
Confucianism In Chinese Policy: Critical Analysis

I. Introduction, context and importance of the problem

The Mongol conquest of China was a sequence of military attacks by the Mongol Empire in order to invade China territory. The Mongols were nomads which were able to grow and expand by constantly conquering more lands and adding many peasants to their army. They migrated, moved and conquered based on climate conditions, they always lived with their animals and very close to nature, and produced manufactured goods in order to trade with conquered civilizations. They were very skilled at archery, shooting arrows, and riding horses which helped them for war and for hunting, they were brutal and violent and had great military skills. By the year 1279 CE, the Mongol leader Kublai Khan began the Yuan dynasty in China and ended the last Song dynasty, which started a new beginning of the Yuan dynasty over the entire Chinese territory. So now in the year 1279 CE, the mandate of heaven has been lost by the Song emperor and I am here as a Chinese government official in order to advise the Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan what are the right steps to take now that his Yuan Dynasty rules over all of China. The Song dynasty was separated in two different parts, Northern Song and Southern Song, and the main causes for its dynasty to fall were that there was a lot of political corruption, invasions from external civilizations, rebellions from peasants which mostly debilitated the Song dynasty. Because of a fragile army, they were not able to defend themselves from the external tribes' invasions, in particular the Mongol's.

II. Introduction and critique of policy options

Legalism, prominent during the Warring States (475-221) BCE and influenced by some philosophers such as Shang Yang, Li si and Hanfeizi, was the Chinese philosophy of the Qin dynasty (221-207 BCE). These legalist philosophers had three main points: putting in action strict and disseminated laws, intelligent methods in decision making such as responsibility and the good use of political acquires. The Legalists thought that the political foundations should be changed based on how humans behave and that individuals are egocentric and short-sighted. This social morality cannot be afforded by the people through the integrity of the ruler but only by strongly managing the state and absolutely obeying to authorities. The Legalists promoted administration through an organization of rules that contained rigid punishments or recompenses for particular behaviors. Their main goal was to give the ruler and the state more power. The cruel application of Legalism from the Qin dynasty conducted to the end of this dynasty and the dishonor of Legalist philosophy in China. This policy's main advantage is that every person respects all laws in order to live in a social harmony but there are also disadvantages such as too brutal and strict methods of obeying and punishments were maybe too rigid.

The following policy is Daoism, also known as Taoism. It is a Chinese philosophy that helped religious people mainly in the countryside of China and, under the Tang dynasty, it was the main religion. Therefore Daoism can be considered as a philosophy but also as a religion. It focuses on doing natural things and being relaxed following the Tao, a cosmic force. Fundamental Daoist ideas include effortless actions, naturalness, how to become a perfected person and the mysterious Dao itself. During the Tang dynasty, it flourished (618-907 CE) and

the emperor Xuanzong (712-756 CE) affirmed that it was a religion. When the Tang dynasty fell down, Confucianism and Buddhism took its place. Daoism has more disadvantages than advantages because to make a country work, people need a ruler and strict laws to respect, not just believing in naturalness and becoming a perfected person.

Confucianism is considered more a social and ethical philosophy than a religion, and its main statement is: "Do not do to others what you would have them not do to you." It is built on being kind and respectful and an admiration for honesty and integrity. Its main point is that a society can grow and develop only if people can positively interconnect with each other. Its founder was Master Kong (Confucius), in 551-479 BC. However its principles began during the Zhou dynasty: the goal of respect and interacting positively were present but spiritual matters were also emphasized. The main goals were to integrate people, establish peace and be safe from any rebellion. Confucianism can have many advantages because people are united, respect and interact positively with each other and can prevent rebellion but the main disadvantage is that some people may rebel because of there is too much kindness, loving of people and there are not strict laws or harsh punishments in certain conditions.

Under Genghis Khan's rule, people felt very united and passionate, with the thought that he came from gods. They were used to be governed by tribes and, to rule them, Genghis Khan organized his Mongol army and created its code of laws called the Yassa, a mix between his laws and tribal customs. The Yassa focuses on three points: obeying to Genghis Khan, an assurance with the nomad clans, and rigid sentences for negative behaviors. Unless someone confessed of wrongdoing, he was not considered guilty except he was seen acting a crime. For the Mongols every man's word was an important thing. Genghis Khan's ruling system has more advantages than disadvantages because everybody obeyed and honored either the ruler and themselves, every man was important and there were rigid punishments so that everybody respected the laws. The main disadvantage for this policy may be that the ruler is considered too much important and the punishments that he gives are too harsh.

III. Policy recommendation

My policy is made up of three principles: a strong and stable government which contains strict laws and rigid punishments, every person is free to speak and to express their opinions always respecting laws and obeying the ruler, and finally interacting positively with each other in order to live in a social harmony. I consider these three points the most valuable because they can all make up a good society based on moral and ethical principles and everybody following the system of laws but at the same time every single person in our society has the freedom to speak and to express themselves, always without offending either our country or our ruler.

The first criteria in order to have a high-minded society is that our government will remain strong and stable by taking firm decisions and establishing strict laws and if laws are not respected and followed by the people then inflexible punishments will be taken into consideration. This connects to Genghis Khan's ruling system in fact for every wrong action made by the people, he punished them with merciless penalties which helped him having a respectful country that follows all the laws in order to live better. I hope that adopting this type of ruling system under Kublai Khan's rule, our society will be more respectful and will not break the laws because they know that there will be rigid punishments and some people can also be rewarded for positive behaviors or actions such as military accomplishments.

The second principle is freedom and it can be developed in many two ways: freedom of speech and to express opinions but also the freedom for a person to have his own thoughts and culture. The first one is for our society in fact they are free to say what they think and to express their opinions but always respecting the laws, without offending the ruler and not going against our principle while the second one is only for the conquered civilizations: after we conquer a piece of land or a country, the people that lived there are free to practice their religion, keeping their culture and having their own thoughts, with two conditions: they have to obey the ruler and they do not have to offend our culture and principles. This again connects to Genghis Khan's ruling style because when he conquered a country, he let that civilization free to have their culture without imposing to follow his religion and culture. I think that under Kublai Khan's rule, this will be very effective and will prevent many rebellions because the conquered people can still have their culture so that they don't feel oppressed by us.

The third and last principle is interacting positively with others and this principle is based entirely on being kind and respectful toward each other. The ideas of respect and the well being of others are extremely important in our society because they help us live in peace, without any problems or issues. This principle connects to Confucianism in fact this Chinese philosophy is based on the thought that a society can grow and develop only if people learn to live peacefully among each other. It also focuses on the importance of daily life and the human interaction and our society also underlines the values of each person's life and how they interconnect together in the society. I hope that this will help us preventing any internal conflict or civil war because if people love each other and live positively together they don't have any reason to put themselves against each other.

Some limitations and difficulties that we might encounter during time are that people may rebel because of the too much freedom they have or because they don't accept some rigid laws put into action and another difficulty we may find is that an internal conflict may be caused because of the different cultures between the conquered civilization and people from our country, but if everybody respect the laws and people positively interact with each other, this will not happen and we will live in entire peace.

IV: Annotated Appendix

The first primary source I used came from Mencius, written by Confucian scholar Mencius in the 4th Century BCE. This document helped me a lot for my recommendation policy because it is about about a Confucian scholar which talks with King Hui and King Hsuan about what as a king he can do to make life better and to be a very good king who really wants to help his people. It is very relevant to my recommendation policy because, from this source, I understood how people could positively interact with each other by being fair and respectful: "If Your Majesty can practice a humane government to the people, reduce punishments and fines, lower taxes, make it possible for the fields to be plowed deep and the weeding well done, men may cultivate their filial piety, brotherly respect, loyalty, and faithfulness.", from Mencius, written by Confucian scholar Mencius in the 4th Century BCE. This quotation explains how Confucian people were reciprocally useful to each other when they needed something and how there was a lot of brotherhood, respect, loyalty and dedication between them which made them live in peace, without internal conflicts and full of respect, honour and trustworthy.

The second primary source that I found really useful for my recommendation policy came from

The Confucian Analects: The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean, recorded by the disciples of Confucius between 551 and 479 BCE. This document helped me understand more about Confucianism in general and especially for their main principles: interacting positively with others and respect. It talks about the Duke Ai which asks the Master about what should be made in order for people to obey. He replies by saying to set aside dishonesty and uprise correctness which will help the people to always be fair. Then Ji Kang asks the Master how to make the people able to respect their ruler, and he answers: "Let him rule over them with seriousness; – then they will respect him. Let him be final and kind to all; – then they will be faithful to him.", from the Confucian Analects. From this quotation I understood a lot more about how Confucian people treated each other, with faithfulness, kindness and also seriousness which caused them to live in a world of honesty, respect and where everybody follows the law.

V: Sources consulted

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