

## THE ROLE OF CONFUCIAN TRADITIONS IN POLITICAL LIFE OF THE PRC

**Sardorbek Abdullaevich Usmanov**

independent applicant

The University of World Economy and Diplomacy

E-mail: [sardorbek.usmanov.97@mail.ru](mailto:sardorbek.usmanov.97@mail.ru)

### ABSTRACT

*The article focuses on one of the most significant events in world politics – the rapid rise of China. It is noted that the influence of the Tianxia Empire on East Asia, including on the international order led by the West, leads political theorists to analyze its causes, trajectory and possible results. Less discussed, however, is the current status of Chinese political thought, which informs, shapes, and formulates the views of Chinese political leaders and the Chinese people. For some theorists, China is an authoritarian regime that adheres to orthodox Marxism-Leninism and has no respect for human rights and the rule of law. For others, China is an economically prosperous country that has benefited greatly from its reform and opening-up policies, but has been consumed by extreme materialism, manifested in greedy consumption and astonishing corruption.*

**Keywords:** *China, culture, traditions, politics, new confucianism, political confucianism, modern confucianism.*

### INTRODUCTION

The revival of Confucianism in China is certainly a phenomenon worthy of discussion and reflection. It represents the main cultural tradition of Chinese civilization for more than 2,000 years. After the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), Confucianism also became a mainstream political discourse that provided emperors with ruling legitimacy on the one hand and regulated the behavior of rulers towards their subjects on the other. It would not be an exaggeration to say that before modern China, it was largely a Confucian state, and that the system of Chinese political institutions was essentially Confucian, with Confucian guidelines ranging from governance structure, hiring civil servants, and accountability mechanisms to people's legitimate expectations in daily life.

Confucius (551-479 BC) was a philosopher, teacher, and politician of Chinese history. He wanted to restore the order of the past, encouraging reigning emperors to follow the example of the ancient wise emperors. He proclaimed the ideas of benevolence, the rules of virtue and harmonious fellowship in government. Confucius' views were further developed by Mencius (c. 372-289 BC), Xunzi (c. 310-235 BC), and many other scholars and politicians throughout subsequent Chinese history. By the second century BC, during the Han Dynasty, Confucius' political ideas had become the basis of state ideology. Emperor Wu accepted the proposal of Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BC), a Confucian scholar and politician, to make Confucianism the only valuable science. Later, Confucius was officially recognized as the greatest sage and teacher.

It should be noted that the political ideas of Confucius represent a traditional Confucian political theory consisting of five important components: first, the vision of the state (datong), which is the ideal political and social life for Confucianism; Secondly, the principle of benevolent government shows how a benevolent king should govern his country; thirdly, the rule of virtue represents the virtues of a gentleman (junzi) and the transition from a well-bred gentleman to an excellent ruler; fourth, the practice of meritocracy allows the most virtuous and competent people to be chosen to serve society; and fifthly, there is a mechanism for the transfer of political power.

## METHODS

The proclamation of the ideal of political and social life, according to Confucius, is expressed in the fact that the world is everything that is "under heaven", which should be common to all, corresponding to the ideal of commonwealth. It is not the asset or property of any individual monarch or family. Although kings or emperors are chosen by divine will, and the people entrust them with the government of the state, they are not the owners and dictators of the country, but rather public servants who are supposed to contribute to the general welfare. One of the important texts of Confucianism, the Book of Rites (Legge, 1967), describes the ideal of a state under a benevolent king as follows [1].

When the Great Path wins, the world is shared by all. The virtuous and competent are chosen to serve society. Mutual trust is fostered and good-neighborliness is cultivated. Therefore, people do not only consider their own parents as parents, but they do not consider children only as their own children. Provision is made for the elderly until death, employment for adults and development for the young. Therefore, people are not engaged in intrigues, or deceit, or robbery, or theft, or rebellion. This is called the Commonwealth Era.

It is worth noting that the ideal of political and social life (or great harmony) can only be realized at the last stage of human development. In Confucian political theory,

there are three periods of human progress: the Turbulent Age, the Age of Prosperity, and the Age of Peace. Confucius believed that he lived in a turbulent time. This will be followed by an era of prosperity in which everyone will be able to enjoy his property, and each king will be able to hand over his power to his successor in peace if the "royal way" (wangdao) of the ancient sage king can be restored. However, the ideal of commonwealth can only be attained in times of peace, when everyone loves everyone else as his own family, and political power always belongs to the virtuous and competent, and not to the heirs of the royal family.

When the world is not yet as perfect as the ideal of the state expects, the second-best option is to have a benevolent monarch and a stable hereditary system. Confucius is the first proponent of the concept of charity and benevolent government in Chinese history. He defines "benevolence" in many ways, but the most famous definition is "a return to observance through self-transcendence" [2]. Ceremonies are important to man because they reflect the natural order of heaven and the right ethical relationship between man and the people around him. In order to cultivate oneself as a benevolent person, one must learn to overcome unnecessary and illegitimate desires with the help of the faculty of reason, an experience very similar to the birth of "positive freedom" [2].

However, benevolence means more than positive freedom. Confucius argues that it is not only a matter of overcoming oneself, but also an attitude of "loving one's neighbor." A benevolent person "will not do to others what he does not want others to do to him," and he will "help others to establish themselves as he wants to establish himself." If a person can realize the sovereign virtue of benevolence in his every behavior, he will be recognized as a true gentleman (jun-zi). If the king can extend the principle of benevolence to his government of the country, he will be glorified as a benevolent king and supported by his people [2].

Throughout Chinese history, benevolent government measures have varied from dynasty to dynasty, but the following policies seem to remain more or less the same. Their responsibilities traditionally include: minimizing penalties and taxation; to make people able to feed their families, especially the elderly; build schools for the education of children; rehabilitate the well system and land demarcation; keep the market as open as possible; stop all invasions, usurpations and unjust wars, etc.

From the point of view of popularizing the quality of "chang", the legitimacy of the Confucian political system was based on the "service concept of power", and the power political relations are marked by a "mutual obligation" of both the ruler and the ruled, namely, the rulers are committed to serving the people, and the ruled are voluntarily subordinate to the rulers. When a benevolent king can win the support of

the people by providing them with the best services, it does not matter whether he is elected by the people in a general election. What matters is whether he rules like a king.

Benevolence is the most important virtue for Confucius, but many other virtues are also necessary to raise a gentleman and a benevolent leader. The basic virtues of a gentleman include filial piety, fraternal duties, loyalty, kindness, righteousness, sincerity, trustworthiness, humility, diligence, gentleness, perseverance, reverence, etc. Those who wish to serve in government, according to Confucius, should follow such political virtues as: trustworthiness, reverence, generosity, frugality, honesty, determination, generosity, determination, thoughtfulness, forgiveness, etc. With what the Western political tradition recommends for good citizens, one will find that they are by definition different from one another. For example, John Locke valued religious tolerance, John S. Mill advocated individual autonomy. And Confucian political theory doesn't talk as much about individuality and tolerance as it does in modern Western liberalism. In addition, theorists of Western civic republicanism, from Aristotle, Cicero, and Machiavelli to Rousseau, emphasized the importance of political participation for the good citizen. However, traditional Confucians never consider political participation to be so important that it should be placed above personal moral excellence or family duty [3].

Confucianism asserts that a virtuous leader can influence the behavior of his subjects by setting an example for them. A good political leader will automatically be followed by his people, and if people are morally affected by the leader's virtuous deeds, governance becomes a matter of behavior. A leader doesn't have to do anything but demonstrate these virtues. Confucius asserted, "The power of virtue may be compared to the North Star, which commands the worship of a multitude of stars simply by remaining in its place." This relationship between the ruler and the ruler is very similar to exaltation in Taoism (not doing or doing without effort). Confucianism consciously refrains from applying harsh laws and punishments. "If a man is right in himself, there will be obedience without commands" [3].

In the Great Teaching (originally a chapter of the Book of Rites, which later became one of the Four Books of Confucianism), the connection between a person's inner virtues and his devotion to the outer world is established in eight steps: investigate everything, expand knowledge, make your will sincere, correct your mind, cultivate your personal life, establish your family, restore order to the state, and bring peace to the world. A person must nurture and behave by practicing the virtues every day so that he can first become an "inner sage." Then he can have the opportunity to serve society and benefit both his country and the whole world. A person will be well prepared for the transition from an inner sage to an "outer king" if he devotes himself to the study and practice of virtue [4].

The practice of meritocracy was aimed at observing the rules of virtue. If the rule of virtue was not implemented in a political institution, it turned into idle chatter. In ancient China, there were two ways to recruit the virtuous and competent into the management structure. The first method consisted of a system of recommendations established by Emperor Wu in 134 BC and was in effect as early as the Han Dynasty (until 220 AD). Local officials recommended two types of virtuous people: respectful and incorruptible. Those who were recommended to the central government first served as junior officials in the court. Their abilities and merits were carefully tested by the overseers for several years before they were recommended for local government management positions. The second method, the imperial civil service examination, was used from the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD) until the end of the Qing Dynasty. People who wanted to serve as officials had to pass an exam, which was a very difficult but fair system of competition. The exams focused on Confucian classics, poetry, literature, calligraphy, and political arguments. There were different curricula in different periods, but it was generally believed that people with a good command of the Confucian classics (especially the Four Books) would be virtuous and incorruptible officials [4].

Every political theory must answer the question of how to transfer political power from one ruler to another. With regard to this question, Confucianism has two variants: renunciation as the ideal system and hereditary ascension as the practical system. Confucius himself adhered to the legendary system of abdication during the time of Emperors Yao and Shun. Emperor Yao (c. 2356-2255 BC) is said to have transferred political power to Shun in place of his own son, and Emperor Shun (c. 2294-2184 BC) transferred power to Yu when he grew old. Both Yao and Shun were benevolent kings who worked hard for the people and never considered the kingdom their property, which is why Confucius repeatedly praises them in the Analects. Since the system of abdication had not been applied since the time of Emperor Yao and Shun, Confucius argues that the hereditary system of the dynasty is the most desirable and practical system of transmission of power. The eldest son of a monarch inherits monarchical power regardless of whether he is perfect or not. The advantage of this system is that it provides political stability and respect for elders (two important values in Confucianism), while the disadvantages are the mediocrity of government in most cases and the injustice of having rulers turn out to be tyrants [5].

## RESULTS

The traditional Confucian political theory described above lasted for thousands of years, providing imperial China with a discourse of legitimacy. It came at the end of the collapse of the Qing Empire in 1911, and was almost eliminated during the Cultural

Revolution. In mainland China, the hereditary and imperial examination system disappeared. The ideal of commonwealth was replaced by the classless utopia of communism. The theory of benevolent and virtuous government was supplanted by authoritarian rule and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, however, the ideal of Confucianism was preserved in the writings of some Neo-Confucian intellectuals.

When the Communists defeated the Nationalists and seized power in 1949, many anti-CCP intellectuals decided to retreat to Taiwan with the Nationalist government, while those who distrusted the Nationalist Party chose to stay in Hong Kong. Among the exiles were some intellectuals who believed that Chinese culture was on the verge of extinction and that special efforts should be made to preserve Confucianism. Their ranks closed around Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), the leader of the Nationalist Party, a supporter of Confucianism.

Chang himself sincerely believed in the thought of Wang Yangming (1472-1529), the most famous Confucian scholar-officer of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Wang created the theory of the "unity of knowledge and practice," emphasizing that knowledge without practice is not true knowledge. Wang also argued that it is the mind that shapes the world and that benevolence is the intrinsic nature of man. Influenced by Wang's teachings, Chiang sought to revive Confucianism and other Chinese cultural traditions in Taiwan. When Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Chiang opposed it with the Chinese Cultural Revival Movement, which promoted the study of Confucianism, the construction of Chinese cultural facilities, and the daily practice of moral and virtuous behavior [5].

However, what the Confucian intellectuals were trying to do was different from the Chiang political movement. They focused on interpreting traditional Confucianism and finding a real solution to the problems faced by Confucianism in the modern era. In particular, they wanted to understand how Confucianism could save the Chinese people from the moral catastrophe created by communism, how the political theory of Confucianism could adapt to the irresistible trend toward democracy, and how the enduring values of Confucianism could be appreciated by Westerners.

Despite their differences, the New Confucians share three points of view. First, they believe in the eternal values of Confucianism, such as the inner goodness of man, the priority of self-overcoming, benevolent government, the rule of virtue, and a harmonious society. They are confident that the core values of Confucianism will survive the catastrophe of communism and become popular again in the future. Second, they recognize that Western liberal democracy is better than traditional Confucian politics at promoting individual autonomy and protecting the basic rights of ordinary people. Third, they believe that the Western social order is not necessarily preferable

to the Confucian order because it tends to breed extreme individualism and materialism. This, they believe, is what Confucian ethics can help to correct.

Mou Zongsan (1909-1995) is an example of the proponents of the new Confucianism. Mou argues that Confucianism is a "permanent path" in the sense that it is eternal in time and universal in human nature. The development of Chinese Confucianism, according to Mou, can be divided into three main stages. The first period begins with the time of Confucius and ends with the demise of the Han Dynasty; In this formative age of Confucianism, the essence of its philosophical tradition (i.e., metaphysics, ethics, politics, social order) was forged, culminating in Emperor Wu Han's decision to accept Dong Zhongshu's proposal to make Confucianism an official doctrine. The second period lasts from the Song Dynasty to the Ming Dynasty, when Confucianism turned inward and paid more attention to the development of its own mentality and spirituality. The third period is modern times, when Confucianism was devastated by communism in China and suppressed by liberalism by the West. Mou sees the mission of modern Confucianism as creating a new opportunity in which the positive side of Western culture can be absorbed and reconciled with the wisdom of Confucianism [2].

In the third period, Mou argues, the most urgent task is to create a new form of the outer king to replace the traditional figure. Confucian theory calls for a gentleman to first become an "inner sage" and gradually move into the state of an "outer king." The inner sage and the outer king are intimately related and mutually composed; A virtuous gentleman without an external contribution to the world is not sufficient for its human flourishing, and a successful civil servant without a remarkable personality and intelligence is not a true leader. An external king may take the form of an emperor, a duke, a minister, a civil servant, a local official, etc. What is important is the existence of an institution or mechanism that makes possible the pursuit of external achievements, such as the recommendation system of the Han dynasty or the imperial examination after the Sui dynasty. However, when the traditional political system came to an end in 1911, the inner sage and the outer king were separated. It may still be possible to speak of an inner sage in modern times, but the institution of the outer king is no longer applicable, because the political order has completely changed. The only way to revive Confucian political theory, Mou argues, is to create a new form of external king, that is, to develop a new form of political institution so that the inner sage can engage in public service or external achievement [6].

For Mou, science and democracy are the new external king. Science, such as physics and medicine, can help Chinese people gain more useful knowledge to improve their lives, while democracy can provide China with political modernization and solve problems that ancient politics cannot answer, such as the transfer of political power

and the election of civil servants. "Scientific knowledge is the material condition of the new external king, but for its full realization it must be placed under democracy. The key to modernization is not science, but democracy. The essence of modernization is freedom, equality and the movement for human rights, which are inherent in democracy [7] "

Mou believes that ancient China was very good at its "way of governing" but extremely bad at its "way of politics." Neither the monarchy nor the feudal system was the true path of politics, because these systems did not understand that the state belonged to the people and not to any particular family or clan. It is only in democracy that the principle of popular sovereignty is recognized and actualized. Like many other new Confucians, Mou is willing to embrace the institutions of Western democracy, such as elections, party politics, the rule of law, checks and balances, freedom of expression, and the protection of human rights. He does not think that Confucianism is "forced" to embrace democracy, because there is an intrinsic inclination toward democracy within Confucianism. What Confucianism needs is simply to develop this inner inclination and allow democracy to become an essential part of its politics.

Mou's positive attitude toward democracy is shared by another prominent representative of the New Confucianism, Xu Fugan (1904-1982). Like Mou, Xu does not consider Confucianism to be inherently anti-democratic. He argues that Confucianism always puts the good of people first and is therefore a strong advocate of the principle of "people first". In his view, not only Confucius and Mencius, but all the other great Confucian philosophers, recognize the principle that the will of heaven really reflects the will of men. "The people are not placed below the ruler as merely ruled, they are above the ruler as the representative of heaven and deity," Xu says. The problem is that emperors and kings in Chinese history have always denied the "subjectivity" of the people and behaved as if they were the leaders of the people. To correct this distortion, Xu argues "that we have no choice but to embrace Western democracy [8].

For Xu, the advantage of democracy is that it encourages ordinary people to be fully aware of their political subjectivity and to collectively thwart the ruler's intention to become an arbitrary dictator. In order to guarantee the subjective status of the people, periodic elections are necessary, as well as multi-party competition, separation of powers, freedom of speech, freedom of association, the rule of law, etc. Any fantasy of developing Confucianism without accepting the institutions of democracy is doomed.

Although Xu is an unconditional defender of democracy, he is critical of individualism and atomic liberalism. Like many other modern Confucians, Xu believes that democracy is just a set of political institutions that does not necessarily imply what he calls "individualistic liberalism." For him, individualistic liberalism is a "derivative"



form of "genuine liberalism," which values human rationality more than human desires, emphasizes socialized individuality rather than atomic individuality, and emphasizes moral personality instead of materialistic interest. Confucianism is consistent with true liberalism, because charity itself is a process of liberating innate rationality and gaining moral independence. It is also a process of self-awareness and affirmation of identity. At this key point, Xu even believes that Confucianism is much better than individualistic liberalism for supporting democracy because Confucianism promotes the doctrine of virtue rule, which requires everyone to create moral autonomy from within, while individualistic liberalism tries to restrain the arbitrariness of power. a ruler with a theory of the social contract and limited government that comes from the outside. He argues that "democracy can be firmly rooted and function well only after it adopts the philosophy of Confucianism" [8].

## DISCUSSION

Thus, the proponents of the new Confucianism believe in the superiority of Confucianism over Western moral philosophy, but they are willing to recognize the value of Western democracy as a political institution. They are trying to creatively combine Confucianism and democracy so that the mixed formula can simultaneously preserve Confucian ethics and democratize Chinese politics. The New Confucians represent the first generation of modern Confucianism, which takes democracy seriously and attempts to revise traditional Confucian political theory to fit the democratic era. However, they have not had a chance to test their theory in either Taiwan or Hong Kong, let alone mainland China. The real problems of reconciling Confucianism and democracy only became apparent when Taiwan began its democratization in the mid-1980s. The problems of party struggle, vote buying, demagogue politics, political polarization, capitalist infiltration into the political process, etc., have become realities of democratic life. All these new phenomena pose a huge challenge to Confucianism because they seem inevitable but are in serious contradiction with the spirit of Confucianism. The task of democratization in Confucian society has never been as simple as the new Confucians in the 1950s and 1960s envisioned [9].

Admittedly, Confucianism was destroyed by Mao Zedong in mainland China after the CCP seized power in 1949. It was not until the mid-1980s that Confucian philosophy was reintroduced to China from Taiwan and Hong Kong as a result of China's reform and opening-up policies. This is confirmed by the results of scientific research and ideas in support of the new Confucianism. However, as China's political and economic power grew rapidly in the 1990s, mainland Chinese Confucians became

more and more confident and able to formulate their own views in defense of Chinese culture [4].

However, not all modern Chinese Confucians are so hostile to Western philosophy; many of them turn to Confucianism simply because of interest in the revival of sinology in the last decade. The spread of the "Movement for the Reading of the Classics" (the Confucian classics) in civil society certainly has as a sociological basis a reaction to an era when materialism and corruption were becoming increasingly intolerable to many people. Yet the view that China should go its own way and not follow the West is getting more attention than ever before. It argues that China should be proud of its cultural heritage, especially Confucianism; that Western democracy is in serious trouble; and that, therefore, China does not need to learn from it. Instead, China should develop a new political institution that reflects the spirit of Confucianism. Crucially, this view advocates the promotion of Confucianism to the status of a state or civil religion so that it can be firmly embedded in the consciousness of every Chinese. Jiang Qing and Chen Ming are prime examples of the new school of thought [3].

Jiang Qing criticizes the new Confucianism for two reasons. First, it is basically "spiritual Confucianism" rather than political, and so it cannot open up a new possibility of an external king; Second, it is too vulnerable to Western philosophy and democracy to represent a new political structure based entirely on the Confucian tradition. Jiang acknowledges Mou and other New Confucians' studies of traditional Confucianism, especially their study of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties, but he finds their approach "too individualistic," "too metaphysical," "too internalized," and "too internalized." The new Confucianism may be recommended for the development of the human mind or spirit, but it does not create any great political institutions other than an imitation of Western liberal democracy, which is not suitable for China. Commenting on the new Confucianism, Jiang contemptuously asserts that "China is China, the West is the West, Confucianism is Confucianism, democracy is democracy... There is neither the need nor the opportunity to combine the two"[6].

Constitutionally speaking, Jiang argues that China should become a "republic under a symbolic monarchy," in which the monarch should be a direct descendant of Confucius, and the Academy of Scholars should have the right to control the activities of the government. In government, the executive branch must be accountable to the legislature, just as the cabinet is accountable to parliament in the United Kingdom. However, a tricameral legislature is necessary to conform to three forms of legitimacy: the House of Great Confucians, representing the sacred will of heaven, the House of the Nation, representing the history and culture of the country, and the House of Men, representing the people's legitimacy [6].

Jiang's Confucian constitutionalism is often criticized for its conservative nature, but equally controversial is his plan to recruit to the House of Great Confucians and the House of the Nation. He proposes that in the first place, the speaker should be elected by the national Confucian Association, and all members should be well-known Confucian scholars who are tested for knowledge of the Confucian classics and evaluated during the probationary period by the administration at a lower level, like ancient civil servants who were recruited on the basis of the imperial system of examinations or recommendations [6].

Finally, Jiang declares that Confucianism is not only a philosophical school, but also a state religion. He argues that whenever China has been powerful and prosperous in history, Confucianism has naturally become its state religion. In view of China's rapid rise in the 21st century, Confucianism should once again become the country's dominant religion. In particular, it should be recognized as the official religion (ideology) of China and enjoy privileges that no other religion has. The government should resume the worship of Heaven, Earth, the Nation, and the various deities of nature, as well as Confucius and other national heroes. All civil ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals, must be conducted according to Confucian rituals. Other measures of China's "reconfucianization" include the following: the need to resume a national examination of civil servants aimed at the classics of Confucianism; the creation of a new national association of Confucianism in civil society, with the privilege of having its own temples, fields, schools, social welfare institutions, publishing houses, television stations, a state-guaranteed budget and places for meetings; increasing the construction of national Confucian universities and local Confucian academies, and their government sponsorship; further development of the "Movement for the Reading of the Classics", at the expense of the state budget; National Confucian University and local Confucian academies should be built and sponsored by the government, etc.

Many other contemporary Confucians share the view that China should be reconfucianized, such as Chen Ming (2016), Kang Xiaoguang (2016), Yu Donghai (2016), and Qiu Feng (2016), although these may differ depending on the approaches they recommend. Chen, for example, argues that Confucianism should cooperate with the CCP party-state in restoring China's political discourse, and he agrees with Jiang's proposal to reintroduce Confucianism as a religion, but he does not believe that political Confucianism is the best solution. He proposes to understand and reconstruct Confucianism as a civil religion rather than a state religion [2]. A political community, Chen says, must have its own understanding of history and culture that underpins the daily lives of its people. The specific historical and cultural consciousness of a given country forms the basis of its civil religion, in which its people can find the meaning

of their existence. In this way, civil religion consists not only of the ceremonies and rituals that people follow, but also, in a metaphysical and theological system, gives them an idea of who they are and what they can expect in their afterlife. Confucianism is the same civil religion for the Chinese, but not universally adhered to. To be accepted by all 56 ethnic groups in China, it must be a "thin" religion, not a "fat" religion. Chen does not believe that political religion is a good idea for Confucianism, as it would become too authoritarian and repressive for those who do not share his views. Confucianism as a civil religion, on the contrary, will be distinguished by realism and as close to people as possible [7].

Chen argues that Confucianism can help the CCP unify the three different traditions of modern China: the Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China, and the People's Republic of China. In orthodox Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the relationship between the three historical periods is dialectical and confrontational. They represent the interests of the landlord, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, respectively, without the possibility of reconciliation. However, from the point of view of Confucianism, these are just different moments of national development.

It is understandable that most modern Confucians in mainland China are enthusiastic about President Xi's dream of a "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." They want Xi to revive Confucianism, even though they understand that the CCP will not abandon Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in the foreseeable future. The positive attitude of modern Chinese Confucians towards Xi has been sharply criticized by Chinese liberals, who believe that the CCP is too authoritarian to be trusted. However, it is likely that modern Confucianism in China will resume its affiliation and cooperation with the ruling power, as it did in the past. It is also likely that the CCP will encourage the spread of Confucian values in society as long as its principles and ideals prevail.

The revival of Confucianism in China occurred in the mid-1980s, when student intellectuals were able to resume classical studies after the devastation of the Cultural Revolution, and the general public began to turn to Confucian texts and practices for spiritual comfort and rebalancing. With the collapse of Eastern European communism in 1989, it became more apparent to the Chinese that Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought had disappeared and could no longer function as a persuasive ideology or belief system. People's interest in traditional cultural heritage grew steadily during the 1980s and 1990s. One of its consequences was the spread of the "Movement for the Reading of the Classics" in the private sector. In addition, the commemorative ceremony for the birthday of Confucius, which has become popular since 1911.

In 2004, the concept of a "harmonious society" as a socio-economic vision was officially proclaimed by then-President Hu Jintao and officially endorsed by the CCP.

Social harmony is a core value of ancient Confucianism and was considered contrary to the communist principle of class struggle, so its revival was immediately suspected as an indication of the CCP's penchant for Confucianism. In the same year, an ambitious program to establish Confucius Institutes around the world was initiated by a non-profit organization with the support of the Chinese government. The mission of Confucius Institutes is to promote and improve the study of the Chinese language and the understanding of Chinese culture. By the end of 2016, there were 512 Confucius Institutes in more than 140 countries [5].

The first academic college of Chinese studies was established at Renmin University of China in 2005 with the specific purpose of promoting sinology, especially Confucian philosophy. This was followed by the establishment of more than 20 colleges and institutes at Wuhan, Beijing, Tsinghua and other leading universities in China. Two years later, a memorial ceremony for Confucius was officially held by the government of Shandong Province, where Confucius was born. Unsurprisingly, the event was covered by CCTV, China's official television station.

Since Xi Jinping came to power, the Chinese government's support for Confucianism has increased significantly. In 2013, the head of state visited Confucius' birthplace in Shandong Province and publicly praised Confucius' teachings, and in 2014, he met with Professor Tang Yijie, a renowned retired scholar and president of the Chinese Confucian Academy. This was followed by Xi Jinping's keynote speech at an international conference dedicated to the 2565th anniversary of Confucius, held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, the most prestigious venue for the national ceremony in the country. These and other events are an example of the high reverence, respect and propaganda of Confucianism in China.

In his keynote address, Xi (2014) makes it clear why the CCP recognizes Confucius and how, in his view, the people can learn from Confucian philosophy. He says that Confucianism is an integral part of Chinese culture, which "recorded the spiritual activities of the Chinese nation, rational thinking and cultural achievements in the construction of its homeland, reflected the spiritual aspirations of the Chinese nation, and provided a key source of nourishment for survival and continuous existence." the growth of our nation." He then argues that humanity is currently facing many serious challenges, such as "the widening wealth gap, the endless greed for material pleasures and luxuries, the unbridled extreme individualism, the constant decline of social credit, the ever-degrading ethics, and the growing tension between man and nature" [8].

It is impossible not to assume that the problems mentioned by Xi Jinping in his speech are the problems facing the CCP today. When the Chinese are becoming more and more greedy due to incredible material abundance and are in dire need of spiritual

rebalancing, Confucianism offers useful ideas for "changing the situation, solving state affairs, and improving the morality of society." To make the appeal to Confucianism logical, Xi is even prepared to assert that "Chinese communists have always been the faithful heirs and champions" of Confucian philosophy. He notes, "We have consciously adopted nourishment from the teachings of Confucius to Sun Yat-sen." Mao Zedong would not have believed his ears if he had lived to see Xi's speech [8].

In reality, however, there is a huge discrepancy between Xi's rhetoric and the reality of the communist regime. China is not a country that honors the royal path. A communist government is not a regime that favors political dissidents or Falun Gong believers. In the vast majority of cases, the mechanism for selecting civil servants is guided by the political ideology of candidates and their loyalty to the party, rather than by virtue and knowledge of the Confucian classics or modern social sciences. Neither the ministers of the State Council nor the members of the National People's Congress are democratically elected, nor are they elected or recommended by Confucian scholars or experienced civil servants. Last but not least, China is an authoritarian party state whose constitution guarantees a monopoly of political power in the hands of the CCP.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, the revival of Confucianism is an important development in Chinese political theory and practice. It should be noted that there are three main schools of modern Confucian political philosophy: the new Confucianism of the 1950s and 1960s in Taiwan and Hong Kong; political Confucianism since the 1980s in mainland China; Modern Confucian Political Meritocracy [4].

The New Confucians argue that the views of this school must accept the institutions of Western liberal democracy, on the one hand, and preserve their own moral and ethical teachings, on the other. This is the approach most appropriate for the development of Confucian political theory at the present time. However, the question of how to reconcile Confucian ethics with liberal democracy remains a huge problem, because the new Confucians did not foresee many problems when democracy did not yet look so realistic in Taiwan.

Political Confucianism, on the other hand, argues that Confucianism should not go the way of the West, since the very practice of Western liberal democracy suffers from serious problems. Instead, it argues that China should develop its own political order, in which Confucianism will play the role of state philosophy and Confucians will govern the country without democratic elections. The view of political Confucianism seems too conservative to be a viable option, but it is quite popular among those who are too keen on China's revival to challenge the idea that China must be completely different from the West.

Confucian political meritocracy represents a third approach to the problem, which is ready to correct the shortcomings of liberal democracy through a meritocratic mechanism for selecting virtuous and competent husbands, through scrutiny and peer review. This is noteworthy, given the fact that many liberal Democrats are mired in populism and do not work. Still, the question of whether a political meritocracy can work without the assumption of popular sovereignty remains controversial for those skeptical of electoral democracy. It is one thing to argue that governance can be greatly improved by introducing meritocratic mechanisms, but quite another to argue that the people will accept the rule of elites whose final mandate does not come from the consent of the people.

## REFERENCES

### Book

1. A.V. Vinogradov, A. (2020). History of China from ancient times to the beginning of the XXI century: In 10 volumes. RAS S.L. Tikhvinsky; Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Vol. IX: Reforms and Modernization (1976-2019) / guest editor by A.V. Vinogradov. Moscow, Nauka, 996.
2. Kondrashova, L. (2019). Chinese dream of national revival [Text] / L.I. Kondrashova. Moscow, Institute of Economics, 35.
3. Khoros, V. (1996). Authoritarianism and democracy in developing countries. [Text] / V.G. Khoros. Moscow, Nauk, 336.
4. Galenovich, Yu. (2017). Zhao Ziyang and reforms in China [Text] / Moscow, SPSL, 752.
5. Vinogradov, A. (2018). Chinese model of modernization: Search for a new identity [Text] A.V. Vinogradov. Moscow, Institute of the Far East of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 335.
6. Li Gou (1985). A plan for the enrichment of the state. Lane. with Chinese: Z.G. Lapina [Text] / Doctrine of State Management in Medieval China. Moscow, 384.
7. Wen Jian, (2019). Taoism in Modern China / [Text] Wen Jian, L.A. Gorobets. St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg Oriental Studies, 158.
8. Busygina, I. (2019). Modernization and democratization in the BRICS countries. Comparative Analysis [Text] / Ed. by I.M. Busygina, I.Y. Okuneva. Moscow, Aspect Press, 352.

### Journal

9. Vinogradov, A. (2020). History of China from ancient times to the beginning of the XXI century: In 10 volumes. RAS S.L. Tikhvinsky; Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Vol. IX: Reforms and Modernization (1976-2019), 996.