The Refunctioning of Confucianism: The Mainland Chinese Intellectual Response to Confucianism since the 1980s

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This paper examines the thrust and content of the discourse of Confucianism in maintand China since the 1980s. It begins with an examination of three different approaches in the Confucianism discourse, including the socialist approach, the liberal approach, and the Confucian approach. It then proceeds to analyze the substance of the specific contestations over Confucianism and democracy, Confucianism and Marxism, Confucianism and modernization, and, most importantly, the mainland Chinese government's attitude toward the socialist approach, the liberal approach, and the Confucian approach. It concludes with some general observations about the refunctioning of Confucianism and its shift in a conservative direction.

KEYWORDS: refunctioning; Confucianism; Marxism; liberal democracy; modernization.

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Since the 1980s, China has witnessed a sustained resurgence of scholarly and intellectual interest in a previously marginalized Confucianism (儒學). This can be seen from the remarkable

number of research centers, conferences, research projects, publications, and postgraduate theses devoted to aspects of Confucianism. The Confucianism discourse has attracted great attention not only internally but also internationally, especially among scholars in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and the United States. Before the 1980s, intellectual activity concerning Confucianism was concentrated in peripheral Chinese societies, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, none of which has much significance as a center of intellectual activity when all attention has been focused on mainland China. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Confucianism was criticized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as an "unenlightened" and "feudal" ideology, Li Zehou (李澤厚), a prominent philosopher engaged in Modern Confucianism (現代儒學) discourse, argues that criticism of Confucianism has only been conducted by a small number of Chinese intellectuals at a superficial level, and that it has had very little effect (Li 1986). Yet it cannot be denied that Confucianism studies and values were attacked during the Cultural Revolution period. Therefore, it seems to be imperative for mainland Chinese scholars to exchange ideas with their counterparts from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, the United States, and other areas (Wen 1987). Several scholars, such as Cui Jianzhong (崔建中), Li Zonggui (李宗桂), and Meng Hongsheng (孟鴻聲), suggest that during the Cultural Revolution the base of Confucian studies was transferred from mainland China to the East Asian region and the United States by default. Academic exchange on Confucianism between mainland China and other countries is seen as "children feeding their mother" (反哺, fanbu) (Li Zonggui 1992; Meng 2006; Cui 1989), meaning that mainland Chinese. the initiators of Confucianism, received their education in the doctrine from the inheritors of Confucianism in other regions after the 1980s.

Despite the importance of the discourse in mainland China, only a few detailed studies of Confucianism have been written in English (Dirlik

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1995). By contrast, a tremendous amount of research and writing on the subject of Confucianism has been done by Chinese (mainland and overseas) scholars over the past three decades. Arif Dirlik has remarked that in mainland China in recent years, Confucius (孔子) has been moved "from the museum to the theme park," the most recent location for history under global capitalism. It is time for the fruits of this scholarship to be distilled, examined, and evaluated. The aim of this study is to examine the political and ideological purposes behind the reintroduction and reconception of Confucianism in Chinese scholarship.

Since the 1980s, a number of scholars outside China have commented on the role played by Chinese state funding in shaping Confucianism discourse in order to facilitate the deployment of Confucianism as "an instrument to counter Western influence." Another view is that the state has supported Confucianism because it is seen as being compatible with neo-conservatism and a rising state nationalism (Zhao 2000; Zheng 1999). However, John Makeham in his latest book Lost Soul: "Confucianism" in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse, points out that no policy documents or programs have been issued that promote a Confucianized national identity. He goes on to argue that "the widely held view that the promotion of Confucianism in contemporary China is orchestrated by the Party-state and its functionaries is untenable."

However, there is evidence of an official appeal to Confucianism during the administrations of Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) and Jiang Zemin (江澤民). Just weeks after the crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square (天安門廣場), the government of Deng Xiaoping sought to cleanse the public of Western influence by scheduling, without overt Party endorsement, a celebration of Confucius' birthday. As is re-

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Arif Dirlik, "Confucius in the Borderlands: Global Capitalism and the Reinvention of Confucianism," *Boundary* 2 22, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 273.

²Werner Meissner, "New Intellectual Currents in the People's Republic of China," in *China in Transition: Issues and Policies*, ed. David C. B. Teather and Herbert S. Yee (London: Macmillan, 1999), 18.

³John Makeham, Lost Soul: "Confucianism" in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 7.

ported in Wm. Theodore De Bary's book *The Trouble with Confucianism*, Jiang Zemin, the leader of the CCP and president of the People's Republic, made an unannounced appearance at the celebration, signaling the Party's approval (De Bary 1991).

Makeham is right that there is little evidence of state-led initiatives specifically promoting the popularization of Confucian values during Hu Jintao's (朝錦濤) administration. Since he became general secretary of the CCP Central Committee in 2002, Hu Jintao has never openly embraced Confucianism specifically, but has instead broadened it to embrace the idea of Chinese tradition in general. Hu has promoted a succession of official slogans, including "harmonious society" (和諧社會) and xiaokang shehui (小康社會, "a moderately well-off society"), which apparently have Confucian undertones. The Party's appeal to Chinese tradition is reinforced by Hu Jintao's recent report to the CCP's Seventeenth National Congress. According to several socialist scholars working in the Party's top think-tank, the Central Party School (中央章校), official approval of Chinese tradition is tempered with suspicions about Confucianism and with lingering concern over the mixture of Marxism, Confucianism, Daoism (追教), Buddhism, and other elements in Chinese tradition (Jia 2006; Yu 2005).

Questions have been raised concerning the ambiguous and suspicious attitude of socialist scholars toward Confucianism. Some observers have wondered what is driving the resurgence of scholarly and intellectual interest in a previously marginalized Confucianism, and, more importantly, which direction this discourse will follow: toward liberal democracy or toward authoritarianism. These issues may prove to be of great significance for China, for the East Asian region, and for the rest of the world.

Indeed, the resurgence of Confucianism could be identified with the refunctioning of Chinese tradition in general. The term "refunctioning of tradition" was introduced by David Gross in his book *The Past in Ruins*. The idea of "refunctioning" was first used by Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Bloch, and other Marxist intellectuals in the Germany of the 1920s. These thinkers talked about a process of refunctioning bourgeois values in such a way as to use them against their initial intention. More precisely, the term meant extracting and rearranging elements from within the capitalist

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system in order to set them against capitalism itself, a process Bloch referred to as salvaging "that which is true in false consciousness." Gross points out that "the greatest successes of refunctioning have not been those that subverted bourgeois values, but those that transformed many of the old traditions, forcing them to serve ends for which they were not initially intended." Like the refunctioning of tradition in general, the appeal to Confucianism in contemporary China is understood as a movement "in which tradition has to be lifted out of its previous setting, reconceptualized, and invested with meanings different from those it carried earlier."

This study begins with the identification and examination of three different approaches in the Confucianism discourse in mainland China: the socialist approach, the liberal approach, and the Confucian approach. Then three key sub-arguments are developed. The first is that the discourse on Confucianism in mainland China is manipulated by socialist Confucianists (儒學研究者). Whether Confucians (儒家) and liberal Confucianists admit it or not, these two approaches seem to need the Party as much as the Party needs them. The second argument is that this manipulated discourse is more likely to be a political strategy that will enable the socialists to legitimatize a socialist power than to be a genuine academic pursuit. Thus, it is understandable that the politicized discourse has provided "little evidence" of a sustained or robust philosophical creativity in Confucianism philosophy." The third argument is that, from the perspective of the socialists, some aspects of Confucianism are not easy fits for the Party. The Confucians' views of "Confucianizing the CCP" (儒化共產黨), "Confucian kingly-style politics" (儒家王道政治), and "Confucian authoritarian regime" (儒家權威主義政體), and the liberal view of "breaking the link between Marxism and Confucianism" could greatly undermine the legitimacy of the revolutionary socialist Party. It is also evident that the liberal

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⁴Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, translated by Neville Plaice and Stephen Plaice (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 225-29.

⁵David Gross, The Past in Ruins: Tradition and the Critique of Modernity (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 107.

⁶Ibid.

⁷See note 3 above.

and Confucian approaches in the discourse are constrained or suppressed by the socialist approach.

Confucians, Socialists, and Liberals

There have been few systematic efforts to deconstruct the various approaches to the study of the refunctioning of tradition until, most notably, David Gross applied discourse theory, treating the reconstruction of tradition as a discursive theme that is constructed from a set of contradictory ideological strategies. As Gross rightly suggests, "intellectuals and politicians in the discourse of rethinking tradition have tended to divide along their lines with a good deal of interchange and even blurring in individual cases among various options."

in China have responded to the discourse on Confucianism, a quintessence of Chinese tradition, since the 1980s by deconstructing the compound value of Chinese tradition in a non-unified manner. To achieve this, we will divide scholars specializing in Confucianism into the following categories: Confucians, socialists, and liberals. This is a complex task. It is true that Chinese academia is censored by the CCP. Yet official censorship does not necessarily imply a complete homogeneity of views. It is equally true that in mainland China only a minority of scholars openly acknowledge their political views. Yet it is still possible to differentiate among Confucians, socialists, and liberals, according to their publications, media interviews, and public speeches. Only by applying such markers can we understand why the discourse on Confucianism does not necessarily convey an authoritarian ideology following the Party line.

This discourse on Confucianism in contemporary China is a movement in which Confucianism "survives from the past into the present, not only because of the efforts of adherents, but also because of the calculated

⁸Gross, The Past in Ruins, 77.

strategies of support coming from the outside." A distinction may be made between "Confucians" (儒家), who are adherents of Confucianism and look to it as an alternative way of being, and "Confucianists" (儒學研究者), who specialize in studying Confucianism but are not true believers. The Confucianists may further be divided into socialist Confucianists and liberal Confucianists. Neither socialist Confucianists nor liberal Confucianists refashion Confucianism because they see it as an alternative way of being. They do so because some aspects of Confucianism can be useful in the pursuit of a certain political goal.

Confucians

"Confucians" see Confucianism not only as a system of morality or culture uniting a nation, but also as an ideology underlying a political system. Indeed, at the center of their vision is a set of invariable Confucian moral norms, the dissolution of which results in identity crises, moral degradation, social chaos, and political disorder. Confucians believe that the practice of Confucianism will prevail across the nation and that the nation will be blessed with order, harmony, stability, certainty, and prosperity only if it rediscovers the Confucian values of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, sincerity, harmony, loyalty, and filial piety. In their view, while class struggle turns sons against fathers, wives against husbands, and sibling against sibling, harmonious cooperation among all the individuals and units of the community contributes to the welfare of the national community and moral values are capable of uniting the nation.

For these Confucians, the primary goal is to bring about a coercive restoration of the way things were. In this purest form, they attempt to set the clock back in order to bring Confucianism back to life. The underlying assumption of these Confucians is that a world governed by Confucianism was simpler, better, and morally healthier than the world we have now. In addition, they believe that the alien ideology of Marxism, which has taken over as the national ideology under the tutelage of the CCP, can neither

⁹Ibid.

benefit the nation nor represent the national spirit of the Chinese. In their eyes, the Chinese have been without a spiritual anchor for nearly half a century, and spiritual desolation is worse than ever today.

Confucians insist that the lack of spiritual guidance is responsible for the general social chaos and disorder of the past century. The most important task for mainland China, therefore, is to refashion Confucianism. Confucianism must take over from the now less influential Marxism as the ideological guide. From the perspective of the Confucians, China cannot rely on a political system, either Marxist or liberal democratic, adapted from that of the West. They insist that political Confucianism can bring about the reconstruction of a Confucian authoritarian system. The ideal ways of reviving Confucianism are by "Confucianizing the CCP," introducing. "Confucian kingly-style politics" and a "Confucian authoritarian regime" (Jiang 1989, 2007).

This approach to Confucianism is spearheaded by the leading Confucians, Jiang Qing (蔣慶), Kang Xiaoguang (康晚光), and Luo Yijun (羅義俊). According to Guo Xiaoli (郭晚麗), these Confucians are supported to varying degrees by many others, including some of the country's most eminent philosophers and historians, such as Chen Lai (陳來), Kong Xianglin (孔祥林), Li Zonggui, Ma Zhenduo (馬振鐸), Tang Yijie (湯一介), Yang Xiangkui (楊向奎), Zhao Jihui (趙吉惠), and Zhou Guidian (周桂甸) (Guo 2006).

As early as 1989, Jiang Qing, one of the most noted Confucians, published a 35,000-character article in the Taiwanese journal Ehu (熱湖, Legein Society), in which he argued that Confucianism should take the place of Marxism and become a legitimatized ideology representing Chinese culture and the Chinese spirit (Jiang 1989). He later wrote that in order to carry forward the Chinese national culture and spirit, modern Confucianism must "walk out of the confinement of ethical Confucianism" and must "search for another way to develop within the grand range of the tradition of Confucianism." Here, he was referring to "political or ideological Confucianism."

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¹⁰Jiang Qing, "Cong xinxing Ruxue zouxiang zhengzhi Ruxue" (From ethical Confucianism

Since 2004, Jiang Qing has openly argued that Marxism has lost its influence. He has also suggested the possibility of "Confucianizing the CCP" or "peacefully transforming the CCP through Confucianism" (Fang and Luo 2007; Jiang 2007).

Another leading Confucian, Kang Xiaoguang, advocates the establishment of a Chinese "Confucian authoritarian regime," which would be "under the rule of Confucians with virtue." Kang claims that due to differences in people's virtue and ability, it would be rational to empower Confucians of virtue with the right to elect and be elected. Thus the ruling class in a society would be "nominated from among Confucians of virtue," and elected by "Confucians with virtue instead of all the people of the nation." Although other people do not have the right to elect or be elected, they do "have the right to be ruled properly" (Kang 2007, 2005). Kang's "Confucian authoritarian regime" is a complete authoritarian utopia in which great priority is given to such ideas as rigid social hierarchy, good governance, and rule by men. This ideal regime seems to be the antithesis of both Western liberal democracy and Marxism. Luo Yiiun holds that Confucianism should be studied according to the principles of traditional Chinese culture rather than those of Marxism or liberalism. The practice of examining Confucianism in any other way could lead to a distortion of the essential meaning of Confucianism (Fang 1996: Luo Yijun 1994). In Lixing vu shengming (理性與生命, Rationality and life), a work which is clearly more activist than academic. Luo Yijun invokes the New Confucian Manifesto of 1958, revealing beyond doubt the Confucians' identification with their counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In fact, Luo makes no secret of their intention to bring this more authentic brand of Confucianism back to the mainland to nurture its people (Luo and Chen 1994). Luo calls for the revival of Confucianism, so that it will replace Marxism and become the orthodox ideology, nourishing the Chinese national spirit and guiding the nation in the twenty-first century (Luo Yijun 1994). addicate transferred

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to political Confucianism), Shenzhen daxue xuebao (Renwen shehui kexueban) (Journal of Shenzhen University, Humanities & Social Sciences), no. 1 (1991): 85.

Socialist Confucianists

Socialist Confucianists are those who study Confucianism according to Marxist principles. They hold that the study of Confucianism can strengthen Marxism and the CCP, and they seek to develop and enrich Marxism by drawing on the essence of traditional ideology, including Confucianism (Fang and Li 1989; Li Xianghai 2007; Zheng 2006). Their initial aim in studying Confucianism is to legitimatize an authoritarian regime led by a socialist party; thus they give high priority to studying and modifying Confucianism "under the stances, principles, and methodologies of Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong [毛澤東] Thought" (Fang 1991a; Li Yi 1994a, 1994b).

On the face of it, it is illogical and inappropriate for these socialists to study Confucianism. During the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism was criticized by the CCP as an "unenlightened" and "feudal" ideology that stood in contradiction to scientific Marxism and the modernization of China. The CCP, at least in name, remains a communist party adhering to the doctrines of Marxism, Leninism, and the thought of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, as well as the "three represents" (三個代表) doctrine of Jiang Zemin (Hu 2007). The reasons why this once-criticized ideology is studied by socialists are highly significant.

Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought are all defunct in China. The betrayal of the official socialist ideology first became apparent with the introduction of a capitalist market economy at the beginning of the economic reform. This betrayal was reinforced by changes in political slogans and terms. The most important guiding slogan, "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (有中國特色的社主義), was first put forward at the CCP's Thirteenth National Congress (Zhao Ziyang 1987), and has since been used successively by Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao (Hu 2007). This slogan, implying as it does the practice of a capitalist market economy combined with the rule of a nominally socialist party, seems to be both vacuous and plastic. It derives its importance from the fact that the CCP, a historically revolutionary party, decided to use it to maintain its authoritarian regime, rather than from being in any way the authentic wellspring of a political spirit. However, if Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong

Thought are dead in China, what is China's political ideology at present? The ideological vacuum in Chinese politics has tended to be filled by a combination of crass materialism and the reinforcement of Chinese nationalism. Thus the CCP finds it necessary to achieve legitimacy from another political strategy.

In these circumstances, the socialists have found the traditional and indigenous Confucianism appealing. To socialist Confucianists, the Confucian love of order assists in achieving this purpose, while "obedience to one's superior, the devotion to the state, and the protection of the family ... help to promote a desperately-needed social order and stability." In times of drastic social and economic change, when peasants and workers are stripped of the rights to associate and bargain, reestablishment of the notion of social order and stability has undoubtedly served the interests of a socialist party desperately in need of a stable social environment in which to pursue economic reform. And by rejecting liberal democracy, suppressing participation, negating ideas, showing contempt for justice, and encouraging greed, the Party-state encourages Chinese people to focus their energies solely on the pursuit of wealth and the achievement of social harmony, thus encouraging a level of economic competitiveness rarely seen in either a free market or a welfare state. Thus, like a phoenix completely resurrected from the ashes (Du 2006), Confucianism is used to articulate the characteristics of Chinese culture. Through the process of negotiation and renegotiation with traditional, overseas, and mainland Confucianism, and in a constantly changing social and political environment, socialist Confucianists in mainland China attempt to present their Chinese audience with a tailor-made Confucianism. This tailor-made version of Confucianism has proved convenient for the Party to legitimatize its authoritarian rule and promote a capitalist economy.

The socialist approach to Confucianism in contemporary China began with a meeting organized by the State Education Commission in March 1986, during which Fang Keli (方克力), a professor in the department

¹¹Meissner, "New Intellectual Currents in the People's Republic of China," 19.

of philosophy at Nankai University, Tianjin (天津南開大學), delivered a speech on the significance of New Confucianism in contemporary China. He argued that Confucianism was compatible with the modernization of China and called for a revival of Confucianism. In November 1986, Fang and Li Jinquan (李錦全), another philosophy professor from Zhongshan University (中山大學), were put in charge of a government-funded academic project on New Confucianism. In 1992, Fang and Li again received support from this fund to launch a Confucianism studies project which was aimed at helping accomplish the targets of the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1991-95). During these two projects, dozens of books and more than three hundred papers were published by socialist Confucianists, and several conferences on Modern Confucianism were organized by the project committee (Zhuang 1991). In addition, several socialist Confucianists, such as Oian Xun (錢遜), Ji Liangong (紀連功), and Song Defu (宋德福), began to advocate educating school students in traditional Confucianism (Qian 1998; Ji 2000; Song 1991).

Through these research projects, publications, and conferences, the socialist Confucianists portrayed themselves as true believers in Confucianism. However, when Confucians argued in favor of a "Confucian authoritarian regime," "Confucianizing the CCP," or "Confucianizing Chinese politics," the socialist Confucianists revealed their true identities as socialists, not Confucians. Socialist Confucianists saw arguments for the establishment of a Confucian regime as going beyond the initial aims of consolidating the socialist regime. They criticized views such as "Confucianizing the CCP" and "Confucianizing Chinese politics," which they believed could undermine the legitimacy of the Party. They adopted a socialist stance and sought to eliminate the influence of Confucianism on Chinese socialist ideology.

Liberal Confucianists

Chinese liberals¹² emphasize political transparency and procedures for the legitimatization of peaceful political change. Indeed, few scholars

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¹²In using the word "liberals" (自由派) I must of course anticipate other possibilities for

in mainland Chinese universities, including those who call themselves "liberals," actually favor the introduction of a Western-style liberal democracy in China within the next decade or so. However, these liberals emphasize a gradual and peaceful process of political reform, which would lead to a Chinese democracy as distinct from a Western liberal one:

In the discourse on Confucianism, the main aim of liberal Confucianists in studying Confucianism is to initiate a peaceful political transition in order to promote political transparency within China. It is notable that, although some liberals attach a degree of importance to Confucianism, they acknowledge its weaknesses (Zhang 1987). Thus liberal Confucianists call for a "transition of traditional Confucian ideology" so as to create a "Chinese Confucian democracy." The term "Chinese Confucian democracy" indicates a democratic system different from that of the West (Tang 1991; Chen 1989; Zhu 1984). It is also significant that this different interpretation of democracy can be found among contemporary Chinese liberal intellectuals, which may betray certain of their assumptions concerning democracy.

In the meantime, liberals see little need to sustain Marxism in the Chinese ideological system. They imply that because Marxism stands in contradiction to liberal ideas, it should be abandoned (Chen 1989; Zhu 1984). Their arguments also imply that Marxism is not compatible with China's modernization. Thus, in their eyes there is a need to supplement Marxist ideology with liberal Confucianism (ibid.)

In October 1984, several liberals based at Beijing University, including Feng Youlan (馬友蘭), Zhang Dainian (張松年), Zhu Bokun (朱伯崑), and Tang Yijie, established the Chinese Culture College (中國文化書院 Zhongguo wenhua shuyuan), a non-governmental academic organization.

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misunderstanding. There will be objections from those who adhere to a narrow, purist view of liberalism as defined within a specific Western context, and others who, reacting against certain libertarian features of the presumed Western prototype, would reject it as alien and inapplicable to China. To me these are small risks to run. I welcome the fullest possible discussion and delineation of differences in historical experience between China and the West, as long as this does not preclude the finding of some common ground between the two and thus arriving at a deeper mutual understanding.

Between 1985 and 1989, members of this organization held frequent open lectures and seminars, and delivered speeches on Chinese traditional culture and on the comparison between Chinese and Western cultures. In addition to eminent scholars based in mainland China, such as Liang Shuming (梁漱溟), Feng Youlan, and Zhang Dainian, Confucian scholars based in the United States, such as Tu Wei-ming (杜維明) and Cheng Chung-ving (成仲英), also took part in these activities. These were the first occasions since 1949 on which Chinese scholars had discussed Confucianism in public, and also the first time that U.S. scholars of Confucianism had been invited by their Chinese counterparts to give open lectures in mainland China. It is surprising that the government seemed to tolerate these critiques of Marxism, and equally unexpected that they allowed scholars from democratic countries such as Japan, Germany, Australia, and the United States to be invited to take part. Even the foreign scholars were astonished by the acquiescent attitude and liberal views of top Chinese government officials at that time (Wen 1987).

However, this official attitude is understandable given the predicament of the CCP was in at that time. The leaders knew that the revolutionary ideology, Marxism, was dying and that its demise would leave a huge void in the ideological system. The vacuum left by the departure of Marxism resulted in the Party's reliance on pragmatism and gradualism, and that weakened the CCP. In these circumstances, the revolutionary Party allowed the liberals space to question Marxism, and more significantly to seek a fresh strategy to underpin the Party's legitimacy. In order to shift the study of Confucianism in a liberal direction, the most pressing task for liberals is to transform Confucianism into an idea compatible with the idea of democracy. They have made great efforts to explore theoretical ways of accommodating Confucianism to the democratization of China.

Confucianism and Democracy

Does Confucianism pose a challenge to Western liberal democracy? There are reasons to believe that the two ideologies are compatible, if not

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mutually reinforcing. Many Western theorists take this view (see, for example, Tan 2003; Ackerly 2005; O'Dwyer 2003).

Chinese liberal Confucianists believe that Confucianism and democracy have often been compatible, although their definition of democracy may be different from that of the West. For the liberals, the fundamental purpose of reintroducing Confucianism into the Chinese ideological system is to promote political reform and transparency. It is vital to mention here that liberal scholars differ in their reasons for trying to accommodate Confucianism with democracy, depending on whether they take a unipolar or multipolar view of the world's ideologies. However, both unipolarists and multipolarists see Confucianism as compatible with democracy in China.

The unipolarist argument regarding the necessity of combining Confucianism with democracy is based on the trend toward globalization, and international economic, political, and cultural integration. One well-whown scholar who advocates the liberal approach, Li Shenzhi (季模之), insists in his recent magisterial exploration of the future development of different ideologies that global economic interaction is leading to conflicts among ideologies. In order to deal with such conflicts and confrontations, it is necessary to establish a standard ideology. Liberal democracy has been consolidated in two-thirds of the world's states (Karatnycky 2002), and it is an ideology that has wide appeal. It is very likely to become the dominant ideological system, and to be applied around the globe (Li Shenzhi 1999). In other words, since globalization is advancing in China, the country will need to accommodate Confucian ideology to the global trend of democratization.

From the multipolarist point of view, more significance needs to be given to communication and understanding, rather than conflict, between different cultures and ideologies. Tang Yijie of Beijing University, an eminent liberal involved in the discourse on Confucianism, is a multipolarist. He argues that the increasing conflict between cultures and ideologies, and between rationality and empiricism, is useless and self-destructive. In his view, it is impossible to categorize human ideologies as either Western democracy or Confucian authoritarianism; what is needed is a combination

of both. We need a rich variety of human ideologies. It is not necessary to be a "true believer" in either system to recognize the debt that Western societies owe to democracy and that Chinese societies owe to Confucian authoritarianism: Therefore, resistance among advocates of Western democracy to a Confucian authoritarian regime is likely to be reduced and eventually eliminated through mutual interaction and understanding among supporters of democratic and Confucian ideas in China (Tang 1999, 2004). Additionally, multipolarists emphasize the necessity to modify Confucianism so that it can be blended with Western democracy in the Chinese ideological system (Yu 1999; Zhao Jihui 1995).

It is significant to find a different interpretation of democracy among contemporary Chinese liberal intellectuals, which may betray certain assumptions of Western liberal democracy, Cai Dingjian (蔡定劍), a liberal jurist at the China University of Politics and Law (中國政法大學). has written an essay (in Chinese) entitled "In Defense of Democracy: A Response to Contemporary Anti-Democratic Theory" (Cai 2007), an important academic and political contribution to the debate on democratization in China. Cai argues forcefully against some of the most frequent objections to democratic rule in China; that it benefits only the majority, that it undermines stability and economic development, and that it contributes to corruption. In support of the view that the "quality" of the people does not affect the prospects of democracy, however, he draws on the argument of Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew that despite coming largely from poor and uneducated backgrounds, Singapore's Chinese immigrants have succeeded in establishing a good society based on the rule of law. What Singaporean Chinese can do, mainland Chinese can do alsowhether it is the rule of law or democracy (Cai 2006). However, democracy in Singapore is characterized by the overwhelming dominance of the ruling People's Action Party along with harsh punishments for opposition politicians that range from public humiliation to bankruptcy and exile.

democracy farfetched? We can gain an insight into liberal views of Confucianism by linking Chinese Confucianism and "Asian values," something that was initiated by Lee Kuan Yew, his successor as prime minister of

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Singapore Goh Chok Tong, and members of their think-tanks, in the pages of a white paper (*Shared Values* 1991) as well as in international journals, such as *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy*. In their view, "Asian values" usually embody commonplace Confucian values: strong leadership, respect for authority, a communitarian orientation placing the good of the collective over the rights of the individual, and emphasis on social stability and economic development over political freedom (Kausikan 1993; Zakaria 1994; Ghai 2000; Mahbubani 1995, 1998; Goh 1999; Lee 1989)

Indeed, mainland Chinese liberal Confucianists not only hold similar views on Asian values, but also use strategies borrowed from Asian values discourse to justify their advocacy of "Chinese Confucian democracy." One of the most accurate analyses of strategies for the implementation of Asian values is that of Michael Jacobsen and Ole Bruun (Jacobsen and Bruun 2000). They suggest three main arguments for the practice of Asian values: the uniqueness argument, the disciplinary argument, and the organic argument. Indeed, Chinese liberal Confucianists employ all three of these. They accept pluralism, rule of law, and accountability in theory. However, after careful examination of the liberal argument, the liberal intellectual elites that are best positioned to think about and implement political reform tend to favor a strong, meritocratic, appointed regime that takes constitutional priority over the democratically elected regime. Liberal Confucianists justify this view by citing the ways in which Confucian democracy differs from Western-style democracy. For example, in the way it gives precedence to social and economic rights over political rights, and in its opposition to international interference in China's human rights and political transparency. Liberal Confucianists also argue that, in an ideological context, Confucian democracy is not a negative rejection of Western liberal democracy, but an attempt, by both Asian government officials and scholars as well as Western social scientists, to find the best way forward for societies hurtling through the processes of modernization, accept

However, the features of "Chinese Confucian democracy" that cause most controversy among advocates of Western liberal democracy are strong leadership, respect for authority, and emphasis on social stability and economic development over political freedom. The most important

controversies surrounding this issue are cultural relativism versus universalism, Orientalism versus localized perspectives, nationalism versus internationalism, communitarianism versus individualism, democracy versus authoritarianism, and priority for stability and economic development versus priority for political freedom (Lingle 1996, 1998; Thompson 2000).

More importantly, in the nations influenced by Chinese Confucianism, the outcome of the struggle between "Chinese Confucian democracy" and "Western liberal democracy" will have long-term significance. In the mid-1980s, the "countries" of greater China (mainland China, Taiwan, and Singapore) were all non-democratic by Western standards. Taiwan's experiment with Western-style democracy has had a great impact on "Confucian democracy," in that it shows beyond doubt that a Confucianisminfluenced nation is able to implement a Western-style democratic system. Western democratic theory has an important stake in the success of Taiwan's democracy, as it very badly needs at least one modern, functioning, successful democracy in a Confucianism-influenced nation. It is argued that corruption, violence, and the lack of a completely independent judiciary have seriously impeded the development of democracy in Taiwan (Sheng and Huang 2006; Wang 2007; Li Ding-tzan 2007; Hsueh 2007; Chu 2004) and mainland China (Liu and Luan 2007; Liu Guoshen 2002; Ma 2005; Huang and Cheng 2003). Although Taiwan's system has been termed a "crippled democracy," it is the genuine article. Yet Singapore continues to be a well-studied though special (because of its small population and area) model of conservative Confucianism. It is significant that Lee Kuan Yew was elected honorary chairman of the International Confucian Association, established by the Chinese government (Guoji Ruxue lianhehui tongbao, Newsletter of the International Confucian Association, 2005). China is quite obviously not a Western-style democracy. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there is great political diversity among this collection of Chinese states, which is clear evidence that "the Chinese" are not inevitably "Confucian democratic."

The 1997 financial crisis seems to have undermined the idea of "Confucian democracy" and discredited international discussion about the ideology in the region. When the economic miracle turned sour and there

was "growing evidence of a popular desire for democracy," critics dismissed this discourse as "an elaborate fraud," claiming it was "merely an excuse for authoritarian governments to stay in power, depriving their subjects of rights which are not Western but universal" (Mallet 1999). Academics, conservative politicians, and businesspeople in the West who had sympathized with Confucianism were also embarrassed. Economic theorists found themselves with no Asian economic "miracle" to support their argument that a Confucian ethos had promoted capitalist growth in Asia as the Protestant ethic had in the West (Vogel and Lodge 1987; MacFarquhar 1980). The overthrow of Indonesia's authoritarian regime shortly after the crisis undermined the culturally relativist argument of Asian values in the East Asian region. The practice of democracy in Indonesia seemed to challenge the argument that liberal democratic universalism was an arrogant and naive attempt to impose the ideas of the Occident on the Orient in the region (Zhang 1995; Rodan 1996). Interestingly, Lee Kuan Yew, an advocate and practitioner of Asian values, was prepared to acknowledge the weaknesses of the Confucian inheritance. In a magazine interview in 1998, he admitted that "there are certain weaknesses in Confucianism Confucianism led to nepotism and favoritism" (McCarthy 1998).

Surprisingly, after a decade of crisis, most non-Western-style regimes in the Asia-Pacific (China, Singapore, and Malaysia) have emerged stronger, while the new democracies (Indonesia, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand) have been slower to recover economically. More significantly, developing countries in the region, especially China along with North Korea, Vietnam, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, and Cambodia, continue to put forward a critique of Western-style democracy. This critique not only claims that good and strong governance is needed to achieve rapid economic growth. Additionally, in countries that were already economically advanced, such as Singapore and Malaysia, it is still claimed that a distinctive "Confucian democracy" is more likely to yield economic growth and high living standards in the post-crisis period than "Western liberal democracy."

There is a possibility that the system of "Chinese Confucian democracy" will become entrenched—fossilized, like the American constitu-

tional system—and hard to change once it is in place. This is no less likely than scenarios that envision a transition to Western-style liberal democracy and assume an end to one-party rule. However, what if "Chinese Confucian democracy" works well? Chinese liberal Confucianists favor policies that give priority to the needs of the destitute. And what if the large majority of Chinese seem satisfied with a strong regime of "Confucian democracy"? Should the West complain because the Chinese system does not accord with the principles of democratic rule or should it allow for the possibility that there are morally legitimate, if not superior, alternatives to Westernstyle liberal democracy? These questions are wide open.

Confucianism and Marxism

and NOfficially, the legitimacy of the ruling CCP is underpinned by the philosophy of Karl Marx; thus Marxism is the starting point for examining the CCP's attitude toward the dispute between Confucianism and Marxism. It is true that the CCP no longer emphasizes class struggle, hatred of the rich, or opposition to private property. In fact, capitalists can now join the CCP, and the legal system is being reformed so that it more closely approximates to that of capitalist countries. Chinese officials and scholars rarely talk about communism and hardly anybody really believes that Marxism should provide the guidelines for thinking about China's political future. The ideology has been so discredited through misuse that it has lost almost all legitimacy in society. In reality, even the "communist" government does not allow itself to be confined by Marxist theory if that theory conflicts with the imperative to remain in power and to provide stability and order in society. For practical purposes, Marxism, though not ideology in general, is finished in China. To some extent there is a need for Chinese tradition, essentially Confucianism, in Chinese politics. However, there is no need

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¹³ As Mencius (孟子) put it, the government should give first consideration to "old men without wives, old women without husbands, old people without children, and young children without fathers" (常宴本员者).

for the CCP to abandon its commitment to communism and Marxism as its long-term goal so long as it recognizes that poor countries must go through a capitalist stage on the way to that goal. This commitment to Marxism in name alone is mainly motivated by the CCP's need for legitimacy.

What is most striking about the quarrel between Confucianism and Marxism in the discourse of mainland Chinese Confucianism is the eagerness of socialist Confucianists to draw some strength from Confucianism, and the determination of most Confucians and liberal Confucianists to deny Marxism a role in the imagining of a Confucian nation and to seek to eradicate the contamination of Marxism from the Chinese or the Western psyche.

In the discourse of Confucianism, some of the most authoritative socialist Confucianists, such as Fang Keli, Li Jinquan, Li Cunshan (李存 山), Shi Zhonglian (施忠連), Song Zhiming (宋志明), and Oiao Oingju (喬清舉), have gone so far as to propose that Marxism should be further Sinicized by incorporating elements of Confucianism. They make a great effort to create a link between Marxism and Confucianism. In several published articles and media interviews. Fang Keli, one of the most prominent socialist Confucianists, argues that Confucianism, as a complementary ideology to Marxism, is useful in preventing "Western liberalization" in China and promoting "the patriotism of the Chinese people" (Fang 1997). According to Fang, of all the modern schools of thought in recent Chinese history, Confucianism is second only to Marxism in terms of its theoretical creativity and influence, and its capacity to survive (ibid.). At a conference entitled "New Confucianism and Contemporary China," held in 1991, Shi Zhonglian noted "the compatibility between Confucianism and Marxism," He went on to argue that contemporary Confucian ideas of humanity and equality are supplements to Marxist ideas (Zhuang 1991). (In Zhongguo Makesi zhuyi yu xiandai xin Ruxue (Chinese Marxism and New Confucianism), Li Yi (李毅), a young scholar based at Nankai University, calls for a dialogue between Marxism and Confucianism (Li 1994a, 1994b). This idea is backed by several authoritative socialist Confucianists, such as Fang Keli, Song Zhiming, and Li Cunshan (Fang 1997; Song 2001; Li Cunshan 1999).

The appeal to Confucianism made by these socialists has much to do with certain elements of Confucianism that promote "social order and stability." These elements can be invoked by the socialists to encourage the Chinese people to focus their energies on the pursuit of material prosperity and to press upon them the need for strong leadership and a hierarchical social system. The emphasis on these pro-socialist elements of Confucianism could further encourage the socialists' rejection of liberal democracy, the suppression of political participation, the negation of ideas, contempt for justice, and the stimulation of appetites in the country.

Additionally, this appeal by the socialists could also account for the success of the Confucian ethos in the East Asian economies. Much of the debate about the role of Confucianism in these economies, part of the "Asian values" debate, was conducted by government officials in the pages of international journals such as Foreign Affairs and Foreign Policy. These East Asian officials won the attention of Chinese socialist scholars primarily because they made claim to a Confucian ethos that had produced impressive economic results under their authoritarian regimes. Some economic theorists have further backed up this claim, and argued that a Confucian ethos promoted capitalist growth in Asia in the same way that the Protestant ethic did in the West (MacFarquhar 1980; Vogel and Lodge 1987). This is an inversion of Max Weber's thesis that Confucianism was an obstacle to economic development. The Chinese socialist Confucianists who advocate a dialogue between Marxism and Confucianism are probably aware that Confucianism has little to offer Marxism, though it certainly has elements which are of particular benefit to the CCP's rule over a capitalist economy.

Therefore, like a phoenix completely resurrected from the ashes (Du 2006), Confucianism is used to articulate the national characteristics of Chinese culture. Through a process of negotiation and renegotiation with Confucians and liberal Confucianists, and in a constantly changing social and political environment, socialist Confucianists in mainland China are

¹⁴See note 11 above.

able to present a tailor-made Confucianism to their Chinese audience. The CCP seems to find this tailor-made version of Confucianism attractive as a means to legitimatize its authoritarian rule and help promote a capitalist economy.

However, this does not mean that socialist Confucianists are blind to the ideological thrust of the Confucians' or the liberal Confucianists' agendas. Nor are they unaware that Confucianism could lead the nation away from socialism in a Confucian or a liberal direction. Socialist Confucianists warn against a dialogue between Marxism and Confucianism forcefully reminding their socialist colleagues of the risk that Confucianism could erode Marxism. The biggest danger with Confucianism, the socialist Confucianists argue, is "its negation of Marxism and its attempt to revive Confucian capitalism" (Li Jinquan 1990; Fang 1991b). More importantly, they emphasize that Confucianism, as an "unenlightened and feudal" ideology, needs to be studied and modified within the boundaries of the "four cardinal principles" (四項基本原則) and under the "principles" of Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought" (Fang 1991b; (Li) Jinguan 1990). The dialogue between Marxism and Confucianism, from the perspective of socialist Confucianists, is aimed at strengthening Marxism and the CCP rather than Confucianism. They wish to achieve this through "developing and enriching Marxism by drawing on the essence of traditional culture, including Confucianism" (Wang 2000; Fang 1991c; Chen 2007; Li Cunshan 1999). In short, a consensus achieved by socialist Confucianists is drawing strength from Confucian studies to supplement the less-influential ideology, Marxism, and to legitimatize the CCP's rule. This conservative consensus indicates that Confucian studies as practiced by socialist Confucianists are more of a political agenda than an academic pursuit.

Indeed, the socialist approach toward Confucianism in mainland China is criticized by Taiwanese Confucians as no more than a "united front" gimmick, and they claim that it is anti-Confucianism under the banner of Confucianism (Lee 1991; Liu 2000). The Taiwanese Confucian Lee Ming-huei (李明粹) suggests that the biggest obstacles to Confucian studies in the mainland are ideological constraints, and that unless main-

land scholars free themselves from Marxist dogmas, they are not likely to make any breakthrough (Lee 1991). However, the question is whether mainland Chinese Confucian studies are totally homogenized—as is assumed by the Taiwanese Confucians.

between Marxism and Confucianism. Indeed, they are against any far-fetched link between the two. At a conference organized by the Central Party School and China's Confucius Foundation in 1995, liberal scholars, such as Zhu Bokun, Wang Guoxuan (王國軒), Chen Yajun (陳亞平), and Li Denggui (李登貴), pointed out significant differences between Marxism and Confucianism (Qiao 1996). Other liberal scholars backed up this argument and endeavored to develop two specific aspects of it.

Firstly, the most irreconcilable difference between Confucianism and Marxism is class struggle (階級鬥爭, jieji douzheng) versus social harmony (社會和諧, shehui hexie). One initial attempt to address this issue was undertaken by Chen Fong-ching (陳方正), a scholar based at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Liu Shu-hsien (劉述先) of National Taiwan University. At a symposium in Hong Kong in 1985, the problem was defined in terms of the difference between Confucianism and the kind of Marxism that takes class struggle as its guiding principle (Tang 2001). Thus, it is undeniable that the difference between the two is immense. Feng Youlan, a distinguished mainland Chinese philosopher, also discussed this issue in the seventh volume of his Zhongguo zhexueshi xinbian (A new history of Chinese philosophy), and for this reason the volume was banned in mainland China, although it was eventually published in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Feng addressed the gap between Confucianism and Marxism in the form of Mao Zedong Thought, arguing that the latter was a philosophy of struggle based on the idea that "enmity must remain enmity to the end" (仇必仇到底, chou bi chou daodi). This means that the class struggle must continue until one's enemy is vanquished. Confucianism, on the other hand, advocates that "enmity must be harmonized and thereby dispelled" (仇必和而解, chou bi he er jie). Although "through opposing positions, enmity arises" (有對斯有仇, you dui si you chou), at the end of struggle, the need for conciliation will inevitably emerge (Feng 1991). In

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several articles written just before his death, Li Shu (黎樹), a historian specializing in the history of capitalism and Marxism in China, argued that the ideology of class struggle is "out of fashion and should fall into disuse" (Li Shu 1989), and that "dogmatic Marxism" should be abandoned (Li Shu 1988) in mainland China. Although these proponents of the liberal approach have not advocated abandoning Marxism in its entirety, their argument that "dogmatic Marxism" should be discarded and Marxism reevaluated has attracted broad attention within Chinese academia.

The second difference between Marxism and Confucianism is that they vary in their methodologies for understanding and explaining the world. Marxism, from the perspective of liberal Confucianists, is primarily a form of scientism. It is a mode of thinking grounded in the principles of science, whereas Confucianism is a mode of thinking from a humanist point of view. Confucianism does not proceed along the path of science, nor does it subscribe to the principles of science. As a mode of thinking, Confucianism is not based on demonstrable proof or evidence (論證, *hunzheng*); rather, it relies on intuition (直覺, *zhijue*) (Tang 1995; Tang 2001).

The liberal argument concerning the differences between Marxism and Confucianism, though quite well-developed, has been attacked by socialist Confucianists. One defense of the link between Marxism and Confucianism put forward by the socialists is that "Marxism contains the idea of social harmony" (Liu Guanjun 2002; Zhuang 1994). These socialist Confucianists seek to prove this link by citing passages from Marxist and Confucian texts. 15 Nevertheless, this connection seems to be more

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¹⁵ It is important to note here that it is always possible for someone to support an argument by quoting the Marxist and/or Confucian originals and explaining the underlying meaning based on their own biased views. This is because Marxist and/or Confucian originals are ambiguous enough for many interpretations. The immediate result of explaining Marxism and Confucianism has been the proliferation of Marxisms and Confucianisms. Thus, in the Western countries and the non-democratic countries, we now have "Western Marxism," "neo-Marxism," "cultural Marxism," "autonomist Marxism," "post-Marxism," "socialist Marxism," "allumist Marxism," and "Maoist Marxism" (Kolakowski 1978; McLellan 1979). In Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Singaporean Confucianisms, we have "social Confucianism," "vulgar Confucianism," "low Confucianism," "hoigh Confucianism," "bourgosic Confucianism," "bourgosic Confucianism," "bourgosic Confucianism," "bourgosic Confucianism," "bourgosic Confucianism," "bourgosic Confucianism," "importanism," "reform Confucianism," "confucianism," "socialist."

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a political eisegesis than an academic argument. Indeed, these papers claiming the existence of a link between Confucianism and Marxism do not adhere to the normal standards of social science research, yet they are still published in core journals in mainland China. This evidence suggests that the quarrel between Marxism and Confucianism has extended itself from pure academic debate into a competition between different political views.

Like the liberal Confucianists, the Confucians are also against the utilization of Confucianism by Marxism. They are more interested in the restoration of Confucian values in China's present and future cultural-moral order. It is quite common for this group of intellectuals not simply to justify Confucian ideas but also to treat Marxism as an alien ideology. Their call for the continuity of the Chinese national essence and national traditions has helped reinforce the Confucian discourse of reconnecting with the Confucian tradition.

Jiang Qing, a leading Confucian, has pitted Confucianism against Marxism, arguing that

Confucianism embodies the dao (12), as it derives from the human understanding of the dao and the metaphysical world. Because it accords with the dao, it is asarced, universal, and timeless. Marxism, on the other hand, is nothing but an ideology far removed from the dao and not rooted in any sacred tradition. For that reason, it is neither sacred to the Chinese people nor relevant to the Chinese way of life. 16

In July 2004, Jiang organized a forum on the contemporary fate of Confucianism in Guiyang City, Guizhou Province (貴州省貴陽市), attended by such prominent Confucians as Chen Ming (陳明), Sheng Hong (盛洪), and Kang Xiaoguang. During the forum, the Confucians argued that Confucianism has been destroyed while an imported alien ideology, Marxism,

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ism," "social-elites-not-holding-high-government-posts Confucianism," "merchant house Confucianism," and "mass Confucianism," among others that I may have missed. See Berger and Hsiao 1988; Tu, Hejtmanek, and Wachman 1992.

¹⁶Jiang Qing, "Zhongguo dalu fuxing Ruxue de xianshi yiyi jiqi mianlin de wenti" (The practical implications and its problems of reviving Confucianism in mainland China, parts 1), Ehu (Legein Society), no. 170 (August 1989): 31-32.

has taken over as the "national religion" under the tutelage of the CCP. This alien ideology, they argued, can neither benefit the nation nor represent the national spirit. The most important task for the mainland, therefore, is to revive Confucianism, so that it will replace Marxism and become the orthodox ideology to nourish its national spirit and guide the nation in the new century (Jiang 2005; Chen 2004).

In order to achieve that goal, Confucians have suggested "setting up a Confucian authoritarian regime"(建立儒家權威主義政體)(Kang 2005, 2007), "Confucianizing the CCP" (儒化共產黨), and "peacefully transforming the CCP through Confucianism" (和平儒化共產黨) (Fang and Luo 2007; Jiang 2007). Confucianism, they argue, must also take over again as the guide in moral and ideological education and replace the lessinfluential Marxism, which has underpinned an education system that has done little more than train political rebels since 1949. Their call to replace Marxism with Confucianism in the education system is not only presented in their publications, but is also echoed in their promotion of the compilation of textbooks for ethical and moral education in schools. In April 2004, a series of primary school textbooks on Chinese Confucian culture was published, edited by Jiang Qing. The books were published by the Higher Education Press and recommended as experimental textbooks by the Chinese Society of Education under the administration of the Ministry of Education, to stee and addresses of heapynetical level serious antiferior.) Advises

However, the Confucianis' arguments in favor of "Confucianizing the CCP" and "setting up Confucianism in the system of ideological education", worry socialist Confucianists. They fear that these ideas could lead to the abandonment of Marxism, though Marxism has already lost its appeal with the public, and they see them as likely to destroy the legitimacy of a revolutionary communist party like the CCP. Fang Keli claims that radical ideas, such as "Confucianizing China," "Confucianizing the CCP," "establishing Confucianism as the state religion" (儒教國教說), and "replacing Marxism with Confucianism," openly challenge socialist ideology and the political system of China. He goes on to suggest that it is time for the people in a socialist state to "be on high alert and pay close attention to these ideas." In addition, socialist Confucianists emphasize the signifi-

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cance of studying Confucianism and promoting traditional culture "under the Marxist guiding principle" (Fang 2005, 2006; Qiao 1996; Li Cunshan 1999).

Disturbed by the promotion of textbooks that sought to replace Marxism with Confucianism in the education system. Fang Keli wrote a letter to Zhou Ji (周濟), the minister of education. Fang pointed out that in recent years the anti-Marxist approach in the discourse of Confucianism had exerted a certain degree of influence in both academic circles and the wider society. He emphasized that most of these views and propositions are "not in line with the marching direction of Chinese socialist culture," nor are they "in line with the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics." Fang went on to claim that Jiang Oing "equates Chinese traditional culture with Confucianism." Therefore, the textbooks on Chinese traditional culture edited by Jiang were books about Confucianism alone, and the national campaign to allow children to read traditional Chinese texts was no more than a campaign to allow them to read the Confucian canon. These views, said Fang, "deviate from the initial aim of reviving Chinese culture" and from "enhancing knowledge of the nation's culture and morality among youth" (Fang 2005). It is pointing out the obvious to say that socialist Confucianists know all too well that a revival of Confucianism will lead to a head-on collision with Marxism. Through their criticism. socialist Confucianists have endeavored to secure the core role of Marxism in the Chinese ideological system, and to prevent Confucianism from taking its place.

Confucianism and Modernization

Surprisingly, socialist Confucianists, liberal Confucianists, and Confucians all give favorable consideration to the feasibility of applying Confucianism to the modernization of China, although they vary in their views of what the role of Confucianism should be. For both socialists and liberals, the biggest obstacle is probably Confucianism itself, or some elements of its Socialist scholars believe that Confucianism needs to absorb ele-

ments of Marxism so that it can serve the needs of socialist modernization. Since the 1990s, a more conciliatory mode of discourse has developed. although "scholars formulated various proposals for some sort of Confucianism-Marxist synthesis but generally aroused little controversy or interest."17 The liberals acknowledge the weaknesses of Confucianism. For example, they recognize that not all of the "five cardinal relationships" (五) 倫, i.e., relationship between ruler and ruled, between husband and wife between parents and children, between elder and younger brothers, and between friends) exist today, and not all the Confucian ethics governing these relationships appeal to contemporary Chinese. The liberal Confucianists, therefore, call for a "transition of traditional Confucian ideology" to promote democracy with Chinese characteristics (Tang 1991; Chen 1989; Zhu 1984). However, to these Confucians, because Confucianism has survived the transformation of traditional society, it remains a crucial topic that continues to attract people's attention. Confucians also believe that Confucianism is a humanist reflection on the enlightenment narrative, and therefore it can provide a therapy for Western modernity. Whenever society is in a state of moral crisis in the course of modernization, calls for a return to traditional Confucianism resound even more loudly.

Socialists and liberals, especially, hold that Confucianism needs to be reinterpreted, reinvented, or modernized in order to make it more relevant and appealing to contemporary Chinese. The question is how to transform Confucianism into an enlightened and modern ideology to accommodate the needs of the Chinese nation.

The socialist view of how Confucianism should be transformed constitutes the official line. This entails the modification of Confucianism by selecting the essence and discarding the dross. In fact, the origin of this official line can be found in Mao Zedong's theory of inheriting and animad-verting traditions. In his article, "Xin minzhu zhuyi lun" (On new democracy), published in January 1940, Mao argued in favor of a positive and a constructive attitude toward traditional Chinese ideologies which involved

¹⁷ Makeham, Lost Soul, 238.

criticizing their feudalist elements and adopting their democratic elements (Mao 1940). However, how the essence should be distinguished from the dross and who should do the distinguishing was a big problem for Mao and others. During the Cultural Revolution, and even for a few years afterwards, the study of Confucianism was criticized and banned by the CCP. In the post-Cultural Revolution period, a conference on social science theories held at Shandong University (山東大學) in October 1978 marked the official resumption of the study of Confucianism in mainland China. The participants of that conference came up with a method for selecting the essence and discarding the dross that has been used continuously up to the present day. It is that "Confucius should not be completely negated" but rather that "he should be divided into two," so that his positive and negative qualities can be distinguished (Song, Zhao, and Pei 1991).

True, the discourse of Confucianism acknowledges the existence of merits and faults. However, more and more socialist Confucianists have realized that it is not pragmatic to divide Confucianism into "feudal" and "democratic" elements: Professor Qian Xun of Tsinghua University (清華 大學) argues that distinguishing between essence and dross involves a value judgment, and that is inevitably subjective and uncertain. Ofan argues that what was dross in the past could be essence now, and vice versa. In order to avoid this problem, he advocates distinguishing between the universal elements and special elements of culture, and adopting the universal elements. The universal elements do not depend on changes in personal cognition and knowledge, or on differences of time and space (Qian 1987). Yet Qian's methods of distinguishing the universal from the specific are still based on personal experience. The socialist way of emphasizing the division between the positive and negative qualities of Confucianism is problematic in that it ignores this lack of objectivity. It is also obvious that the Confucianism modified according to the principles of Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought could regain its position more as the "vocabulary" of a hybrid ideology than as the "grammar" of Chinese ideology.

Liberal Confucianists believe that Confucianism has the capacity to modify and develop itself. The ethics and spirit of Confucianism could be

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transformed under certain circumstances into a Modern Confucianism that encompasses the ideas of democracy and the rule of law (Li Renzhi 2007). Returning to the study of Primordial Confucianism, they argue, helps in the innovation of Confucianism. In other words, this innovation is more of a process of self-reform than a reform initiated and driven by other ideologies. However, learning from Primordial Confucianism does not automatically lead to a transformation into Modern Confucianism. In order to put into action the self-reform of Confucianism, ideas embedded within Confucianism, such as scientific development, democracy, and the rule of law, need to be brought out (Guo 2006).

Since the 1990s, liberal Confucianists have mostly argued that the most practical way to develop Confucianism is to "accomplish outer king-liness within inner sageness" (內里外王). "Outer kingliness" refers to the systematic arrangements for democracy, the rule of law, and scientific development, while "inner sageness" is Confucian morality, ethics, and spirit. They insist that Modern Confucianism should be a combination of these outer and inner elements. This modified and integrated Confucianism, they say, would combine Chinese tradition with Western wisdom, and would therefore contribute to Chinese modernization (Zhuang 1991).

However, this self-innovation theory is challenged by several liberal Confucianists. Professor Zhao Jihui, a prominent scholar of Modern Confucianism, argues that "achieving outer kingliness within inner sageness" is subjective and impractical. It is unrealistic in that it lacks specific strategies for accomplishing these "outer" arrangements while at the same time adhering to the traditional moral legacy within. Another problem is that no state has ever put such an ideology into practice. Hence it is doubtful whether the reform of Confucianism could generate a democratic political system with a Confucian ethos. Yet Zhao adds that his questioning of the practicality of self-reform does not mean that he is against the transformation of Confucianism; rather, he wants to increase the possibility of such a transformation (Zhao 1994). Other liberal scholars, such as Guo Qiyong (鄉齊勇), Yang Xianbang (楊意邦), Liang Linjun (梁林平), and Wu Guang (吳光), have also questioned whether it is possible to achieve outer kingliness while retaining inner sageness. Yang Xianbang suggests that the

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modification of Confucianism should not put too much emphasis on the difference between the Western democratic outside and the inner core of Chinese ethics. Rather, he calls for a mixing of the essences of the West and China in Chinese political ideology (Wu 1995). Yet this strategy, given its failure to specify how Confucianism should be modernized, is still not a pragmatic one. Thus, liberal Confucianists still have a long way to go before they can develop strategies for transforming Confucianism in mainland China.

Last but not least, it should be pointed out that Confucians have advocated that foreign-style modernization must be adapted to Chinese Confucianism, rather than the other way round. This is a thread that runs through Confucianism. Even today, Confucians continue to make a sharp distinction between the Chinese and the foreign, and, as mentioned above, one of their charges against Marxism and Westernization is that both involve the transformation of China in accordance with an alien ideology. Yet, this is not to imply that Confucians refuse to learn from others. After the Opium Wars, Confucians gradually came to terms with the fact that China could only improve its lot by learning from the West. Today, one and a half centuries later, Confucians remain committed to the paradigm of "Chinese learning as principle and Western learning for utility" (中學為 體: 西學爲用), although what they want to learn has expanded dramatically to include democratic politics. Jiang Oing, for example, contrasts his Confucian theory with Western-style liberal democracy and argues that Confucianism is more appropriate for China. However, his institutional proposals for transforming Confucianism contain certain liberal assumptions, such as freedom of religion. He argues for the establishment of Confucianism as a state religion and compares the system to state religions in the United Kingdom and Sweden, where other religions are not prohibited.

and public-spirited members of the community—might seem to conflict with democracy, but institutional proposals have been made that combine the two (Jiang 2005). In a Taiwanese publication entitled *Shengming*, xinyang yu wangdao zhengzhi (Life, belief, and the kingly way of politics),

Jiang Qing makes an interesting proposal for a tri-cameral legislature that includes representatives of the people, Confucian elites chosen by competitive examination, and elites entrusted with the task of cultural continuity. Jiang's proposal—the elites would be descendants of Confucius—stands about as much chance of success as proposals for reserving more seats for hereditary peers in the British House of Lords (Jiang 2004). However, the possibility of a bicameral legislature, with one political institution composed of democratic leaders chosen by free and fair competitive elections and another of meritocratic leaders chosen by free and fair competitive examinations, is more consistent with a commitment to both Confucian meritocracy and modern-day democracy. However, Jiang does not tell us which institution should have priority or how such a tri-cameral legislature would be organized in China.

Whether or not Confucianism is necessary for China's modernization is something that cannot be systematically proved, and whether or not Confucianism can be transformed into a modern ideology is even less certain. Yet, to mainland scholars involved in the Confucian discourse, there is no doubt in either case. While their confidence may well stem from genuine convictions about the magic power of Confucianism, it is possible, too, that their confident assertion is primarily a hegemonic practice calculated to reinforce the discursive formation of Confucian values and thereby empower themselves in the contest for influence and control over national identity and the future direction of the nation.

Whither Confucianism? Government Attitudes to variously toward Socialist Confucianists, Liberal Confucianists, and Confucianist

To what extent Confucianism will shape China's ideological system and its future largely depends on its strengths and weaknesses, the balance of power among scholars of Confucianism in China, as well as the situations in which the different approaches of Confucianism find themselves. Although contemporary Chinese intellectuals are far less influential than

their predecessors during much of the history of imperial China, they remain one of the most influential groups in Chinese society because they provide a large corpus of written work that reflects the concerns, outlooks, and hopes of a group of people closely attuned to socioeconomic and political trends in China (Fewsmith 2001). Their view of the world is important because it influences the thinking of the government decision-maskers (Christensen 1996). In addition, as Merle Goldman argues, Chinese intellectuals are not just academics; many are political activists as well. In the same article, she also highlights the pivotal role that intellectuals played in the May Fourth Movement, the Communist movement, and the events of June Fourth, to name the most obvious examples (Goldman 1999).

There are a number of conditions favorable to the growth and spread of socialist Confucianism in China. The most obvious is the increased support it enjoys among the current leadership of the CCP. This is clear from the number of officially sponsored projects undertaken by socialist Confucianists. In 1986 and 1992, two notable Confucianism studies projects, co-supervised by socialist scholars Fang Keli and Li Jinquan, were supported by government funding. This kind of official support has facilitated the organization of large-scale cooperative research activities and resulted in large quantities of publications, numerous conferences, the establishment of research centers, and the provision of postgraduate training.

Another sign of government backing for socialist Confucianism is the authorities' attitude toward the debate between socialist Confucianists and Confucians. As a result of Fang Keli's letter to the minister of education criticizing Jiang Qing's primary school textbooks (Fang 2005, 2006), the Ministry of Education announced that the approved texts for the teaching of Chinese culture consist of those of Confucius, Mencius, Zhuangzi (莊子), Laozi (老子), the Book of History (史記) by Sima Qian (司馬邊), and the Poetic Remarks of the Human World (人間詞話) by Wang Guowei (玉 國维), not just the textbooks edited by Jiang. In addition, the announcement openly criticized the arguments put forward by Jiang Qing and Kang Xiaoguang in favor of replacing Marxism with Confucianism, saying, "This view is not in line with the ideological route of the CCP, or with the fundamental guideline of the Party-state... It is not only politically incor-

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rect but also threatens the legitimacy of the state. "18 Indeed, the similarity between the views expressed by Fang Keli and the government position indicates governmental adherence to Marxism and socialism. Government attitudes toward socialist Confucianists and Confucians could be influenced to some extent by Fang Keli's personal political influence. However, the government would be unlikely to criticize the views of Confucians unless it still strongly adhered to Marxism and socialism—in name at least.

Still further evidence of the government's preference for socialist Confucianism can be seen in official attitudes toward the quarrel between socialist Confucianists and liberal Confucianists. Liberal Confucianists are worried by the overwhelming official support for socialist Confucianists and the Party's control of the Confucian revival. These scholars fear that Confucianism studies may serve as an ideological and political strategy. which could further lead the authoritarian regime in a more conservative direction. The June 1994 issue of Zhexue vanjiu (Philosophical Studies) contained an article published under the allonym Luo Bo (羅萄) criticizing the rise of "national studies" (國學, guoxue), 19 especially Confucianism studies, and expressed alarm at the way this revival represents a deviation from the new modernization culture of post-Mao China (Luo 1994). 20 This critique of the conservative direction of Modern Confucianism studies was subsequently endorsed by Hu Sheng (胡繩), president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), in an article published in Liaowang (Outlook), a journal widely read in official circles. By expressing their concern, such scholars are trying to prevent Confucianism studies from

¹⁸Fang Keli, "Guanyu dangqian dalu xin Ruxue wenti de sanfengxin" (Three letters about the current problem of new Confucianism in mainland China), Xiesini tansuo (Academic Exploration), no. 2 (2006): 4.

¹⁹ The term "national studies" (guoxue) refers to the study of traditional Chinese philosophies and culture. Since the appearance of the highly significant full-page article "Guoxue zai yanyuan qiaoran xingqi" (國學在意園情為興趣, The quiet rise of national studies at old Peking University) in the People's Daily (August 16, 1993), national studies has attracted ever increasing public attention.

²⁰It is interesting to note that this article has disappeared from the current China Academic Journals Full-Text Database, but has been cited by several authors (Tang 2001; Wang 2004). The disappearance of the article indicates the existence of government censorship of Chi-nese academia.

taking a more leftist direction. At a conference held to commemorate the 2545th anniversary of the birth of Confucius in October 1994, organized by the journal Kongzi yanjiu (Confucian Studies), socialist scholars, in turn, criticized Philosophical Studies and Hu Sheng, singling out the critics of "national studies" by name. This was an unprecedented event, as Hu Sheng, with his academic prestige and personal connections with the CCP leadership, is someone whom most would not have dared to criticize publicly. The organizers of the conference took the further step of publishing a summary of the conference in the first issue of Confucian Studies of 1995 ("Kongzi danchen 2545 zhounian jinian yu guoji xueshu taolunhui pingshu" [Commemoration of the 2545th anniversary of the birth of Confucius and review of the international academic conference 1995). The third issue of this journal in 1996 contains an article by Liu Hongzhang (劉宏章), a member of the department of philosophy of the CCP's Central Party School. The article reaffirms the criticism of Hu Sheng, concentrated on the adherence to a conservative direction in Modern Confucianism studies, and further links Confucianism with Marxism in the system of China's ideologies (Liu 1996). The debate between the socialists and the liberals goes beyond the range of pure academia. In various instances, it is obvious that socialist Confucianists, backed by the government, have more opportunities to publish papers in CCP-controlled "academic" journals and organize government-supported "academic" conferences than liberals

Now one may ask the question: since the evidence has shown that Confucianism, as a convenient and appealing idea, can be used as a tool by the CCP to legitimatize its authoritarian regime, why would the Confucian approach and the liberal approach be criticized by the government and the Party? In answering this question, one should bear in mind that the government-backed study and reassessment of Confucianism in mainland China is only occurring because it serves the aims of the CCP, which is to gain strength from a certain political ideology to legitimatize its power.

Indeed, socialist Confucianists have gradually realized that the CCP cannot afford to appeal to Confucianism openly. Confucianism cannot easily be made to fit a socialist party. This is firstly because any official

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declaration on the subject would be in direct contradiction to earlier Maoist attacks on the ancient philosopher, and secondly because it would show how mistaken the Party was during the Cultural Revolution and thus, paradoxically, jeopardize its legitimacy.

Additionally, the Confucians and the liberals in the Confucianism discourse have strayed too far from the CCP's ultimate purpose in rein-by troducing Confucianism. The radical Confucian views concerning "Confucianizing China," "Confucianizing the CCP," and "replacing Marxism with Confucianism," and the liberal's advocacy of "breaking the link beautienen Marxism and Confucianism" do great damage to the legitimacy of the revolutionary and socialist CCP, especially considering its already parlous state. If the Party is now Confucianiand not revolutionary, it is inevitable that the Chinese people will question its rule over an authoritarian regime and a capitalist economy. If such views were to spread, they could open up opportunities for challenging the legitimacy of the CCP and its one-party state. However, since the Party's first priority is political justification rather than pure research, it seems quite logical for it to suppress the liberal and Confucian approaches within mainland China.

In such a discourse manipulated by socialist Confucianists, Confucianism is more likely to take the form of a political strategy adopted by the CCP. The role that Confucianism can play will be decided by the Party's needs. Indeed, considering this manipulation and politicization by socialists, it is no wonder that there is "little evidence of a sustained or robust philosophical creativity in Confucianism philosophy." More importantly, in the Confucianism discourse, the political imperative to justify the authoritarian regime has been disguised by a pretence of academic research. This misuse of research is very likely to undermine the academic research. This restrict freedom of thought among academics in mainland China. This tendency could further reduce the prestige of Confucianism studies because it is seen as merely a means of justifying the political purposes of the Party-state.

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²¹ Makeham, Lost Soul, 7.

Alternatively, Confucians and liberal Confucianists may be able to maximize their influence through an alliance with the Party. Whether these two groups admit it or not, they seem to need the Party as much as the Party needs them. Such an alliance would enable Confucianism to reach out to the public through the state propaganda apparatus and, more importantly, through the state patriotic education system. Even if the two approaches fail to gain a mass following, an alliance with the Party would still enable them to exert an influence on society by dint of their influence on the political center. What hinders such an alliance is not the Party-state's opposition to Confucianism but the Confucians' and the liberal Confucianists' unwavering opposition to Marxism and socialism.

Any suggestion of an alliance among Confucians, liberal Confucianists, and socialist Confucianists is probably quite preposterous. As has been reiterated, the three approaches are diametrically opposed to each other. While Confucians and liberal Confucianists reject Marxist ideology. they have little reason to resist the socialist Confucianists' reintroduction of Confucianism, and their support for an ideology that accords with China's traditions and history, and maintains national unity and autonomy. Acting as custodians of Confucianism, the socialists might seize upon certain elements of Confucianism, including the idea of a hierarchical system, community orientation, and meritocracy, but separate this content from forms such as individual freedom and the right to rebel that were once integral to Confucianism. It is likely that the pro-socialist elements of Confucianism will be subtly combined with artificially created forms, such as love of the state, faith in the Party, and opposition to liberal democracy, which may have little to do with the Confucianism that actually existed in the past. If this happens, Confucianism in mainland China will shift further away from authentic Confucianism, and this artificial Confucianism will look more socialist than ever before

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