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Artificial intelligence empowering the construction of the China–Cambodia community of shared future: mechanisms and collaborative pathways

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Abstract. This study, grounded in a Marxist "technology–institution–value" three-dimensional analytical framework, examines the internal mechanisms and collaborative pathways through which Artificial Intelligence (AI) can empower the construction of a China–Cambodia community of shared future. The research finds that, although preliminary coordination exists between China and Cambodia in technological complementarity, institutional frameworks, and value alignment, several challenges persist. These include technological bottlenecks such as weak infrastructure, limited data resources, and a lack of innovation ecosystems; institutional barriers including misaligned laws and regulations, fragmented supervision, and difficulties in standard harmonization; as well as value-related gaps such as differences in cultural perceptions, fragile foundations of mutual trust, and insufficient social participation. To address these challenges, three strategic pathways—technological coordination, institutional alignment, and value consensus—are proposed to build a systematic solution structured around "foundational support–institutional guarantees–social integration." This framework provides theoretical guidance for China–Cambodia AI cooperation and offers insights for innovating digital collaboration models within the Belt and Road Initiative.

Keywords: China–Cambodia community of shared future, artificial intelligence, technological empowerment, digital collaboration, collaborative pathways

1. Introduction

As a core driving force of the new wave of technological revolution, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping global governance structures and international cooperation models. During President Xi Jinping's visit to Cambodia in April 2025, bilateral relations were elevated to the level of a "New Era All-Weather China–Cambodia Community of Shared Future," with digital economy cooperation identified as a key priority [1]. However, existing scholarship on China–Cambodia cooperation has several limitations: (1) an excessive focus

on traditional economic and trade relations, overlooking the soft mechanisms enabled by technology [2]; (2) a lack of systematic theoretical frameworks, making it difficult to reveal the internal mechanisms through which AI empowers cooperation [3]; (3) superficial analyses of cooperation bottlenecks, failing to explore the interconnections among structural, systemic, and social obstacles [4]; and (4) solutions often limited to general policy recommendations, lacking differentiated pathways tailored to Cambodia's local needs [5].

Amid the evolving landscape of global AI governance, China–Cambodia cooperation faces a complex international environment, which highlights both its strategic significance and the practical challenges involved. In this context, the present study adopts the perspectives of technological empowerment and digital collaboration to address three core questions: How can AI empower the construction of a China–Cambodia community of shared future? What bottlenecks does cooperation encounter? And how can practical pathways be designed that align with the development stages of both countries?

2. The Marxist theoretical foundation for artificial intelligence empowering the China–Cambodia community of shared future

As a core driving force of the new wave of technological revolution, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is profoundly reshaping the landscape of international relations and cooperation models. From a Marxist theoretical perspective, AI empowerment of the China–Cambodia community of shared future has a solid theoretical foundation and practical logic. Marxist notions of community provide scientific guidance for understanding the essence of international technological cooperation, while Marx's praxis perspective reveals the internal laws governing such cooperation and offers methodological tools for analysis.

2.1. Marxist community thought and its new interpretation in the AI era

In The German Ideology, Marx proposed the classic distinction between the "illusory community" and the "true community." The illusory community is characterized by the ruling class packaging its particular interests as universal ones, manifesting in the falsity of its interest foundation, inequality in power structures, and the alienation of development goals. In contrast, the true community is a "union of free individuals," grounded in the common interests of all members, with the comprehensive free development of humans as its fundamental goal. Marx further argued that the illusory community represents the fundamental form of "all previous communities," whose key feature is that "individuals are subordinate to the class, and the class is subordinate to them." In such a community, the ruling class controls the means of production and the ideological discourse, presenting its special interests as the universal interest of society. The illusory nature of this community is reflected in three aspects: 1) Falsity of interest foundation: Particular interests are disguised as universal ones. 2) Inequality of power structures: A minority governs the majority. 3) Alienation of development goals: Individual development serves the interests of the ruling class. By contrast, the true community is a union of free individuals, whose core principle is that "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." It exhibits three fundamental characteristics: Authenticity of interest foundation: Built on the common interests of all members. Democracy of power structures: Implementing democratic governance and equal participation. Human-centered development goals: Prioritizing the comprehensive free development of individuals [6]. This theoretical framework can also be extended to the field of international relations. The current international economic order largely reflects characteristics of an illusory community: developed countries occupy the high end of global value chains through technological advantages and capture the majority of benefits [7], while developing countries remain in low-value segments,

bearing costs with limited returns. Hegemonic states package institutional arrangements that preserve their own advantages as "universal values," concealing the true power structures [8].

However, the development of AI provides a historical opportunity to construct an international "true community." At the level of productive forces, AI's universality, pervasiveness, and substitutability significantly enhance social productivity [9]. More importantly, AI development relies heavily on data accumulation, algorithmic innovation, and diversified application scenarios, objectively creating space for countries to leverage comparative advantages and achieve complementary development. At the level of production relations, AI's networked, open, and shared characteristics call for more equal and collaborative international cooperation models [10]. Technological monopolies and knowledge blockades not only contradict AI's intrinsic logic but also constrain the realization of its full potential. At the human development level, AI liberates individuals from heavy labor, expanding opportunities for creative activity and comprehensive personal growth. This, in turn, lays the foundation for transcending traditional hegemonic logic and establishing a new type of international relationship based on shared development [11].

2.2. Marxist praxis perspective and the practical logic of international AI cooperation

Although artificial intelligence provides theoretical possibilities, whether these can be translated into reality depends on the concrete practice of international technological cooperation. The Marxist praxis perspective offers methodological guidance for China–Cambodia cooperation: 1) Practice as the criterion of truth: The extent to which AI can genuinely empower the construction of a China–Cambodia community of shared future does not depend solely on the sophistication of the technology itself, but on whether it can meet the development needs of each country in concrete practice [12]. 2) Practical significance of the labor theory of value: AI development combines complex and simple labor, requiring both advanced algorithm design and extensive data annotation and application testing. 3)Guidance from internationalist values: International AI cooperation should transcend narrow nationalism, cultivate a sense of a shared human destiny [13], and be grounded in equality and mutual benefit. It should oppose technological blockades and zero-sum thinking, aiming ultimately to promote the common progress of humanity and jointly establish a fair and reasonable international order in global AI governance [14].

2.3. A Marxist "technology–institution–value" three-dimensional analytical framework

Building on the logic of theory and practice, the Marxist historical materialist perspective reveals the dialectical relationships between productive forces and production relations, as well as between the economic base and superstructure, providing a scientific methodology for understanding the complexity of international technological cooperation. Based on this, the present study constructs a three-dimensional analytical framework of "technology–institution–values" to systematically capture the practical logic of China–Cambodia AI cooperation: 1) Technology dimension: Corresponding to the level of productive forces, this dimension encompasses material elements such as AI technological development, infrastructure conditions, data resource endowments, and innovation capacity building. It focuses on each country's technological foundation, complementary characteristics, and real-world obstacles in technology transfer and localization processes. 2) Institutional dimension: Corresponding to production relations and the economic base, this includes formal rules governing technological cooperation, such as laws and regulations, regulatory systems, technical standards, and intellectual property protection mechanisms. This dimension examines how well existing institutional frameworks align with cooperation needs, the impact of institutional differences on cooperative efficiency, and directions for constructing new institutional arrangements. 3) Values dimension: Corresponding to the superstructure, this involves ideological elements such as cultural concepts, value

consensus, ethical norms, and social recognition. It examines the common ground and differences among participants in terms of technical ethics and cooperative philosophy, as well as the influence of cultural factors on the depth of cooperation.

These three dimensions form an interdependent, interactive system. From a positive feedback perspective, technological progress drives institutional innovation: the development of AI requires new data governance frameworks and algorithmic regulatory mechanisms. Technological applications promote value updates, reshaping societal perceptions of privacy protection, employment structures, and human–machine relations. Institutional improvements facilitate technological development, as robust intellectual property protection incentivizes innovation. Institutional optimization supports value realization, with fair benefit-sharing mechanisms enhancing participants' value recognition. Value consensus guides technological direction, with shared ethical norms steering AI development toward human well-being, while value consensus also informs institutional design, providing normative guidance for cooperative frameworks (see Figure 1).

From a contradiction and conflict perspective, gaps arise: technological development may outpace institutional construction, causing regulatory lag; technological applications may conflict with traditional values, triggering ethical debates; institutional differences increase transaction costs, creating coordination obstacles; and differences in values may limit the effectiveness of institutional coordination, constraining the deepening of cooperation. These contradictions serve as intrinsic drivers of cooperative development; through continuous resolution and dynamic balancing, international technological cooperation can ascend to higher levels in a spiraling progression.

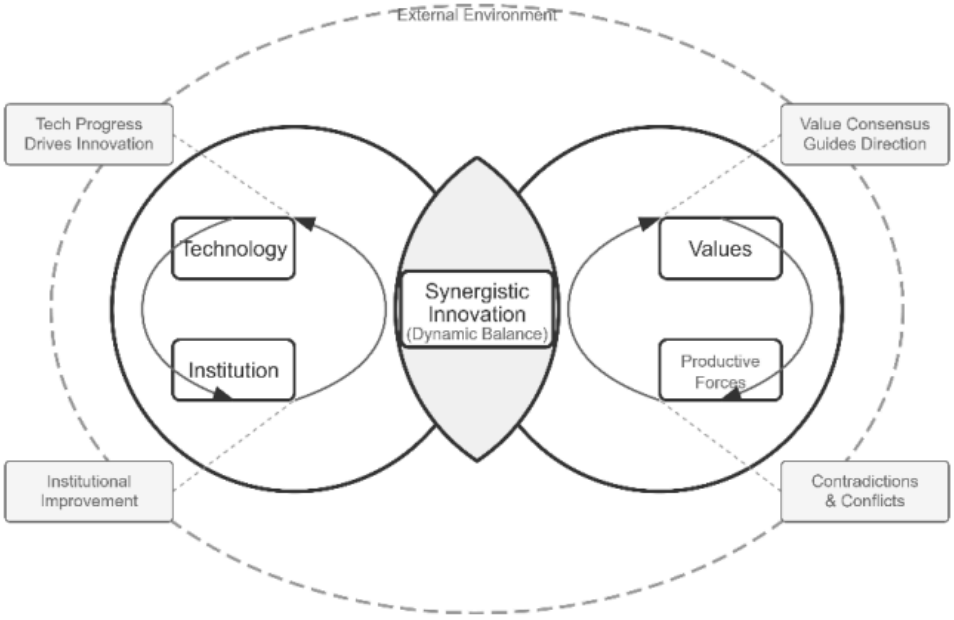

Figure 1. Technology-institution-values three-dimentional framework

3. Assessing the current status of China–Cambodia AI cooperation based on the "technology–institution–value" framework

Building on the Marxist three-dimensional analytical framework of "technology–institution–values" proposed earlier, this section further examines the current state of China–Cambodia cooperation in the field of artificial intelligence. By analyzing the collaboration across the dimensions of technology, institutions, and values, this

study evaluates interactions and differences in productive foundations, production relations, and cultural-ethical norms, providing a comprehensive understanding of the realities and internal mechanisms of bilateral cooperation.

3.1. Technology dimension: complementarity of productive foundations and coordinated development

From the technology perspective, China and Cambodia exhibit significant complementarity in AI and related digital technologies, reflecting the Marxist principle of international division and cooperation of productive forces. China has established a relatively mature technological system in frontier areas such as artificial intelligence, 5G communication, and cloud computing, representing the advanced level of contemporary digital productive forces. Cambodia's digital economy, by contrast, is experiencing rapid growth: by 2023, mobile broadband and Internet subscriptions exceeded 11.37 million, and active social media users accounted for approximately 67.5% of the population, marking notable progress in digital infrastructure [15]. This uneven development provides a practical foundation for complementary, gradient-based technological cooperation between the two countries.

In practical terms, China has committed to helping Cambodia achieve 100% high-speed Internet coverage in urban areas and 70% coverage in rural areas by 2025, reflecting pragmatic technology-sharing cooperation [16]. Chinese enterprises are promoting emerging technologies such as AI, cloud computing, and mobile payments in Cambodia, helping enhance the country's digital productive capacity. Conversely, Cambodia's rich application scenarios provide broad space for localizing Chinese technologies, creating a positive cycle of "technology transfer – scenario application – feedback optimization." Specifically, in the communications sector, Chinese companies such as Huawei and ZTE have become key partners in Cambodia's 5G network construction, driving the modernization of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure [17]. The Phnom Penh municipal government has collaborated with Chinese tech firms on the "City Brain" project, exploring localized pathways for smart city development [18]. In terms of industrial digitalization, China–Cambodia cooperation demonstrates diversified development. Platforms like Alibaba and JD.com assist Cambodian enterprises in expanding into the Chinese market; Ant Group collaborates with Cambodian financial institutions to provide mobile payment solutions, promoting the adoption of digital payments. Chinese firms also participate in Cambodia's smart agriculture initiatives, offering integrated digital solutions for planting, management, and sales, thereby improving agricultural productivity [19]. Meanwhile, intelligent applications in smart healthcare and smart education further illustrate how AI technologies are transforming traditional sectors. Collectively, these collaborations not only advance Cambodia's digital development but also provide robust technological support for the construction of a China–Cambodia community of shared future.

3.2. Institutional dimension: adjusting production relations and innovating cooperation mechanisms

From an institutional perspective, China and Cambodia have preliminarily established a multi-layered framework for AI cooperation. These institutional arrangements reflect explorations of new forms of production relations and provide governance guarantees for unleashing the potential of digital productive forces. Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1958, China–Cambodia relations have developed steadily, reaching a new stage termed the "Diamond 60 Years" in 2023 [20]. During President Xi Jinping's visit to Cambodia in April 2025, the two countries signed 37 cooperation documents, elevating bilateral relations to a "New Era All-Weather China–Cambodia Community of Shared Future" and providing a higher-level

institutional guarantee for AI collaboration. This top-level institutional design demonstrates a strategic consensus on adjusting bilateral production relations to align with the development requirements of digital productive forces.

China–Cambodia digital cooperation began with infrastructure connectivity. In 2016, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Jointly Promoting the Construction of the Information Silk Road, marking the gradual establishment of a digital cooperation institutional framework [21]. In November 2024, Cambodia's Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation signed a cooperation memorandum with China–ASEAN Information Harbor, representing significant progress in digital infrastructure collaboration. However, it should be noted that, as of the end of 2025, public records do not indicate the existence of standardized data exchange mechanisms between China and Cambodia. Although multiple cooperation agreements have been signed, they have not included relevant provisions. That said, the most recent joint statements emphasize strengthening judicial and security cooperation, particularly in addressing transnational cybercrime. Should future collaboration expand into the "cyber and data security" domain, it could facilitate more formal negotiations on data exchange and sharing mechanisms [22]. Moreover, both sides have established multiple levels of coordination institutions, including the China–Cambodia Intergovernmental Coordination Committee, the China–Cambodia Economic and Trade Cooperation Committee, and the China–Cambodia Foreign and Defense Ministers "2+2" Strategic Dialogue Mechanism, creating multi-tiered communication channels from the national to industry levels [23]. The establishment of the Digital Economy Industry Branch of the Cambodia China Chamber of Commerce in 2024 demonstrates a governance model involving multiple stakeholders [24].

With China's release of the Global AI Governance Initiative in 2023, a preliminary policy framework for AI cooperation has been formed, providing clear guidance for China–Cambodia collaboration at the policy level. Serving as China's bridgehead to ASEAN, Guangxi has established the China–ASEAN AI Innovation and Cooperation Center, which is expected to become an important platform for future China–Cambodia AI cooperation. The establishment and refinement of these institutional frameworks not only provide strong support for pragmatic bilateral collaboration in AI but also illustrate the dynamic role of production relations in facilitating productive force development.

3.3. Values dimension: ideological consensus and value guidance in the superstructure

From the values perspective, China and Cambodia have gradually developed a shared value consensus in AI cooperation, centered on common development and mutual benefit, providing both an ideological foundation and motivational force for deepening collaboration. As developing countries, both nations face similar developmental challenges and share common goals in pursuing economic growth and improving social welfare. This principle of common development reflects Marxist ideas regarding the shared interests of peoples and also represents a move beyond traditional zero-sum thinking.

Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the two countries have significantly strengthened cooperation in digital infrastructure, 5G networks, e-commerce, and digital payment systems, embodying the principle of inclusive development. Chinese enterprises investing in Cambodia emphasize technology transfer and local talent cultivation, adhering to the principle of mutual benefit in project implementation. The China–ASEAN AI Summit held in Guangxi advocates openness and inclusivity in international cooperation, opposing technological blockades and zero-sum logic, thereby reflecting a new set of international cooperation values distinct from Western discourse hegemony [25]. As China–Cambodia relations deepen, both countries are expected to increasingly recognize and uphold the concept of a community of shared human destiny in AI cooperation, jointly

advancing the legitimate interests of developing countries in global digital governance and promoting a fairer, more equitable international digital order.

3.4. Three-dimensional synergy: positive interaction among technology, institutions, and values

The three dimensions—technology, institutions, and values—exhibit mutually reinforcing dynamics in China–Cambodia AI cooperation. Technological collaboration drives institutional innovation and the formation of shared values; institutional development provides robust support and regulatory guidance for technological cooperation; and value consensus directs the proper trajectory of both technological and institutional development. Investment in the China–Cambodia digital economy continues to expand, showing a clear progression from infrastructure development to industrial applications, and from technology importation to localized innovation. China remains Cambodia's largest foreign investor, with increasing investment in AI-related sectors. Projects in smart cities, intelligent transportation, and other domains illustrate the trend of integrated "smart infrastructure" development.

This three-dimensional synergistic development exemplifies Marxist principles regarding the interaction between productive forces and production relations, as well as between the economic base and the superstructure. At present, China–Cambodia AI cooperation has achieved significant progress in technological foundations, institutional frameworks, and shared values, providing a solid basis for further deepening AI-enabled construction of the China–Cambodia community of shared future.

4. Bottleneck analysis of AI-enabled deepening of the China–Cambodia community of shared future

Although China–Cambodia AI cooperation has achieved preliminary results, a closer examination reveals that many projects encounter substantial difficulties in implementation. From the perspective of the Marxist "technology–institution–values" framework, these bottlenecks essentially stem from the uneven development of productive forces, lagging adjustment of production relations, and the complex adaptation of the superstructure.

4.1. Technology dimension: development dilemmas under multiple constraints

The first challenge in bilateral AI cooperation lies in the "limping" state of digital infrastructure. Although Cambodia's mobile network coverage reaches 99%, this seemingly impressive figure masks a more severe reality: the penetration rate of fixed broadband is only 35%, and high-speed Internet access in rural areas is extremely limited [26]. This means that AI applications requiring large-scale data transmission are effectively confined to urban cores. Even more challenging is the serious lag in local data center construction. Most institutions rely on international cloud services, which not only raises operational costs but also introduces risks to data sovereignty [27].

Weak infrastructure further exacerbates the structural shortage of data resources. AI thrives on data as fuel, yet Cambodia faces a "triple deficit": insufficient quantity, uneven quality, and low structural organization [28]. In the context of China–Cambodia AI cooperation, the most critical issue is the severe lack of Khmer language datasets—a speech recognition system performing well in Chinese contexts may fail to recognize even basic Khmer input. Legal barriers to cross-border data flow further compound the problem. Cambodia issued the Sub-Decree No. 252 on the Management, Use, and Protection of Personal Identification Data in 2021, regulating personal identification data managed by the Ministry of Interior. However, this sub-decree covers only personal identification data under the Ministry's jurisdiction and does not extend to all personal

data or broader data protection requirements. Additionally, Cambodia's comprehensive Personal Data Protection (PDP) Law remains in draft form and is expected to be enacted in the coming years [29]. Consequently, Cambodia has yet to establish a comprehensive personal data protection law comparable to the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) [30]. Meanwhile, China continues to strengthen cross-border data management, introducing strict rules for data circulation and transmission. Since the two countries have not aligned their data standards or exchange mechanisms [31], data-driven applications face operational challenges, and data sharing and exchange are restricted. There is an urgent need to coordinate and harmonize data protection standards between China and Cambodia.

Behind the data gap lies a generational disparity in technological absorption capacity. The number of Cambodian AI graduates each year falls far short of development needs [32], and enterprises and government agencies have limited capacity to digest new technologies—advanced equipment alone cannot deliver its full potential [33]. Current technology transfer models are mostly unidirectional, rather than empowering local capabilities, lacking deep consideration of local needs and systematic cultivation of absorptive capacity [34]. If this "blood transfusion" model persists, it may stifle Cambodia's autonomous innovation potential, creating a vicious cycle of "import–dependence–capability hollowing."

At its core, the root of these problems is the absence of a robust domestic innovation ecosystem. Cambodian universities have limited research capacity and weak links to industry [35], venture capital and financial support mechanisms are underdeveloped [36], and AI startups face financing bottlenecks. The industrial chain is incomplete, with inadequate upstream and downstream support [37]. While China and Cambodia share a willingness to cooperate, there is a lack of efficiently functioning joint laboratories or other physical platforms [38]. This fragmented and inefficient allocation of innovation resources confines technological cooperation to mere transplantation, making true collaborative innovation and capability advancement difficult to achieve.

4.2. Institutional dimension: misalignment of regulatory systems and its ripple effects

The first institutional bottleneck lies in the misalignment of legal and regulatory frameworks. China has established a relatively comprehensive digital economy legal system, seeking a balance between promoting development and ensuring reasonable oversight. In contrast, Cambodia's digital regulations remain in their infancy. Although the E-Commerce Law and Personal Data Protection Law have been enacted, supporting regulations and enforcement mechanisms are still underdeveloped [39]. The deeper conflict stems from divergent governance philosophies: China emphasizes a balanced approach that prioritizes both development and security in an orderly manner, while Cambodia tends to prioritize rapid development first, followed by regulation. These differences manifest in concrete legal provisions—data security, personal information protection, and algorithm regulation standards are inconsistent—forcing enterprises to bear the high cost of "dual compliance." The absence of mutual legal recognition mechanisms and ineffective cross-border dispute resolution channels further increases legal risks for cooperation.

Misaligned legal frameworks inevitably lead to fragmented regulatory practices. At least five Cambodian government agencies are involved in digital economy oversight but lack a unified coordination mechanism, resulting in overlapping authority and low efficiency. These agencies include the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPTC), Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation (MISTI), Ministry of Information, National Bank of Cambodia (NBC), Ministry of Commerce (MOC), and the Digital Economy and Society Development Committee. Additionally, the Ministry of Interior oversees aspects of cybersecurity and digital identity management. Regulatory agencies have limited experience overseeing emerging technologies such as AI, with outdated tools and technical capabilities, and enforcement teams are

understaffed. Weak regulatory capacity not only undermines the effective implementation of laws but also leaves space for illicit activities, ultimately harming compliant enterprises and market order. From a Marxist state theory perspective, regulatory capacity reflects the modernization level of national governance; improving it requires iterative adaptation alongside technological evolution—a gradual historical process.

Regulatory fragmentation further exacerbates difficulties in aligning technical standards. Cambodia lacks domestic AI technical standards and largely relies on international or developed-country standards. The two countries' standards differ in data formats, interface protocols, and security specifications. While this appears to be a technical issue, it actually reflects deeper interest-based competition: standards determine market access thresholds and industrial dominance. Within domestic power dynamics, Cambodia has weak influence in setting AI standards, making it difficult to fully assert its national interests. Even if consensus on standards is reached, deficiencies in implementation mechanisms hinder their practical enforcement [40].

All institutional obstacles converge on a core pain point: weak intellectual property (IP) protection. Although Cambodia joined the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2003, its Patent Law and Copyright Law provide unclear protection for core AI assets such as algorithms and models. Software piracy rates are approximately 85%, far above the Asian average [41]. The absence of dedicated bilateral IP protection agreements or cooperative mechanisms not only undermines Chinese investment confidence but also stifles the cultivation of Cambodia's domestic innovation capacity. Without effective IP safeguards, innovation loses its fundamental incentive structure.

4.3. Values dimension: multi-layered projections of deep cognitive differences

The challenges at the values level stem from deep-seated cultural and cognitive differences. As a Theravāda Buddhist country, Cambodia's traditional culture emphasizes harmony and stability, and its acceptance of technological change tends to be cautious [42]. A McKinsey survey indicates that Cambodian enterprises' willingness to pursue digital transformation is significantly lower than the Asian average, with cultural factors playing an important role [43]. Language barriers also impose practical constraints: the digitalization of the Khmer language is limited, and localized AI tools are extremely scarce. More subtly, differences in management culture emerge: Chinese actors tend toward efficiency-driven, rapid decision-making, while Cambodian counterparts emphasize consensus-building and relationship maintenance. These differences may appear as minor "frictions" in daily work but often become difficult gaps to bridge during critical decision-making moments.

Cultural differences also extend outward to affect trust-building. Although political trust at the top levels between China and Cambodia is relatively high, trust at the social and enterprise levels remains fragile. Historical and geopolitical factors lead Cambodia to maintain caution in sensitive areas such as data security and technological dependence. Surveys show that the Cambodian public maintains a cautiously optimistic attitude toward technology, with particular concern for privacy protection [44]. At present, long-term, stable AI cooperation mechanisms and successful bilateral cases remain limited [45], and third-party interference remains a potential risk in the context of intensified global technology competition. Practically speaking, trust-building is not only a matter of attitudes but also requires transparent cooperation mechanisms, verifiable outcomes, and mutually beneficial practices to solidify over time.

At its root, weak trust partly reflects objective cognitive differences. Cambodia has a limited understanding of AI, with high expectations but also accompanying concerns. In practice, according to information from the Chinese Embassy in Cambodia, ongoing large-scale projects primarily focus on agriculture, tourism, and public infrastructure. Chinese enterprises still have room to improve their understanding of local Cambodian needs and application scenarios [46]. The two sides also differ in emphasis regarding cooperation goals and

values: China tends to prioritize market expansion and international influence. According to the official Chinese document, Opinions of the State Council on Deeply Implementing the "AI+" Action, …" promote open and accessible AI technologies, strengthen international cooperation in computing power, data, and talent, and help countries in the Global South enhance AI capabilities …" This indicates that China emphasizes not only technology transfer but also enhancing its international influence. In contrast, Cambodia places more focus on acquiring technology and building domestic capacity [47]. On fundamental issues such as AI ethics, the two countries' value orientations and boundary definitions also differ. China's AI+ Action Plan stresses "integrating ethical and moral considerations throughout the AI lifecycle" and ensuring that "AI adheres to common human values, remains controllable, and does not endanger public safety." Cambodia, however, has relatively limited policies and norms regarding AI ethics, potentially creating differences in interpretation and handling of ethical issues during cooperation. If these cognitive gaps are not gradually narrowed, even if technological and institutional barriers are addressed, cooperation may still struggle to deepen due to insufficient alignment of goals.

All challenges at the values level ultimately extend outward, manifesting in the absence of broad social participation mechanisms. As previously noted, current China–Cambodia AI cooperation is concentrated at the government and large enterprise levels, while civil society organizations, academic institutions, and small- and medium-sized enterprises are largely absent. Furthermore, Cambodia's AI industry ecosystem remains underdeveloped, making it difficult to form a diverse participation structure. Crucially, considerations for digital inclusion need to be strengthened—the UN Digital Development Index shows significant disparities in digital opportunities across urban and rural areas and between different social groups in Cambodia [48]. Without broader social participation mechanisms, cooperation risks undermining the democratic and inclusive nature of AI collaboration and cannot ensure that technology genuinely serves societal development or benefits the wider population.

Overall, the bottlenecks in China–Cambodia AI cooperation reflect systemic contradictions intertwined across technology, institutions, and values. Resolving these contradictions requires systematic strategic design and sustained collaborative effort over the long term.

5. Designing collaborative pathways for AI-enabled China–Cambodia community of shared destiny

Building on the systematic analysis of bottlenecks in China–Cambodia AI cooperation, this chapter, grounded in the Marxist "technology–institution–values" three-dimensional framework, proposes systematic collaborative pathways. These pathways target structural constraints at the technological level, systemic barriers at the institutional level, and cognitive gaps at the values level. They are mutually reinforcing and coordinated, aiming to overcome the deep-seated contradictions that hinder the construction of a China–Cambodia community of shared destiny and to establish a sustainable mechanism for a "true community."

5.1. Technological coordination strategy: overcoming multi-layered constraints on productivity development

Technological coordination constitutes the foundational strategy for building a China–Cambodia community of shared destiny. Its core lies in leveraging systematic technology empowerment to address multiple constraints, including infrastructure "limping," data resource scarcity ("three deficits"), generational gaps in absorption capacity, and gaps in the innovation ecosystem.

Given Cambodia's fixed broadband penetration of only 35%, a three-layer architecture strategy—backbone network, edge nodes, and terminal coverage— is recommended. This can leverage existing Asia-Europe submarine cable infrastructure, including the SEA-ME-WE 5 cable linking Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Western Europe, in conjunction with China-based technology companies such as Huawei and Alibaba operating in Cambodia. Expanding international bandwidth via submarine cable cooperation, extending 5G networks to rural areas, and jointly building a regional computing center serving Southeast Asia can be key measures. Drawing on Guangxi's experience in constructing a "core + edge" multi-tiered computing power supply system, the following illustrates practical possibilities: by the end of 2024, Guangxi's operational data center racks reached 164,000 standard racks, a 172% increase over 2022. Five ultra-large data centers were established, achieving a total computing capacity of 3.28 EFLOPS (FP32), up 546% from 2022; AI computing capacity reached 1.568 EFLOPS (FP16), a 52-fold increase, accounting for 23.9% of total computing capacity. Edge computing infrastructure covered all 14 prefecture-level cities, forming a regional computing layout centered on Nanning and Liuzhou, radiating across the entire region. This multi-layered edge computing system supports localized, low-latency, and diversified computing demands, enhancing the region's digital service capacity [49]. Based on this model, Guangxi could establish a cross-regional AI computing resource coordination platform with Cambodia, dynamically matching computing resources with application demands, reducing costs, and minimizing latency.

To address Cambodia's scarcity, uneven quality, and severe lack of Khmer-language datasets, a multi-tiered data governance system should be established. A China–Cambodia Data Standards Working Group can formulate sensor data and robot communication protocol standards for embodied intelligence. Mechanisms such as a China–Cambodia AI Open Data Sharing Platform could help Cambodia build national-scale multimodal datasets. A model akin to Guangxi's outbound data management negative list could be applied, implementing a "non-prohibited means permitted" principle for areas outside the list [50], providing clear guidance for cross-border data flow.

Regarding the shortage of AI graduates in Cambodia and limited enterprise absorption capacity, the traditional "blood transfusion" model of one-way knowledge transfer should be replaced with a "self-sustaining" two-way empowerment mechanism. Joint initiatives such as a China–Cambodia AI R&D Center could focus on developing Khmer-language natural language processing models and perception algorithms adapted to Cambodian contexts. Chinese innovations in large AI models, quantum technologies, and intelligent manufacturing can be absorbed [51], alongside the creation of AI service platforms offering computing, model, and data services in a standardized, professional, and inclusive manner for Cambodian society. To address Cambodia's weak university research capacity and loose industry–university–research linkages [52], institutions such as a China–Cambodia AI Technology Academy and China–Cambodia AI Industry Incubation Base could be established, introducing Chinese vocational education models and digital teaching resources, providing end-to-end support from ideation to industrialization.

5.2. Institutional coordination strategy: resolving the chain reactions of rule misalignment

Institutional coordination constitutes a critical strategy for building a China–Cambodia community of shared destiny. Its core objective is to leverage institutional innovation and rule alignment to address cascading obstacles such as misaligned laws and regulations, fragmented regulatory practices, disconnected technical standards, and weak intellectual property protection.

Recognizing the differences in the maturity of China's and Cambodia's digital legal frameworks, and the high compliance costs enterprises face under the "dual compliance" challenge, it is recommended to establish a regular policy dialogue platform and create a China–Cambodia Digital Regulation Coordination Working

Group [53]. This group would focus on aligning rules in key areas such as data security, personal information protection, and algorithm governance. Following China's principle of "development first, agile governance," the emphasis should be on regulating through development and developing through regulation, with innovation-driven cooperation as the primary objective in rule design. Given that at least five Cambodian agencies are involved in digital economy regulation but lack a unified coordination mechanism, support should be provided to establish a cross-departmental digital economy regulatory coordination framework and to pilot a sandbox for embodied intelligence applications. Drawing on Guangxi's experience in creating multi-stakeholder collaborative research platforms, cooperation could focus on cross-border data flow standards, algorithm transparency, and ethical frameworks [54], fostering institutional rules that reflect the shared interests of both countries. Similar mechanisms are currently being developed between China and Germany, and China and Singapore, indicating the feasibility of a China–Cambodia initiative.

Second, to address Cambodia's lack of domestic AI technical standards and the misalignment in data formats and interface protocols between the two countries, a China–Cambodia AI Standards Working Group should be established. The strategy would follow a three-step approach: Localization of international standards to suit Cambodian conditions; Mutual recognition of bilateral standards, and joint development of new standards. Reference can be made to Guangxi's recent explorations in digital governance, cross-border data flows, and algorithm ethics, emphasizing multi-stakeholder participation, including government, academia, enterprises, and research institutions. Collaborative innovation platforms should integrate standard development, technological innovation, and ethical governance. Initiatives such as the establishment of the Guangxi AI Academy and data collaboration projects with ASEAN countries exemplify this open, cross-boundary governance philosophy. Standardization and collaborative innovation could also extend to areas like quantum communication, humanoid robotics, and smart healthcare, forming regionally leading technical norms.

Finally, to tackle Cambodia's ambiguous protections for core AI assets such as algorithms and models, and a software piracy rate of approximately 85%, a China–Cambodia Intellectual Property Information Sharing Platform should be constructed. This platform could explore joint patent applications and rights-sharing mechanisms for algorithms and robotics designs, establishing a fair value distribution framework. As noted previously, following the "technology–industry–education" coordinated development model, initiatives such as a China–Cambodia AI Technology Academy can align talent development with six emerging industrial tracks, implementing an industry–education integration strategy. Drawing on China's flexible talent recruitment mechanisms, such as "migratory experts" and "weekend engineers [55]," a joint AI talent training and qualification mutual recognition system could be developed.

5.3. Values consensus strategy: bridging multi-dimensional cognitive gaps

Values consensus represents an innovative strategy for constructing a China–Cambodia community of shared destiny. Its core lies in bridging multi-dimensional gaps—including deep cultural and cognitive differences, fragile trust foundations, and absent social participation mechanisms—through scenario demonstration, cultural integration, trust-building, and collaborative governance.

Considering Cambodia's cautious attitude toward technological change as a Buddhist-majority country, and the fact that Cambodian enterprises' willingness for digital transformation is below the Asian average, a series of tangible and demonstrable applications should be introduced. For example, China has developed mature technologies in intelligent rice-field weeding robots and smart irrigation systems, which have been deployed through governmental ministries, universities, and enterprises. Cambodia and China already have official cooperation agreements and implementable projects in agricultural intelligence [56], providing a strong

foundation for applied demonstration. Additionally, UNESCO has repeatedly highlighted the need for digital documentation, 3D scanning, and modern technology-based protection and restoration of heritage sites such as Angkor Wat [57]. This opens the door for China–Cambodia collaboration in cultural heritage digitalization, alongside educational applications such as Khmer–Chinese AI translation tools. Introducing Chinese technologies in areas like intelligent manufacturing, low-altitude economy, smart photovoltaics, and cell/gene therapy can make the benefits of AI tangible to Cambodian citizens, demonstrating direct improvements to daily life.

First, to address Cambodian concerns regarding data security and technological dependence, initiatives such as "China–Cambodia AI Open Days," technology exhibitions, and citizen experience events should be regularly held, alongside the establishment of social impact assessment mechanisms for collaborative projects. Technologies like privacy-preserving computation and blockchain can enable "usable but invisible" data flows, while a regional-level data security monitoring and risk assessment platform would allow full lifecycle traceability and auditability of cross-border data movement, thereby enhancing Cambodian trust in data security. Second, to reconcile differences in technical understanding and value priorities between the two countries, a China–Cambodia AI Ethics Dialogue Mechanism should be established. Research on AI cultural adaptability can explore how Buddhist concepts of compassion might inform AI ethical design. Drawing on China's experiences in algorithmic transparency, inclusive service guarantees, and human–machine collaboration boundaries, the two countries can jointly define ethical standards that balance technological progress with humanistic concerns. Finally, considering that current cooperation is concentrated mainly at the government and large enterprise level, with limited participation from civil society, a China–Cambodia AI Governance Coordination Mechanism should be created. This could include a joint fund dedicated to AI applications serving grassroots communities and vulnerable groups. Integrating China's experience in leveraging high-value application scenarios through state-owned enterprises, fostering cross-sector technology integration, Cambodian projects can expand the deep application of AI technologies in energy, industrial manufacturing, transportation, and other strategic sectors.

5.4. Systemic safeguards for collaborative pathways

The three collaborative pathways are not isolated measures, but rather an organic whole that mutually reinforces and advances each other. The technical collaboration strategy focuses on strengthening the material foundation at the level of productive forces; the institutional collaboration strategy aims to optimize the institutional environment at the level of production relations; and the values consensus strategy consolidates the spiritual and normative bond at the level of the superstructure. Together, they form a progressive relationship of "technical foundation → institutional support → value guidance", while simultaneously maintaining a dynamic balance through the feedback mechanism of "value orientation → institutional design → technological direction."

Particularly, the integration of embodied intelligence, future industries, and vocational education constitutes a closed-loop feedback mechanism, generating a virtuous cycle of "technological innovation → industrial application → talent cultivation → technological iteration." Leveraging China's strategic deployment across six future industry tracks, China and Cambodia can engage in deep cooperation in advanced fields such as intelligent manufacturing, quantum technologies, hydrogen energy, low-altitude economy, brain–computer interfaces, and synthetic biology, fostering an industry symbiosis driven by scenario-based innovation and cross-sector linkage. Drawing on China's experience in constructing coordinated governance systems that integrate government leadership, market actors, and social participation,

this approach aligns policy guidance, market allocation, and social coordination into a unified governance paradigm.

It is important to note that effective implementation of these strategies requires robust organizational and evaluation mechanisms. A strategic implementation leadership group should be established, comprising representatives from both governments, enterprises, research institutions, and civil society. A comprehensive assessment framework covering technical, industrial, talent, and social indicators should be developed. Drawing on China's practices in establishing specialized industrial guidance funds and innovative technology-finance service models, a "technology + capital + scenario" integrated development system can be constructed to leverage social capital for key AI technology breakthroughs and demonstration projects in Cambodia.

From both strategic and regional diplomatic perspectives, implementing the China–Cambodia AI collaboration pathways will effectively advance the bilateral relationship from mere technological cooperation to a higher stage of shared destiny. This transition entails a shift from passive adaptation to proactive innovation, from unidirectional output to bidirectional interaction, and from localized cooperation to systemic synergy. It aims to realize the vision of "technology empowerment, industrial co-prosperity, and shared benefits for the people." Beyond sharing the dividends of AI development, this model can serve as a paradigm for transcending traditional hegemonic logic, constructing a new form of international relations, and contributing China–Cambodia wisdom and solutions to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

6. Conclusion

This study, grounded in the Marxist "technology–institution–value" three-dimensional analytical framework, systematically examined the internal mechanisms, practical bottlenecks, and collaborative pathways through which Artificial Intelligence (AI) can empower the construction of a China–Cambodia community with a shared future. The findings indicate that AI, as a core driver of the new wave of technological revolution, provides a historic opportunity for the two countries to build a "genuine community." Through the synergistic advancement of technological complementarity, institutional innovation, and value consensus, China–Cambodia cooperation is transitioning from a traditional economic and trade relationship toward a digital-era shared destiny community.

From a theoretical perspective, this study integrates Marxist thought on communal development with the characteristics of the AI era, revealing how technological progress can create the material conditions for moving beyond a "illusory community" to construct a "genuine community." The universality, openness, and shared nature of AI objectively demand a more equitable and collaborative international cooperation model, which aligns closely with Marxist principles concerning the common interests of all peoples. The technology–institution–value three-dimensional framework provides a scientific methodology for understanding the complexity of international technological cooperation and offers a systematic approach to resolving its bottlenecks. From a practical perspective, although China–Cambodia AI cooperation has achieved preliminary results, it still faces technical constraints such as weak infrastructure, insufficient data resources, and an underdeveloped innovation ecosystem; institutional barriers including misaligned legal frameworks, fragmented regulation, and difficulties in standard coordination; and value-related gaps such as cultural and cognitive differences, fragile trust, and limited social participation. Fundamentally, these bottlenecks stem from imbalanced productive forces, lagging adjustments in production relations, and the complexity of superstructural adaptation, all of which require systematic mitigation through technical collaboration, institutional alignment, and value consensus strategies.

Looking ahead, China–Cambodia AI cooperation should adhere to a people-centered development philosophy, transforming technological advancement into tangible improvements in the well-being of citizens in both countries. By creating visible and tangible application demonstrations, AI can serve critical public sectors including agricultural modernization, cultural heritage preservation, and educational access. By building inclusive social participation mechanisms, the benefits of digital development can be equitably distributed across urban and rural populations and diverse social groups. By establishing a fair value-sharing framework, the outcomes of technological innovation can be shared for mutual gain. More importantly, the deepening of China–Cambodia AI cooperation extends beyond bilateral development, bearing strategic significance in the broader global context. In an era of profound shifts in international AI governance, the successful exploration of this cooperation model can provide replicable and scalable experiences for digital collaboration under the Belt and Road Initiative, offering guidance for developing countries to achieve leapfrogging development in the new technological revolution, and contributing China–Cambodia wisdom and solutions toward a more just and equitable international digital order. This represents a vivid practice of Marxist internationalist spirit in the digital age and constitutes an important exploration for building a community with a shared future for mankind.

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