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# The Western and the Confucian approaches to war: The universe based on struggle versus the universe based on harmony

Krzysztof Gawlikowski
Kgawlikowski@swps.edu.pl

Summary:

The author characterises Western and Chinese civilisations in Erich Fromm's terms, former as "aggressive and destructive", and the latter as aggressive and non-destructive". The Western tradition glorified war and conquest, and warriors constituted there the ruling elite, whereas the Confucian tradition that shaped Chinese civilisation detested violence, and raised scholars-officials to the rank of the ruling elite. Both approaches and types of social and political structures had been based on different views of the universe. Struggle was a fundamental principle in the Western vision of the world-order, and it reached it apex with the idea of the eternal struggle of the Good against Evil. Confucian tradition promoted instead the vision of the universe as one giant organism based on the principle of harmony. War and peace constituted there negative and positive phases of the great historical cycles. The author outlines how Confucianism influenced the evolution of Chinese civilisation and indicates that both approaches have impact on politics even today.

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Confucian concepts of war and peace in various respects significantly differ from these adopted in the West, rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition and in the heritage of Indo-European peoples (the Ancient Greeks, the Romans, and the "barbaric tribes" of medieval Europe included). Confucian ideas not only shaped politics in China, and in the Sinitic world for two thousands years, but still influence political thinking and values in contemporary East Asia. In order to understand the Chinese traditions and their particular traits, a Westerner should realise first, that numerous essential concepts, values and categories adopted by him as "obvious", belong merely to the Western cultural traditions, and as such shaped our vision of the world and our actions.

The inhabitants of China and their neighbours elaborated different concepts and values, which only in the 19$^{th}$ and the 20$^{th}$ century were confronted with these Western and influenced by them. It resulted in complicated cultural transformations in China. This country underwent a deep process of Westernization, whereas many of her native traditions have been abandoned, and even rejected. It was a very complex process, which involved heated debates and ideological struggle. Since the period of the Opium Wars the general mode of thinking fluctuated from an obstinate defence of the old tradition and naive fascination with various Western ideologies and concepts, with their adoption, blind or more or less selective, to the new interests in the native traditions. During the last fifty years many times new efforts were undertaken to cultivate native

traditions, or to rejuvenate them, and usually Confucianism constituted the central issue (see J. Makeham, 2003).

It is well known that the approach to struggle, confrontation, and war constitutes one of the fundamental characteristics of primitive cultures, which significantly differ in this respect. Erich Fromm in his study of 'human destructiveness' distinguishes, for instance, the three types of cultures and societies: a) life-affirmative societies; b) non-destructive aggressive societies; c) destructive societies (E. Fromm, 1973, 192-204). In the societies of the first type life is highly valued, there are no much hatred, violence, crimes and severe punishment, and war is unknown or not developed. Competitiveness and individualism are reduced, whereas co-operation prevails. The second type of societies shares with the first the lacks of destructive drives, but there are aggressive tendencies and wars, although they are not essential for their social life. These societies are not so gentle as the first, and the level of mutual confidence is much lower there, on the other hand they have hierarchical structure, and there are present competitiveness and some individualism. Possession of goods and fulfilling tasks are valued. In the third type of societies there is much of violence, destructive activity, aggression and atrocities within the tribe and towards 'aliens'. War and harm inflicted to others are treated as sources of pleasure, whereas social life is based on enmity, tension and fear. Such societies are usually highly competitive and put great emphasis on private property. These descriptions could be criticised as not precise enough and requesting more elaboration, but the distinction of these three types of cultures could be useful as a certain theoretical model.

Similar differences, although less pronounced, could be seen in developed, class and state societies, which inevitably waged wars. So, the first of the types enumerated above is absent among them, and they could roughly be divided into the 'non-destructive, aggressive societies' and the 'destructive societies', with various intermediate cases. Such differences could be detected among nations and cultures that belong to Western and East Asian civilisations, but are even more evident when one compares Western and the traditional Chinese civilisations as certain wholes.

In order to simplify the analysis we will omit here the description of the Chinese 'modernised' or 'Westernised' 20$^{th}$ century variants, in which struggle and war were propagated and appreciated. Applying Fromm's models, Western civilisation obviously contained many traits of the 'destructive societies', whereas Chinese civilisation fluctuated between the first and the second type. In general, even the norms of the first type (of tranquil life, confidence, gentility and accord) could be detected there in the Confucian ideal of family and in other groups that imitated this model, to which an individual belonged. On the other hand, the norms of the second type (involving enmity, cheating, violence and oppression) were allowed in the relations with 'alien groups' and with their members. Both modes and approaches were considered inseparable aspects of political life. The first was identified with *wen* 文 – 'culture and civil administration', whereas the second with *wu* 武 – 'use of force, punishment and military methods'. Such views and values were propagated, and petrified by the imperial Confucian ideology, although in practice the behaviour and actions of the third type could occasionally also be noticed, in particular in the relations with 'alien' groups, considered hostile.

*1. Western approaches to war*

Western civilisation, on the other hand, could be described as ‘bellicose’ and its struggle-oriented approach could be seen in various aspects. It is characterised by fascination with struggle, military heroes and competition, related to its exaggerated individualism. Struggle and war were glorified, fighting was often considered a noble duty, and warriors constituted the class of nobles that ruled the states and enjoyed various privileges. Hunting and sports, based on the principle of struggle and serving as an exercise to war, constituted favourable recreation for noble warriors, whereas productive work was hold in contempt, as attributed to the ‘lower classes’. Under such circumstances warriors, who constituted the privileged, ruling class glorified military values and virtues, conquests, booty taking, and subduing others (peasant communities, fellow warriors, lower classes and foreign nations alike). Political predomination of a bellicose aristocracy facilitated, of course, the diffusion of its culture in the society.

Georges Dumézil considered this bellicose orientation truly archaic, belonging to the common cultural heritage of the Indo-European peoples. According to him, their value system and political structure had been reflected in a tripartite structure of their religious pantheons. The gods responsible for maintenance of order and lawgivers were at the top; below there were – bellicose gods of war; whereas the lowest echelon constituted gods and goddess of fertility, granting also good harvest and prosperity. This hierarchy of gods – in his opinion – corresponded to their archaic social and political structures: priests were most respected; warriors had a lower position, but they ruled; whereas the working people, who had to provide means of subsistence to the upper social strata, were hold in contempt. Therefore the Indo-European aristocrats considered waging war almost their “profession”, and treated it as the noble and prestigious task, second in order after praying and sacrifices (G. Dumézil, 1956). These concepts provoked heated debates and various reservations have been presented, but it appears that they illustrate essential traits of Western civilisation. Bellicosity outlined above and a ‘chivalrous code of fighting’ related to glorification of struggle, so characteristic to the Western cultures could evolve and develop in such a cultural and social context. Warriors’ concept of honour and of personal dignity required almost permanent search for battles and duelling, (or of bullying in modern times) on the one hand, and permanent tendency to subdue others and/or to manifest one’s own superiority on the other.

In this Western appreciation of struggle and war the two contradicting but intermingling tendencies could be detected. The first put an emphasis on their purely laic functions: treated war and armed struggle as a kind of game for ‘true men’, or an action granting profits, fame and enrichment. In political aspects war was treated as the means to resolve conflicts, enlarge territory, achieve eternal glory, etc. Contemporary sport evolved from this tradition. The second tendency was different. Mystical significance has been attributed to armed struggle, which was treated as a kind of semi-religious sacrifice (of war heroes, of oneself, of one’s own nation, or of the enemy). It could be treated even as a kind of prayer, as emulating bellicose gods and their creative or destructive activities, etc. In the modern period it could be presented as the creation of History or as ‘executing the destiny’, as almost ‘holy’ service to a nation, to the ‘progress’, etc. Because of these elements struggle acquired a particular pathetic significance in Western minds, often obscure and difficult to logical explanation. In this intellectual framework, personal courage and heroic deeds were of crucial importance, whereas in the ‘holy war concept’ it was God or History that determined victory. The custom of erecting monuments to celebrate military victories and paying homage to the heroes of war could evolve very early in such cultural context.

In the Western tradition warriors as a 'ruling class' had a close relation to politics, and participated in the state affairs. A particular concept of fellowship-in-arms and equality characterised them. Hence there was a truly ancient tradition of electing by them their supreme commander-king, of organising meetings of all warriors – members of the community – for making important decision, etc. Such traditions shaped Greek and Roman democratic traditions and military democracy of the medieval 'barbarians' (K. Modzelewski, 2004).

In ancient Greece and among the European 'barbarians' one could even find an identification of a free citizen, or a grown-up man, with a 'soldier'. For instance, Tacitus (ca AD 54 – ca 120), an eminent Roman historian, noticed that the German tribes 'transact no public or private business without being armed'. When a boy reached maturity there was a particular public ceremony of equipping him with a shield and a spear. 'Up to this time he was regarded as a member of a household, afterwards as a member of the commonwealth'. Medieval knighting a noble boy was an elaborate ritual based on this ancient tradition.

This eminent historian describes Germans' bellicose mentality as following:

> *When they go into battle, it is a disgrace for the chief to be surpassed in valour, a disgrace for his followers not to equal the valour of the chief. And it is an infamy and reproach for life to have survived the chief, and returned from the field. To defend, to protect him, to ascribe one's own brave deeds to his renown, is the height of loyalty... If their native states sinks into the sloth of prolonged peace and repose, many of its noble youths voluntarily seek those tribes which are waging some war, both because inaction is odious to their race, and because they win renown more readily in the midst of peril, and cannot maintain a numerous following except by violence and war... Feasts and entertainment, which, though inelegant, are plentifully furnished, are their only pay. The means of this bounty come from war and rapine. Nor are they easily persuaded to plough the earth and to wait for the year's produce as to challenge an enemy and earn the honour of wounds* (Tacitus, 1877, 90-1).

He mentions that at every public gathering a spectacle is exhibited: naked youths practice the sport bound in the dance amid swords and lances threatening their lives. These descriptions are not necessarily precise, since Tacitus obviously idealises to some extent the 'barbarians' to advocate virtues already forgotten in Rome, but still appreciated by his contemporaries. It is an obvious historical fact that the Roman Empire was based on military power and glorified wars and military victories.

Western bellicose mentality resulted in innumerable wars and conquest on incomparable scale. It was presented in the most eloquent way by John Ruskin (1819-1900), an eminent British thinker and theoretician of art, who acquired prominence at the time of the emerging Victorian global empire, echoing these ancient bellicose traditions. He treated war as an affair that offers the most favourable conditions to development of nations, and to flourishing of arts and of virtues. On December 14$^{th}$, 1869, he instructed the cadets of the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich as follows:

> *When I tell you that war is the foundation of all the arts, I mean also that it is a foundation of all the high virtues and faculties of men. It is very strange to me to discover this, and very dreadful, but I saw it to be quite and undeniable fact... I found, in brief, that all great nations learned their truth of word and strength of thought in war; that they were nourished in war and wasted by pace; taught by war and deceived by pace; trained by war and betrayed by pace; in a word, that they were born in war and expired in pace* (J.Ruskin, 1907, 115).

Hence he also maintained that from the dawn of civilisation people are divided into two races: 'workers' and 'players'. The later are noble and bellicose, proud and looking for entertainment, fascinated with adventure and risk, creative, developing arts and virtues. They treat the 'workers' merely as useful cattle. The drive for domination and power – according to him – promotes human development. War was for him a principal mechanism of this development, of the necessary periodical 'moral purification' and of 'social rectification', that save the society from moral degradation. In his opinion only the nation of warriors, based on courageous engagements in battles, as British, could progress, develop arts and noble mores, and warriors rightly dominate the simple, working people. In the 19th and the 20th centuries in the West there were, of course, numerous other writers and theoreticians who glorified war in other aspects, or who tried to promote peace.

However, the concepts linking progress and development with war were so diffused in the West that even the theoreticians who advocated peace and harmonious social relations were perplexed whether further progress would be possible under such circumstances. For instance, in the 1950's Irving Luis Horowitz maintained that *struggle within society is the deciding factor in social growth itself*. As he indicated, we are confronted with the historical fact that the progress of society in the past often proceeded through a test of armed might, rather than by an avoidance of it. In the national level in some cases progress could proceed 'trough *either* war or peace. Whereas in the world as a whole, no such alternative exists'. Social changes, progress in science and culture – as he concluded - could be halted by the elimination of struggle, and on the other hand a thermonuclear war could mark the end of civilisation. Thus the requirements of progress and of universal peace, as he maintained, are difficult to reconcile (I. L. Horovitz, 1973, 17-8).

Such concepts of inevitability of war and of its 'deeper' significance were rooted in particular philosophical vision of the world. Struggle was treated in the West as a 'manifestation of nature at work', as an essence of 'being', a mechanism of creation/destruction, and of development. War in such a framework was considered a particular type of struggle (armed conflict between autonomous sociopolitical entities) or as a metaphor of struggle in general. Indo-European mythology contains various descriptions of struggle through which the new world-order has been created. Greek Zeus dethroned his father Cronos and other Titans of the older, ruling generation at the course of a great war (*Titanomachia*). The earlier phases of Greek cosmogony were also based on struggle. Indo-Aryan Indra defeated dragon Vritra and liberated waters closed by him. Indra also opened space for the Sun-Surya, for light and rain, and waged innumerable wars with black people, the Dasas, taking booty and acquiring new lands. One could notice that in the ancient Greek sculptures of the famous war of the Olympic gods against the Titans the latter are presented as half-humans and half-dragons. In the Indo-Iranian mythology this primordial war is obviously related to the struggle of Light against the Darkness, of Good and order against Evil and chaos. In the Greek sources similar elements could also be detected.

It seems that Heraclitus (6th-5th century BC) was the first Western thinker, who presented these concepts in a philosophical form. Unfortunately, merely small fragments of his works survived. As he stated:

> *War (Polemos) is the father of all things and governs all things; it reveals ones as gods and others as humans, determines that ones are slaves and others free men* (fragment 53).

*War must be common to all things; the supreme justice (dike) and strife (eris) and all things arise and pass away through strife and according to destiny* (fragment 80).

Aristotle (384-322 BC) adds:

*Heraclitus states that 'the oppositions – merge and from the divergences emerges the most beautiful harmony; all things come into being through strife*[1].

As Italian scholars point out, Heraclitus' concepts are elaborate and complex. According to him war must not and cannot be stopped, since exclusively in war *philia*, i.e. 'friendship' is born, that constitutes the source of harmony and cohesion of the *polis* (city-state). The most beautiful harmony – according to this Greek philosopher – consists in an eternal conflict of the opposition. Hence war itself grants real peace that is based on 'balanced oppositions', each part of which could flourish without reaching predominance. Moreover, Heraclitus presumes that there are two kinds of harmony: one visible and another – invisible that is much more beautiful and powerful, and the latter determines the former (Cacciari, 1987, 155, 158-9).

Eventually on this basis in the Mediterranean religions a particular concept of an 'ontological struggle' evolved: of an eternal struggle of the forces of Evil and Darkness against the forces of Good and Light, or of the struggle of Satan against God, mentioned at the beginning of this study. This concept, in its Christian form, became an *archetype* of the Western civilisation. It did not only justify struggle carried out by various subjects and legitimise struggle as such, but also presented it as a 'glorious action' and fulfilment of a 'moral mission'.

In the prevalent opinion of Western thinkers in the universe there are various conflicts, merely their forms and nature vary. There are ontological-and-moral struggles, as an eternal struggle of the satanic forces against God, and these less glorious aiming at profits, prestige, or merely for survival. Violent struggle could be destructive or could produce peace based on a kind of coexistence of oppositions, although their struggle never ceases. A particular 'partnership' of foes was also an age-old tradition of the Indo-European peoples already present in their ancient myths. Rüdiger Safranski rightly notices that the Ancient Greeks and Romans perceived the universe (*universum*) as 'plurivers' (*pluriversum*), since it was divided into diverse parts and was of a pluralistic nature. Later on such views had been even more elaborate. As Safranski indicates, contradictions and conflicts, resulting of this pluralism, constitute the basis of politics for many contemporary Western thinkers, as Carl Schmitt or Helmuth Plessner. As they indicated, where there are no contradictions – no politics (Safranski, 1997, chapter 7-8).

This explains why since the ancient times Western thinkers treated with contempt the political systems in which internal struggle and open manifestation of opposition were absent, such as Persian and other Oriental empires. The Westerners, as it appears, simply could not understand the systems based on the principle of unity, which was to them 'contradicting human nature and the nature of the universe'. Such regimes appeared to them highly oppressive, since – as they believed – merely force could halt the opposition to manifest itself. It should also be mentioned, that liberal democracy, Western dictatorships or totalitarian systems were all based on the concept of struggle. It acquired the form of 'beneficial competition of various political forces' and of the

[1] These quotations have been translated here according to their interpretation by Massimo Cacciari and other Italian scholars. See: Cacciari, 1987, p. 156. The last quotation derives from *Nicomachean Ethics*, ch. 8. Slightly different translations of Heraclitus' statements are given in: Nahm, M.C. (ed.), 1945, 91-2.

‘right to oppose the government’, or of ‘struggle against dangerous enemies of the nation/state’, or of ‘progress’ in general. Primordial pluralism and strife, which result of it, were for the Westerners simply ‘natural’ and ‘inevitable’.

Western thinkers have adopted similar approach to other fields as well. The concept of ‘market economy’ granting prosperity and development is also based on the principle of free struggle and competition. Western scholars believe that the scientific truth could be reached through free competition of laboratories and researchers. Charles R. Darwin promoted such a concept to explain the evolution of species, Karl Marx applied the concept of ‘class struggle’ to history. Samuel P. Huntington presented the vision of the ‘clash of civilisations’ as a dangerous scenario of the future, and so on.

The World War II constituted the turning point in the history of the West and resulted in the condemnation of war and military conquest, but even later on war-mongering attitude was often manifested and struggle was glorified. Merely its military forms have been condemned and restricted to 'particular cases' as a ‘means of the last resort’. These transformations changed mentality of the Europeans, but were much more restricted in the USA.

*2. The Confucian approach to war*

Chinese civilisation represents a different type of culture and of political evolution. As Herrlee G. Creel points out, Romans’ main industry was war, they venerated Aeneas, the Trojan warrior, as their ancestral hero, and ascribed the founding of their city to Romulus, the son of Mars. Military service and achievements carried the highest prestige there. *In China, the concentration of fervour that the Romans devoted to war was channelled into government* (H. G. Creel, 1970, 251). Civilian administrators have been the great heroes there, and military career and positions were almost invariably considered inferior to civil ones. Classical Chinese literature in general produces, according to him, two impressions. Although war was common, those who fought it derived very little pleasure of it. Moreover one scarcely could find there anything that could be called a ‘battle scene’, in the sense of a description of battle in which the exploits of individual warriors are recounted in detail. One could find numerous such scenes, for instance, in *Aeneid*, but not in ancient Chinese works (*ibid.* 254). Other scholars also notices this characteristic of Chinese literature, in particular poetry, called ‘the elipsis of battle’, since the actual clash of arms is always left unsaid, and there are no detailed narratives of the heroic actions (C. H. Wang, 1975, 29).

As Creel concludes, in the Western Zhou period warfare was regarded an important and sometimes necessary task, but insofar as the sources indicate, rather distasteful. *There is little suggestion of any thought by officers or men of failure to perform their duty, but neither is there evidence that war was thought of as an enjoyable game* (*ibid.* 256-7). Later on, as he adds, at least since the beginning of the Han epoch (206 BC – AD 220) military actions were considered a ‘necessary evil’.

According to him, in the Western Zhou period (11$^{th}$? century – 771 BC) appreciation of civil administration and disdain for military activity already prevailed. The situation changed in the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BC), when numerous wars were waged by ruling aristocracy, and warriors had been esteemed more highly than administrators. Under such circumstances chivalrous code of fighting evolved, at lest in its embryo form. But the time of Confucius (551-479 BC) marked a turning point: after his time the glorification of war declined and it was eventually disdained. A large body of works edited or written by Confucian scholars, later on considered ‘canonical’, played a principal role in this evolution, in particular since the reign of the Han Emperor

Wu (140-87 BC), when Confucianism was declared a state ideology. Disdain for war and military activity, so characteristic for Confucianism shaped the mentality of the ruling elite. As David A. Graff points out, the Chinese scholarly elite of the imperial period was often actively hostile to the warfare and the military. Its members *esteemed the civil and literary virtues (*wen 文*) over the martial virtues* (wu 武)*, and regarded the resort to arms as an undesirable option, almost a confession of [political] failure*. In their practical actions they usually reduced the power and influence of military officials within the imperial polity, and sometimes even openly argued against military expeditions beyond empire's borders. Similar approach could even been seen in official reports and in numerous and voluminous histories, which describe in detail events of the subsequent dynasties. The actual course of battles is usually passed in silence, whereas historians tend to focus on pre-battle deliberations and on post-battle explanations of applied strategy. Such practice led not only to omissions in historical sources, but even to significant distortions (D. A. Graff, 2002, 7).

The transformation processes from the Spring and Autumn culture of the warrior-aristocrats, that appreciated to some extent military pursuits, to the new 'Confucian culture', were very complex, as Mark E. Lewis outlines them. He also points out one of their components, rarely properly explained. Strategic literature initiated by Sun Wu 孫武 a contemporary of Confucius, promoted a new vision of war very distant from its heroic images cultivated by the old warrior aristocracy. It propagated precise assessment of situation, the use of masses of organised soldiers treated as objects of manipulations, and devising stratagems. Since these times, Lewis concludes, it was the commander who determined the outcome of prolonged war, not individual heroic deeds of warrior-aristocrats who previously could win a battle on their chariots within several hours (M. L. Lewis, 1990, 103). The small armies of almost professional aristocratic warriors, that numbered several thousand, at most twenty or thirty thousand, had been substituted by the mass armies of the peasant conscripts, which may surpass a hundred of thousands. The chivalrous code of struggle was rejected as useless, since war was not any more a 'matter of honour', but a state enterprise aiming at achievement of precise political gains. All means that served these ends were considered justified, without considerations whether they are 'noble' or 'ignoble'. The new principle was: *war is based on deception and manipulations* (Gawlikowski, 1995). Confucian ideas of benevolent rule and strategic concepts of the most efficient actions resulted in a tendency: to avoid bloodshed as much as possible and to manifest benevolent attitude towards the civil population.

As numerous new studies prove, wars played significant role in the evolution of Chinese state and in Chinese history (P.Lorge, 2005). Alastair I. Johnston is also right pointing out that in practice wars have not been so avoided, and bloodshed had not been so reduced, as one could expect reading merely Chinese theoretical literature, how warfare should be conducted (Johnston, 1995, 27). One could even find, in particular in the popular literature, some fascination with war, fighting and physical strength and abilities. There were even the Chinese ethnic groups known for their belligerency, such as inhabitants of the Hunan province, or the Hakkas (*Kejia* 客家). Nevertheless, in general, wars and military pursuits were not appreciated much, generals did not acquire there fame and 'eternal glory' as in Europe, and they did not play a prominent role in politics either. The soldiers, as they were described in Chinese literature, were poor creatures separated from their families, and brought to foreign lands, to fulfil unpleasant duties imposed on them by the state. In the *Book of Songs*, a famous Confucian classic, one could read, for instance, such a poetic description:

*I climb that hill covered with grass*
*And look towards where my parents stay.*
*My father says 'Alas!*
*My son's on service so far away;*
*Cannot repose night nor day.*
*O may he take care of himself,*
*To come back and not remain there.*

*I climb that hill devoid of grass*
*And look towards where my parents stay.*
*My mother says 'Alas!*
*My youngest son on service far away,*
*Cannot sleep well night nor day.*
*O may he take care of himself*
*To come back and not be captive there*[2].

The young soldier continues his song revoking memories of his older brother (abbreviated here). Could one imagine the heroes of *Iliad* or the *Song of Roland* so lamenting that they are so far from the mom and from daddy, and from the good older brother who takes care? Could they be preoccupied first of all about their safe return home from a unwanted military campaign? But in the *Book of Songs* even the royal guard, professional, selected soldiers lament in a similar way for hardships of military campaign.

As Stephen Owen points out, in the *Book of Songs* there is a noticeable lack of violence. In this Confucian classic, that contain material of the 11th-5th centuries BC, edited by Confucius himself as generations of scholars believed, there was some glorification of Zhou military power, in the descriptions of fast chariots, blazing valour, rank upon rank of warriors, but blood is hardly ever shed. Even the conquests of new lands are usually presented there as the willing acceptance of the new lords by their native people. In Homer's works each warrior seeks his personal glory. In the Confucian classic military heroism is rare and it is directed first of all to public glory (or the glory of their ancestors and clan – as M. Lewis indicates, 1990, 36), and the Zhou heroes are praised for their valour and their sagacious execution of state policy. The army is essentially – as Owen notices – a collective force, 'the king's claws and fangs'. When the threat of violence is presented there, it is immediately balanced by some justifications of the use of force: reestablishment of the moral order and the granting of peace. The complains on the military service are much more numerous there than even restricted praise of military power and achievements. In the 'military' songs contained therein the soldiers, in general, are prevented from desertion only by the fear of punishment, and do not express their fascination with a military enterprise or conquest in any way (A. Waley, 1987, xiv-xviii).

In general, one could distinguish the four main types of Chinese "military heroes" portrayed in the best way in the most famous medieval novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義. Guan Yu 關羽 (d. AD 219), who subsequently became one of the principal Chinese deities, embodies a "virtuous warrior" and loyalty to his master. Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220), his great adversary, could be treated as a model

[2] *Shi jing* 詩經(The Book of Songs); see translations: J. Legge, 1972, vol. 4, 167-8 (book IX, ode IV); A. Walley, 1987, 115; Xu Yuanzhong, 1994, 117 (the last has been adopted here with minor modifications).

"villain", whereas Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮(181-234) as the most famous Chinese strategist. Zhang Fei 張飛 on the other hand, represents a heroic, but impulsive and rouge fighter (R. Ruhlman, 1978, 147, 149-54). It is highly significant that the last, an able fighter of the strong complexion, and of very masculine appearance, who mostly resembles Western military heroes, is presented without great admiration. It was Zhuge Liang, a cabinet scholar with immense knowledge, capable to invent innumerable stratagems and tricks, who acquired fame of the most renown Chinese 'master of war'. He fascinated Chinese commanders until the 20th century. For centuries his example served as an illustration of the 'eternal truth' that strategy is first of all the art of deceiving the enemy and of inventing stratagems, not the art of the operating of military forces and of violent strikes[3].

One has to remember that the Chinese military heroes were expected to fight in another way than their Western partners. In an early medieval description of the Three Kingdoms period (220-265), Ma Su 馬謖, Zhuge Liang's commander states in a discussion with his master:

> *According to the principle of employing military forces, the best is to attack the minds* (gong xin 攻心), *and the worst is to attack the strongholds; the best is 'war of minds'* (xin zhan心戰), *and much worse is 'war of troops'* (bing zhan 兵戰)[4].

The first part of this sentence repeats Sun Zi's treatise, but the second goes much further setting 'war of minds', which is much broader than the modern 'psychological warfare', against 'war of arms'. The former not only includes tricks and artful operations, but also the attack on enemy's plans, the morale of his troops and on the enemy ruler' will to fight. The principle 'attack on minds is the best' become the most famous Zhuge Liang's principle and a kind of 'proverb'.

In a well-known ancient work of the 1st century BC it is stated:

> *The master conqueror does not wage wars; the master commander of the army does not use it; the master of battling does not fight. [Enemy's opposition] should be regulated in the ceremonial hall of the palace (i.e. by diplomacy) and the resistance of [his] army should be broken at a distance. If the ruler carries out the policy of benevolence, he will meet no opposition in the entire world*[5].

The conclusion corresponds to the Confucian concepts (their Mencius' version), but the statements concerning fighting, with various modifications, are repeated in several ancient sources and could be considered political 'common knowledge'[6].

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[3] Vitaliy Primakov (1897-1937), a Soviet military advisor to the National Armies of Feng Yuxiang in the 1920's describes with horror his discussions with Chinese generals, who understood strategy in such a way and examples of military actions based on such concepts (Primakov, 1970, 156, 231-3, 251-2).

[4] *Sanguo zhi* 三國志(History of the Three Kingdoms), *Shu shu* 蜀書 (The Book of the Shu State), chapter 39, 983. These words are contained in the commentary of the 5th century, which extensively quotes an earlier source already lost.

[5] *Yan tie lun* 鹽鐵論(Discourses on Salt and Iron), part I, p.1. E. M. Gale's partial translation (1931, 4-5) is at this point imprecise and has been used only to a small extent.

[6] In *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書(Lost Books of the Zhou), part 8, p. 8, this Confucian conclusion is missing and one could read there: 'The master of politics does not undertake attacks; the master of attacks does not invade; the master of invasion does not carry punitive expeditions; the master of punitive expeditions does not form battle arrays; the master of battle arraying does not combat; the master of combating does not fight; the master of fighting does not suffer defeats'. It is a source of uncertain provenance, but could contain authentic Zhou and

These concepts were coherent with the Confucian appreciation of peace and harmony, and condemnation of violence, but they had also other roots. The new ruling elite of administrators-and-scholars considered 'mental work' prestigious and noble, and treated with a certain contempt physical labour and the use of force. In the Confucian canonical books it is formulated with an extreme clarity:

> *It is a rule of the former kings that the noblemen* (junzi 君子) *should labour with their minds, and the simple people ('small men',* xiao ren 小人) *labour with their physical force*[7].

In the book attributed to Mencius (371-289 BC) an old saying is quoted that explains the situation in detail:

> *Some labour with their minds, and some labour with their physical forces. Those who labour with their minds govern others; those who labour with their forces are governed by others. Those who are governed by others provide them; those who govern others are provided by them.*

The author concludes that this is a universal principle[8]. Hence all forms of physical labour and the use of strength were considered less noble than intellectual work of scholars and administrators.

Until the eventual triumph of Confucian ideology in the 2nd century BC, it had to compete with other schools of thought, and at least three of them accepted, in various forms and extent, the use of violence and coercion. The most famous are Legalists (*fajia* 法家), who treated war as the principal social and political mechanism of strengthening the state. A state that lives in peace and grants its citizens prosperity and tranquil life was – according to them – destined to decline. And the Qin state that adopted their teaching eventually united China by brute force (in 221 BC). The Mohists (*mojia* 墨家) who condemned war and struggle in the most eloquent way allowed the use of force for a 'just cause'. They even created a kind of the knight-order that defended the weak and oppressed, and acquired fame as specialist of warfare. The Strategists (*bingjia* 兵家) recommended the restriction of violence to the minimum, and warned that war must not been enjoyed, but accepted war as a necessary means to the very survival of the state. In their writings and in other miscellaneous works one could even find the statements that war is inevitable and could not be ceased, and struggle is a natural phenomenon common to animals and humans alike.

For instance in the texts excavated in 1972 attributed to Sun Bin 孫髕(fl. 380-320 BC) one can read:

> *To assail with fangs and to jab with horns; to tear with claws in front and fling out with hooves behind; when enamoured to unite together, when angry to attack – this is the natural way, which cannot be impeded. Hence those who have no*

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Warring States texts, although they could be edited and complemented with later materials. There are also some differences in various editions of this text. In its *Sibu congkan* edition the later part is abbreviated into: 'the master of punitive expedition does not strikes, the master of striking does not combat'. In the *Han shu* (History of the Han Dynasty) of the AD 1st century one could read: 'The master commander of the army does not form battle arrays (i.e. must not combat); the master of combat does not suffer defeat; and the master of defeats does not suffer an annihilation' (chapter 23, 1088. It is quoted there as a commonly known concept.

[7] *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, Xiang Gong 襄公 9; trans. J. Legge, 1972, vol. 5, 438/440, mod. The text was composed in the 5th-4th centuries BC

[8] *Mengzi* 孟子(The Book of Master Meng), attributed to Meng Ke 孟軻 (372-289 BC), book III, part 1, par. 4; trans. J. Legge, 1972, vol. 2, 249-50, mod.

*natural weapons (i.e. man) have to prepare them by themselves; it was the task of the sages.*

Then the author enumerates military inventions of the mythological Chinese rulers[9]. One could find similar statements in other ancient sources as well, and they were also repeated later on.

At the end of the 1st millennium BC all these schools for various reasons ceased to exist, and the new imperial Confucianism of the Han period incorporated to some extent their heritage. Later on mostly foreign peoples of the north, who temporarily ruled China, could cultivate military arts, games that required physical strength, hunting, etc., whereas Chinese scholars disdained such activities.

Under such circumstances the warriors could not acquire a high position in the social and political structures that corresponded to the state ideology. Since the Han period the four social classes were distinguished, which had different legal status and rights: scholars-administrators (*shi* 士), peasants (*nong* 農), artisans (*gong* 工), and merchants (*shang* 商). The first class enjoyed the highest prestige, since scholars served as tutors of the people and administrators of public affairs. The state officials, that enjoyed the highest prestige, were recruited from them. The second class, the peasants that produced food and other essential goods, as for example, textiles, simple pottery, etc. enjoyed a status of 'free citizens'. They had all essential rights and various obligations to the state. For instance, they had the right to posses fields, could participate at the state examination that opened public career, they had semi-autonomous self-government, etc.). Up to the Tang period (618-907) village elders were highly respected figures and could present their opinions on various state affairs even to the emperor himself. On the other hand, they had to pay taxes, serve at the armies, and perform *corvée* works. Agriculture was considered a noble occupation, in which – in a symbolic way – even emperor, empress, and the highest official of the state had to participate. The *shi* were closely related to peasants and could be recruited from them. There were, however, two strata of *shi*: 'official-scholars' and 'scholar-commoners'. The last were much closer to the commoners, although had some privileges and enjoyed higher prestige (Ping-ti Ho, 1962, 35-7).

The artisans and merchants constituted 'lower classes', and had restricted rights. There were various types of artisans. A great number of them were considered a kind of 'state workers' employed in numerous state enterprises, who worked and lived under strict control. They could serve at the state manufactures for several months a year, in their free time producing goods for the market, or entirely engage in their private work although their activity remained under state supervision. The lowest was the position of merchants, who often travelled (leaving their families and abandoning their Confucian duties, first of all to serve their parents), and were engaged in an 'ignoble activity'.

The legal status of artisans and merchants was much lower than that of the two 'noble' classes. There were restrictions concerning possession of agriculture land, and a merchant family for three generations should live on more noble occupation until it could be allowed to participate in the state examinations. Of course, their social status was different, and the richest merchants were often very influential persons, and could even buy noble titles (Ping-ti Ho, 1980). But their property could be confiscated by the state, since their wealth was considered 'suspicious' or even 'illegal'. When there were

[9] *Sun Bin bingfa*, chapter *Shi bei* 勢備; Zhang Zhenze, 1984, 78; trans. D.C. Lau, R.T. Ames, 203, 118-9; here the text in a different author's translation. See also more detailed description of these concepts in K. Gawlikowski, 1991.

'hereditary soldiers', they were treated as a kind of semi-free state servants deprived of essential citizens' rights, close to other 'low categories', such as state and private slaves, prison guards, actors, prostitutes, etc.

Such a social division of the 'four categories of the people' (*simin* 四民) was usually presented as introduced by 'ancient sages' (see, for instance, the *History of the Han dynasty* of the AD 1st century[10]). It appears in numerous ancient sources, although earlier, in particular before the Han period (206 BC – AD 220), their 'order of prestige' could be altered. For instance, in the *Mr. Zuo's Commentary* and in the *Book of Master Xun* merchants are enumerated above artisans[11]. In the *Book of Master Guan* peasants are enumerated as the first and scholars as second, since agriculture was considered there a supreme activity most important to the state[12]. In the *Gu Liang's Commentary* the four classes are enumerated as following; scholars, merchants, peasants and artisans[13].

As one can see, the distinction of these four 'classes' was commonly accepted, merely their hierarchy varied, until the 'orthodox' Confucian order prevailed. Moreover, warriors are missing in this social order, and there is no room for them. In fact, situation is much more complex. In the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) the *shi* were not 'scholars', but constituted a lower stratum of the ruling class of nobles, who cultivated military arts and skills. Great Chinese historian Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893-1980) outlined their transformation as follows. Initially, in the Western Zhou and at the beginning of the Spring and Autumn periods all *shi* had 'military' characteristics and constituted the basis of aristocratic armies. In the period of Confucius, in the 6th – 5th century BC, military and civil administrative skills differentiated and two separate types of *shi* started to appear: 'civil *shi*' (*wen shi* 文士) and 'military *shi*' (*wu shi* 武士). One should bear in mind that as tradition indicates Confucius' disciples studied 'the six arts': etiquette, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and calculations. Two of them (archery and charioteering) were 'military', and in these times all of them were 'obligatory' to a gentleman. And this reflects the customs of the earlier period. Confucius obviously put an emphasis on studying books and civil skills.

Gu Jiegang indicates that the archaic 'military *shi*', who fulfilled also some civil, administrative functions, were transformed step by step into scholars-officials, whereas side by side also appeared distinct military figures: warriors and officers. These former were called *ru* 儒– 'scholars' (later on it meant also 'Confucians'), whereas the latter were called *xia* 俠– 'chivalrous warriors'. The opposition of these scholars and warriors lasted almost for five hundred years, since the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) to the Western Han period (206 BC – AD 24). Even during this time the scholars prevailed, but later on the ancient *xia* entirely disappeared (Gu Jiegang, 1977, 85-91).

However, it has also to be pointed out, that at least since the Western Han period until the beginning of the 20th century all officials of the imperial bureaucracy were

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[10] *Han shu* 漢書 (History of Han Dynasty), by Ban Gu 班固(32-92), chapter. 24, part. 1, . 1118.

[11] *Zuo zhuan* 左傳(Mr. Zuo's Commentary), Xiang Gong 襄公 9; J. trans. Legge, 1972, vol. 5, 437/440. *Xunzi* 荀子(The Book of Master Xun), chapter 8; trans. J. Konoblock, 1990, II, 71. It is attributed to eminent Confucian philosopher Xun Qing 荀卿(ca. 298-238 BC).

[12] *Guanzi* 管子(The Book of Master Guan), chapter 48; trans. W.A. Rickett, 1998, II, 179. This chapter was probably written in the 3rd or the 2nd century BC.

[13] *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳 (Guliang's Commentary), Cheng Gong 成公5; *Shisanjing*, 2417. Probably written in the 3rd century BC.

divided into two 'types': 'civil' *wen* and 'military' *wu*. During official presentations of the authorities or receptions they had to stay respectively on the left and the right. The 'military' officials were responsible not only for military affairs in general, but also for punishment, prisons, guards, some public works, etc. This division concerned functions and offices, not personnel, since one person could be promoted from a military to civil offices, or *vice versa*, many times in his political career to fulfil various tasks, although civil offices were usually considered 'higher' from the military of the same rank. It could be stated that in the empire based on Confucian ideology the civil type bureaucracy prevailed and civil mentality and ethos dominated. As numerous Western observers noticed at the beginning of the 20th century, Chinese generals and officers were not 'military' in the Western sense and presented themselves first of all as 'scholars'.

The Confucian disdain for the physical labour, violence, struggle and war was based on a particular vision of the universe. It was described as 'harmonious'. In one of its canonical books, *The Doctrine of the Mean* it is stated:

> *While there are not strings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in a state of Equilibrium* (中 zhong). *When these feelings have been stirred and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony* (和 he). *This Equilibrium is the great root of the world, and this Harmony is the universal path* (道 dao). *Let the state of Equilibrium and Harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout Heaven and Earth, and all things and creatures will be nourished and flourish.*[14]

Hence maintaining Harmony and Equilibrium was presented as the fundamental principle of the universe, and as its ideal state. Each its entities should maintain them, and in their mutual relations. Merely under such conditions they could develop and flourish, whereas struggle that break harmonious interrelations was considered destructive and harmful to all beings.

Such concepts were also contained in other Confucian texts. For instance, in the famous *Book of Changes* in the explanation to the hexagram 1 *Qian* 乾 —"The Creative", which describes the Heaven and condensation of the Yang in general, one can read:

> *Vast indeed is the [sublime] Creative, it generates all things and beings, and its [power] permeates even Heaven. It causes the clouds to come forth, the rain to bestow its bounty, and all objects and beings to flow reaching their [respective] forms. Its dazzling brilliance [leads them] from their end to the [new] beginning (...) The Way of the Creative consists in alternations and transformations, [granting] to each [object and being] its right nature and destiny. Then it preserves their conformity with the Great Harmony [of the universe]*.[15]

In the explanation of the hexagram 11 *Tai* 泰—"Peace", that grants prosperity and the proper moral order, it is stated:

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[14] *Zhong yong* 中庸 (The Doctrine of the Mean); see: J. Legge, 1972, vol. I, 384-5, mod. This work is traditionally attributed to Zi Si 子思(ca. 483–402 BC), a Confucius' grandson and an outstanding philosopher himself. Now his authorship is questioned and numerous scholars presume that the text was written or edited around 200 BC. For a detailed analysis of the text and its dating see: Tu Wei-ming, 1989.

[15] *Zhou yi zheng yi* 周易正義 (The Correct Meaning of the Book of Changes of the Zhou Epoch), *Shisanjing*, p. 14 (chapter 1). The two translations have been used here to some extent: by Wilhelm, R.,1983, 4–5; Blofeld, J., 1968, 85.

*[With] the Little gone and the Great come, good fortune and success [are granted]. It is so when Heaven and Earth are in intercourse, and all beings are in communion with one another (i.e. in a state of harmonious relatedness). The upper and lower (i.e. ruling and the ruled) unite and have the same will. Inside (i.e. in the Middle State) the Yang prevails and Outside (i.e. on the barbarian periphery) Yin remains. [Thus] the Interior is strong and the Exterior follows it. Inside the noble men [rule] and Outside the people of the low moral standing [obey]. The way of the former waxes, and the way of the latter wanes. [But eventually] walls [that protect the order] will fall back into the moat and disorder and wars will inevitably follow.*[16]

It is highly significant that the opposite state of chaos and war is described in the explanations to the hexagram 12 *Pi* 否 - "Standstill" representing the period of decline. One can read there:

*The evil of the rebels and usurpers [prevails]; this period is unfavourable to the correctness of noblemen. The Great are gone and the Little came. [It is so, when] Heaven and Earth are disunited and there is no communication among all things and creatures [so they cannot flourish]. The upper and lower [strata, i.e. the ruling and the ruled] are disunited [and they have different wills]; in the world there are no vassal countries [i.e. the leadership of the Son of Heaven is lost, which results in disorders and wars]. In the Interior [i.e. within the Middle State] the Yin predominates, whereas in the Exterior [i.e. in the barbarian lands] Yang is diffused. The Interior is weak and the Exterior strong. The people of low moral standing [rule] the Interior, whereas the noble men [appears] in the Exterior. The way of the low people flourishes, and the way of noblemen decays... [But] the period of evil must come to the end, it cannot last forever*[17].

As one could see, the *Book of Changes* presents history as periods of "order" (治 *zhi*) and "chaos" (亂 *luan*), which follow one another. Each of these states develops from an embryo to its apex, and then declines up to its nadir, and gives the room to the opposite. Wars, rebellions and foreign invasions happen in the period of chaos, when Yin and Yang reverse their proper positions, whereas peace and harmony characterise the period of their 'normal state'. Hence a founder of a new dynasty, who receives the Mandate of Heaven and restores order, begins a new cycle of 'order'. His success, however, depends not only on his virtues and on the will of Heaven, but also on this 'cosmic pulse' of the universe: he could success merely when the period of chaos is ending.

The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, mentioned above, the most popular fiction until the 20th century, initiates with such a quotation of a proverbial truth:

*The fundamental pattern of the world* (tianxia 天下) *is this: long divided, must unite; long united must divide.*

Hence the world known to the Chinese, and identified with the system of their empire, passed inevitable cyclical changes: of order and unity, and of chaos and divisions.

Then the author describes how the ancient Zhou Empire (11th ? century – 476 BC) was divided into seven kingdoms that waged innumerable wars, and how they were united again by the Qin (221 – 207 BC) and Han (206 BC – AD 220) dynasties, to be again divided into the Three Kingdoms (220-265)[18]. So, according to this novel, the

[16] *Zhou yi...*, 28–9 (chapter 2); *cf.* Wilhelm, 48–9; Bloefeld, 110; trans. mod.
[17] *Zhou yi...*, 29 (chapter 2); *cf.* Wilhelm, 52-3.
[18] Luo Guanzhong, 羅貫中(ca. 1330-1400), 1962, vol. 1, p. 1 (chapter 1); see also the English version: trans. by M. Roberts, 1994, vol. 1, p. 5 (mod.).

human efforts of the heroes who wanted to restore a political order in the empire and unite again the world known to them were destined to failure from the very beginning. At this time China was entering the new period of division and wars which human efforts could not stop.

The process of change consists – as it was presumed by Confucian thinkers of the imperial epoch - in eternal cyclical transmutations from Yin to Yang and again to Yin. They complement one another, not oppose, as the God and Satan in Christian thought. All beings were generated through their union. Thus co-operation, communion, fertile intercourse — constitute the fundamental principle of the universe and of the society. Harmony, unity and conformity were considered the ideal and the most beneficial state, whereas conflicts, strife, disorders and wars were disdained, as breaking this unity and harmony. These both states were, however, inevitable, since the peace and order could not be preserved forever. But man should restore order as soon as it is possible, since peace and harmony constitute the 'proper' order and are 'fertile' and 'creative', not chaos and strife.

Such concepts had been shared to a large extent by other school of thought. For instance, in the fundamental Taoist text, *The Book of the Way and the Virtue* one finds such statements:

*He who assists the ruler according to the Way does not [seek]*
*to dominate the world with arms.*
*The use of arms usually brings requital.*
*Wherever armies are stationed, briers and thorns grow.*
*Great wars are always followed by famines.*
*A master [in generalship] achieves [with arms] the purpose*
*and stops,*
*But dares not to dominate the world (...)*
*He achieves his purpose but does not boast about it.*
*He achieves his purpose but is not proud of it.*
*He achieves his purpose [using force] but only when it is*
*unavoidable.*
*Fine weapons are instruments of bad luck,*
*And all beings hate them.*
*Therefore those who follow the Way turns away from them (...)*
*Only when it cannot be avoided, [the ruler] makes recourse to them,*
*and regards calm restraint the best.*
*Even when he is victorious, he does not regard it as*
*praiseworthy,*
*For to praise victory is to delight in the slaughter of men.*
*He who delights in the slaughter of men will never get what he*
*looks for [out of those that dwell] in the world (...)*
*The army that has slain men is received with grief and*
*mourning;*
*[The commander] who won in battles is received with rites of*
*mourning.*[19]

There was even coined a proverb:

*Weapons are disastrous, war is dangerous* (*bing xiong zhan wei* 兵凶戰危)[20].

[19] *Laozi dao de jing* (The Book of the Way and the Virtue by Laozi), ZZJC, vol. 3, pp. 17–8 (paragraphs 30–31); trans., Chan, Wing-tsit, 152-4, mod.

The works of strategists, the recognised experts in war, supported such opinions. For instance the *Book of Master Wei Liao* (尉繚子 *Weiliaozi*), included in the *Military Classics*, states:

*Military forces are a tool of disaster, and war contradicts the Virtue*[21].

Hence in the Chinese Empire there were no monuments or arcs of triumph built up to celebrate military victories and no commander could hope for 'eternal glory', or a triumphal reception in the capital with his victorious army, which the Romans would offer him.

According to the Confucian concepts, the recourse to the arms was considered a political failure, since the dangers should be prevented or eliminated in their embryo forms by political and diplomatic means. Thus a military campaign demonstrated that the ruler and his advisors were not enlightened enough or not versed in the subtle art of politics. Moreover, as the Confucians maintained, the Son of Heaven should possess the True Virtue and administer his empire so well, that everybody would subdue to him and recognise his superiority. Thus voluntary obedience confirmed his Virtue and legitimised his power, whereas the necessity to subdue somebody by force could put under question the legitimacy of his power. Therefore a defeat could result easily in widespread rebellions.

It was a duty of the Son of Heaven to punish the 'rebels' and restore order within the empire and on its frontiers. But according to this logic a 'military punitive campaign' was considered the most severe punishment, and the commander who executed such 'rebels' and restored order could not count on the 'fame of hero'. His action was not a duel with a noble foe, like these of Homeric heroes, or medieval European knights, but was rather similar to police suppression of riots and disorders. Hence war offered no 'divine glory' and did not involve deep feelings related to 'a communion with transcendence'. Conquests were condemned as 'wrong' and 'dangerous' to the state.

At least since the times of Wu Qi 吳起 (d. 381 BC), one of the greatest Chinese military theoreticians, it was known that numerous victories weaken the winning state. As he indicated *those who [successfully] conquered the world through numerous victories are extremely rare, whereas those who thereby perished are many*[22]. It was also known that it is relatively easy to conquer a new land, but it is difficult to maintain it. Therefore the Chinese rulers and commanders never dreamed of conquests similar to these of Alexander the Great, Julius Cesar, or Napoleon. Moreover, for millennia they should resist figures like Chingis-Khan, his predecessors and his successors, with their cavalry armies. Rejection of the policy of military conquests, as immoral and impractical, is one of the reasons why China survived until now, whereas all other ancient empires disappeared.

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[20] See Tong Yubin 佟玉斌 Tong Zhou 佟舟, 1996, 70-1. It is an abbreviated form of the ancient statement: "weapons are a tool of evil, and war is a dangerous affair". It originates from a Han period text *The Commentary on the Explanation of Military Affairs* (言兵事疏 *Yan bing shi shu*), composed by Chao Cuo 晁錯 (200-154 BC), a statesman and scholar. It is quoted in his biography, *Hanshu...*, ch. 49, 2282. This statement with various modifications had been quoted in numerous later works.

[21] *Weiliaozi* 尉繚子, chapter 5 (section 23), ZGBS edition, vol. 11, 976; trans. Sawyer, 1993, 273, mod.

[22] *Wuzi zhijie* 吳子直解 (The Book of Master Wu with Straight Explanations), p. 384 (ch. 1); trans., R. D. Sawyer, 1993, 208, mod.

Moreover, the Confucian scholars elaborated a particular concept of 'civilisation' that contributed much to the common disdain for violence. Its essence constitutes *wen* 文 — that originally meant, 'design', 'ornate', but later on literature, culture, and moral education. Its antonym or counterpart is *wu* 武— 'bellicose', 'martial', and 'violent' (but it origins from a complex pictogram meaning 'protecting with arms'). Hence 'civilisation' by its very nature was considered 'peaceful', whereas the 'barbarians' were inevitably bellicose and violent (see: Gawlikowski, 1987, 398-433). The process of 'civilising' (*wen hua* 文化) was understood as 'cultural transformation of human beings'. That is absorption of 'culture', with its ritualised norms of behaviour, restrain of biological stimuli, duties and virtues, etc., in the process of self-perfection, created human nature in each individual. According to these concepts we do not born 'humans', but become humane in the complex social process of education and self-perfection.

Since Confucian ideology dominated in China, harmony, equilibrium and peace were considered central values and the essential principles of the cosmic, political and social order. Even one's own self was portrayed as 'harmonious', whereas the concepts of 'spiritual struggle' and of 'moral choice' were unknown. This ideology contained as its key ideals self-perfection and adjustment to the outside world (social and natural), confidence in the leaders and obedience, respect for social norms and ritualised forms of behaviour. They together wit the imperative of maintaining harmony and concord determined behaviour of groups and of individuals, not the struggle (for freedom, to subordinate others, etc.) as in the West. The society and its members were duty not rights-oriented. Instead the dualism of Evil/Good there was used a bipolar scheme of Yin and of Yang, which complement each other and born one another.

*3. Contemporary conclusions: a new return to Harmony*

These traditional Chinese concepts started to change in the 20th century under Western influences. The reforms of the year 1905 constituted the turning point: the age-old civil examinations based on the Confucian classics, that recruited the scholar-officials who administered the Empire, were abolished. A new system of military schools and military academies had to substitute them and educate the new military elite able to rule the country and modernise China. This reform did not save the Empire but opened the decades of military or semi-military rule. The Western-type belligerent attitudes were adapted by various political groupings and China suffered innumerable wars. Fascination with struggle and war reached an apex under Mao's regime, during the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1969). In a strange way China, that wanted defend herself from the West or fight against it, joined it adapting its essential principles and views.

In the period of reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1979, a belligerent Maoist ideology was abandoned, and a partial revival of the traditional culture, including Confucianism, has been initiated. At the beginning of the 21st century the idea of harmony appeared again in Chinese politics. For instance, the Prime Minister Wen Jiabao in his Harvard speech (Dec. 10, 2003) explained to the American audience the fundamental value of harmony:

> *The Chinese nation has rich and profound cultural reserves. 'Harmony without uniformity' is a great idea put forth by ancient Chinese thinkers. It means harmony without sameness, and difference without conflict. Harmony entails co-existence and co-prosperity, while difference conduces to mutual complementation and mutual support. To approach and address issues from such*

*a perspective will not only help enhance relations with friendly countries, but also serve to resolve contradictions in the international community (...)*

*Today, mankind is in the middle of a period of drastic social change. It would be wise approach for all countries to carry forward their fine cultural heritages by tracing back their origins, passing on the essentials, learning from one another and breaking new grounds*[23].

It may be considered a right description of this fundamental Confucian concept. It reflected a new way of thinking and of presenting China's heritage to the world.

President Hu Jintao also advocated this new approach. In September 2004, at the 4th Plenary Session of Central Committee of the 16th term, the Communist Party of China, he for the first time presented the concept of 'harmonious development'. At the party conference on February 19, 2005, he outlined such policy in more detail. And since this time the concept of 'harmonious society' (*hexie shehui* 和諧社會) at home become a leitmotiv of the official Chinese ideology. The Chinese leaders started also to call for 'harmonious Asia', or 'harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity'. Moreover, Hu at various international events indicated that harmony is a 'defining value of the Chinese civilisation' openly referring to native traditions[24].

In his lecture at the Yale University (April 21, 2006) he explained this concept as follows:

*The Chinese civilisation has always given prominence to social harmony, unity and mutual assistance. Back in the early days of the Chinese nation, the Chinese already advocated that 'harmony is most valuable'. They strove for harmony between man and nature, among people and between man's body and soul, and yearned for an ideal society where 'everyone loves everyone else, everyone is equal and the whole world is one community'.*

*Today, China is endeavouring to build a harmonious society. It is a society of democracy and rule of law, fairness and justice, integrity, fraternity, vitality, stability, order and harmony between man and nature*[25].

These concepts could, as it appears, really influence Chinese politics and social mentality, since they are deeply rooted in the national culture, and respond to practical needs as well. They could also attract attention in East Asia, where such ideas are shared by many nations. On the other hand, they will be much less convincing to Western politicians and societies, to which such concepts appear alien and 'artificial'.

By a strange coincidence, at the end of the 20th century, after the end of the cold war, the West started to condemn wars, aggression, and violence with surprising vigour, promoting peace and human rights. Hence its cultural heritage essentially changes after the four millennia of belligerency, and one could hope that both civilisations would evolve again into a common direction, at this time peaceful and enduring.

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### Abbreviations

[23] "Turning Your Eyes to China, Premier Wen's Speech at Harvard", *China Daily*, www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2003-12/10

[24] See, for instance, his speech at the APEC Summit in Hanoi, Nov. 17, 2006: "Hu: China to Pursue Peace, Prosperity", *China Daily*, www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-11/17/content_736124.htm

[25] *A translation of Chinese President Hu Jintao's remarks at Yale*, April 21, 2006, www.yale.edu/opa/hu/download/transcript_Hu_20060421.pdf

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