaped South Africa's post-apartheid constitutional jurisprudence. The Constitutional Court has explicitly invoked Ubuntu in landmark decisions, establishing it as an interpretive principle informing constitutional adjudication. Yvonne Mokgoro articulated Ubuntu's jurisprudential significance: "While it envelops the key values of group solidarity, compassion, respect, human dignity, conformity to basic norms and collective unity, in its fundamental sense it denotes humanity and morality" (Mokgoro 1998) [72].

Rwanda's Gacaca Courts: Community-Based Genocide

Justice: Perhaps the most ambitious post-TRC application of Ubuntu-inflected restorative justice emerged in Rwanda's Gacaca court system (2001–2012), established to address the overwhelming caseload generated by the 1994 genocide. With approximately 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu killed in one hundred days, conventional court proceedings would have required over a century to process the estimated 1.2 million accused perpetrators. Rwanda's government revived and adapted the traditional Gacaca (meaning "grass," referring to community gatherings on village lawns) system, creating over 12,000 community courts that ultimately processed nearly two million cases (Clark 2010) [68]. The Gacaca system operationalized Ubuntu principles through several distinctive mechanisms. Community members served as judges (Inyangamugayo, "persons of integrity"), selected by neighbors for their moral standing rather than legal credentials—reflecting Ubuntu's emphasis on communal wisdom and collective moral authority. Proceedings prioritized confession, truth-telling, and community reintegration over incarceration; perpetrators who confessed fully and sought forgiveness received substantially reduced sentences, often involving community service rather than imprisonment. Victims and survivors participated directly in proceedings, sharing testimony and confronting perpetrators in ways that conventional courts preclude. The explicit goal was ubwiyunge (reconciliation) and ubudehe (collective action for mutual assistance)—restoring social fabric rather than merely punishing wrongdoing (Ingelaere 2016) [70].

Critics raised legitimate concerns: procedural protections fell below international fair trial standards; community pressure sometimes coerced confessions; and survivors frequently experienced re-traumatization through confrontation with perpetrators. Nevertheless, the Gacaca system demonstrated Ubuntu's scalability—its capacity to address mass atrocity through community-based mechanisms when conventional judicial institutions prove inadequate. International observers increasingly recognize Gacaca as a significant experiment in transitional justice, informing debates over post-conflict reconstruction from Colombia to the Democratic Republic of Congo (Bornkamm 2012) [67].

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights—Ubuntu in Constitutional Design:

Ubuntu principles have shaped not only transitional justice mechanisms but also foundational legal documents. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), also known as the Banjul Charter, represents the most significant continental institutionalization of Ubuntu philosophy in binding international law. Unlike the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Western-derived successors, which emphasize individual rights against state power, the African Charter explicitly recognizes "'collective' or 'peoples' rights and individual duties to community"—a distinctive framework reflecting Ubuntu's relational ontology. Article 27 of the Charter declares that "every individual shall have duties towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community," while Article 29 specifies duties including preservation of family cohesion, service to the national community, and strengthening African cultural values. This reciprocal framework—rights balanced by responsibilities, individual entitlements grounded in communal membership—operationalizes Ubuntu's conviction that personhood emerges through relationship rather than existing prior to social bonds (Cobbah 1987) [69]. The Charter's recognition of peoples' rights to existence, self-determination, natural resources, economic development, and peace similarly reflects Ubuntu's communitarian orientation, extending moral standing beyond individuals to collectives.

While critics argue that duties language can be—and has been—manipulated by authoritarian governments to suppress individual freedoms, defenders contend that the African Charter offers a more culturally authentic human rights framework than Western instruments that assume atomistic individualism (Ibhawoh 2000) [7]. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, established in 2004, increasingly interprets Charter provisions through Ubuntu-informed jurisprudence, developing a distinctively African human rights tradition.

▪ **Contemporary Philosophical Development: Critiquing Western Development Models**

Contemporary African philosophy increasingly mobilizes Ubuntu to mount systematic critiques of Western development paradigms. Ramose (2007) [45] argues that African political philosophy must reject both liberal individualism and Marxist-Leninist materialism in favor of Ubuntu's relational ontology—an ontology that recognizes spiritual dimensions and communal solidarity marginalized by Western secular philosophies. Complementing this

critique, Kwame Gyekye (1997) [20] articulates "moderate communitarianism" as a viable alternative to both radical individualism and authoritarian collectivism, carefully balancing individual rights with communal responsibilities in ways responsive to African social realities.

Furthermore, scholars applying Ubuntu to environmental governance contend that it provides robust philosophical grounds for rejecting extractive development models predicated on resource exploitation and ecological commodification. In their place, Ubuntu supports sustainable, community-led stewardship that recognizes humanity's embeddedness within broader ecological and spiritual relationships (Le Grange 2015; Murove 2009) [29], [39]. This environmental dimension demonstrates Ubuntu's capacity to address contemporary global challenges—climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental justice—from distinctively African philosophical premises.

2.2 Neo-Confucian Political Theory: Toward a Progressive Non-Western Modernity

Confucianism similarly offers substantial resources for conceptualizing non-Western modernity, though its contemporary articulation requires careful differentiation from authoritarian appropriations, instead articulating progressive Confucian political theory that reconciles hierarchical relationality with democratic participation, meritocratic governance, and protection of basic rights.

▪ Moral Cultivation and Leadership Ethics: The Junzi Ideal in Practice

Confucianism's emphasis on moral self-cultivation (修养xiuyang) as the foundation of good governance finds institutional expression in China's extensive apparatus for ideological education and cadre training. The Central Party School and its provincial counterparts provide ongoing ethical and ideological formation for officials, explicitly incorporating Confucian classics alongside Marxist-Leninist and Xi Jinping Thought curricula. Anti-corruption campaigns, particularly intensified since 2012, are framed not merely as legal enforcement but as moral rectification—restoring the ethical integrity that Confucianism demands of those exercising political authority.

The ideal of the junzi—the morally cultivated exemplary person who leads by virtuous example rather than coercive force—permeates official discourse on leadership. Government officials are exhorted to embody de (德, virtue), demonstrating personal integrity, frugality, and dedication to public service. The Confucian concept of zhengming (正名, rectification of names) appears in campaigns demanding that officials fulfill the authentic responsibilities of their positions rather than merely occupying titles. While significant gaps persist between rhetorical ideals and actual practice, the normative framework remains explicitly Confucian in orientation.

▪ China's Development Trajectory—Benevolent Governance and Long-Term Planning

China's development trajectory operates within explicitly Confucian norms across multiple dimensions: the developmental state enacting benevolent governance; meritocratic selection cultivating competent, virtuous leadership; harmony principles orienting policy toward social cohesion; moral cultivation shaping official conduct;

minben(民本) grounding legitimacy in popular welfare; and tianxia(天下) extending relational ethics to global engagement. These features constitute a coherent alternative to Western liberal-democratic capitalism—one that cannot be dismissed as mere authoritarianism dressed in cultural rhetoric.

In fact, at the core of China's development model lies the concept of the developmental state—a strong, centralized government that actively guides economic transformation while claiming moral responsibility for collective welfare. This institutional arrangement resonates deeply with Confucian political philosophy, particularly the ideal of renzheng (仁政, benevolent governance), wherein rulers bear ethical obligations to ensure the material and moral flourishing of the populace. Unlike the liberal minimal state, which limits government intervention to protect individual liberty, the Confucian-inflected developmental state assumes expansive responsibilities: poverty alleviation, infrastructure provision, educational access, and social stability.

China's successive Five-Year Plans exemplify this orientation toward long-term, strategic governance. Rather than responding to short-term electoral cycles characteristic of Western democracies, Chinese policymakers operate within extended temporal horizons—a practice consistent with Confucian emphasis on intergenerational responsibility and the cultivation of enduring social harmony. The explicit policy goal of achieving xiaokang (小康, moderate prosperity)—a term drawn directly from Confucian classical texts, specifically the Book of Rites (Liji)—illustrates how ancient philosophical concepts have been mobilized to frame contemporary development objectives. President Xi Jinping's declaration in 2021 that China had achieved a "moderately prosperous society in all respects" represented not merely an economic milestone but a fulfillment of Confucian social ideals spanning millennia.

▪ The New Confucianism Movement—Critical Engagement with Western Philosophy

China's post-1978 development trajectory—combining market-oriented economic reforms with centralized governance and selective appeals to Confucian values—has generated significant scholarly debate. The central question remains contested: does this model represent a legitimate Confucian alternative to Western liberal democracy, or does it constitute precisely the instrumentalization that progressive Confucians seek to overcome? This very contestation demonstrates Confucianism continuing relevance to contemporary debates over political order, economic development, and cultural identity. The "New Confucianism" (新儒家) movement, developing since the mid-twentieth century, exemplifies the critical retrieval project that addresses this dilemma. New Confucian scholars engage substantively with Western philosophy—including liberalism, democracy theory, and human rights discourse—while asserting distinctive Confucian contributions to ethics, politics, and metaphysics (Tan 2012) [55]. Mou Zongsan (牟宗三, 1909–1995), widely regarded as the most systematic New Confucian philosopher, engaged extensively with Kantian moral philosophy to articulate Confucianism's distinctive contribution to ethical theory argued that Confucian moral metaphysics—grounded in the concept of liangzhi (良知, innate moral knowledge)

articulated by Wang Yangming—offers resources for understanding moral autonomy that parallel yet transcend Kantian formulations. His concept of "self-negation" (ziwo kanxian) proposed that Confucian moral consciousness must temporarily "step back" to allow space for democratic institutions and scientific inquiry—a creative synthesis acknowledging Western contributions while preserving Confucian foundations (Mou 1991).

Tu Weiming (杜维明), perhaps the most internationally influential New Confucian scholar, developed the concept of "Confucian Humanism" as a framework for dialogue with Western liberal thought. Working from Harvard University, Tu argued that Confucianism offers a relational, communitarian humanism distinct from—yet compatible with—Western individualist humanism. His articulation of "Multiple Modernities" challenged the assumption that Westernization constitutes the sole path to modernity, positioning Confucian societies as developing alternative modern forms grounded in indigenous philosophical resources (Tu 2000). Tu's scholarly diplomacy facilitated substantive dialogue between Confucian and Western philosophers, demonstrating that cross-cultural engagement need not entail cultural subordination. Crucially, this engagement is neither defensive nor derivative; it positions Confucianism as a living philosophical tradition capable of internal development, self-correction, and cross-cultural dialogue. Progressive Confucian scholars thus face a dual task: articulating how authentic Confucian principles might ground genuinely emancipatory governance, while rigorously critiquing appropriations that betray those principles in service of authoritarian ends.

In sum, Ubuntu and Confucianism constitute invaluable decolonial resources for constructing alternative philosophical foundations that challenge Western hegemony in global ethical and political discourse. However, their decolonial potential can only be realized through sustained critical engagement that distinguishes emancipatory interpretations from authoritarian appropriations, and through rigorous philosophical work that refines these traditions for contemporary global challenges.

3. South-South Cooperation and Non-Zero-Sum Paradigms

The philosophical complementarity between Ubuntu and Confucianism finds institutional expression in South-South cooperation frameworks, particularly China-Africa partnerships. The Bandung Conference (1955) inaugurated the Non-Aligned Movement, articulating principles of mutual respect, non-interference, sovereign equality, and mutual benefit that contrasted with Cold War bloc politics and colonial paternalism. These principles, derived from Zhou Enlai's "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" (和平共处五项原则) and resonating with Ubuntu's egalitarian reciprocity, established a normative framework for Global South solidarity.

Contemporary South-South cooperation builds on this foundation while adapting to changed geopolitical conditions. China's emergence as a global economic power has enabled massive infrastructure investment, trade expansion, and technology transfer to Africa and other Global South regions. The FOCAC established in 2000, institutionalizes these partnerships through triennial ministerial conferences, three-year action plans, and

Chinese financial commitments that have grown from billions to over \$60 billion by 2018 (FOCAC 2018) ^[16]. The BRI, launched in 2013, extends this framework globally with over 150 participating countries (NDRC 2015) ^[40].

Proponents argue these initiatives operationalize Ubuntu-Confucian principles of mutual benefit, non-conditionality, and win-win cooperation, contrasting with Western aid's neoliberal conditions and donor-recipient hierarchies (Taylor 2009) ^[56]. Chinese officials consistently invoke "friendship," "sincerity," "equality," and "mutual benefit" (真实亲诚, zhen shi qin cheng) in describing China-Africa relations, drawing on both Ubuntu's solidarity ethic and Confucian relationality (Wang 2021) ^[59]. African leaders emphasize that Chinese cooperation respects sovereignty and allows recipient countries to set development priorities rather than imposing external agendas (Ramaphosa 2018; Kenyatta 2019) ^[43].

Critics counter that China-Africa cooperation reproduces neocolonial patterns: raw material extraction in exchange for infrastructure, debt accumulation creating "debt trap diplomacy," labor practices that exclude African workers, and support for authoritarian regimes (Alden 2007; Brautigam 2020) ^[9]. These critiques warrant serious engagement, yet dependency theory reminds us that judging South-South cooperation by whether it replicates Western development pathways imposes precisely the epistemic violence post-colonial theory challenges. The question becomes: do China-Africa partnerships enable more autonomous development trajectories and equitable global integration than previous/alternative arrangements, even if imperfectly realized?

China-Africa Relations within the Broader Global South Context

1. Historical Overview and Institutional Frameworks

China-Africa relations extend back centuries through Indian Ocean trade networks, but contemporary partnerships trace to the 1950s-1960s when China supported African independence movements and Zhou Enlai toured the continent articulating Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. During the Cold War, China provided modest development assistance, most notably funding the TAZARA railway (Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority, 1970-1976), framed as Third World solidarity rather than strategic competition (Monson 2009) ^[38].

Post-1978 economic reforms transformed China's capacity for African engagement. Trade grew from \$12 million (1978) to \$282.1 billion (2023), with China becoming Africa's largest trading partner since 2009 (China Ministry of Commerce 2024) ^[13]. Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in Africa exceeded \$40 billion by 2023, concentrated in infrastructure, extractives, manufacturing, and services (China Ministry of Commerce 2024) ^[13]. The FOCAC, established in 2000, institutionalized these relationships through regular high-level meetings and programmatic commitments (FOCAC 2000) ^[15].

FOCAC operates through triennial ministerial conferences alternating between China and African capitals, summit meetings when Chinese presidents attend, and three-year action plans specifying cooperation priorities. As of 2024, FOCAC includes 53 African countries (all except Eswatini, which maintains diplomatic relations with Taiwan) plus the African Union Commission (FOCAC 2024) ^[17]. Key

principles codified in FOCAC declarations include: mutual respect and equal consultation, mutual benefit and common development, mutual learning and win-win cooperation, close coordination on international affairs, and non-interference in internal affairs (FOCAC Beijing Declaration 2018, 2024) ^[16, 17].

2. Philosophical Complementarities in Practice

FOCAC explicitly invokes philosophical frameworks aligning Ubuntu and Confucianism with China's "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind." The 2024 Beijing Declaration states: "We decide to jointly build an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era... upholding the principles of sincerity, real results, amity and good faith, and pursuing the greater good and shared interests" (FOCAC 2024, p. 1) ^[17]. This language synthesizes Confucian harmony (he, 和), Ubuntu solidarity, and Marxist dialectical materialism in articulating an alternative global order (Wang 2021) ^[59]. Several domains illustrate these principles' practical manifestation:

▪ Infrastructure Development

China has participated in building/upgrading over 10,000 km of railways, 100,000 km of highways, 1,000 bridges, 100 ports, and 66,000 km of power transmission lines in Africa (State Council Information Office 2023) ^[53]. Major projects include the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (Kenya, completed 2017), Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway (Ethiopia-Djibouti, completed 2018), and Abuja-Kaduna Railway (Nigeria, completed 2016). These infrastructure investments address Africa's \$100 billion annual infrastructure deficit and enable regional integration (African Development Bank 2018) ^[2].

From an Ubuntu-Confucian perspective, infrastructure cooperation manifests relationality through enabling connectivity—literally and metaphorically linking communities previously isolated. Chinese officials frame infrastructure as creating conditions for mutual flourishing rather than extracting resources, though critics note projects often facilitate resource export (Mohan & Lampert 2013) ^[37]. The non-conditionality principle contrasts with World Bank/IMF requirements, allowing African governments to prioritize infrastructure over Western-prescribed governance reforms (Brautigam 2009) ^[8].

▪ Healthcare Cooperation

Healthcare cooperation exemplifies Ubuntu's communal care ethic and Confucian benevolence (ren). China's framing emphasizes solidarity and mutual assistance rather than charity: "China and Africa are good friends, good partners and good brothers sharing weal and woe... We must stick together in collaboration to protect people's lives and health" (Xi 2020) ^[62]. Practically, China has dispatched over 2,000 medical personnel to Africa annually, with 46 Chinese Medical Teams (CMTs) maintaining continuous presence since 1963, treating over 200 million Africans (State Council Information Office 2023) ^[53]. During COVID-19, China provided 200 million vaccine doses to Africa, sent medical expert teams, established hospital partnerships, and committed to building the Africa CDC headquarters (State Council Information Office 2023) ^[53]. The 2024 FOCAC Beijing Action Plan pledges establishing a Chinese-African hospital alliance, constructing joint medical centers, implementing 20 healthcare facility and malaria elimination

programs, and training 10,000 medical professionals (FOCAC 2024) ^[18]. The hospital pairing mechanism creates ongoing relationships rather than one-time interventions, embodying relational rather than transactional approaches. Concurrently, African medical professionals report that CMTs transfer skills, work collaboratively rather than assuming sole authority, and remain even during crises when Western expatriates often evacuate—practices consistent with Ubuntu's reciprocity (Liu et al. 2019) ^[32].

▪ Educational and Human Resource Development

China provides approximately 10,000 government scholarships annually for African students, with over 80,000 Africans studying in China as of 2018 (Ministry of Education 2018) ^[36]. The 2024 Action Plan commits to training 60,000 African professionals, implementing 30 poverty reduction and agricultural demonstration projects, and establishing 10 Luban Workshops for vocational training (FOCAC 2024) ^[18]. These programs address human capital development, technology transfer, and South-South knowledge sharing. From a Confucian perspective, education represents the fundamental path to cultivating virtue and enabling harmonious governance. African students' exposure to Chinese development models offers alternatives to Western paradigms, though critics worry about ideological influence (Kuo & Kommenda 2018) ^[28]. Ubuntu's emphasis on intergenerational knowledge transmission aligns with China's focus on skills transfer rather than merely providing finished products.

▪ Agricultural and Food Security Cooperation

China has established 30 agricultural demonstration centers across Africa, trained thousands of agricultural technicians, and invested over \$100 billion in African agriculture (State Council Information Office 2023) ^[53]. Programs include greenhouse cultivation, biogas promotion, mushroom farming using Chinese technology, and improved seed varieties. The 2024 Action Plan commits China to providing \$1 billion in emergency food assistance, implementing 100 agricultural enrichment projects, and supporting agricultural industrialization (FOCAC 2024) ^[18]. Agriculture cooperation directly addresses food security—a fundamental prerequisite for Ubuntu's vision of community flourishing. The emphasis on demonstration centers and training reflects technology transfer consistent with reducing dependency. However, critics note Chinese agricultural investment sometimes involves large-scale land acquisitions that displace smallholders, contradicting Ubuntu's communal land ethic (Brautigam & Zhang 2013) ^[10].

3. Belt and Road Initiative in Africa

The BRI, while global in scope, has Africa as a major focus, with investments in railways, ports, power plants, and industrial parks across the continent (State Council Information Office 2019) ^[52]. As of 2024, 52 African countries and the African Union have signed BRI Memoranda of Understanding (State Council Information Office 2023) ^[53]. Total Chinese financing for African BRI projects exceeded \$400 billion between 2013-2023 (American Enterprise Institute China Global Investment Tracker 2024) ^[4]. BRI articulates explicitly Confucian-inflected principles: "peaceful development, win-win cooperation, harmonious coexistence, inclusive and shared development, and mutual learning among civilizations"

(NDRC 2015, p. 3) ^[40]. The initiative frames infrastructure connectivity as enabling "policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonds"—the "Five Connectivities" (wu tong, 五通) echoing Confucian emphasis on relationality (NDRC 2015) ^[40]. Chinese officials frequently invoke datong (大同, great harmony) and tianxia (天下, all under heaven) as animating BRI's vision of shared prosperity (Zhao 2018) ^[66].

Empirical assessments reveal mixed outcomes. Benefits include: addressing Africa's \$100 billion annual infrastructure deficit; creating employment (estimated 100,000+ jobs directly, millions indirectly); enabling regional integration through cross-border infrastructure; and providing financing without neoliberal policy conditionalities (African Development Bank 2018; Brautigam 2020) ^[2, 9]. Challenges include: debt sustainability concerns, with several countries (Zambia, Kenya, Ghana) facing repayment difficulties; labor practices favoring Chinese workers over local employment; environmental and social safeguard deficiencies; lack of transparency in contracting; and allegations of enabling corruption (Acker & Brautigam 2021) ^[1].

The "debt trap diplomacy" narrative, prominently advanced by Western critics, alleges China deliberately over-lends to seize strategic assets when countries default, citing Hambantota Port (Sri Lanka) as exemplar (Chellaney 2017) ^[12]. However, rigorous empirical research finds limited evidence for systematic debt trap strategies; most Chinese debt restructuring has been cooperative, and debt problems result from multiple factors including commodity price shocks, governance failures, and borrowing from diverse creditors (Brautigam 2020) ^[9]. Deborah Brautigam concludes: "There is very little evidence of deliberate Chinese 'debt trap diplomacy'... the reality is more complex and nuanced" (Brautigam 2020, p. 45) ^[9].

4. Practical Manifestation of Africa's Ubuntu Principles toward China

The philosophical synergy between African Ubuntu and Chinese Confucianism finds concrete expression in the multifaceted, reciprocal support that Africa extends to China. Moving beyond a simplistic donor–recipient framework, this engagement reflects Ubuntu's core tenets of mutual support and shared destiny, encapsulated in the notion "I am because we are". Africa's proactive partnership provides China with substantial economic, diplomatic and strategic advantages, cementing a win–win relationship central to both parties' global ambitions.

4.1 Economic Imperatives: Markets, Resources and Investment Returns

Africa's role as a crucial economic partner for China is demonstrated by the explosive growth in bilateral trade and investment, which underscores an interdependence that benefits both sides:

- **Market diversification and expansion:** With a rapidly growing population and increased consumer demand, Africa serves as a crucial export destination for Chinese goods. The surge in bilateral trade from 145 billion USD in 2015 to an estimated 295 billion USD in 2024 provides an outlet for China's industrial capacity and mitigates risks associated with over-reliance on traditional markets in Europe and North America (Statista, 2024).
- **Strategic resource security:** Access to Africa's abundant natural resources—including oil, minerals and agricultural products—is vital for fuelling China's industrial economy, and Chinese FDI in mining and extractives, at around 30 per cent of its total investment, secures long-term supply chains for critical inputs (UNCTAD, 2024).
- **Profitable capital deployment:** Chinese FDI in Africa, which reached 4.8 billion USD in 2023, generates significant returns for Chinese state-owned enterprises and private firms (UNCTAD, 2024) ^[7]. Investments in infrastructure, constituting approximately 45 per cent of FDI, create opportunities for Chinese construction and engineering companies and build logistical networks that facilitate broader trade and resource flows, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of economic benefit (Brautigam, 2009; UNCTAD, 2024) ^[8].

This economic symbiosis shows that Africa is not merely a recipient of aid but an active participant that contributes to China's economic vitality and strategic resource security.

4.2 Strategic Gains Beyond Resource Extraction

China's deep engagement with Africa is a multifaceted strategy that yields substantial economic, geopolitical and strategic returns. While access to Africa's natural resources is an important component, China's strategic gains extend far beyond simple extraction. The partnership serves as a cornerstone of China's broader global strategy, offering diverse benefits as illustrated in the table below:

China Strategic gain	Description (of Strategic Benefits across Africa)
Ideological, Political and Soft power Influence	Mainly exerted through the promotion of "China's development model" as an alternative to Western liberal democracy, emphasizing state-led economic growth, non-interference in domestic affairs, and South-South solidarity—disseminated via party-to-party exchanges, media partnerships (CGTN Africa, StarTimes), Confucius Institutes, educational scholarships, and strategic cultural diplomacy under frameworks like FOCAC, all while positioning China as a fellow developing nation and partner rather than a colonial power. Moreover, by positioning itself as a partner for development without the political conditionalities often attached to Western aid, China enhances its soft power and bolsters its credentials as a leader of the Global South (Mawdsley, 2012).
Advancing Technological Standards	Companies like Huawei and ZTE have built extensive telecommunications networks across Africa, while fintech and e-commerce platforms have gained widespread adoption, allowing Chinese firms to refine products and establish international standards (Gagliardone, 2019).
Infrastructure expertise	Large-scale infrastructure projects provide overseas experience and revenue for Chinese construction and engineering firms, reinforcing their global competitiveness (Brautigam, 2009).

4.3 Geopolitical Leverage and the Shaping of Global Norms

The unwavering diplomatic support from African nations provides China with indispensable geopolitical capital, enabling it to bolster its international standing and challenge existing global governance structures:

- **A unified diplomatic front:** The 54 African nations form a powerful voting bloc within the United Nations and other multilateral bodies, and their collective support is crucial for defending China against international criticism and promoting Chinese candidates to key global agencies.
- **Endorsement of China's global vision:** Widespread African support for initiatives such as the BRI and GDI lends credibility to China's foreign policy by framing its ambitions as collaborative efforts to foster global development (FOCAC, 2018) ^[16].

This transforms the relationship into a powerful alliance that actively reshapes the global order toward a more multipolar and development-focused future.

5. Implications for Global South Solidarity

The relationship between China and Africa, underpinned by the philosophical principles of Ubuntu, manifests as a deeply reciprocal and mutually beneficial partnership that transcends the traditional donor–recipient narrative. Africa's tangible contributions to China's economic growth, diplomatic standing and strategic ambitions solidify this partnership as a cornerstone of South–South cooperation. The China–Africa relationship serves as a powerful and practical blueprint for Global South solidarity, presenting an alternative development model centered on infrastructure, mutual respect and non-interference. Africa's proactive engagement thus creates a win–win dynamic grounded in shared development and diplomatic reciprocity and contributes to the emergence of a more multipolar and development-focused global order.

Ubuntu-Confucian Paradigms' Implications in International Relations and Global Ethics

1. Reshaping Global Governance: Multilateralism and Mutual Benefit

Adopting Ubuntu and Confucian inspired paradigms could fundamentally reshape global governance by replacing competitive, zero-sum international relations with cooperative, positive-sum frameworks. Current international institutions—UN Security Council, IMF, World Bank, WTO—reflect post-WWII power distributions and Western preferences for liberal market economics and representative democracy. These institutions operate through formal equality among sovereign states but reproduce substantive hierarchies through voting structures (UNSC veto, IMF/World Bank weighted voting), conditionality mechanisms (structural adjustment programs), and agenda-setting dominated by wealthy nations.

Ubuntu-Confucian principles suggest alternative institutional designs:

- Multilateralism grounded in relationality recognizes that addressing transboundary challenges requires inclusive participation but allows differentiated contributions reflecting varying capacities, consistent

with Confucian reciprocal hierarchy and Ubuntu's particularist obligations. This contrasts with both absolute sovereignty (which enables powerful states to opt out of cooperation) and coercive universalism (which imposes uniform standards ignoring context). China's concept of "a community of shared future" proposes such differentiated multilateralism: "We should build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity" (Xi 2023) ^[63].

- Economic cooperation emphasizing complementarity over competition challenges neoliberal globalization's assumption that market competition optimally allocates resources. Confucian economics, drawing on classical texts' emphasis on sufficiency, equitable distribution, and ruler's responsibility for popular welfare, legitimizes state-directed development, industrial policy, and prioritizing employment over efficiency. Ubuntu's principle of sharing surplus to meet community needs justifies progressive taxation, social safety nets, and resource redistribution (Wiredu 2009) ^[60]. BRI's emphasis on infrastructure connectivity over financial liberalization reflects these priorities as well.
- Restorative rather than retributive approaches to international conflicts applies Ubuntu's reconciliation ethic to international relations. Traditional international law emphasizes state responsibility, reparations, and sanctions—retributive mechanisms. Ubuntu suggests prioritizing relationship repair, acknowledging harms, and establishing conditions for peaceful coexistence. This approach could better inform international conflict resolution and conflicts' mediation.

2. Addressing Contemporary Challenges: Global Health Security, Climate Change and Economic Justice

Applying the principles of Ubuntu and Confucianism to contemporary global challenges reveals pathways for more robust and ethically grounded collective action. These philosophies provide the conceptual tools to reframe problems not as external threats to national interests but as ruptures in the fabric of a shared global community. Let's consider the following three exemplary problems:

▪ Pandemic Response and Global Health Security

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed how individualism undermines collective health. Countries emphasizing individual freedom over collective obligation—such as the United States—experienced higher transmission and mortality rates than societies with stronger communitarian norms (Bavel et al. 2020) ^[6]. Vaccine nationalism, where wealthy countries hoarded doses while global vaccination rates lagged, exemplified how aggregating individual/national interests produces globally suboptimal outcomes (Eccleston-Turner & Upton 2021) ^[14].

Ubuntu's communal responsibility ethic directly addresses these failures. The recognition that "no one is safe until everyone is safe" implies that community health is constitutive of individual health, not merely instrumentally related. South Africa's COVID-19 response incorporated Ubuntu principles through community-based contact tracing, collective adherence to public health measures framed as mutual care, and solidarity with neighboring countries (Olivier 2021) ^[41]. Ubuntu has made significant

inroads into global health ethics, offering alternatives to autonomy-centered Western bioethics. The principle of informed individual consent—foundational to Western research ethics—sits uneasily in communitarian societies where decisions involve families and community leaders rather than isolated individuals. Ubuntu-informed bioethics proposes relational models of consent and decision-making that acknowledge communal dimensions without abandoning protections for vulnerable populations (Metz & Gaie 2010). During the HIV/AIDS crisis, Ubuntu principles informed community-based care models across southern Africa, emphasizing solidarity with affected persons against stigmatization and exclusion. Ubuntu's insistence that personhood diminishes through exclusion provided philosophical grounding for destigmatization campaigns and community support networks. Home-based care programs, volunteer caregiving initiatives, and support groups drew explicitly upon Ubuntu values of mutual responsibility and communal care (Louw 2006) [71].

Confucian ethics grounds health obligations in relationality and role responsibilities. The concept of tianxia as a unified human family legitimizes international health cooperation as fulfilling relational duties rather than charitable supererogation (Xi 2020) [62]. China's 2020 Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against COVID-19 explicitly invoked these principles, with President Xi stating: "In the face of the pandemic, no country can stay unaffected and no one can remain unscathed. Only through solidarity and cooperation can we ultimately defeat the virus" (Xi 2020) [62], illustrating how relationality can inform health diplomacy emphasizing solidarity over transactional exchange (State Council Information Office 2023) [53]. China pledges to make vaccines "global public goods" and prioritize Africa's access reflects Confucian benevolence (ren) and Ubuntu solidarity.

Despite criticism over implementation revealing gaps between rhetoric and reality, with voices pointing at China's vaccine diplomacy involving complex negotiations, delayed deliveries in some cases, and tensions over vaccine efficacy (Bridge Consulting 2021) [11]. With critics questioning about whether solidarity rhetoric masks strategic competition for influence (Rolland 2020) [48]; yet comparative analysis shows China provided more vaccines to low-income countries relative to GDP than any Western nation, suggesting genuine albeit imperfect commitment to equitable access (Huang 2022) [22].

▪ **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

Liberal individualism struggles with climate action because greenhouse gas emissions impose diffuse, temporally delayed harms on distant others and future generations, generating classic collective action problems where rational self-interest produces collectively catastrophic outcomes. Market-based solutions like carbon pricing attempt to align individual incentives with collective welfare but face political resistance from those bearing short-term costs, and they fail to motivate the fundamental transformation of consumption patterns that climate stabilization requires (Klein 2014) [27].

Relational frameworks reframe climate ethics by recognizing planetary interdependence. Ubuntu's extension of relationality to non-human nature and future generations in one part makes environmental stewardship a direct obligation rather than optional altruism (Le Grange 2015)

[29]. Confucian harmony (he) between human activity and natural patterns (tian) in other part prescribes living within ecological limits.

Empirically, China has become the world's largest renewable energy investor, accounting for over 50% of global solar and wind capacity additions (IEA 2023) [25]. China-Africa green cooperation includes 30 clean energy demonstration projects under the 2024 FOCAC Action Plan, technology transfer for solar/wind, and support for Africa's renewable energy industrialization (FOCAC 2024) [18].

However, China remains the world's largest emitter (30% of global CO₂), continues financing coal plants in Africa and Asia, and prioritizes economic growth over emission reductions (Climate Action Tracker 2024). This gap between philosophical ideals and developmental imperatives illustrates implementation challenges. The Neo-Confucian idea of li (理, cosmic pattern or principle—distinct from 礼, ritual) suggests humans should discern and align with natural patterns rather than impose anthropocentric designs (Zhang & Barr 2013) [64]. Contemporary Chinese environmental policy discourse increasingly invokes Confucian "ecological civilization" (shengtai wenming, 生态文明) as an alternative to Western industrial models, though implementation often lags rhetoric (Hansen, Li & Svarverud 2018) [21].

Ubuntu principles inform African climate adaptation strategies. Community-led disaster risk management in Malawi, Kenya, and the Sahel employs traditional knowledge systems, participatory vulnerability mapping, and collective early warning systems—practices consistent with Ubuntu's communal problem-solving. These approaches contrast with top-down, technocratic Western climate interventions that often ignore local knowledge and undermine community autonomy.

▪ **Economic Justice and Inequality Reduction**

Liberal theories of global distributive justice debate whether affluent individuals and nations have duties to assist the global poor, typically ground affirmative conclusions either in universal human rights or in causal responsibility. Dependency theory demonstrates that global inequality results from structural exploitation, not individual failures (Amin 1976; Rodney 1972) [5, 47]. Relational ethics grounds obligations to transform these structures. In fact, Ubuntu and Confucianism provide philosophical grounding for alternative economic paradigms emphasizing mutual benefit, equitable exchange, and collective development rather than zero-sum competition. Ubuntu's principle that collective well-being constitutes individual well-being implies wealthy nations/individuals cannot flourish sustainably while others suffer deprivation. The African Union's Agenda 2063 and China's BRI invoke these principles, framing South-South cooperation as reciprocal partnership rather than donor-recipient charity (African Union 2015; NDRC 2015) [3, 40].

Practically, China-Africa economic cooperation attempts to operationalize these principles through tariff exemptions, industrial capacity cooperation, and technology transfer. The 2024 summit's commitment to grant tariff-free treatment to least developed African countries on 100% of tariff lines represents unprecedented market access (FOCAC 2024) [17]. Though, structural trade imbalances persist: Africa's exports to China remain concentrated in raw

materials (crude oil, minerals), while China exports manufactured goods, machinery, and electronics. African industrialization requires moving up value chains, yet Chinese import competition sometimes crowds out local manufacturing.

3. Global Applicability of Ubuntu-Confucian Frameworks : Limitations and Pathways Forward

Though offering compelling philosophical foundations for alternative global ethics, the translation of philosophical ideals into institutional practices within international relations reveals significant limitations. Rather than dismissing Ubuntu-Confucian frameworks as impractical, let's identify specific implementation gaps while proposing empirically grounded pathways forward.

3.1 Institutionalization Obstacles: Transforming Global Governance Architecture

▪ Limitations

Cultural Translatability : Can philosophies rooted in specific cultural contexts legitimately inform universal global ethics without constituting neo-imperialist imposition of particular values upon diverse populations? This tension manifests concretely in UN deliberations. China's advocacy for "community of shared future for mankind" as a guiding principle for global governance has encountered resistance from Western delegations who perceive it as ideological packaging for Chinese interests rather than genuinely universal ethics. Similarly, African states' invocations of Ubuntu principles in human rights debates—particularly regarding collective versus individual rights emphasis—have been dismissed by some Western observers as cultural relativism masking human rights violations. The 2018 UN Human Rights Council resolution on "promoting mutually beneficial cooperation" (A/HRC/RES/37/23), sponsored by China and supported by many African states, illustrates this contestation. Western states opposed the resolution, arguing it diluted individual rights protections; proponents contended it reflected non-Western relational approaches to human rights. Neither position engaged substantively with whether Ubuntu-Confucian principles could genuinely enrich—rather than undermine—universal human rights frameworks.

Structural Resistance: Translating Ubuntu-Confucian principles into international law and institutions faces formidable obstacles. Existing multilateral institutions—the UN Security Council, Bretton Woods financial institutions, World Trade Organization—reflect Western preferences embedded during post-World War II institution-building when African and Asian states were largely colonized or marginalized. Institutional inertia, combined with powerful states' resistance to reforms diminishing their influence, constrains transformative change.

United Nations System Limitations. Within the UN system, Ubuntu-Confucian principles encounter multiple institutionalization barriers:

Security Council Reform Deadlock: Proposals to expand permanent membership to include African and additional Asian representation—necessary for legitimating non-Western governance philosophies—remain blocked by existing permanent members protecting veto privileges. The Ezulwini Consensus (2005), articulating African common

position on Security Council reform, has achieved no implementation despite two decades of advocacy.

Human Rights Council Polarization: Ubuntu-Confucian emphases on collective rights, duties, and developmental approaches to human rights encounter Western resistance within the Human Rights Council. Rather than substantive dialogue exploring potential syntheses, debates often devolve into mutual accusations—Western states charging relativism; non-Western states charging cultural imperialism—without productive engagement.

Development Finance Architecture: The World Bank and IMF governance structures weight voting power by financial contribution, systematically marginalizing African and smaller Asian states. Despite rhetoric of "voice reform," substantive redistribution of decision-making authority remains minimal. African states collectively hold approximately 6% of IMF voting power despite comprising 28% of member states.

Alternative Institutions' Limitations: Alternative institutions—BRICS New Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, African Development Bank—remain peripheral to global governance rather than transformative alternatives. The NDB capitalization (100 billion USD authorized, approximately 50 billion USD subscribed) remains modest compared to World Bank (approximately 300 billion USD lending portfolio). AIIB, despite rapid growth, similarly operates at scales insufficient to fundamentally reshape development finance architecture. Alternative institutions also lack coordination mechanisms enabling coherent challenge to dominant frameworks. BRICS institutions, African Development Bank, AIIB, and bilateral development finance institutions operate independently, fragmenting potential collective influence.

▪ Pathways Forward

Institutional Translation Mechanisms: Establishing formal processes within UN bodies for articulating how non-Western philosophical traditions might inform specific policy domains—development, peacebuilding, environmental governance—would move beyond rhetorical invocation toward substantive engagement.

UN Reform Advocacy: Sustained advocacy for Security Council expansion, General Assembly empowerment, and Human Rights Council procedural reforms incorporating non-Western philosophical perspectives. Specific proposals should articulate how Ubuntu-Confucian principles might inform reformed institutional mandates—for example, emphasizing mediation and restorative approaches in Security Council conflict resolution.

Regional Governance Development: Developing regional governance mechanisms in Africa and Asia explicitly grounded in Ubuntu-Confucian philosophies provides laboratories for institutional experimentation. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights' emerging Ubuntu-informed jurisprudence exemplifies this potential; parallel developments in ASEAN or other Asian regional bodies could advance Confucian governance principles.

Alternative Institution Strengthening: Expanding NDB, AIIB, and African Development Bank capitalization and

mandate; developing coordination mechanisms among alternative institutions; and articulating distinctive governance philosophies differentiating these institutions from Bretton Woods's counterparts.

Benchmarking and Evaluation: Establishing clear benchmarks for evaluating whether cooperation embodies mutual benefit and relational ethics enables accountability beyond rhetorical commitment. Independent monitoring bodies—potentially including academic institutions, civil society organizations, and multilateral observers—could assess compliance with stated principles.

Scholarly-Policy Dialogue: Fostering sustained dialogue translating philosophical concepts into actionable policies—involving philosophers, international relations scholars, policymakers, and practitioners—bridges the gap between abstract principles and institutional design.

3.2 Power Asymmetries: Philosophy Cannot Overcome Material Inequality

▪ Limitations

Structural Inequality in China-Africa Relations: Philosophical frameworks cannot by themselves overcome material power disparities. China's economic and military superiority vis-à-vis African countries creates structural inequality that philosophical rhetoric may obscure rather than resolve. China's GDP (approximately 17.9 trillion USD, 2023) dwarfs the entire African continent's combined GDP (approximately 2.9 trillion USD, 2023), creating asymmetry that shapes every dimension of engagement regardless of philosophical framing (IMF 2024) [24]. This asymmetry manifests practically through Chinese firms often control key decisions in joint ventures; technology transfer remains limited despite rhetorical commitments; African businesses struggle to penetrate Chinese markets despite China's extensive market access to Africa; and negotiating capacity differs dramatically between Chinese state institutions and African counterparts (Mohan & Lampert 2013) [37].

FOCAC—Multilateral Rhetoric, Bilateral Reality: The FOCAC exemplifies tensions between multilateral framing and asymmetric practice. While FOCAC's triennial summits present China-Africa cooperation as partnership among equals, actual negotiations occur bilaterally between China and individual African states—fragmenting African bargaining power and enabling differentiated terms that China can exploit. The African Union's participation in FOCAC has increased since 2018, reflecting African efforts to present unified positions. However, the AU lax enforcement mechanisms ensuring member states adhere to collectively negotiated terms; individual countries facing urgent financing needs frequently accept conditions below collectively stated preferences. FOCAC's Action Plans articulate ambitious commitments, yet monitoring mechanisms verifying implementation remain weak, and African civil society participation in FOCAC processes remains minimal (Bodomo 2020) [7].

BRICS—Emerging Alternative or Reproduced Hierarchy? The BRICS formation (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and its 2024 expansion to include Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE ostensibly

provides Global South platforms for articulating alternative governance frameworks. However, power asymmetries within BRICS replicate rather than transcend hierarchical dynamics. China's economic dominance within BRICS mirrors Western dominance in Bretton Woods's institutions; smaller members' influence remains circumscribed by material capacity differentials. For example, The BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), established in 2014 as an alternative to World Bank financing, has disbursed over 30 billion USD in loans. While NDB lending avoids explicit policy conditionality characteristic of IMF/World Bank structural adjustment, critics note that Chinese infrastructure companies disproportionately benefit from NDB-financed projects, and governance structures give larger economies greater effective control despite formal equality provisions (Stuenkel 2016) [54].

▪ Pathways Forward

Addressing power asymmetries requires concrete structural measures rather than philosophical reframing alone.

Progressive Debt Restructuring: Developing transparent frameworks for debt sustainability assessment, restructuring mechanisms that prioritize debtor development needs, and multilateral approaches preventing individual creditors from extracting preferential terms. China's participation in the G20 Common Framework for debt treatment represents initial progress, though implementation has proven slow and inadequate.

Technology Transfer Without Restrictive Conditions: Establishing binding commitments for technology transfer in priority sectors—renewable energy, digital infrastructure, manufacturing—with monitoring mechanisms verifying compliance. Current commitments remain largely voluntary and unenforceable.

Joint Venture Governance Reform: Requiring African equity participation, management representation, and decision-making authority in Chinese-financed projects proportionate to projects' presence in African economies. Empirical research should examine which governance structures maximize local benefit retention.

FOCAC Institutional Reform: Strengthening African Union coordination capacity; establishing permanent FOCAC secretariat with African co-leadership; creating civil society consultation mechanisms; and developing independent monitoring systems for Action Plan implementation.

BRICS Governance Democratization: Reforming NDB governance to ensure smaller members' effective voice; establishing transparency requirements for BRICS-affiliated institutions; and developing intra-BRICS mechanisms for addressing members' human rights and governance concerns.

3.3 Gender and Inclusion: Patriarchal Legacies Requiring Transformation

▪ Limitations

Limitative Traditions: Traditional formulations of both Ubuntu and Confucianism include patriarchal elements that contradict contemporary gender equality commitments and

limit these frameworks' emancipatory potential. Confucian hierarchical relationality historically subordinated women within family structures; the "three obediences" (三从sancong)—to father before marriage, husband during marriage, son in widowhood—institutionalized female dependence (Rosenlee 2006) [49]. Traditional Ubuntu, while emphasizing communal solidarity, frequently confined women to domestic spheres, excluded them from political deliberation, and sanctioned patriarchal authority within kinship structures (Manzini 2018) [33].

Progressive Reinterpretations: Feminist scholars within both traditions articulate progressive interpretations that challenge patriarchal readings while remaining grounded in Ubuntu-Confucian philosophical resources. Li Chenyang (2020) [2] argues that Confucian relationality, properly understood, emphasizes reciprocity and mutual cultivation incompatible with hierarchical domination; authentic Confucian relationships require each party's flourishing, precluding arrangements systematically subordinating women. Ikpeh (2025) [23] similarly argues that Ubuntu's core commitment to mutual recognition and collective flourishing provides resources for feminist critique of patriarchal practices claiming Ubuntu legitimization; practices diminishing women's personhood violate rather than embody Ubuntu principles.

▪ Pathways Forward

Feminist Policy Integration: Ensuring progressive gender interpretations inform policy implementation requires institutional mechanisms: gender impact assessments for all cooperation projects; women's participation requirements in consultation processes; gender-responsive budgeting for development financing; and support for women's economic empowerment initiatives.

Civil Society Engagement: Supporting African and Asian women's organizations to participate in FOCAC, BRICS, and other cooperation platforms ensures that progressive interpretations inform deliberations rather than remaining confined to academic discourse.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Ubuntu and Confucian thought provide robust philosophical foundations for conceptualizing global community in ways that transcend Western individualism's limitations. By grounding personhood in relationality rather than autonomy, emphasizing collective flourishing over atomized self-interest, and prescribing reciprocity and solidarity as ethical imperatives, these traditions offer conceptual resources urgently needed to address contemporary global challenges requiring cooperation across difference.

The philosophical complementarity between Ubuntu's communitarian maxim "I am because we are" and Confucianism's cultivation of Ren (仁, benevolence) through Li (礼, ritual propriety) oriented toward He (和, harmony) demonstrates that non-Western traditions independently converged on relational ethics. This convergence suggests these frameworks may capture universal dimensions of human sociality that individualist philosophies marginalize. Yet this universality-in-difference respects cultural particularity: Ubuntu and Confucianism

offer alternative pathways to similar insights rather than imposing uniform doctrine.

Situating these philosophies within Global South contexts reveals their significance for decolonial politics and development. Dependency theory's critique of Western-centric development models finds philosophical grounding in Ubuntu-Confucian relationality, which legitimizes non-zero-sum cooperation, mutual respect, and rejection of conditionality. China's "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind," while imperfectly realized, articulates an alternative vision for international order drawing explicitly on these traditions.

Empirical analysis of China-Africa relations through FOCAC and BRI reveals untapped development potential. China-Africa cooperation constitutes the most significant contemporary experiment in applying Ubuntu-Confucian principles to international relations. Its outcomes—whether genuinely mutual benefit or reproduced hierarchy with philosophical packaging—will substantially determine these frameworks' credibility as alternatives to Western-dominated global governance. The stakes extend beyond China-Africa relations to fundamental questions about whether non-Western philosophical traditions can inform genuinely pluralist global ethics capable of addressing humanity's collective challenges. Meeting these stakes requires moving beyond philosophical articulation toward the difficult, contested, empirically grounded work of institutional transformation.

Most fundamentally, this article argues for epistemic pluralism in global ethics and international relations. The dominance of Western philosophical frameworks in international discourse does not reflect their universal superiority but rather historical power asymmetries that post-colonial critique exposes. Ubuntu, Confucianism, and other non-Western traditions offer alternative starting points that may prove more adequate for addressing challenges—pandemics, climate change, inequality—whose solutions depend on recognizing our fundamental interdependence. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu observed: "A person is a person through other persons. Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the summum bonum—the greatest good" (Tutu 1999) [58]. This insight, shared across African and East Asian wisdom traditions, provides philosophical ground for building the global community of solidarity that our shared vulnerabilities demand. Ubuntu and Confucianism, with their sophisticated frameworks of relational ethics, communal responsibility, and harmonious coexistence, offer precisely the philosophical resources needed for this transformative undertaking. As the 21st century unfolds and the Global South continues to rise, these non-Western voices must be central to the conversation about humanity's shared future.

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