

China's modernisation: From daring reforms to a modern Confucian revival of traditional values

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Abstract

China's modernisation did not represent a "natural" process, i.e. a process that would be defined merely by the internal dynamics of the autochthonous development of Chinese society. This article investigates the specific features of modernisation processes in China. In this framework, it deals with a series of consecutive phases that lasted for a few decades each and that were – each in their own way – connected either to the specifics of Chinese tradition or with the problems of accepting and transforming "non-Chinese" forms of production, reproduction and life styles. The author analyses the ideological background of these process and their integration into the world of modern capitalism, clearly demonstrating that it was often accompanied by traditional Confucian ethics, which have been proven in Japan to be harmoniously compatible with the demands and often unbearable conditions of early capitalism.

KEYWORDS: Chinese modernisation, ideologies, modern Confucianism, capitalism, traditional values

Modernity with Chinese characteristics

One of the main reasons for the loss of the normative authority (which the Communist Party of China enjoyed unconditionally until the 1990s) can be found in the fact that the values it asserts within its central ideologies are no longer in contact with social reality; none of the leading ideologists can establish in what way the values of "collectivism" or "serving the people" (both of which hold an important place in the so-called socialist morals) can be combined with the terms of the market economy and the harsh competition that defines it. This is even more so when dealing with the concepts of protecting worker's rights and the social state, which are one of the dominant socialist values, but cannot be found in the priorities of the Communist Party of China (CPC). These discrepancies lead to the vacuum of values that is not reflected merely in blind consumerism and the lack of critical reflection in the political measures and social mechanisms, but also in the loss of traditional identities. Jürgen Habermas called such states a 'crisis of rationality' (1973: 87), for these states appear in every society that finds itself at a crossroads between the actual practices and the ideological assumptions that suited the previous practices.

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China found itself in a similar situation at the dawn of the 20th century, when the two-thousand-year rule of Confucianism gradually (but radically) started losing its dominance. Following the Opium Wars (1842–44), it was clear that the Confucian ideology was outdated and that it could no longer serve the conditions of the new era, which was defined by the economic, politic and philosophical contact with the colonial superiority of the Western forces. As a result of the confrontation with the Western forces the mid-19th century, Chinese intellectuals debated modernisation as a period of transformation and separation from the traditional political, economic and axiology paradigms, which had until then credibly defined the social reality of the so-called central empire.

If we try to analyse this process from the “general” theoretical premises of modernity¹ and with this attempt recall the central paradigms that have (in the Euro-American sociological, culturological and philosophical discourses) decisively influenced philosophical reflection, we also have to examine the classic definition, which was established by Hegel, and later developed through the socio-theoretical assumptions of Marx and later expanded upon by Weber, early Lukács and older representatives of the Frankfurt school. These discourses were based on the absolutist criticism of the intellect and thus led to a self-referential cul-de-sac; afterwards, alternative theoretical projects with a self-critical foundation of modernity and the aid of a different, language-based understanding of the term ‘intellect’ developed. This linguistic spin led to two different starting points for the explanation of modernity. The first starting point was shown in the post-modern “surpassing” of the normative understanding, and the second in the intersubjective transformation of the classical term (Habermas 1998). In the prevailing Western understanding, we do not focus merely on the explanation of a particular social situation (which is usually shown as criticism of the intellect), but on the terminological spectrum of modernity, which also includes the connotation of the conscious discontinuity of the new from the old or the modern from the traditional.

When discussing modernisation processes in China, of course we need to know that we are dealing with a series of consecutive phases that lasted for a few decades each, and that were – each in their own way – connected either to the specifics of Chinese tradition or with the problems of accepting and transforming non-Chinese forms of production, reproduction and life styles. If we thus attempt to transfer the above-described theoretical starting points to the reflection of the “modern” period and axioms of “modernisation” in China, we have to pay attention to the following characteristics:

¹ Because the term Modernity, which in general denotes the period of such social transformations, was developed within Euro-American theories, the definition of “general” theoretic evolutions within this frame (once again) deals with the theoretical development of the so-called West. Of course, we should draw attention to the fact that this is not a discussion on the period of modernity in the sense of a concrete, rounded period of the so-called classic modernity, i.e. the Western “new era”, but the period of modernity as a process of general social transformation or social revival linked to certain characteristic conditions that dictate modernisation (for instance, the Enlightenment or the dominant role of the intellect in philosophy or industrialisation in economy). This era is marked by processes that took place differently in various cultural environments or traditions, but always in connection with the transformation of the specific conditions of traditional societies.

1. In China, modernisation, in the sense of an all-encompassing political, economic and cultural process and its theoretical reflection, were always influenced by the invasion of Western military and technological supremacy; thus, it is no coincidence that Western technology, political systems and culture became a referential frame for the modernisation of China (Geist 1996).

2. From this, it is obvious that the theoretical reflection is defined through the equation of tradition with Chinese culture and modernisation with Western culture.

3. Historically, the debate on modernisation in China took place within the frame of classic Chinese discursive methodology, which is defined by traditional binary categories: in the context of modernisation in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Chinese rhetoric attempted to clarify the relation between modernity (the West) and tradition (China) through the binary category of *essence (ti)* and *function (yong)*. In the 19th century, Zhang Zhidong's slogan which advocated a 'the preservation of the Chinese Essence (*ti*) and the application of Western Function (*yong*)'² gained wide-spread popularity among many Chinese intellectuals (Rošker 2008: 96). This reveals the attempt to preserve Chinese tradition regardless of the modernisation, which was understood exclusively as accepting Western technology and administration. In the 20th century, the theoretician Li Zehou changed this assumption around, when he switched the two counter poles of the binary opposition (ibid. 179); he considered modernisation to be a transformation of essence in the sense of general social consciousness, production and lifestyles.

4. The inner logic of traditional Chinese society was intra-systemic (Moritz 1993) in the sense that ensuring stability and the centralisation of social communities was a priority. The past not only served as the central point from which they would reflect the present, but also as a signpost for the future (ibid.).

5. Enlightenment in the sense of broadening the ideological domination of reason, which was seen as essential to modernisation, did not find its dynamic and modification potential in its philosophical history, but in the adaptation of Western philosophical traditions.

Modernisation, as defined by the above mentioned characteristics, did not represent a natural process in China (Luo Rongqu 2008), nor did it represent a process that would be defined merely by the internal dynamics of the autochthonous development of the Chinese society. In the 19th century, it appeared as a necessity for radical changes in the existing political and economic system, which no longer fitted the terms and demands of the period. We cannot overlook the fact that the modernisation process in China was governed by their contacts with overseas lands; in this sense, the European colonial past defined these processes. In contrast, 18th and 19th century China faced a deep inner crisis, the dimensions of which were greater and reached into the traditional structure of society and the state much deeper than in the normally occurring cyclic rises and falls of dynasties. This means that the radical reform of values, production manners and the economic and political system were necessary even without any contact with the West.

² 中學為體, 西學為用.

This reform would not be comparable to the “Western-type”³ modernisation, and we can only guess what China would look like today if it had performed this reform on its own, i.e. using only its own economic, political and philosophical sources as its base.

What is important for our debate is the fact that these sources have survived until the present day, even though they no longer hold the role of prevailing ideologies. Over the most recent centuries, we have witnessed a revival of the various Chinese histories and pasts, even though it seemed that they were already destroyed by modernity and thrown onto the rubbish heap of discarded ideologies. This revival is not a denial of modernity, for it takes place under its banner. Modern Confucians never showed the desire to return to the pre-modern period. Today’s Confucians do not consider globalisation a victory or domination of the Eurocentric modernity, but a challenge for its historicisation (Dirlik 2001) in the sense that tradition should be harmonised with the present.

Daring reforms, ambitious renovations and passionately naïve movements

The first modernisation attempt was represented by the so-called *One Hundred Days Reform* (Rošker 2008), which is in China also known as the Wuxu reform⁴ and which fell victim to the last relicts of the conservative authorities in the gradually disintegrating empire:

The first (transformation) took place when Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao led the 100-Days Reform, to 1927, when the first civil war broke out. In the half century between the 1840 Opium war and 1898, the Chinese ruling elites attempted no serious social reform. The so-called “Chinese studies as substance, Western studies for practical use” or *Zhongxue wei ti Xixue wei yong*, effectively prevented profound social transformations of any kind. The 100-Days Reform was a product of the failure of this policy of introducing Western technology without changing society fundamentally. The attempts at reforming China’s political system failed with the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 and the elites’ inability to establish a workable republic shortly afterwards (Hua Shiping 2001: 3).

The idea and political turning point in Chinese modernisation is represented by the *May Fourth Movement* (*Wu si yundong*), which started in 1919 with the student demonstrations against what China considered to be unjust decisions of the Versailles

³ We should draw attention to the fact that the Eurocentric discourses of the dominating Western social sciences still focus on the Western paradigms of social development. These discourses lead to the logical conclusion that China would never experience an industrial revolution because its production and technology never reached a level of development necessary for this to occur. However, the research that has led to the well-known theory (in sinology), called “origins of capitalism in China” (*Zhongguo zibenzhuyi mengya*), which has clearly shown that the production means (production technology) in China was at a sufficiently high level for an industrial revolution to take place in the 12th century. This did not take place because the structure and composition of the traditional Chinese political and economic system did not enable such transfer – amongst other reasons also because China – unlike Europe – did not face an economic crisis.

⁴ For a more detailed explanation of the philosophical and ideological basis of this reform, see Rošker 2008: 97

peace treaty. Over the next few years, this grew into an all Chinese movement of the so-called “new intellectuals”,⁵ who stood for radical cultural and idea reforms in Chinese society (ibid). This movement, the broader influence of which is historically known as the “New Culture Movement” (*Xin wenhua yundong*) and which contemporary theoreticians often equate with the beginning of Chinese enlightenment, included patriotic and nationalist elements and strongly criticised or even ultimately rejected Chinese tradition, especially its Confucian state doctrine. According to Li Zehou (1996) the two components were complementary at the start, even though it might appear at first glance that they were in opposition to each other. In his opinion, the enlightenment tradition of the May Fourth Movement gradually disintegrated, because the years that followed required the mobilisation of all physical, economic and philosophical forces in order to prepare for the inner revolution and to fight against the foreign aggressors and preserve the sovereignty of China (ibid). ‘Socialist centralism, in which minorities were submitted to the majority and in which the lower levels followed the higher ones’ (ibid.) prevailed. According to Li, this principle represented:

... a revolutionary heritage, which was based, advertised and mediated at great length, until it gained general social status and became a part of the general social awareness ... and this is what I wish to show in my thesis, according to which enlightenment suffocated under the weight of the national solution. This is a historical fact that cannot be changed⁶ (ibid.).

This thesis by Li Zehou is relatively widespread in contemporary theory; however, we should consider whether the reason for the failure of this enlightenment project truly lies merely in the political constellation of the time. According to Li Huiru, this external factor did not have a direct influence on the loss of the direct philosophical heritage and modernisation potential of the movement itself. In his opinion, the reason for this should be sought mainly in the fact that the May Fourth Movement was not an enlightened movement from its very beginning. Liu Huiru summarised (1993: 48), that the ‘incongruence between “what is said” and “what is actually thought”’ that was consciously used by the intellectuals in the May Fourth Movement, proved to be a well-tested and well-known strategy in Chinese tradition, the origins of which can be found in Confucian pragmatism. From the virulence of a tradition that was apparently doomed, it should be clearly noticeable that their negation (proclaimed towards the outside) did not mean that the tradition was truly surpassed, because, in reality, it hindered its transformation.

The critical negation of the past ideas and practices would need to include the attempts to liberate themselves from the un-reflected tradition. The fact that the May Fourth activists questioned this previously unquestionable sacral authority indicates a series of enlightenment elements; however, they did not try hard enough to establish a generally

⁵ These were mainly intellectuals, who studied in Europe or Japan, or at least at one of the modern universities that adopted the Western curriculum.

⁶ 革命的傳家寶，被廣泛地長期地論證，宣傳，教育，並推行給全社會，成為某種普遍狀態和普遍意識...這就是我所說的‘救亡壓倒啟蒙’。這是一個歷史事實，誰也沒法再去改變這一行程。

binding instance of reason that would surpass the declarative level and create a truly new discourse. Thus, it comes as no surprise that this greatly praised cultural reformation movement, the main task of which was to raise modern awareness, was considered by numerous theoreticians to be incapable of producing a new line of philosophy (*ibid.*) that would not be merely limited to new methods of explanation and understanding the past and evaluations of new future strategies, but would include the possibilities of creatively overcoming the usual borders of cognition and reflection on the given reality.

A superficial understanding of the tradition, which was naturally not enough to truly surpass it, was linked to the superficial and idealised image of “science”, which was supposed to be the carrier of the all-mighty and unmistakable mind and would, following the negation of its own tradition appear as a surrogate that would overcome the transcendental homelessness and the loss of one’s cultural identity. The following thesis by Wang Fuwu clearly shows the naivety of the modern intellectuals of the time:

Science is composed of the principles of causality and identity. In the case of life, neither belief nor attitude can avoid the magical forces of these two principles. This leads us to believe that science can save any problem life can throw at us⁷ (Wang Furu, in Hu Shi 1990: 127).

All similar starting points, notions and norms of the May Fourth Movement, which were expressed through the various slogans, and which on the declarative level demanded to be widely acknowledged, were never truly legitimised through a discursive argument, which is a necessary precondition for any type of enlightenment. In this sense, we should agree with Liu Huiru (1993: 55), who saw it as some sort of ‘non-enlightened enlightenment.’

The idea of reason as the core of modernisation and progress is of course closely connected to the ideas of subjectivity and individualism. The concept and political endeavours of the May Fourth Movement focused on freeing the individual from the domination of the traditional system, in which the monitoring institutions of the state and its bureaucratic system on one hand and the owners of production means (land owners) and their clan connections on the other were closely connected. These institutions did not monitor merely external spheres (public and political spheres, institutionalised nepotism and corruption, political and economic clan connections and strategies), but also internal ones (formal and correct relations between clan members). The Confucian society was based (and still is) on the notion that society has priority over the individual. Intellectuals active within the May Fourth Movement tried their utmost to turn around this relation. This can be clearly seen in their stance for the freedom of the individual, equal opportunities for all and especially free love, which of course did not mean a sexual revolution, but merely the possibility of arranging marriages and a free choice of partners regardless of the needs and interests of the clans to which the two potential partners belonged.

Since its establishment in 1949, the People’s Republic of China has been

⁷ “科學是憑籍‘因果’和‘齊一’兩個原理而構造起來的; 人生問題無論為生命之觀念, 或生活之態度, 都不能逃出這兩個原理的金剛圈, 所以科學可以解決人生問題”。

developing and implementing various modernisation concepts. During the first decade, they mainly imitated the Soviet model, which placed socialist industrialisation in the forefront. After 1956, the Chinese government endeavoured to come up with its own modernisation model, which focused predominantly on agriculture; in the field of the autochthonous modernisation of politics and culture, this period witnessed the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” experiment. Following the death of Mao Zedong and the introduction of economic liberalisation, the endeavours to overcome the antagonistic abyss between capitalist reality and socialist values was at first expressed in the ideologies of “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” and concepts such as “socialist market economy”.

Such modernisation models emerged from the traditional inseparability of society and state. This was a holistic system in which neither politics nor economy represented a separate sphere.⁸ The domination of the state in the economy thus already traditionally represented one of the essential characteristics of traditional society. In this system, the concept of private property was always relatively irrelevant, for the possibility of fulfilling its inherent potential for the liberation and contrast development was usually limited to a minimum. Throughout the history of the Chinese state, all attempts to concentrate arable land failed as did all attempts by individuals to pull their ownership from state control. Thus, on the level of society property was manifested as that of a clan, which of course (alongside ideological and moral factors) made it harder to transfer or alienate. Moritz (1963) stated that the nationalisation processes of production capacities and forces in the People's Republic of China had a completely different cultural and historical background as well as a completely different cultural meaning than the similar processes that took place in Eastern Europe after WWII. Any attempt to divide Chinese history into chronologically consecutive, distinctive epochs merely by property (or production) criteria and that does not take into account the essential characteristics of social reality in this traditional society will fail to lead to logically consistent results. The effects of creating continuity linked to the state remain hidden. The holistic effect of the state in space – in the sense of *imperium mundi* – comes in pair with its holistic effect in time (ibid.).

Unlike previous phases, this new renovation, based on the laws of the market economy, did not lead to a longer-lasting mass movement, which would appropriate at least the illusion that it is based on the ideas of the Enlightenment, i.e. that it fulfils a certain theoretical assumption of modernisation. This fact is hardly surprising when we

⁸ From the Han dynasty onwards (206 BC–220AD), the state had the authority to actively become involved in agricultural relations, i.e. the base of the production system in a traditional society. This not merely dealt with the introduction of numerous state monopolies in various production fields, but also with the efficiency of the inheritance principle, which merged moral and family/clan motives with the interests of the state, which ensured its fiscal and budgetary power by preserving the highest possible number of independent farming economies, while preventing their decline (which was conditioned by the division of assets through inheritance deeds), by linking the owners of the production means (i.e. landowners) to the state by offering them state positions if they managed to prove that they have accepted the ideological axioms of the Confucian state. Only once this position was obtained was it possible to successfully overcome the dangers linked to the scattered main investment (i.e. arable land) as a result of the inheritance system (compare Moritz 1993).

consider that the economic liberalisation led by Deng Xiaoping over the last two decades of the 20th century (following the death of Mao Zedong), was predominantly the result of a government decree; a great difference from the classic (i.e. Western) modernisation model can be seen already in this aspect. However, a short and spontaneous mass movement did occur during the gradual economic liberalisation, and this fought for parallel political democratisation. This, at first a student movement, which was similarly naive as the May Fourth Movement, ended with the mass slaughter of protestors on Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. This occurred even though the given situation was reflected upon on other levels, and political criticism was often shown in the form of a search for new cultural expressions.⁹

Of course, the enlightenment movement existed in Modern Chinese theory; in fact, it belonged to the central theoretical reflections of Chinese social reality;¹⁰ the reason this reflection never became part of mass movements can be found in the fact that government institutions managed to discharge the intellectuals' critical potential not only through repressive measures, but also (and especially) through the professionalisation of the theory. In the post-1989 period, Chinese intellectuals were forced to rethink their historical experiences.

A large majority of intellectuals in humanities and social sciences renounced their new enlightenment style which had defined them in the 1980s; this either resulted from the pressure put upon them by the environment or, in some cases, they reached this decision themselves. Following their discussions linked to the problems of intellectual work, they started to focus on more specialised research, and clearly redirected themselves into the professionalisation of their work. In the beginning, they based this transformation on Weber's theories on the professionalisation of research, which can be understood as a way of finding excuses for themselves in the harsh situation that emerged in the post-1989 period. After 1992, the process of market transformation accelerated the appearance of essential social stratifications. This tendency was obviously in accordance to the inner professionalisation of research; the development of professionalisation and institutionalisation of intellectual life gradually led to a fundamentally changed role of intellectuals. Most intellectuals from the 1980s were gradually transformed into experts,

⁹ The reform oriented into the gradual introduction of the market-capitalist economy started in 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Similar to the first two society modernisation transformations, Deng's reforms also started in the fields that were not closely connected to what we understand under the expression culture: as is most commonly the case, it dealt primarily with technology and economy. Hua Shiping (2001: 4) stated that the increasingly successful reforms were often political reflected in the cultural field; this position was clearly indicated by the phenomena of the "Cultural Fever" (Wenhua re) and the "Great Debate on Culture" (Wenhua da taolun). Of course, following the 4th July incidents, these theoretical reflections on modernisation processes were violently halted.

¹⁰ In most cases, the epistemological sources that formed the base for the new Chinese enlightenment theory emerged from the Euro-American (predominantly liberal) economic, political science and legal theories. In the historic perspective, it is evident that the New Enlightenment thought processes served as the base ideology for economic reforms (Wang Hui 2000: 16)

¹¹ Any similarity with the current situation in Europe and Slovenia is of course a mere coincidence.

scholars and professionals¹¹ (Wang Hui 2000).

This tendency did not result merely in the alienation of intellectuals from the state and its structures of political decision making, but also in their dispersion; in modern day China intellectuals no longer exist as a homogenous social group (ibid.). Over the last fifteen years of the 20th century, Chinese intellectuals reacted to this new situation in different ways. While the minority tried to heed the critical theory and believed that informing citizens is a traditional task to be carried out by intellectuals, most turned towards a narrow, but in the strictly applicative view, “useful” scientific specialisation within their profession, or into the search for a modernisation method which would fulfil the “vacuum of values” that most intellectuals believed prevailed in society at the time.

Gradual Westernisation: Modern Confucianism and the case of Taiwan

The neo-conservative intellectuals mainly gathered under the colours of the so-called Modern Confucianism (現代新儒學).¹² During the first twenty five years of the People's Republic, this philosophical current was silenced (at least on the explicitly formal level); however, its starting points were developed by theoreticians from Taiwan, and to a slightly lesser degree by those from Hong Kong. Unlike the People's Republic of China, where Confucianism was believed to be the “ideology of outdated feudalism” until the 1980s,¹³ in Hong Kong and Taiwan, both of which were (each in their own way) defined by post-

¹² In international sinology, this line of thought is translated with various names, which include a broad and colourful spectrum, that reaches from Neo-Confucianism or contemporary or modern Neo-Confucianism, through new Confucianism to modern or contemporary Confucianism. The first batch which includes the term Neo-Confucianism, is unpractical because this name is often mistaken with Neo-Confucianism as a term that is in western sinology used for denoting reformed Confucian philosophers from the Song and Ming periods (li xue 理學 or xingli xue 性理學). I mainly use the term modern Confucianism, because we are dealing with philosophy belonging to the Chinese Modern period. Similar confusion can be found in Chinese discourses, which most commonly denote this line of thought with one of the following expressions: 新儒學, 現代儒學, 當代儒學, 現代新儒學, 當代新儒學 etc. In Chinese, I find the following expression 現代新儒學 to be the most appropriate, as the character, which denotes new in this phrase is not problematic, because the Chinese language (in contrast to the European sinological discourses) never associated the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties with the concept of new Confucianism 新儒學.

¹³ Since the 1990s, we have started witnessing livelier debates and more intense research emerging from the assumptions of the new Confucianism philosophy also in the People's Republic. We should mention the role of the organisation for the Research of the idea flow in contemporary New Confucianism (Xiandai Xin rujia sichao yanjiu 現代新儒家思潮研究), which was established in November 1986 by philosophy professors Fang Keli 方克立 and Li Jinquan 李錦全. Nicolas Bunnin described this integration of mainland China into the discourses of modern Confucianism optimistically: ‘With a renewal of officially sanctioned Confucian philosophy in China and greater contact among philosophers in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, New Confucianism can contribute to the reintegration of Chinese philosophical life after the politically enforced divisions of half a century. Other Chinese and Western influences can also contribute to this reintegration. In addition, the schools of Chinese philosophy can be constructively criticised. In these circumstances, Chinese philosophers, holding diverse views but sharing a complex intellectual culture, can display subtlety, dynamism and openness to dialogue as Chinese philosophy takes its place in world philosophy’ (Bunnin 2002: 13).

colonial social discourses, individual intellectuals started opposing the ever increasing westernisation as early as in the 1950s. Due to the culturally, nationally and politically layered situation in Taiwan (which will be discussed below in greater detail), Taiwanese intellectuals played an important role from the very beginning.

They drew attention to the fact that the island's dependency on Western colonial forces was by no means limited to culture. Following the victory of the Communist Party of China and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Taiwan became the headquarters of the government in exile under the flag of the national party (*Guomin dang*)¹⁴ that was in charge until then. Of course, the small country needed external help in order to survive, both politically and economically. For the Taiwanese government, which governed with a soft autocratic rule in the first post-war years, American donations (which became a usual part of their "anti-communist" strategy after the Korean War) represented a necessary requirement for establishing and preserving economic and political stability (this lasted for over a decade). The great Taiwanese dependency on American capital investments, technology and market did not cease even after the official aid was ended in 1965 (Li Ming-Yan 1995: 103). The American donations and investments were soon joined by those of Japan, who soon after the war regained¹⁵ economic domination of the island. The USA and Japan took efficient control over the Taiwanese industrial development and its overseas trade. In 1970, American and Japanese capital represented 85% of all Taiwanese investments (ibid).

This domination of American and Japanese capital often lead to the understanding of the contrasts between work and capital as parallel or analogue to the contrasts between the Chinese and other foreigners. In this situation, it was not "class consciousness", but "national identity",¹⁶ defined by a striving for national autonomy and independence, that was fast to spread amongst the Taiwanese population. This change conditioned our understanding of Taiwanese modernisation, which is better if we treat it through post-colonial optics.

The Taiwanese identity was always uncertain. Originally, the island was populated by various Pacific tribes, however between 1683 and the end of WWII it was practically constantly under control of different colonial forces (Day 1999). The first Han Chinese immigrants inhabited parts of Taiwan in the 17th century, at a time when Taiwan was still a Dutch colony. Following the defeat and deportation of the Dutch in 1683, the island fell under the Manchurian government of mainland China.¹⁷ When the Japanese overpowered the Manchurians in 1859, they occupied Taiwan as one of their colonies.

¹⁴ Henceforth GMD.

¹⁵ Taiwan was a Japanese colony between 1895 and 1945.

¹⁶ At this point, the general issue of the concept of national identity in Taiwan should be mentioned. As mentioned by Li Ming-Yan (1995: 104): 'What constituted the nation in Taiwan was (and continues to be) a highly contentious issue. While the Nationalist government claimed representation of the Chinese "nation" against the Communist regime in mainland China, some local people came to see Nationalists as "colonialisers" of their Taiwan (Formosa) "nation", especially after the bloody events of the "February 28 incident" in 1947, which saw considerable deaths and persecutions of local people, particularly social elites, at the hands of the Nationalist Army, and the subsequent imposition of a highly repressive regime as the Nationalists "retreated" to Taiwan in 1949'.

¹⁷ The last dynasty Qing 1644–1911.

The largest wave of Han Chinese immigrants (approximately one million people) moved to Taiwan following the end of the civil war between the Communist and People's parties and the establishment of the People's Republic of China under communist government. The confrontation with newcomers led to the reinforcement of the Taiwanese ethnic and cultural identity amongst the previous, now already indigenous inhabitants. Over the last decades of the 20th century, the differentiation between Taiwanese and Han Chinese (continental) identity played a relevant part in the political and philosophical developments of the island, which (with the aid of foreign investment) went through intense modernisation processes. The People's Party, which until the year 2000 represented the sole governing party, always propagated Chinese unity and the Han Chinese cultural and national identity, while the second most important party, which won the general elections in 2000 (the Democratic Progressive Party, *Minjin dang*), emphasised the importance of the unique Taiwanese identity:

Mainlanders remained in control of the Kuomintang and Taiwan's central government until recently. However, the Taiwanisation of politics in this society has rapidly accelerated as the older generations of Mainland refugees pass from the scene. By the beginning of 2000, 84% of the population was Taiwanese in terms of birth, whereas only 14% were Mainland Chinese and less than 2% were aborigine. Without exception, those born on the Mainland who have survived politically like Ma Ying-Jeou (Mayor of Taipei) and James Soong (former Governor of Taiwan and head of the People First party) have sought to become 'new Taiwanese', identifying themselves with the predominately Taiwanese electorate. Lee Teng-Hui, the first Taiwanese President, clearly exhibited his desire to be identified with Taiwan, not the Mainland, and frequently referred to his educational background in Japan (Scalapino 2002: 33–4).

All of these are reasons that Taiwan (to where the defeated national government escaped to after the civil war) is one of the areas of modern China where the new philosophy of modern Confucianism found fertile ground. Chinese philosophers who lived and worked on Taiwan post-1949 (the functions and theoretical contributions of whom we will discuss in greater detail in the following chapter) did not deal so much with the questions of sinisation of Marxism and its significant connotations, but confronted the problem of modernisation and capitalism much earlier than their colleagues on the mainland. This was a continuous development, which started in China towards the end of the 19th century and was *merely* interrupted with the anti-Japanese and later civil wars (*ibid.*). Their works reflected the desire to solve the necessary practical problems in the fields of politics, society, economy and culture. Due to the "generous support" of Western countries (headed by the USA), who endeavoured to preserve the Taiwanese 'democratic alternative' and the semi-colonial status of Hong Kong as a counterweight to Chinese communism, explosive westernisation of both societies took place in the 1950s. In the ideological sense, the process of their integration into the world of modern capitalism was accompanied by traditional Confucian ethics (based on the hierarchical system of obedience), which had already been proven in Japan to be harmoniously compatible with the demands and often unbearable conditions of early capitalism:

This philosophical trend was supported by the experience in Japan and the four so-called “Asian tigers” (Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong), in which the successful modernisation was considered to be the “victory of Confucian capitalism”¹⁸ (Wang Hui 2000: 19).

Thus, it is not surprising that modern Confucians have, from their very beginnings, based their research on the belief that Confucian philosophy is compatible with capitalist development. Numerous elements lead to this coalition. Most Chinese theoreticians see this compatibility as a result of the cooperation principle and the so-called ‘communicative method of operation’ (Trauzettel in Moritz 1993: 65), which is supposedly characteristic of Confucianism. However, apart from the aforementioned societal hierarchic structure on the formal and interactional levels (which also represents the basics of the traditional Confucian view of interpersonal relations in society), the importance of the personal, in fact intimate identification with one’s clan, which forms the basic unit of an individual’s social environment should be mentioned. In the capitalist production process, this identification concept is transferred from the clan to the company, which enables the efficient integration of employees. In relation to the absolute and uncritical obedience of authorities, which is based on the specifics of the Confucian view of the autonomous self, and which was formed within the legally defined reform of the original teachings during the Han period, the transformation of this identification concept can lead to surpluses in production and profits.

The 1950s witnessed a debate between the Modern Confucians who worked in Hong Kong and Taiwan on one side and the liberal Taiwanese intellectuals on the other. At the forefront of the latter stood the famous theoretician and politician Hu Shi. The debate focused on the issue as to whether traditional Chinese culture and especially Confucianism were appropriate for the development of science, technology and democratic political system in the Western sense. Even though modern Confucians believed traditional Confucianism did not include these elements, they did not think that the Confucian tradition slowed down the development of the modern country with its attributes. In contrast, the liberals believed in the opposite and insisted that China had to get rid of all of its relicts of Confucianism if it wished to become a modern, technologically developed and democratic state. This debate has shown that modern Confucians acknowledged the difference between politics and morality; however, on the theoretical level, they believed that political freedom was conditioned by moral freedom. The representatives of the liberal camp denied their assumption according to which political freedom was based on morality, for in their opinion this scenario (in the best case) led to a ‘totalitarian democracy’ (Li Minghui 2001: 89–129).

In his book *Four Essays on Liberty*, published in 1969, Isaiah Berlin introduced the differentiation between positive and negative freedom.¹⁹ Chang Fo-chüan mentioned

¹⁸ 這一思想傾向特別的受到日本以及韓國，新加坡，台灣和香港等所謂‘亞洲四小龍’的鼓勵，這些國家和地區現代化的成功被視為‘儒教資本主義的勝利’。

¹⁹ The idea of ‘negative freedom’ denotes freedom from something in the sense of lack of heteronomy, while the term ‘positive freedom’ denotes freedom to something in the sense of ensured rights.

this idea already in his book *Freedom and human rights (Ziyou yu renquan)*, which was published in 1954. Taiwanese liberals started from this terminological pairing and came out with the idea that democratic order can be established only on the basis of negative freedom. In their opinion, the introduction of positive freedom would lead to totalitarianism. Modern Confucians did not merely advocate negative freedom but were also of the opinion that such freedom was not sufficiently present in Chinese culture. However, they also emphasised that on the theoretical level, negative freedom needs to be conditioned by the positive and that in practice the thesis of negative freedom is not sufficient to oppose the idea of totalitarianism (Lee Ming-Huei 2001).

Numerous theoreticians have stressed that negative freedom is conditioned by positive freedom (Taylor 1985). The liberals' persistence on the exclusive meaning of negative freedom meant that they based their thoughts on the individualistic view of the individual as a subject separated from the community, i.e. on the idea of 'unencumbered self' (Sandel 1984: 81). Some theoreticians are even of the opinion that in this sense Modern Confucians were much closer to communist views than it had appeared at first glance (Lee Ming-Huei 2001). They were searching for what could be summarised as "Confucian liberalism", i.e. liberalism that would develop naturally within the context of Confucian tradition.

Conclusion

The appearance of the "vacuum of values" in modern China, its problematisation and connection to the partially violent, partially by the modernisation processes determined transformation of the structure, role and function of social knowledge, is a good example for the consequences of explosive social transformations. The exposure of this phenomenon and its discussion in the academic and broader public sphere in China was based on the general method of transferring contents and problems from the political to the private sphere, a method well known amongst the ruling elites in all latent autocratic societies. This was in accordance to the official ideology of the Chinese modernisation method, which demand that the intellectuals serve the new market either as technocrats or as neoconservative intellectuals.

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Povzetek

Kitajska modernizacija ni predstavljala “naravnega” procesa, t.j. procesa, ki bi bil opredeljen zgolj z notranjo dinamiko avtohtonih družbenih razvojev. Pričujoči članek raziskuje specifične značilnosti procesov modernizacije na Kitajskem. V tem okviru obravnava vrsto zaporednih faz, ki so trajale po več desetletij in so bile – vsaka na svoj način – povezane bodisi s specifikom kitajske tradicije, bodisi s problemi sprejemanja in transformiranja “ne-kitajskih” oblik proizvodnje, reprodukcije in življenjskih stilov. Avtorica analizira ideološka ozadja tovrstnih procesov in njihovo integracijo v svet sodobnega kapitalizma. Pri tem nazorno prikaže dejstvo, da je bila ta integracija pogosto povezana s tradicionalno konfucijansko etiko, ki se je že na Japonskem izkazala kot harmonično združljiva z zahtevami in pogosto težkimi pogoji zgodnjega kapitalizma.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: kitajska modernizacija, ideologije, moderno konfucijanstvo, kapitalizem, tradicionalne vrednote

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