

# The Core Values of Harmonious Philosophy: Implications on International Ethics

ZHANG Lihua

Tsinghua University, Beijing, China

This paper mainly explores the ideological roots of conflicts and wars in the international community. From a human-nature perspective, it analyzes how five negative aspects of human nature: greed, hatred, obsession, arrogance, and suspicion, influence the foreign policies and behaviors of state leaders, resulting in international conflicts and wars. It expounds on the fundamental connotations of the core values of traditional Chinese ideology of harmony: benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*). Furthermore, it examines their implications for contemporary international ethics. The paper further discusses new thoughts on promoting the good in human nature and mitigating its negative tendencies within international relations, with the aim of preventing global conflicts and wars.

*Keywords:* harmonious philosophy, core values, international ethics, implications

## Introduction

On February 24, 2022, the Russia-Ukraine war broke out. On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched attacks against Israel and took Israeli hostages. In response, Israel carried out intensive airstrikes on the Gaza Strip, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatening to occupy the entire territory. On June 13, 2025, Israel launched missile strikes against Iran, which prompted fierce retaliation. Subsequently, Israel conducted air raids on parties like Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and other countries. Israel's acts of war provoked strong opposition from Arab states across the Middle East. In September 2025, more than 50 Muslim countries convened in Qatar to discuss a united resistance to Israel's aggression. In October of the same year, under the strong pressure of international public opinion and the coordination of major powers, Israel signed a ceasefire agreement with Hamas and exchanged hostages with each other.

In today's world, humanity has entered an era of high technology and artificial intelligence (AI), in which AI is profoundly transforming human life. The emergence of nuclear weapons and advanced AI-based weaponry poses unpredictable threats to humankind. Although the world is governed by the United Nations and various regional organizations across continents, and although international law and global ethics are in place, the wars between Russia and Ukraine continue unabated, and even intensify. In this era of rapid technological advancement and globalization, why do conflicts and wars among nations persist? What are the ideological roots behind such confrontations? How to mitigate or eliminate conflicts and wars between states? These pressing questions call for serious reflection.

Throughout history, great powers waging war to invade and annex smaller and weaker nations has been a repeated and common occurrence. Yet, empires that relied on war, plunder, and conquest to expand their dominion ultimately met with inevitable downfall, evidenced by the ancient Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great, the Kushan Empire, and the Timurid Empire; the medieval Seljuk Empire, Mongol Empire, and Carolingian Empire; as well as the modern Russian, Napoleonic Empires, and Second Reich Empire. In historical periods devoid of international law and moral principles of global ethics, aggression and conquest by powerful states against weaker ones were the prevailing norm. Countless nations and city-states were destroyed in one devastating war after another.

Since ancient times, countless sages and thinkers have struggled to seek the ideals and pathways of love and peace. In the 7th century BCE, the Prophet Muhammad founded Islam on the Arabian Peninsula, advocating mutual assistance and compassion among humankind. In the 6th century BCE, Siddhartha Gautama established Buddhism in ancient India, promoting the principles of compassion and universal salvation. In the 1st century CE, Jesus Christ founded Christianity, teaching that one should “love others as you love yourself”. These prevailing world religions share a common aspiration—to promote love and goodness and to reconcile hatred and enmity among people.

Throughout history, renowned thinkers have also devoted themselves to exploring the path toward human peace. Ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle explored the morality and ethics, while the German philosopher Immanuel Kant put forward the theory of “perpetual peace”. In ancient China, sages such as *Laozi* and Confucius advocated for reverence of the natural order (*tao*) and inner virtue, harmony in diversity, and peaceful coexistence—ideas that became the cornerstone of the Chinese traditional ideology of harmony. After World War II, a new academic discipline known as *irenology* emerged in the West, dedicated to exploring ways to eliminate all forms of violence and to build a just and peaceful world through nonviolent means of social governance. In the contemporary era of rapid scientific and AI advancement, high-tech weaponry continues to proliferate. Yet, if ethical and moral development fails to keep pace, humanity’s sustainable development will face profound crises and potential catastrophe. This paper focuses on examining the ideological roots of international conflicts and wars from the perspective of human nature, elaborating on the fundamental connotations of the core values of benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*) in traditional Chinese ideology on harmony, and analyzing their moral and ethical implications for contemporary international relations.

### **The Ideological Roots of International Conflicts and Wars**

Different theoretical schools offer varying explanations for the ideological origins of international conflicts and wars. From a Marxist perspective, ever since the emergence of class society, the ruling classes of states have pursued external expansion in order to maximize the interests of their hierarchies—this pursuit constitutes the fundamental root of international conflicts and wars. In capitalist societies, the monopolistic bourgeoisie, which occupies the dominant position, seeks to maximize profits, thereby giving rise to continual conflicts and wars. Vladimir Lenin famously asserted that “imperialism is war”. Realist theory, by contrast, places state power, interests, and “security” at the core of state behavior, arguing that the primary driving force in interstate relations is the pursuit of national interests. In an “anarchic” international system, states must rely on the accumulation of power, including military, economic, political, and geopolitical influence, to safeguard their security and interests. The relative strength of a state determines its position in the international hierarchy. However, the growth of one

state's power is inevitably perceived by others as a "threat", provoking counter-expansion and creating a vicious cycle of "arms build-up results in arms build-up", which ultimately leads to inter-state conflict and war. Colonialist ideology has historically asserted that "strong nations have a natural right to dominate the weak", viewing the plunder of resources and the division of spheres of influence through war as legitimate and justified. Religious extremism, meanwhile, regards groups outside one's own faith as "heretics" or "barbarians", and frames conquest over them as a righteous or divinely sanctioned act. Extreme nationalism, in turn, absolutizes the interests and values of one's own nation, denying or demeaning the survival rights and equality of other ethnic groups.

The aforementioned perspectives reveal the roots of international conflicts and wars from various angles and dimensions, offering valuable insights. This paper examines the ideological origins of conflicts and wars in the international community from the perspective of human nature. It further expounds on the fundamental connotations of the core values of traditional Chinese ideology of harmony: benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*). Furthermore, it examines their implications for contemporary international ethics. The paper further discusses new thoughts to resolve international conflicts and wars.

Human nature constitutes the sum of all social relations. Living within complex social relations, human beings are shaped by modes of production, class struggles, and interest differences, which together form the multifaceted character of human nature. Like all phenomena, human nature possesses dual aspects—both positive and negative. The good side of human nature brings happiness and harmony to human life, whereas the negative side brings harm and disaster. The author believes that the core values of traditional Chinese ideology on harmony—benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*)—embody the positive side of human nature, while the Buddhist conception of the "five poisons" of the human mindset—greed, anger, delusion, arrogance, and doubt—reveals its negative side. When the values of human goodness are applied in a state's foreign policy, they contribute to international peace and cooperation. Conversely, when the principles of human evil influence a state's foreign policy, they provoke inter-state conflicts and wars. Therefore, it is essential to examine the ideological roots of international conflicts and wars from the perspective of human malevolence. The author asserts that the human evil in international relations can be summarized as follows.

### **Insatiable Greed: Conquest and Expansion**

Selfishness and greed represent the most prominent manifestations of the darker aspects of human nature. Throughout history, rulers of numerous great powers have adhered to the principles of "survival of the fittest" and "the law of the jungle", believing that powerful states are justified in using military force to conquer others, seize wealth, and expand their territories. This insatiable ambition has often driven aggressive expansion and exploitation, as stronger states impose their will upon weaker ones.

From 808 BCE to 168 BCE, the Kingdom of Macedonia, located in northwestern Greece, unified the Greek peninsula, and after occupying Egypt, continued its external expansion. King Alexander of Macedonia aimed to conquer what was legendary as the "ends of the world". Leading his armies, Alexander defeated and annexed the vast Persian Empire, advanced into territories north of Arabia and Persia, and penetrated the Indus River basin. He established a sprawling empire stretching from Greece and Macedonia in the west to the Indus River in the east, from the Nile in the south to Babylon in the north as its capital—becoming the largest empire in history to span Europe, Asia, and Africa. In June 323 BCE, after encountering resistance in the Ganges region, Alexander

returned to Babylon, where he suddenly fell ill and died at the age of 32. Although the Macedonian Empire contributed significantly to the spread of Greek civilization, this vast empire, built primarily through military force and conquest, collapsed soon after Alexander's death, fragmenting into several smaller kingdoms.

In the early 18th century, Tsar Peter I of Russia launched wars against Sweden and other Baltic states to secure a maritime outlet for his country. After two decades of the Great Northern War, Russia defeated Sweden and its allies, acquiring extensive territories around the Baltic Sea and gaining access to its ports. In the latter half of the 18th century, under the rule of Empress Catherine II, Russia waged prolonged campaigns against the declining Ottoman Empire, ultimately defeating it, annexing the Crimean Peninsula, and securing access to the Black Sea, while also gradually absorbing territories in Central Asia. Nevertheless, the seemingly invincible Russian tsardom was ultimately overthrown and destroyed in the artillery fire of World War I.

From the late 18th to the early 19th century, Napoleon Bonaparte, the ruler of France, adhered to the principle that "the truth is only within the cannon range", defeating various European states through aggressive warfare and temporarily conquer much of the European continent. In 1801, he established the Napoleonic Empire. However, after Napoleon's failed invasion of Russia, Russia joined forces with other European powers to form the War of the Sixth Coalition, ultimately defeating Napoleon's army. By 1815, the Napoleonic Empire was completely dismantled.

### **Envious Hatred: Provoking Conflict**

Envy and hatred are also prominent manifestations of the darker aspects of human nature. Those possessed by such mindsets cannot bear to see others succeed, harboring intense envy and anger toward anyone perceived as superior. Driven by a compulsive need to compete and dominate, these individuals incessantly provoke conflicts, undermine others, and create chaos.

The foreign policies of nations are also influenced by envy and hatred, as manifested in certain great power's refusal to allow the existence of any nation more powerful than themselves. Once a rising nation is identified, great powers will exert every effort to suppress it. In today's world, a certain superpower views the emerging Eastern nation as its greatest threat and rival, implementing comprehensive containment across economic, political, technological, cultural, and military domains. Such superpowers take measures such as initiating tariff wars in an attempt to stifle the target nation's exports through heightened tariffs, sanctions, embargoes, and export controls; they also restrict high-tech exports to the rising power to obstruct technological exchange and its scientific advancement; they spread disinformation to shape public opinion, tarnish the other's reputation, and rally allies to encircle and pressure the target nation; and they conduct military exercises near the other country's maritime territories which fuel tensions and provoke conflict. Such comprehensive suppression of a rising power reflects the envious hatred side of human nature in policymaking, while also exposing the nature of monopolistic capital groups that seek to suppress global competitors to maximize their own interests.

### **Obsession With Struggle: A Delusional Fixation**

The international community has witnessed a recurring pattern: Leaders of certain superpowers, often trapped in a rigid "black-or-white" binary mindset, constantly seek out and designate opponents or enemies to confront. They label nations that defy their will as "rogue states", imposing severe economic sanctions and blockades against them. They deploy special forces in surprise operations to capture and detain foreign leaders, or issue massive bounties for their arrest. Their warships conduct military exercises in the maritime zones of perceived "enemy states", attack vessels of other nations, cause casualties, and even threaten outright war. This

obsession with confrontation—which blatantly disregards international law, tramples on the dignity and sovereignty of other countries, and reflects delusional fixation—has become a major factor fueling conflicts and wars in the international community.

### **Arrogant Egoism: National Self-Centeredness**

During World War II, Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany, propagated the theory of “Aryan racial superiority”, regarding other ethnic groups as inferior races and showing particular contempt for the Jewish people. Under Hitler’s orders, six million Jews within Germany were systematically massacred. Through the united resistance of the nations in the global anti-fascist alliance, the Soviet Red Army captured Berlin in April 1945, leading to Hitler’s suicide. Nazi Germany subsequently collapsed.

During the same period, Hideki Tojo, a key representative of Japanese militarism, adhered to the theory of “Yamato ethnic superiority”, viewing the Japanese people as “descendants of heaven” while labeling all other ethnic groups as “barbarians”. He proclaimed the establishment of the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere”. Japan launched wars of aggression against Korea, China, and Southeast Asian nations, ruthlessly plundering the wealth of the invaded countries. During the Japanese invasion of China, the military perpetrated atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre, Unit 731’s human experimentation, biological warfare, and implemented the “Three Alls Policy” (“Burn All, Kill All, Loot All”) in northern China. The Chinese people waged a 14-year resistance war against Japanese aggression. Through the united efforts of the global anti-fascist alliance, Japan announced its unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945. Hideki Tojo was sentenced to death by hanging by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, leading to the collapse of Japanese militarism.

Nowadays, leaders of certain superpowers, driven by self-centered ideology, have raised the banners of “My Country First” and “National Interest First”, even viewing themselves as “God’s Chosen People” and a “Beacon to the World”. These superpowers leverage their advantages in political, economic, military, and financial domains to impose power politics and hegemonic practices on the international community. They establish military bases across the globe, projecting military deterrence against nations that defy their will. They interfere in other countries’ internal affairs, instigate internal divisions, cultivate proxy forces, and seek to control foreign governments. In various regions and countries, they fuel tensions, engineer incidents, and provoke proxy wars—supporting one faction while attacking another to intensify conflicts between warring parties. They exploit their financial hegemony to extract wealth from nations worldwide, securing low-cost borrowing through massive currency printing to reinforce their economic dominance. They wage tariff wars against numerous countries, raising import duties on foreign goods to boost their own fiscal revenue. This arrogant, self-centered approach, which systematically disregards the interests of other nations, has faced resistance and opposition from many countries across the world.

### **Erratic Suspicion: Betrayal and Bad Faith**

Both history and contemporary reality attest to another source of international conflicts and even wars: erratic suspicion, betrayal of trust, and the constant breaking of promises.

In October 1949 after the founding of People’s Republic of China the Soviet Union actively supported China in restoring its economy. In February 1950, the *Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance* was signed, and the Soviet Union supported China in constructing 150 fundamental projects. After the death of Soviet leader Stalin, Khrushchev came to power and made demands that were detrimental to China’s national interests to the Chinese leaders, which were rejected by the Chinese leaders. Following this rejection, in July

1960, Khrushchev unilaterally tore up the agreement signed between the Soviet Union and China and announced the withdrawal of all Soviet experts who were providing assistance to China. Khrushchev's treacherous and inconsistent behavior was strongly opposed by the Chinese side, and the Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated sharply.

In the present world, some countries reach cooperation agreements with their counterparts, while leaving the agreements on the shelf for a long time. Some countries breach the contract when undertake engineering projects in their countries. For example, they unilaterally impose various harsh demands, increase additional taxes, and even go far as to tear up the contract when the projects are about to be completed, causing significant losses to foreign enterprises. In purchasing the start-of-the art products, some countries only pay the initial payment but refuse to make the final payment, deliberately defaulting. Additionally, there are countries which in a unilaterally manner forcibly reclaim the management rights of the canal and port that they had previously granted to other nations. These treacherous actions have led to economic disputes and conflicts between countries.

In conclusion, the negative aspects of human nature—greed, hatred, obsession, arrogance, and suspicion—significantly influence nations' foreign policies, artificially creating conflicts, contradictions and wars in the international community, and causing serious harm to world peace. Then, how can we curb the harm of human evil and its impact on international relations? The five core values of the harmonious philosophy in traditional Chinese culture offer significant enlightenment.

### **The Core Values of Ideology of Harmony and Their Implications for International Ethics**

In 2023, I published *The Research on the Ideology of Harmony of Traditional Chinese Culture* (Chinese version), in which I expounds on the traditional Chinese culture's ideology of harmony in a systematic way. The ideology of harmony system in Chinese traditional culture is drawn by the author from works of Chinese classics *Tao Te Ching*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Analects*, *The Golden Mean*, and more. The harmonious philosophy of traditional Chinese culture encompasses three key components: the *Taiji philosophical worldview*, the *yin-yang dialectical methodology*, and core values. Two of the author's papers published in American journal *International Relations and Diplomacy* in 2024 expounded the *Taiji philosophical worldview*, the *yin-yang dialectical methodology*, and their implications for international relations. This paper mainly elaborates on the core values of the harmonious philosophy, namely benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*), and analyzes their implications for contemporary international ethics.

The author believes that benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*) are both the core philosophy of Confucianism and the core values of the harmonious philosophy of traditional Chinese culture. This paper mainly quotes the viewpoints of *Laozi's Tao Te Ching* and Confucius's *The Analects* to explain the fundamental connotations of these five values.

These core values of the harmonious philosophy in traditional Chinese culture, namely benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*), are the projection of the "Tao" and "virtue" in human society. *Laozi* once said in *Tao Te Ching*: "The Tao gave birth to One. One gave birth to Two. Two gave birth to Three. Three gave birth to All Things. All Things bear *yin* on their backs and *yang* in their arms" (Xu & Liu, 1990, p.119). The *Tao* refers to an essential power that creates all creatures from nothingness. With no fixed form, it exists everywhere. It serves as the origin of the universe and all things and is the law governing the operation of the universe. The *Tao* exists in the universe and is inherent within all things. The *Tao* gave birth to all things and endowed them with harmonious order. *Laozi* once said,

The *Tao* gives birth to all things, and virtue nurtures them. All beings take on diverse forms, and their environments foster their growth. Therefore, all things revere the *Tao* and value virtue, because they do not seek to control the process of creation, but rather allow all things to develop in accordance with their natural course. (Xu & Liu, 1990, pp. 141-142)

It gives them birth but does not possess them, brings them about but does not rely on them, and leads them but does not dominate them. This is the most profound “virtue”. The Way (*Tao*) mentioned by *Laozi* is the law of universe to create all natures, and Virtue (*De*) is the rule of nurturing them. *Tao Te Ching* mentions that “For I am abstracted from the world, the world from nature, nature from the way, and the way from what is beneath abstraction” (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 71). It means that Man copies the Earth as example for its tolerance, the Earth copies the Heaven as example for its broadness, the Heaven copies the Way as example for its operation, and the Way just copies the Great Nature for its true nature. Therefore, human beings should find the Virtue (*De*) that obeys the Way (*Tao*), thus reaching the harmony between nature and humanity, and the harmony of all things. The core values of the harmonious philosophy in traditional Chinese culture, namely benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*) are the manifestation of the *Tao* and virtue, and embody the connotations of human goodness.

### **The Connotation and Implications of Benevolence (*Ren*)**

Benevolence (*ren*) is the core of Confucius’s thought and the overarching concept among benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*). A benevolent person “loves” others. This is derived from the kinship and familial affection inherent in humanity’s instinct to continue its lineage. And it is ubiquitously believed by Chinese people that “harmony in a family makes everything successful”. This sense of benevolence, rooted in kinship and familial affection, has extended from family bonds to broader community and social relationships, becoming a fundamental moral principle deeply ingrained in Chinese people and continues to influence them to this day.

As Confucius said, “only the benevolent can be good and evil” (Cheng, 1996, p. 34). It means a person with virtue cannot only treat others kindly, but also fight against the wicked when necessary. From the perspective of Confucius,

A person who can practice five virtues throughout the world—dignity, tolerance, sincerity, diligence, and kindness—is truly benevolent. With dignity, one can be free from insults; with tolerance, one wins the support of others; with sincerity, one earns other’s trust; with diligence, one gains success; and with kindness, one attains the power to lead others.

The benevolent shows respect and dedication to his business, and honesty and sincerity toward others;

The benevolent are reserved and dignified, they do not seek personal gains, they can get along well with others and do not gang up for personal interests;

To avoid resentment effectively, it’s necessary to reflect and blame oneself more while others less;

Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself. (Cheng, 1996, pp. 193, 147, 176, 174, 129-130)

In case of conflicts, one should learn to think from another’s perspective. Not only should one consider issues from one’s own standpoint, but also try to put oneself in the other person’s shoes.

Confucius advocated that rulers should govern with benevolence, stating that “the people’s need for virtue and benevolence is even more urgent than that for water and fire” (Cheng, 1996, p. 179). He further emphasized that “when a ruler governs the state through moral virtue, he will be like the North Star—steadfast in his place, while all the other stars revolve around” (p. 10). “Those in power will gain the people’s support through tolerance, earn their trust through honesty and credibility, achieve success through diligence, and bring joy to the people through fairness” (p. 219).

From the perspective of the Way of Heaven, *Laozi* elaborates the connotation of goodness and virtue. He thinks that the Way of Heaven is a constant, harmonious, and governing force—a benevolent power that is beneficial to all life. The *Tao Te Ching* states:

Heaven and Earth endure because they do not live for themselves; thus, they are able to last forever. Therefore, the sage who follows Tao places his own interests and desires behind those of the people. Hence, he can gain the support of the masses and be elected as the leader. He disregards his own life and gains, and yet is able to preserve himself and establish a lasting position. It is precisely because of his selflessness that he can achieve success in his business.

He gives to other people, and has greater abundance. (Xu & Liu, 1990, pp. 18-19, 223)

In *Laozi's* eyes, one will become fulfilled if one shares with others. To benefit oneself, one must also benefit others. Benefiting others is the same as benefiting oneself. When people cease to cling to their own wealth accumulation but instead take the initiative to help others and spread kindness, they free themselves from anxiety born of attachment. In doing so, they not only receive gratitude and spiritual nourishment in return but also attain a richness of the spirit far greater than the accumulation of material wealth. Great human achievements all stem from altruistic motivations. In the process of serving others, people attain self-interest gaining dignity and benefits through helping others. Conversely, those who act solely out of self-interest ultimately gain neither dignity nor genuine benefit for themselves.

*Laozi* illustrates the nature of goodness using the metaphor of water, stating:

The most virtuous people are like water. Water nourishes all things without competing with them. It stays in lowly places that others disdain, thus closely resembling the Way (*Tao*).

The most virtuous person lives humbly, maintains a calm and profound mind, treats others with kindness and selflessness, communicates with sincerity and keeps his words, governs the country with order, and utilizes their strengths in handling affairs, and acts in a manner that seizes opportunities. (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 21)

From *Laozi*, a person with virtue should nurture all things like water without seeking credit, treat others with kindness and sincerity, and maintain calm, humble, and inclusive. The Way of Heaven does not permit monopoly, nor does it allow one to claim kingship or hegemony; those who violate the Way of Heaven will incur divine retribution. *Laozi* admonishes rulers that attempting to govern a country through force will never lead to success. The people, sacred under Heaven, cannot be governed by force against their nature, nor can they be controlled by coercion contrary to their nature. Rule by force is bound to fail. As the saying goes, power may subdue people temporarily, but virtue can win their hearts for generations.

All streams converge towards rivers and seas as they dwell in the lowlands. Similarly, a ruler who leads the people must speak with humility and regard the welfare of the people above his own. To serve as an example for the people, he must place his interests after theirs. Thus, a person who follows the *Tao*, though positioned above the people, does not burden them; though ahead of the people, does not harm them. Consequently, the people willingly support him without resentment, because he does not contend with the people, no one in the world can contend with him. (Xu & Liu, 1990, pp. 184-185)

*Laozi* warned humanity against excessive greed. From his point of view, “it is the Way of Heaven to diminish superabundance, and to supplement deficiency” (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 210). When water at a higher level is full, it will naturally flow downward. If a person has an excessive desire, wanting everything and always wanting to exceed others and having more than others, they will encounter great disasters. Heaven will reduce the excess and make up for the deficiencies. Those who have surplus and are willing to give to the world are virtuous people. When people fight with each other out of selfishness and greed, it only intensifies hatred. Only kindness and compassion can dissolve hatred.



The philosophy of benevolence (*ren*) has long been passed down to this day and engraved in Chinese people's heart. The Chinese people generally adhere to the principles of Virtue (*De*), the Way or "*Tao*", benevolence (*ren*), and goodness (*shan*). They believe that "good deeds bring good rewards, and evil deeds bring evil consequences". Planting seeds of goodness will yield favorable outcomes, while sowing seeds of malice will lead to retribution, or as the saying goes "you reap what you sow". One may escape the punishment of laws, but never the principle of karma. Those with a benevolent heart possess altruism and a sense of moral responsibility. When a person cares for and helps others, they will receive kindness in return. When a person attacks and harms others, they will suffer the backlash of malice. If people harbor gratitude and yearn for kindness, compassion, and beauty, they will attract good fortune. Conversely, if one's thoughts, words, and actions are filled with greed, jealousy, hatred, and reckless behavior that harms others, misfortune will inevitably follow.

The value of benevolence (*ren*) offers significant insights for international ethnics. National leaders should regard its people's interests as national core interests. Countries should respect each other for mutual benefits and win-win results. In foreign exchanges, a state leader should not only take the interests of its nation into account, but also the other nation's interests and the collective interests of all human beings. A real great country should be benevolent towards the entire world, be kind to other countries, be humble and inclusive, have an open mind, and focus on uniting and cooperating with other countries for harmonious coexistence. It will not waste time in futile competition, nor will it go too far as resorting to force and wars to conquer other nations.

In dealing with the relations with its neighboring countries, China forges friendship and partnership with neighbors and fosters an amicable, secure, and prosperous neighborhood. China's role of mediator and facilitator in international conflicts and wars exactly embodies the value of "benevolence". China is the first major power that joins the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and establishes strategic partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In November 2002, the two parties reached the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea*, which played an active role in the stability and peace in the South China Sea. In March 2023, China facilitated the reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran. And in June 2023, China signed a *Permanent Treaty of Neighborly Friendship* with five countries in Central Asia. To date, China is the country among the permanent members of the UN Security Council that has dispatched peacekeeping forces the most times.

### **The Connotation and Implications of Righteousness (*Yi*)**

Righteousness (*yi*) refers to appropriateness, fairness, and justice. It emphasizes adhering to righteousness on the grounds of morality. The superior man holds righteousness to be of highest importance. As Confucius said, "the noble person regards righteousness as the highest virtue. If a person possesses courage but lacks righteousness, they will rebel against authority; if a person possesses courage but lacks righteousness, they will become a bandit" (Cheng, 1996, p. 200). A man of virtue mentioned by Confucius is a virtuous and righteous person, and a man of meanness is greedy without virtues. Confucius drew a distinction between a man of virtue and a man of meanness, stating,

The former understands what is right, while the latter understands only personal gains.

The man of virtue unites with others without ganging up or pursuing private interests, whereas the man of meanness colludes for selfish gains, without a true sense of unity.

The man of virtue seeks to help others accomplish good deeds and never assists in wrongdoing, whereas the man of meanness does exactly the opposite.

The man of virtue is at ease without being arrogant; the man of meanness is arrogant without being at ease.

The man of virtue understands what is appropriate; the man of meanness understands what is of personal gains.

The man of virtue will never try to save his life at the expense of his moral character: he prefers to sacrifice his life in order to save his moral character. (Cheng, 1996, pp. 39, 15, 135, 151, 162, 173)

In Confucius's view, when a man of virtue sees gain, he thinks of righteousness (*yi*), and bases their conduct on the principle to adhering to what is right. He remains humble and prudent, cooperates with, and considers others. The man of virtue upholds righteousness, tells right from wrong, punishes evil-doers, and praises good-doers. He resolutely defends his own dignity and interests, bravely takes up arms to resist invaders, and when faced with danger, is willing to sacrifice for justice.

*Laozi* holds a profoundly cautious stance toward warfare. He asserts that a nation should resort to the use of force only in cases of self-defense or counterattack.

The man who assists the Emperor with the principle of *Tao* will not conquer the world by force of arms. Such warring is sure to meet with its proper future return. Where armies have fought, thorns and brambles take root. Lean years always follow the war. Therefore, a good captain who acts accord with the standard of *Tao* just fights for relieving jeopardy. He will only fight when forced to fight. He will not use all armed might to indulge in aggressive wars. He will not be swashbuckling, pretentious or conceited after he gains his ends by force. When military power reaches its peak, it will inevitably decline. This is because warfare contradicts the Way (*Tao*), and what contradicts the *Tao* will inevitably perish.

Weapons are instruments of ill omen, not tools for a noble person. If one is forced to use them, it is best to remain calm and detached. Even in victory, one should not glorify oneself, for to glorify oneself is to take pleasure in killing. Those who take pleasure in killing will never gain the allegiance of the world. (Xu & Liu, 1990, pp. 85-86, 89)

Regarding the principles and methods of military operations, *Laozi* believed that the strategic and tactical principles of just wars were as follows. As he said.

A good warrior is not violent, a good fighter is not angry, a good visitor will not yield, and a good leader will not be humble. Such is the virtue of non-contention, the ability of employing men. Such is the way to match heaven. (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 190)

The ancient Chinese military classics, *The Art of War by Sun Tzu* and *Sun Bin's Art of War*, expounded on the strategies and means for conducting defensive counter-offensive wars. The core thought of *The Art of War by Sun Tzu* is "to subdue the enemy without fighting" (Chen, 2011, p. 46). He said, force is not the only way to achieve the predetermined objectives, but non-violent means instead, with strong military power being the prerequisite. That's to say, to gain strategic advantages by taking political, economic, diplomatic, and military deterrence measures, forcing the opponent to yield or submit through means that avoid direct armed confrontation. Even the use of military force aims to "using force to stop violence", that is, using a just war to stop an unjust one. According to Sun Tzu,

The highest form of warfare is to subdue the enemy by strategy; the next best is to disrupt their alliances by diplomatic means; then to attack their army in the field; and the worst is to besiege a city. Besieging cities is only resorted to when there is no other alternative. (Chen, 2011, p. 46)

That's the desirable pursuit and highest realm of Sun Tzu's art of warfare.

The implications of the value of "righteousness" for international relations are: A nation should firmly defend its national interests and sovereign territorial integrity, and fight against foreign invasion bravely. It's righteous for a country to launch a self-defense war to respond to foreign invasion. For example, in 1931, the "September 18th Incident" occurred. The Japanese army invaded and occupied Northeast China, and the Chinese people launched a 14-year War of Resistance Against Japan invaders. Through the joint efforts of the

international anti-fascist united front in combat, on August 15, 1945, the Japanese Emperor announced an unconditional surrender, marking the final victory of the Chinese people's War of Resistance Against Japan invaders. To defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity, a country must possess strong military power. The value of "righteous" also inspires us that state leaders should not stir up trouble for no reason, sow discord among countries, be arrogant, or form cliques for private gains. When conflicts arise among countries, never resort to force or war, nor to bully the weak or seek hegemony. Failing to do so may beget resentment or resistance by other countries. In the end, it will hurt itself and eventually lead to its downfall. The final defeat of German fascism and Japanese militarism during World War II is a testament to this.

The benevolence (*ren*) and righteousness (*yi*) are closely interconnected—the pursuit of benevolence and the upholding of justice are two aspects of a unified whole. Where there is benevolence (*ren*), there must be righteousness (*yi*). To uphold the justice, a state must both exercise resilience to overcome strength with gentleness and possess the decisive capacity to take stern actions when necessary, essentially having "a heart of compassion, but a fist of steel".

### **The Connotation and Implications of Propriety (*Li*)**

Propriety (*li*) advocates that people's words and deeds should conform to etiquette and institutions, including national law and regulations, systems and etiquette. Its inner connotation is to treat others with propriety, be modest and prudent, and act reasonably but not recklessly.

Confucius proposes to "To master oneself and return to ritual propriety is benevolence". "Respect without ritual leads to toil; caution without ritual leads to cowardice; courage without ritual leads to disorder; frankness without ritual leads to harshness" (Cheng, 1996, pp. 129, 81). Ritual here refers to the Confucian concept of "*li*", encompassing moral principles, social norms, and proper conduct that guide virtuous behavior.

It is also stressed by Confucius that those in high positions should abide by the laws and regulations, be respectful and humble, and use their self-cultivation and courtesy to bring peace and happiness to their relatives and friends as well as to the common people.

In *Tao Te Ching*, *Laozi* reveals the dangers of arrogance and rudeness by vivid metaphors. In his eyes,

If too much energy is used, exhaustion follows.

One cannot stand long on tiptoe; with a large stride, one cannot walk far. One who shows off is not wise; self-righteousness is not the same as distinction. One who boasts is not honorable; one who is arrogant cannot lead. (Xu & Liu, 1990, pp.152, 69)

Therefore, arrogant people find it hard to have a broad vision and high level of accomplishment.

Never resting on one's laurels is one of humanity's greatest virtues. Disasters and blessings are always indefinite; they are caused by the person himself. Most of the crises and risks one encounters in life are self-imposed. When greed grows too great and the desire to compete and seize becomes overwhelming, malicious thoughts and dangers inevitably follow. *Laozi* warned that "those who do not understand the eternal laws act recklessly, bringing about calamity" (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 44). Those who have grasped the Way (*Tao*) will keep themselves away from risks.

*Laozi* advocated that states, regardless of their size, ought to interact with one another through humility and harmony. He stated:

A large state should position itself like the lower reaches of a river, where all the streams under heaven converge. It should occupy the position of the receptive and yielding. The receptive and yielding always triumph over the aggressive and

strong through stillness, for stillness resides in the lower position. Thus, if a large state lowers itself before a small state, it will win the trust of the small state. If a small state lowers itself before a large state, it will be embraced by the large state. The large state should not desire to dominate the small state excessively, and the small state should not excessively flatter the large state. In this way, both large and small states can achieve their desires—yet it is especially important for the large state to maintain humility. (Xu & Liu, 1990, pp. 169-170)

In the opinion of *Laozi*, small countries will, out of instincts, be afraid or panic when facing powerful large ones. Therefore, a big country should be especially modest to a small one.

The 15th hexagram of the *The Book of Changes*, the Modesty Hexagram (Qian Hexagram), is the most auspicious one among the 64 hexagrams. It reveals that by adhering to righteousness and maintaining humility and caution, one can achieve good fortune and smooth progress. The man of virtue should not only remain humble and prudent throughout his life, but also promote the virtue of modesty in the world.

In terms of international relations, propriety (*li*) enlightens us that nations, regardless of size, should respect and be tolerant towards each other, treat each other with courtesy, and coexist harmoniously. Large nations should not bully the small, and small nations should not be arrogant. Whether large or small, no nation should act with hubris, self-centeredness, or a sense of superiority. “When hearts are equal, we can reside in a harmonious world”.

China consistently pursues an independent foreign policy of peace and the Chinese people will not provoke troubles, but we never flinch when trouble comes our way. Any act that provokes China’s sovereignty and dignity will be resolutely rejected. China is committed to resolutely opposing hegemonism and power politics globally, advocating that all countries treat each other as equals, jointly participate in global governance, and stay true to the vision of global governance featuring extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefits. All these embody the philosophy of benevolence and righteous all over the world.

### **The Connotation and Implications of Wisdom (*Zhi*)**

Wisdom (*zhi*) refers to self-awareness, intelligence, strategic insight, sound moral discernment, and the ability to adapt principles to changing circumstances with flexibility. *Laozi* regarded the truly wise as those who possess self-knowledge. As he said:

It needs observation to know others, but reflection to know oneself. Physically strong, one can conquer others; mentally strong, one can conquer oneself. Content, one is rich; with strong will, one can persevere. Staying where one should, one can endure long; Unforgettable, one is immortal. (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 94)

In *Laozi*’s view, defeating others does not make one great. A person who possesses self-awareness, continuously overcomes personal shortcomings, rises above selfish desires, and dedicates himself wholeheartedly to the people, is the true sage. Such individuals, though departed, live on eternally—their spirit and influence enduring through the ages.

In the eyes of both *Laozi* and Confucius, those who engage in conspiracy, manipulation, or deceit (such as setting traps for others and seeking to ruin them) commit acts of foolish wickedness. Confronted with a complex and ever-changing world, *Laozi* emphasized that a wise person should cultivate adaptive and flexible thinking. As the *Tao Te Ching* states: “Good fortune follows upon disaster; disaster lurks within good fortune” (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 160). All things are changing, and under certain conditions, blessings and calamities transform into each other. One should regard every hardship and setback as a form of life’s tempering. It is through adversity that one learns perseverance, through suffering that one refines one’s character, and through challenges that one attains personal growth. The “Kan Hexagram” in *The Book of Changes* teaches that when one encounters layers

of peril and obstruction, one must hold firm faith, maintain composure and open-mindedness, act with patience and prudence, and deliberate carefully on all possible responses. One should avoid impulsive moves or extreme measures.

In *Tao Te Ching*, *Laozi* elaborates the wisdom that the soft and weak may overcome the hard and strong, which reflects the ancient Chinese philosophy of adapting to circumstances.

He says:

the softest thing in the world dashes against and overcomes the hardest; that which has no substance penetrates where there is no crevice.

Nothing is softer or more flexible than water, yet nothing can resist it.

To contract something, you must first allow it to expand. To weaken something, you must first allow it to be strong. To abolish something, you must first allow it to flourish. This is the wisdom of weakness overcoming strength. (Xu & Liu, 1990, pp. 122, 215, 101)

A truly wise person, *Laozi* suggests, should be like water. Water is soft and fluid, able to adapt to its surroundings—it may rise or fall, flow straight, or curve around obstacles, never playing hardball. Though it appears gentle and soft, water cannot be severed or restrained; it fills the lowest hollows, embraces all rivers, and, when surging as a flood, can unleash overwhelming force to destroy even the hardest of things. Hence, the wise understand that “to be part is to be whole”—flexibility ensures survival and steady progress. To be hard and unyielding is the last resort; to be gentle and humble is the best. The truly wise remain modest and composed, practicing what *Laozi* called “hidden virtue and the same commonplace”—that is, keeping a low profile and integrating harmoniously with the environment around. Such people do not dazzle, yet they illuminate naturally. True strength often resides in quiet wisdom. Those who constantly seek to stand out or assert their superiority will inevitably invite trouble and misfortune upon themselves. *Laozi* describes the characteristics of the wisdom in *Tao Te Ching*, “cautious as one crossing a stream in winter; hesitant as one fearing the neighbors; formal like a guest; melting like ice about to dissolve; genuine like an uncarved block of wood; open like a valley” (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 41).

*Laozi* revealed the principle of doing things rationally, wisely, and with moderation through the law that “the opposite is the movement of the *Tao*” (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 113). He warned that

things go by contraries and then revert to their original state. Stretch a bow to the very full, and you will wish you had stopped in time; temper a sword-edge to its very sharpest, and you will find it soon grows dull. When bronze and jade fill your hall, it can no longer be guarded. Wealth and honor accompanied by arrogance invite disaster. When your work is done, then withdraw! Such is the law of nature.

To yield is to be preserved whole. To be bent is to become straight. To be empty is to be full. To be worn out is to be renewed. To have little is to possess. To have plenty is to be perplexed. Without showing himself, he shines forth. Without justifying himself, he is distinguished. Without boasting, he receives recognition. Without bragging, he never wanes.

A person who follows the *Tao* accomplishes things without claiming credit for them, achieves success without arrogance, and never seeks to display their own intelligence or talent before others. (Xu & Liu, 1990, pp. 23, 63-64, 212)

Confucianism advocates “the Doctrine of the Mean”,

The “Mean” is the fundamental root of all under heaven. The “Harmony” is the universal path followed by all under heaven. When one attains the Mean and Harmony, heaven and earth will take their proper places, and all things will flourish and grow. (Wang, 2008, pp. 14-15)

People are not allowed to go extremes in their thoughts and behaviors. They are warned that “too much of anything is good for nothing”. This means that one must grasp the principle of moderation, acting in a manner

that is appropriate and measured. When problems arise, reflect oneself first, seeking faults within oneself rather than blame on others or indulging in endless criticism. Toward people of different cultures, beliefs, or perspectives, a man of virtue adopts an attitude of “harmony without uniformity”—showing respect and maintaining harmony with others while neither following blindly nor conforming to the crowd.

The “Song Hexagram” in *The Book of Changes* reminds people to make their mistake sound less serious and then to reduce it to nothing at all by means of coordination, balance, communication, and negotiation. Even in a struggle, one aim for a mid-way reconciliation. One do not drive the other party to death, and even less seek to dominate the world completely. *The Book of Changes* “Qian Hexagram” says “when the *Long* (Chinese dragons), is at the height of its power, it regrets” (Xu & Zhang, 1992, p. 3). It means that the *Long*, or Chinese dragon, may regret flying to extreme altitudes when it falls due to thin, cold air and suffocation, illustrating that high places are unbearably cold and extreme conditions cannot last.

Wisdom (*zhi*) also emphasizes the idea of constancy within change, asserting that behind all transformations lies an unchanging law. A wise person understands both the laws of nature and society, and acts in accordance with objective rules. In *Laozi*’s view, the truly wise act through “non-action”, not by passivity but by aligning their conduct with the natural order and avoiding unnecessary interference. Such a person possesses self-awareness, humility, and tolerance; is resourceful and adaptable; and is capable of responding to external challenges with reason, strength, and restraint, thus upholding personal dignity. A wise person also cultivates inner composure, remaining unarrogant in favorable circumstances and unshaken in adversity—maintaining calmness and equanimity amid all kinds of conflicts and contradictions.

The value of wisdom (*zhi*) offers the following insights for international relations: National leaders should uphold the Way (*Tao*) and cherish Virtue, adhering to this classical principle while adapting to change. Countries should respect and accommodate one another, embracing diversity while coexisting harmoniously. When contradictions and conflicts arise between nations, one should not only see the faults of others but also reflect on one’s own. It is not enough to criticize others; self-reflection is equally important. For small countries caught in great-power rivalries, the path to survival lies not in simply taking sides or relying blindly on the protection of major powers, but in using diplomatic wisdom to balance various interests and unite with others against hegemony. When conflicts occur in the international community, they should be resolved through communication, negotiation, and dialogue as much as possible. Each party should leave room for the other, they should not be cornered, much less driven to the brink of destruction. Major powers, in particular, must “know where to stop”, understanding the limits of their actions, refraining from excess and extremity, and not pursuing world hegemony. As the “Qian Hexagram” in *The Book of Changes* says, “when all *Long* (Chinese dragons) do not vie to be the head, it is fortunate” (Xu & Zhang, 1992, p. 4). This line suggests that harmony brings fortune—when nations coexist peacefully and no single country claims dominance, the world will prosper. Successive leaders of the People’s Republic of China have solemnly declared to the world that “China will never seek hegemony or expansion”, embodying the wisdom of harmonious thinking. Looking back at history, those countries that sought hegemony through aggressive wars ultimately came to a bad end.

### **The Meaning and Enlightenment of Trustworthiness (*Xin*)**

Trustworthiness (*xin*) refers to being trustworthy and keeping one’s word in both conduct and speech. A man of virtue keeps his word. Integrity and trustworthiness are moral qualities highly valued in traditional Chinese culture. A man of virtue:

When you have a promise with others, only by acting in accordance with righteousness can your words possibly be fulfilled; when you show solemn respect to others, only by conforming to righteousness can you possibly avoid humiliation; and only by relying on those who are trustworthy can you possibly count on them.

By upholding loyalty and faithfulness as one's guiding principles and following what is right, one's moral character will be elevated. (Cheng, 1996, pp. 7, 134)

The eighth hexagram in *The Book of Changes*, the *Bi* Hexagram, explains principles for interacting with others, emphasizing that "integrity and trustworthiness are a person's foremost qualities. Integrity is like fine wine overflowing from its vessel—it brings unexpected auspiciousness" (Xu & Zhang, 1992, pp. 55, 376). The "Xici" (Part I) of the *Commentaries on The Book of Changes* elucidates the significance of sincerity and good faith, asserting that Heaven aids those who follow the Way (*Tao*), while people support those who honor their commitments. By upholding one's word and respecting others, one can receive Heaven's assistance, achieving good fortune without harm (Xu & Zhang, 1992, p. 376).

The Confucian classic *Doctrine of the Mean* similarly emphasizes that integrity derives from the Way of Heaven and is also the principle governing human relations. A person with high credibility will naturally receive others' assistance. People generally avoid dealings with the deceitful; those who rely solely on self-interest without integrity cannot earn trust or help from others.

Confucius called on national leaders and officials at all levels to take the lead in being trustworthy and to practice integrity toward the people. He said:

If those in power observe ritual propriety, the people will not dare to be disrespectful; if they uphold righteousness, the people will not dare to be disobedient; if they are honest and trustworthy, the people will not dare to speak falsely. (Cheng, 1996, p. 142)

*Laozi* also emphasized that rulers must maintain virtue and act with integrity. He stated:

Rules who engage with the *Tao* are aligned with the *Tao*; rulers who engage with virtue are aligned with virtue; rulers who lose the *Tao* and virtue are aligned with failure and will lose governance. If a ruler lacks integrity, the people naturally will not trust him. (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 67)

The value of trustworthiness (*xin*) teaches that a nation must uphold the righteous path and act with integrity. Only when countries understand and trust one another, honoring treaties and agreements, can good relations be established. Conversely, a nation that acts selfishly, greedily, or deceitfully, for example, breaking promises and defrauding other countries, not to pay the money one owes, to unilaterally tear up an agreement or contract, will be condemned by the international community and risk isolation.

## Conclusion

The core values of harmonious philosophy in traditional Chinese culture: benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*) are derived from the top-down interplay of *Tao* and virtue. The *Tao* represents the laws of the universe, nature, and society, while virtue embodies the *Tao* and serves as the foundation for human survival, development, and well-being. The core values translate *Tao* and virtue into ethical principles for human society. They encompass the goodness inherent in human nature and act as remedies for human evilness such as greed, anger, delusion, arrogance, and doubt.

In an era of rapid technological advancement, AI, and globalization, unilateralism and hegemonic thinking no longer work. The international community requires not only the constraints of international law but also the

guidance of ethics and morality. If national leaders, in the face of international conflicts, focus only on the faults of others and fail to examine their own, condemning others without self-reflection, contradictions and disputes in the international arena will continue to arise. If leaders adopt “black and white” or “either-or” dialectics and view society as inherently antagonistic, constantly designating opponents and enemies and taking all possible measures to attack them, even resorting to life-and-death struggles, international conflicts or wars will intensify. If leaders act selfishly and greedily, striving to maximize their own interests at the expense of others, they will repeatedly provoke wars and seize other nations’ lands, resources, and wealth. If leaders regard the international arena as a “jungle world”, in which the strong dominate the weak, they will exploit military power to bully others and pursue global domination, leaving the world in perpetual instability. If leaders resort to nuclear threats or even nuclear war, all parties involved risk mutual destruction, humanity could annihilate itself in the fire of a nuclear conflict, and human civilization on Earth could vanish in the mushroom clouds of nuclear war.

With the Russia-Ukraine war still ongoing and humanity facing the threat of nuclear conflict, countries must act now to call for peace, promote cooperation, and press the belligerents to abandon life-and-death combat and resolve their disputes through political negotiation. It must be understood that when both sides are bent on utterly defeating the other and fight themselves into a hopeless precipice, further bloodshed will only lead to mutual destruction; by contrast, stepping back can bring more possibilities.

The worldview and methodology of harmonious philosophy in traditional Chinese culture hold that the development of all things involves a process of unity of opposites. When a thing develops to its extreme, they will transform into their opposites. There exists a state of opposition and struggle, mutual constraint, and the waxing and waning of elements, as well as a state of mutual growth, interdependence, mutual complementarity, mutual permeation, mutual transformation, and mutual balance. The Chinese concept of harmony does not view development in simplistic “black and white” or “either-or” dialectics but recognizes the complexity and variability of things. While acknowledging conflict and opposition, it also emphasizes balance and harmony.

The core values of traditional Chinese harmonious philosophy focus on fostering the goodness in human nature, eliminating its vices, and promoting social harmony and world peace. Benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*) advocate mutual respect, tolerance, reciprocal benefit, win-win cooperation, peaceful coexistence, and harmonious living among nations. In international relations, leaders should consider not only their own national interests but also the interests of other countries and humanity as a whole. When conflicts arise between nations, they should be resolved through communication, negotiation, mutual understanding, compromise, and consultation, rather than by force or war. The core values of harmonious thought offer profound insights for enriching international ethics and morality, providing guidance for humanity to overcome crises, reduce conflicts and wars, and achieve sustainable development.

In today’s world, humanity shares a common “global village”, with countries interdependent and bound together in joy and sorrow. Cooperation serves as a key factor in human evolution and development, as well as the path to mutual benefit and win-win outcomes among nations. In an era of rapid advancement in AI, high technology, and globalization, it is essential to actively promote the harmonious philosophy of traditional Chinese culture. By advocating the five core values in the international community, countries can foster unity and cooperation, peaceful coexistence, and harmonious living, working hand in hand toward a brighter promising future.



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