

# The Contemporary Thinking of Chinese Traditional Political Thoughts

## LES PRENSÉES CONTEMPORAINES SUR DES PENSÉES POLITIQUES TRADITIONNELLES CHINOISES

Liu Ye<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The thesis synthesizes culture, political value and the system of domination to deduce the core of Chinese traditional culture, which is the traditional political thought. Their marrow can be summarized a sentence: the thought of Confucianism is a foundation, assisted by the thoughts of Legalist and adjusted by the thoughts of Taoism, at the same time containing other schools of thoughts. Then, based on the features of Chinese traditional thoughts, I introduce the three political thoughts and give some comments respectively. Next, I try to find the possibility and practical significance according to analyzing real examples in ancient times. After that, I change the angle of view to today, rethink profoundly and use the experience for reference. Finally, put forward to the assumption of setting up the Chinese modern political system which includes social leading system, social supporting system and social stable system.

**Keywords:** Chinese traditional culture, Political thoughts, Confucianism, Political system

**Résumé:** La thèse fait une synthèse sur la culture, la valeur politique et le système de domination à déduire le noyau de la culture traditionnelles chinoises, qui est la pensée politique traditionnelle. Leur moelle peut être résumée en une phrase: la pensée de Confucianism est une fondation assistée par les pensées des Légalistes et ajustée par les pensées du Taoisme, y compris d'autres courants de pensées. Alors, basé sur les caractéristiques des pensées traditionnelles chinoises, j'introduis les 3 pensées politiques et donne chacun des commentaires. Ensuite, j'essaie de trouver une possibilité et une signification pratique selon une analyse des exemples réels dans l'ancien temps. Après, je change des angles de vues aujourd'hui, approfondis et prends mes expériences comme référence. Dernièrement, je fais des suppositions pour établir un système politique moderne chinois qui comprend le système social de référence, celui du support social et le système stable social.

**Mots-clés:** culture traditionnelle chinoise, pensées politiques, Confucianism, système politique

### 1. FOREWORD

#### 1.1 Begin with culture

What is culture? In ancient time and modern time, in different countries, it may have different answers, but totally the experts never observe it separately. They consider it as a series of behaviors system, which seeps into politics, economic, art and so on. In my thesis, I cite the professor HeXiuHuang's definition: culture is a lifestyle which can be accepted by all people-----especially the way of thinking, action, and value judgment.<sup>2</sup> We are easy to find the experts tend to put

the way of think as vital position, because it affects other parts of culture. So we should pay attention to true nature of Chinese culture when researching Chinese traditional thoughts. In other words, we should put the problem about thoughts under the Chinese culture to consider.

#### 1.2 Begin with political value

Nobody deny political system is a vital factor in the Chinese culture, but political value is necessary for research of thoughts and culture. Before western political thoughts entering China, Chinese think sovereign as a reasonable way to rule, almost nobody call in question. From political value to think, it had been a proper political behavior which can be accepted

<sup>1</sup>NGO Research centre NGO. Tsinghua University, China.

\*Received 6 October 2005; accepted 20 October 2005

<sup>2</sup> YuYingshi. *Modern Annotation Of Chinese Traditional Thoughts*. Page 278.

by the masses. Considering political thoughts research, we also chose ancient political elite or their subordinates as topics. In a word, the research of ancient political thoughts surpasses other research such as economic and society, which was proved from research level and scope. At the same time, research of ancient thoughts regarded political value as a core.

### **1.3 Begin with thoughts of domination and system**

As a Chinese proverb says: it is easy to win state power but difficult to protect it. We can conclude it from some strong dynasty in ancient China, such as Qin and Yuan dynasty. Their failure results from their choices about the way to domination. To be concrete, Qin dynasty benefited from Legalist which was introduced to Qin by LiSi, but when governing the whole country it went extremely and unilaterally; Yuan dynasty benefited from Confucianism which was introduced and changed by YeLv, but after conquering the whole China the government began to carry out the policy about nation discrimination and cruel punishment to citizens. The same ending was losing the regime in a short time. In fact, their failing tell us the thoughts of domination' choice will affect the track of history.

### **1.4 Discussion synthesizing above three**

If let us look for the splendor of Chinese culture, we must point out Chinese traditional political thoughts. In my thesis, I make its position highest, as the core of Chinese traditional culture. I have already explained the reason above, and then I add some points about political thoughts' affect on culture' other categories.

#### **1.4.1 About economic culture**

In economic structure, natural economic was held in very high esteem by ruler. A lot of economic thoughts such as "attaching importance to agriculture and restraining commercial" were political thoughts' mutation.

#### **1.4.2 About mode of thinking**

About this question, the two have a mutual relation. For one thing, political thoughts express ancient mode of thinking; for another thing, to a certain degree they promote the development of mode of thinking.

Let traditional "content---tool" mode as an example "content---tool" is a relation which explains subject and object. Ancient China usually made use of this mode of thinking to politics, such as in the late 19th century WuXu Reform's "Chinese culture is content and western culture is tools".

### **1.4.3 About psychology and accomplishment**

Through my observation, I find the rulers usually understand individual from psychology at first, and then lead the individual to obey public rule, finally strengthen their control. For example, Confucianism proposed "the people is valuable and the foundation of the society" in order to carry out its "virtue control".

As for accomplishment, every school of thought had different opinions. Confucianism paid attention to "a man of noble character" which was pursued by ancient citizens. In fact, it was a kind of strategy of rule. It not only aroused people's sense of responsibility, but also fastened them with political system, impossible to escape.

In short, Chinese traditional political thoughts embrace a wide spectrum, but their marrow should be summarized a sentence: the thoughts of Confucianism is a foundation, assisted by the thoughts of Legalist and adjusted by the thoughts of Taoism, at the same time containing other schools of thoughts. In other words, it is a tool which rectifies a huge machine called China. Although out of track, it will still come back. Before the feudal building collapsed, the anti-feudal counters also put down this kind of traditional foundation gradually, because they know that is a magic weapon which keeps the feudal system revolve and never stop. Next, let me begin with concrete analysis.

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND EVALUATION TO TRADITIONAL POLITICAL THOUGHTS**

### **2.1 Normal character of Chinese traditional political thoughts**

#### **2.1.1 The character of embracing**

Generally it is similar to assimilation, which should be the typical character of Chinese traditional political thoughts.

From political thoughts beginning to be popular, they never developed isolated. Although they struggled sometimes, some orthodox Confucians also discriminated against those who do not belong to the same inner circle. In the long run, those thoughts were not mutually exclusive. For ancient elites, lenience was a kind of virtue; many politicians were experts who were proficient in different thoughts.

#### **2.1.2 The character of conservation**

"Conservation" in my thesis is different from stopping without development, which is not an underestimation.

Its function is obvious. Firstly, conservative political thoughts made the society relatively stable. Although war and reform may be strong, original political mode or thoughts will become an ideal that is pursued by people. Secondly, conservative thoughts of rule are a guarantee of deepening research. Because of the concentration of thoughts, Chinese traditional thoughts become deepen and exquisite.

### **2.1.3 Clan standard**

Chinese traditional society's biggest special feature is the centre of activity.<sup>3</sup> We can see the feudal ruler also found every family is the root of society and the foundation of the rule, so they try to let the thoughts of the rule apply for the family.

The kind of character affects development of political environment. For one thing, it safeguard feudal regime. For individual, he or she can not betray this kind of system, even though lay down his life. For another thing, it is no good to democracy construction. The ancient people's course has been arranged by their clan, individual independent thoughts are restrained, especially for women. And expansion of the clan standard makes the Chinese people deal with things according to human feeling, not reason, which must destroy axiom of society.

## **2.2 The introduction to Confucian traditional thought of domination**

If let me list the thoughts of Confucian domination, the content will be numerous. So I have to choose some classical content to introduce.

### **2.2.1 Setting up the order of domination and protect it with feudal ethical code and status.**

Confucian was originated from ritual, so it was obvious to attach great weight to etiquette. But Confucius's contribution was letting this kind of ritual become a kind of political order which should be obeyed by everyone. He thought when every person from different class kept their behaviors with social standards, the order turned out naturally. For emperor, protecting order must be in light of doctrines. This kind of feudal ethical may include two aspects: One is those things which is habitual, such as "don't see without law and discipline rite, don't speak without law and discipline rite, don't hear without law and discipline rite, don't move without law and discipline rite." Another is those things that have become certain rule. The famous example is the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues as specified in the feudal ethical code. In fact, this kind of system is the certain system which

arranges for society standard and defends political order.

### **2.2.2 The theory of benevolence and morals**

From this angle to consider, Mencius's theory was more typical, systematic and operational. He inherited Confucius 'opinions about morals such as "The benevolent loves others" and "Don't do to others what you don't want others to do to you", at the same time interpret the theory named "policy of benevolence". Which can be divided into three parts: firstly the people's position is vital in political environment, as the sentence said "civilians are important; the state is next; the emperor is light." Secondly, the reason for carrying out "policy of benevolence" is making the people convinced. And whether enjoying the ardent support of the people decides whether succeed or fail in political domination directly. Thirdly, it is used extensively by rulers, which is "make everybody own their estate" as the most important measure to carry out "policy of benevolence".

### **2.2.3 Philosophy of political ethnics**

Besides ancient rulers set up a series of domination system completely and subjectively, they also stressed the philosophy of political ethnics. Some Confucians began to use the experience of Buddhism and Taoism about speculative philosophy, making political ethnics become philosophy and strengthening Confucius as main body, ZhuXi epitomized the thought of this school.

ZhuXi explained his domination thoughts through his philosophy system which centered on the "logic". He put forward to an opinion that everything is consist of special materials, so everything should express different features and be arranged at certain position. Obviously, the system of feudal social stratum and fatalism had been reasonable under his proof.

## **2.3 The introduction to Taoism's thoughts of domination**

### **2.3.1 A political assumption called "smaller country and fewer citizens"**

The delegate of Taoism was Lao Zi, who insisted on thinking there were a lot of wars and each trying to cheat or outwit the other was because the society was developing so fast and the distribution was not fair. So the society should come back to original situation, which is "govern by doing nothing that goes against nature" about politics. Concretely, we can summarize it as "if the government does nothing, the people will inculcate by themselves; if the government is quiet, the people will follow the correct path; if the government doesn't disturb the farmers, the people will be richer and richer; if the government is not filled with lust, the

---

<sup>3</sup> LiangShuming. *The Core Of Chinese culture*.

people will be plain. Lao Zi drew the outline of his dreamful society, which was “the people should have no dealings with each others, only hearing the bark of the dogs and crows of the cocks.

### **2.3.2 The criticism about kindheartedness and justices as well as penalty**

Lao Zi sniffed at the Confucianism’s superficial kindhearted and justice. He thought kindhearted and justices only encourage people’s selfish and greedy nature. Zhuang Zhou gave some comments further; he thought kindheartedness and justices were opposite to human being’s nature. In order to safeguard the false justice, the people forfeited there nature.

As for penalty, Lao Zi attacked it at the same time. He said: “the people were not afraid of death, how the government used death to threaten them?” The people may be afraid of death temporarily, but in the long run it can not solve conflict.

In a word, although their criticism can not be from the people’s point, they still reveal the fatal disadvantage. The pity was their opinions can not be inherited by their inferiors. On the contrary, they were gradually assimilated by Confucianism and Legalists, brought into their systems.

## **2.4 The introduction to Legalist’s thoughts of domination**

### **2.4.1 Legal and political trickery’s integration.**

Legal and political trickery’s integration was not the final goal, but a kind of means. We can summary it easily: if the emperor has no political trickery, the subordinate will conceal the true state of affairs from above and below oneself; if the ministers have no law to carry out, the people will trapped into confusion. In a word, the design of state system of law and the emperor’s political trickery were vital and the key factor of social stable state, which was several hundred years earlier than 《Principe》 written by Machiavelli.

### **2.4.2 policy of keeping the people in ignorance of Legalist**

In Chinese ancient history, Taoism and Legalist countered wisdom except Confucianism. But Taoism only put forward to some principles, not reaching certain height. So Legalist’s opinion for this aspect was the special index.

HanFei once explained why the policy of keeping the people in ignorance was beneficial to rulers in his masterpieces. He said: “the people’s wisdom is like the heart of babies, not knowing sacrifice one’s personal interests to get big success. So the policy should be according to the elite’s wisdom, not fit in with the needs of the people, or that is the beginning of chaos.”

Expounding the profound truth in simple language, for one thing, the people couldn’t understand the excellence of the policy, usually lost a great deal through trying to save a little; for another thing, they always evaluated and censured the government for doing something, which increased the governments troublesome and the difficulty of carrying out some policies.

### **2.4.3 Being strict and fair in meting out rewards and punishments, carrying out cruel torture to the criminal**

The policy was originated from the assumption about human nature by HanFei. He thought the people had desire to pursue interests, similar to the assumption of rational economic man today, they treated each other using the heart of calculation, so restraining the people did not depend on moral ties, only using penalty and cruel torture, which made them dare not do anything out of control. More important thing was Han even circled the target of autocracy, which included Confucians, swordsmen, merchants and workmen. They looked down upon the emperor, slandered the government, and befogged the minds of the people because of their special skills.

In a word, the Legalists used rewards and punishments to lead the people to follow the government’s route, used the penalty punish those men who did not obey the management, reaching the goal of centralization.

## **2.5 The possibility and feasibility of letting three doctrines combined**

### **2.5.1 Some examples about the combination**

Because the politician and thinker often became the same person in ancient China, they must have strong political sense of smell, at the same time their research must solve the real problems, so the method of managing state affairs could not be temporary.

#### **2.5.1.1 The attempt of the first combination**

In the period of Warring States, different schools debated most heated, giving tit for tat. But in Han dynasty, the opportunity had arrived, Confucianism firstly began to take in some opinions from Taoism and Legalists.

In early Han dynasty, the Taoism which put forward to discarding all desires and worries from one’s mind began to be admitted by feudal rulers, because it met recovering the production’s needs. Next, some thinker also began to mix some Legalist’s opinions with Confucianism; the famous man was ShuSuntong, who introduced some Legalist’s classic doctrines such as “respect the emperor and low the ministers”to the emperor and got the admission to spread. 《ShiJi》’s

writer SiMaqian evaluated him “march with the time and catch the chance”. In deed, from that time, the people began to accept the wording.

After that, although DongZhongshu had risen “banning other schools, only worshipping the Confucianism”, in fact he absorbed the quintessence from Legalists and Taoism, brought about a combination of the three. Firstly, he made “respect the emperor and low the ministers” as the principle to extend the other social areas, forming so called the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues, letting Legalist’s doctrine legalizing. Secondly, he used the opinion that is “respect the Yang which means the masculine or positive principle in nature and low the Yin which means the feminine or negative principle in nature” for define the order in human society.

In fact, Dong clearly knew Confucianism was a tool for seeking unity of different thinking; absorbing and harmonizing was the main stream. He believed “it would be better to integrate others than ruin them.” At the time, Dong himself indeed succeeded by using it, not being attacked and abused from rivals.

#### **2.5.1.2 The booming of the second combination**

During the period of the Wei and Jin, Confucianism got a shock from others, but its main position was not shook. Some Confucians began to realize the combination would be enforced. When the Sui and Tang dynasty came, this kind of combination was being perfected.

The ruler of the Tang dynasty pursued the open policy to govern the country, sometimes pursued utilitarianism to change main thoughts to meets emperor’s needs, but at heart Confucianism was still playing a leading role. Choosing TangTaizong (a famous emperor in Tang dynasty) as a example, he realized the policy of benevolence’s essence, understood the principle of “water can support boats, also turn it down”, so pursued governing the country by virtue. In fact, on that time, there were lenient atmosphere in the sphere of learning; contention of a hundred schools of thought came back. As for Legalists, its assisting function, especially its function about controlling whole society reached a high level. Almost Tang’s emperor pursued the reform, especially WuZetian who was the only woman emperor in Chinese history. Her sponsor reform had proved highly successful, at the same time law and penal code relatively were ripen. Moreover, there were a lot of ministers who kept the law; their appearance meant the emperor approved law’s function and status. In the area of the science of law, Tang’s law system also approached today’s. As for Taoism, making provision for recovery from the effects of war or calamity was put forward to and became the important way to attain people’s belief. The thought of Taoism looked like tranquillizers, which brought temporary steady and quick recovery. In brief, the combination basically formed the marrow of Chinese political thoughts

during this period, and made the three thought’s position and function clearly, which had vital effect on the coming of times of peace and prosperity.

#### **2.5.1.3 The final mergence**

We can find Legalists and Taoism seldom appeared on the political stage as independent status from Song dynasty, and Confucianism also changed more or less, especially idealist philosophy appeared. In this period, Confucianism’s self-cultivation and theory that man is an integral part of nature was popular by drawing lessons from Taoism, and ZhuXi finally admitted Legalist’s proposals and accepted the opinion that society was changing constantly and the policy needed changing too. I may well say in Song dynasty, Legalist’s distinct character had not been distinguished from Confucianism.

#### **2.5.2 Subjective and objective factors of the combination**

Why Chinese traditional political thoughts can compromise different features from three schools was an inevitable outcome, not being grafted by human beings.

Firstly, the elite who incorporated the advantages of philologist and politician put forward to political thoughts. They not only had profound thoughts about their researching areas, but also grasped other school’s features and weak points.

Secondly, Chinese emperor’s special position and no radical measures. Because ancient domination can’t bypass the emperor, they had the right to choose and use the political domination thoughts which were more useful. Under normal conditions, the emperor tend to making a middle route to mix different thoughts, adopting the parts which he liked and neglecting other parts which was not vital.

Thirdly, utilitarianism of different schools. After Qin dynasty, how to consolidate new power and set up authority became the key problem. But in practice, only depending on one theory to take effect was not applicable everywhere. Therefore, the boundary of sphere of learning was broken. As long as own thoughts could be admitted and meet the emperor’s needs, changing original doctrines did not betray ancestors. So a kind of utilitarianism’s atmosphere emerged as the times required, every schools began to learn from other’s strong points and close the gap in order to strive for the high status, which improved the combination of thoughts.

Next, the identity of the broad masses of the people. Generally, only using a unitary domination thought was prone to lead to people’s discontent, such as Qin’s exhausting all resources to build up legal authority and Han’s excess rehabilitation. Even winning people by virtue was not an effective way sometimes, which

connived evildoers to do evil deed. So it was accepted by rulers that absorbing anything and everything was considered as a coordinated mechanism

At last, the distinguishing feature and effect of different thoughts. From Chinese history to observe, Taoism usually proved effective after turbulent days and mild as a tool for relaxing class struggle. In flourishing age, Confucianism and Legalist's simultaneous development catered to ruler's ambition, and set up a certain standard to keep state's steady. When the state was beset with troubles internally and externally, Legalist's thoughts had effect on strengthening people's confidence and plucking up their courage, carrying out arduous reforms. Therefore, based on their feature, their combination became the truth.

### **3. PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CONFUCIANISM, TAOISM AND LEGALISTS**

#### **3.1 A resurgence of Confucianism and its transformation**

##### **3.1.1 The sound of New Confucianism**

After War II, western academic circles put forward to an opinion called "the death of Confucianism". They said: "autocratic monarchy supplied the environment for Confucianism and in 1912 it crumbled on the whole and lost its roots. Therefore, the continuance of thoughts had been destroyed. This great tradition had taken leave of China."<sup>4</sup>

But, the fact had proved their conclusion was in a brash way. After 1960, for one thing, some New Confucianism's representative figures began to be active; for another thing, some Asian countries began to improve at an amazing speed under Confucianism's affect. Next, I try to summary them and introduce them to readers.

##### **3.1.1.1 Absorb democratic thoughts but insist on traditional thoughts as a main body**

They thought China had no reason not to develop democracy. China culture can contain different cultures; similarly Confucianism can absorb western democratic thoughts because it advocated wisdom. But, this kind of absorption was not adopting other's strong points and closing the gap easily. It should be creative transformation according to Professor Robert Belch's opinion. In other words, using Confucianism to explain

democracy properly, giving democracy a new interpretation.

In my view, they advocated the democracy which should be elite democracy. It demanded a transformation that can eliminate irrational state. But it was only an imagination; nobody had the condition and chance to let it be in practice and received by mass.

##### **3.1.1.2 Give play to going into the society of Confucianism in politics**

Chinese Confucianism was different from western church, had no possibility to act as a counterweight to secular government. But Confucianism had critical and creative spirits, and that may not express through political organization. Therefore, Confucian should apply this feature to society today. In fact it had been put into practice in some small Asian countries. Concretely, critique and debating can increase rightness of decisions and policies, find breakthrough point in politics. The difficulty was the spokesman of rulers, who can accept but not put into execution. At the same time, using Confucianism needed courage and the adventure of spirit. In case the policy was failed, social conflict and turbulence would have appeared, the consequences would have been too ghastly to contemplate.

##### **3.1.1.3 Pay attention to spirit reward, set up two series of measure of value for elite and the common people**

Chinese history was led by elites; its carrier was centralized bureaucratic apparatus; inner motivation was spirit reward that was satisfaction from heart and immortal reputation. This system was immortal because it set up two different value systems; one belonged to elites and the other belonged to the common people. Following altruism and pursuing spirit reward was elites, they could control themselves, not abuse their power and pursue material reward, so they should lead the society. Relatively, the common people's egoism and their laying too much stress on material income made them work hard and not interfere politics, which can keep the society stable. The combination of two systems was Confucianism's magic key. I think it may be used today, though sometimes idealized.

##### **3.1.1.4 The relation of new Confucianism and modernization**

What is modernization; of course it is not equal to economical development. Webber's concept was authoritative; he regarded it as a rational trend. In other words, the people used ration to control nature and society, made them develop coordinately. Further, he divided it into three dimensions, one was motivation, and one was flow and another was structure. As for the first dimension, western thoughts owned enterprising spirit and Confucianism was not lack of those. As to the

---

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*.

second, they were not the same, the former stressed on efficacy and Confucianism pursued value even though losing efficacy. As for the third, the West advocated extensive political participation and multivariate, and thought it as vital system's factor. But New Confucianism only retained some presumptions and easy model. How to use traditional opinions to explain its superiority was not answered. A typical example was that it admitted democracy and multivariate, but had no evident connection with centralized leadership which sounded farfetched.

### **3.1.2 Confucianism model's practical significance and scope of application.**

#### **3.1.2.1 two-stage structure of elites and common people have realistic value.**

We can discuss this problem from two angles. One is that Party instead of autocratic monarchy was good for Confucianism's survival, because Party had strict standard about people's compulsory and rights which was prior to monarchy. The other is that using communist to control society did not make elite's value disappear. The altruism and moral bound of Confucian could get many people's supports.

Today the evident example was selection of the elites. Before 1978, we selected cadres according to whether they were with politics in command. The value of elites was political consciousness, not special skills, which was fit for Confucianism's designation. Today, some elite enter the class of governance but not giving up their control about economy. That is why we call them government-owned merchants and they are apt to corruption. So it is necessary that we renew Confucianism's opinions to serve the people. But it does not mean rising political red standard again, what we should do now is confirming the class of elites' function and value.

#### **3.1.2.2 The effect to peace and steady**

Chinese people liked peace and hated turmoil. For those rulers who exhaust all resources to build up one's military power, such as Genghis Khan, the people could not affirm their achievements. The hero liked wars, thinking the people were their running dogs, so everyone hated wars and hoped the piping times of peace. From this aspect, Confucianism was a best tool. Some scholars from New Confucianism thought the reason that humanity was not peace was desire for power, which was most deep and potential motivation. However, Confucianism could eliminate this kind of desire. Confucius said: Conquering the country depending on doing injustices should not be done. Under today's circumstance, although this preaching was a bit pedantic, controlling ruler's power was effective. In addition, in the period which needed to hide one's capacities and hide one's time, putting mental pursuits above material arts was necessary which was from Confucianism.

#### **3.1.2.3 Important significance about self-examination of modernization**

Today, when modernization becomes goals which are pursued by different countries, it brought with a lot of bad effects, such as disruption on emotional belts between peoples and destroying the environment. I think many thoughts from ancient Confucianism such as "man is an integral part of nature" were interlinked with modern opinions, only lacking of some necessary depth of thought. For example, when Bolanni criticized moderation he got the conclusion: it is final goal that only human beings are harmonious with universe, which was the same with the Confucianism. Moreover, clan's mentality was once scathingly repudiated, but it was still the key factor which keeps the relation of human nature and society's stabilization. In China, clan standard had prominent function. Firstly, pay attention to clan and neglect individuals. This demand made people takes the whole situation into account, avoiding working rashly; secondly, release pressure by emotion. This pressure does not only mean the pressure at work, but means in general a kind of situation under the pressure of modern life. The outcome of pressure is dangerous, which lead to brutal politics and social capital's decreasing. Just the opposite, the family is not only individual's refuge harbour, but also a source of social cohesion.

#### **3.1.3 Confucianism's backward and rectification**

From the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Confucianism had been hauled down from holy altar. In fact, we had known some backwards about it, so I want to choose some points which need improving.

##### **3.1.3.1 The separation of personal moral and political moral**

Ancient Chinese people thought personal moral was the basic condition of political moral, but it is not correct today and can lead to the rule by man which was stumbling block in the course of democracy. So we must cut the relation. For one thing, bring up some talented people who have whole character with Confucianism's moral. For another thing, we must change traditional political moral to be under the legal frame, or we have no possibility to control elites.

##### **3.1.3.2 Change dictatorial manner into collective policy decision**

Although Confucianism may hold other thoughts, its dictatorial manner must appear when others want to replace it. Many scholars warned people against heresies, especially in political area. Therefore, confiscating the property and exterminating the family because of political opinions was often seen. Moreover, it was also concealed in concept of value. "One person can not attend upon two owners." was the political moral fortitude for Confucians. Because western

multivariate values invade, we can compare it with Confucianism. Obviously, multivariate values are better in modern governance, it demands ideological emancipation and reconciling, not leading to conservation. But, its responsibility system is often obscure and efficiency is low, which is improved according to Confucianism.

### **3.1.3.3 The restriction system of whole country must be changed**

The restriction system in ancient China was regarding virtue as the first thing with the legal assistant. At the same time, it will not take effect on some elites and the people had acquiesced in these unequal matters. Only in Ming dynasty, some thinkers put forward to some views on equal thoughts which also were ignored by rulers. What is the restriction system today? I think equal is the core. Equal standing in law and getting the chance of education are needed. Next is the restricting egoism, entrusting to freedom certain limit with law, morals, public opinion and ballot tickets. Finally, change altruism into citizens and group's obligations; especially change the traditional role of the government. Although China had had similar political designation, we must find this was partial and exaggerated.

## **3.2 The value of Taoism in modern times**

Modern people seem to regard Taoism as a religion, not extending to political areas. The successors of Taoism have not developed their thoughts according to realistic needs and rather limited because of its negativity. So its value exists in the way of thinking and spiritual function.

### **3.2.1 Explore the objective law of political life**

LaoZi had found that all things on earth operated according to certain objective law. As for politics, the replacement of royal court was normal. When any political force reached the peak, it was doomed to follow a zigzag course. So effective way was drawing back wisely in face of overwhelming odds and having elasticity in policy. In China, the law had something to political upheavals, whenever before or after establishing a state. I think LaoZi's opinions still take effect on the control of state and let the leaders be prepared for danger in times of peace. Especially, we should pay attention to guiding the people in thinking respect and allow the people to get something off their chests in order to release social pressure.

### **3.2.2 About the control of political elites**

Taiwan's scholars firstly paid attention to this problem; they thought Taoism's opinions were most completely in this respect. LaoZi said: sages had not regular mind, and thought people's mind as their own mind. It not only meant respecting elite's advices, but also making them not dare cheat emperors. Their successors also put

forward to practical measures, which was dealing with different political opinions in order to set up emperor's prestige. In fact, Taoism's theory was similar with Legalist in this aspect, but recessive and being able to find a secure foothold which had not been criticized by people.

## **3.3 A Legalist's feature not to be ignored**

Today running the country according to law had been accepted by people, so I want to follow other aspects with interest.

### **3.3.1 About radical reform from Legalist**

Reviewing the past Legalist's reform, we can see a lot of achievement had been kept on although sometimes the reform was overturned. This was because they had strong resolution and motive power. I think China is precisely lack of the courage of reform, sometimes misses the chance. Especially when the reformers come up against some difficulties, they can not insist on their original intention and standpoints so that the reform finally fails.

### **3.3.2 About struggling against relational politics**

Legalist's tradition was personal independence of conduct and like frosty, not fearing any poison and bewitch. In China the difficulty we had encounter was old sequence, including politics, economic and culture and so on. At the same time, from Legalist's experience to think, good starting points tended to be ruined by some base people who ganged up for selfish interests. So we must oppose them to ensure our reform successfully because they had not disappeared at present. In other words, we are struggling against relational politics in order to defend the fruits of revolution.

### **3.3.3 Pay attention to extramalization from Legalist**

Legalist's thoughts originated from extremism, which was needed by Qin dynasty because of unifying China. At present, now that we admit a truth that institutionalization is not the best; we must control its extremalization in order not to drift off correct course. We do not want to deny the radical reform, but to strength the direction of reform and protect different sounds. At the same time, we hope the reform can be successful at a low cost.

## **4. THE POINT OF ENGAGEMENT ABOUT CONFUCIANISM, TAOISM AND**



## LEGALIST — A BOLD ASSUMPTION AND ATTEMPTION

After 20<sup>th</sup> 70s, western economic blocked up. Western thinkers began to discover western culture's crisis and reflect on themselves. They queried the validity of the statement that the third world's countries must follow Western Street. They criticized western political system which had been for over 400 years: modernization has been trapped into hopeless situation. Modern western culture is in crossroads, we should think whether it should be regarded as the only choice.

Under this kind of academic atmosphere, some scholars who are engaged in comparing research about western and eastern culture put forward to some propositions. They advocate absorbing western culture's essence on Chinese earth. Mr. YuYingshi from Taiwan said that Chinese culture was not incompatible as modern life. As for practical research, they quoted Han and Tang dynasty's experience to explain their magnanimous and cite Japan and Singapore's examples because they did not give up eastern feature on political psychology and structure of value. But they did not sum up the complete and systematic theory. I want to remould Chinese traditional political thought's core to design another path according to ancient thought's modern feature. Generally, it is based on three systems, firstly social leading system which is the center. It means the elites control the society; they possess a high sense of responsibility and sense of mission from Confucianism. At the same time, they can restrain themselves well. As for the common people, they generally accept the concept of clan, mutual emotion, scaling the height of life and attaching importance to education. The second system is social supporting system, which has the effect on protecting the society to develop well. It means in society we use law to restrain the people, think it as supreme norm and standard. The leader should make use of political tactics to set up authority, letting the people not do evil deed. The third system is social stable system which can adjust the society and make it function normally. It means we should adopt allowance policy to recover the society when the social crisis comes. When contradictions are

fermenting, we should make use of retreating for the sake of advancing and coping with shifting events by sticking to a fundamental policy to put an end to crisis. At the same time, the system demands being prepared for danger in times of peace. All in all, the three systems are supplement to each other. With their common function, a state will develop rapidly which is dreamful civilization otherwise it has fatal defects.

## 5. CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION: BREAK THROUGH BARRIERS, AND BE GIVEN A NEW LIFE.

Beyond doubt, the Chinese nation will be flourishing. But when eastern civilization is reduced to fragments, it is not wise that we still think it as intellectual impetus. Obvious barriers are in face of us. Firstly, the Chinese nation is short of spiritual pillar. When we criticize our culture brutally from time to time, we find we have nothing at all at last. The sense of loss lets the people especially youths give up original lofty ideal and the wish of participation. They become selfish and lonely. Their degeneration is the reason why the whole society has an uncertain future. Secondly, vested benefits which are under western culture's instruction are in the front of us. We have seen Chinese progress during thirty years, but it doesn't mean it should be given the credit to western culture totally. Whether we dare issue our challenge to it is the most important problem nowadays. The key is that we should look for new increasing points. Finally, we have difficulty that is how we deal with the relationship with Communism. About this problem we still have blind sides, but I believe they may be consistent in the sphere of social management and ideology.

In a word, my theory about social system is still a kind of assumption. But at all times and in all countries there are many examples to fully prove that it is effective, such as ancient Tang dynasty and modern Singapore. Most important thing is that it is a scientific path of research which is worth thinking. I believe that eastern traditional thoughts must radiate brilliant light better than past western mythology.

## REFERENCES

- BaiLuxun, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics*, Jiangsu People Press  
JiangRonghai, *From Confucius to MaoZedong*, Press of Peking University  
Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*  
*The Analects of Confucius*, Trigeminy Press  
WuGuozhen, *Chinese Tradition*, East Press  
XieQingkui, XiaoYang, *The Chinese Government and Politics*, Press of Peking University

XuDatong, *The History of Chinese Ancient Political Thoughts*, Jilin Presses, 1981

YuYingshi, *Modern Annotation of Chinese Traditional Thoughts*

#### **THE AUTHOR**

**Liu Ye**, NGO Research centre NGO. From Beijing. Born: 26th May 1981 Male. Master Degree. Room 528 Building 30, Tsinghua University, Beijing, 100084, P.R. China.

Email: liuye1608@hotmail.com