

Confucian Political Culture in the context of the modern World

Cultura Política Confucionista no Contexto do Mundo Moderno

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ABSTRACT

Every modern nation participates in the global political process together with its own spiritual and cultural heritage. From very early on, Confucianism has become an important constitutive component of Vietnamese culture. Moreover, its political, cultural content, namely, the ethical values governing communal life, has left a profound imprint on our political culture. The study of Confucian political culture therefore possesses great theoretical and practical significance, especially from the perspective of contemporary international integration combined with the preservation of national cultural identity.

KEYWORDS: Confucianism, Political culture, Modernization, Confucian capitalism, State-centered governance.

RESUMO

Toda nação moderna participa do processo político global com sua própria herança espiritual e cultural. Desde muito cedo, o confucionismo tornou-se um importante componente constitutivo da cultura vietnamita. Além disso, seu conteúdo político-cultural, ou seja, os valores éticos que regem a vida comunitária, deixou uma profunda marca em nossa cultura política. O estudo da cultura política confucionista, portanto, possui grande importância teórica e prática, especialmente na perspectiva da integração internacional contemporânea combinada com a preservação da identidade cultural nacional.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Confucionismo, Cultura política, Modernização, Capitalismo confucionista, Governança centrada no Estado.

1. Introduction

In the context of deepening globalization and modernization, nations do not merely participate in the global political, economic order through material capabilities and technological advancement, but also through their spiritual values, cultural patterns, and distinctive historical traditions. Modern politics, therefore, is not simply a domain of power, institutions, and interests; it is also a space in which cultural identity, systems of values, and spiritual archetypes, formed throughout long historical processes of civilization, are profoundly expressed. In this sense, the study of political culture is not only of cognitive and academic value, but also of strategic importance for shaping sustainable developmental trajectories of contemporary nations. Among the cultural, intellectual traditions that have exerted the most profound influence in East Asia and Southeast Asia, Confucianism occupies a particularly distinctive position. More than a moral, social doctrine, Confucianism has generated a specific model of political culture, shaping how individuals perceive power, social order, civic duty, the relationship between the individual and the community, and the role of the state in social life. Over more than two millennia, the Confucian value system has contributed to the formation of the spiritual structures of numerous peoples, including the Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, as well as other societies deeply influenced by Sinic civilization. However, with the advent of modernity, Confucianism was long regarded by many Western scholars as an obstacle to economic development, democratization, and individualization. From the analyses of Max Weber to classical modernization theories, Confucian culture was often portrayed as conservative, hierarchy-oriented, restrictive of creativity, inhibitive of individual dynamism, and

incompatible with the logic of modern capitalism. These assumptions dominated Western academic discourse throughout much of the latter half of the twentieth century. Yet, the developmental trajectories of East Asian societies in recent decades have posed serious challenges to such perspectives. The remarkable rise of Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong has not only demonstrated the adaptive capacity of Confucian-influenced societies, but has also suggested that Confucian values themselves may function as important spiritual resources for modernization. This has led to the emergence of concepts such as “Confucian capitalism,” “East Asian modernization,” and “Neo-Confucianism,” all of which emphasize the flexibility and internal reconstructive capacity of this tradition.

These phenomena indicate that Confucianism should not be understood as a static ideological system, but rather as an open tradition capable of reinterpretation and adaptation in new historical contexts. Values such as social obligation, loyalty, frugality, diligence, respect for order, harmony, and communal responsibility, central to Confucian ethics, have been transformed into spiritual resources supporting economic development, political stability, and social cohesion in many cases. This compels us to reconsider Confucian political culture not as a “relic of the past,” but as a dynamic factor within modern political life.

For Vietnam, this issue is particularly significant. As a society deeply influenced by Confucianism, Vietnam did not merely absorb it as a moral philosophy, but also as a mode of social organization, a normative framework of political behavior, and a distinctive power paradigm. Many aspects of contemporary Vietnamese political culture, from perceptions of authority and obligation to notions of order and the role of the state, bear deep Confucian imprints. Yet, in the context of international integration and institutional reform, these values face the imperative of reconfiguration in accordance with modern principles such as the rule of law, democracy, transparency, and respect for individual rights. Therefore, the study of Confucian political culture in the modern world is not merely an academic endeavor; it is an urgent practical necessity. It enables us to understand the deep spiritual foundations that shape political behavior, thereby avoiding two extremes: the wholesale rejection of tradition or its uncritical glorification. Both extremes generate serious obstacles to the formulation of effective national development strategies. The aim of this article is to analyze the core characteristics of Confucian political culture, clarify its adaptive and reconstructive capacities in modern contexts, and elucidate the theoretical and practical implications of this process for the political, social development of East Asian societies in general and Vietnam in particular. On this basis, the article seeks to contribute to a balanced approach, both critical and inheriting, toward the Confucian legacy in a globalized world.

2. Literature Review and Methodology research

Literature Review: Confucian political culture has long been a subject of interest for various schools of thought within the social sciences and humanities, ranging from philosophy, sociology, and anthropology to political science and development economics. Approaches to this issue can be broadly classified into three major trends. First, there is the Western rationalist, critical tradition, represented most prominently by Max Weber and classical modernization theories. In his works, Weber argued that Confucianism was an ideology inclined toward passive adaptation to reality, lacking a transformative drive, and therefore incapable of generating a “spirit of capitalism” comparable to that produced by Protestantism. From this perspective, Confucian culture was viewed as an impediment to industrialization, individualization, and democratization. This standpoint exerted a strong influence on Western academic discourse throughout much of the second half of the twentieth century and profoundly shaped perceptions of East Asia as a region “lagging behind politically.”

Second, there is the empirical, comparative approach, which gained prominence from the 1980s, 1990s onward in connection with the phenomenon known as the “East Asian miracle.” Scholars associated with this trend demonstrated that the rise of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and China could not be adequately explained by Western developmental models alone. Many studies have shown that Confucian values such as discipline, responsibility, devotion to learning, frugality, respect for order, and prioritization of collective interests have played a positive role in modernization processes. On this basis, concepts such as “Confucian capitalism,” “East Asian modernization,” and “Neo-Confucianism” emerged, emphasizing the flexibility, adaptive capacity, and internal reconstructive potential of this tradition.

Third, there is the critical, reinterpretable approach, which has developed more strongly in recent decades. This perspective treats Confucianism not as a fixed value system but as a discursive tradition constantly restructured in different historical contexts. From this viewpoint, Confucianism is not the direct cause of political or economic success or failure, but rather a symbolic resource mobilized, interpreted, and reorganized by social actors to serve diverse developmental objectives. Studies in this vein highlight the role of the state, elites, and discursive strategies in the “modernization of tradition.”

In Vietnam, research on Confucianism has primarily focused on intellectual history, moral philosophy, and education, whereas its political-cultural dimension has not yet been systematically analyzed as a structure of power, a mode of social organization, or a specific form of political consciousness. Most existing works remain at the level of describing Confucian influences, without examining in depth the mechanisms through which these influences are reproduced, adapted, and transformed under conditions of modernization and globalization. Against this background, this article

seeks to approach Confucian political culture not merely as a spiritual legacy, but as a concrete socio-historical form of existence characterized by movement, internal contradictions, and the capacity for self-transformation. Such an approach requires a suitable methodological foundation, namely, dialectical materialism and historical materialism.

Methodology: This study is grounded in the methodological framework of dialectical materialism and historical materialism. These are not merely analytical tools, but epistemological principles that enable political culture to be approached as a dynamic process embedded in material conditions, social structures, and concrete historical contradictions. According to historical materialism, all forms of social consciousness, including religion, morality, and political culture, do not exist as supra-historical entities, but emerge, develop, and transform in relation to specific economic and social conditions. Consequently, Confucianism cannot be treated as an abstract and immutable value system, but must be situated within the concrete historical contexts of East Asian societies, where it both reflects and regulates power relations, class structures, and modes of social organization.

This approach makes it possible to clarify why the same Confucian value system can play different roles in different historical periods: from legitimizing monarchical rule and reinforcing hierarchical order, to becoming a spiritual resource for modernization, labor discipline, and economic development. In this sense, Confucian political culture is not a “metaphysical cause” of development, but one component within a totality of social relations. The dialectical method allows Confucian political culture to be analyzed as a contradictory whole in which opposing elements coexist and interact: order and innovation, obedience and resistance, community and individuality, tradition and modernity. Rather than viewing Confucianism as a homogeneous system, this article treats it as a field of forces in which values are negotiated, reinterpreted, and reconstructed through political practice.

3. Research Results

3.1. The Vitality of Confucian Political Culture

Political theorists have long observed that when cultures are formed through the integration of several religious, spiritual traditions, they tend to possess a particularly powerful source of energy, generating exceptionally strong socio-cultural motivations in political life. Different origins, which never completely merge into a single unity, mutually reinforce and stimulate each other’s development. Under such conditions, the absence of a monotheistic worldview often leads to a form of political pragmatism grounded in the lack of a unified cosmological perspective. For instance, in his study of the cultural, psychological “genetic code” of the Japanese, K. O. Sarkisov emphasizes that Japanese political culture lacks a unified philosophical worldview but instead exhibits a strong orientation toward practical

knowledge, or pragmatism (Sarkisov, 2016).

In recent decades, Confucian-influenced Asian societies have increasingly emphasized the pragmatic dimensions of their religious and spiritual traditions. After centuries of backwardness under Western colonial and imperial domination, industrializing Asia, through its rapid development, has demonstrated what might be described as a form of instrumental rationality as a kind of “revenge” against the West: the mentality of the “Pacific dragons” is permeated by mercantilist spirit, commercialization, and competition. China has openly declared such a developmental strategy since the initiation of reforms in 1979 and has remained faithful to this orientation to the present day.

But can pragmatism truly be regarded as the fundamental characteristic of political culture in this region? According to contemporary scholars, this is not the case. What appears on the surface does not necessarily reflect the deeper layers of cultural consciousness. To understand archetypes and cultural codes, one must return to their origins. Confucian culture contains within itself an enormous humanistic potential, shaping what may be called the “harmonious person.” As early as the first millennium BCE, the formation of this spiritual world already revealed an active search for optimal relations among the interests of the state, society, and the individual, based on a flexible combination of politics and ethics. Therefore, the fundamental feature distinguishing the political culture of Confucian civilization is not pragmatism, but rather ethical centrism (ethicocentrism), the primacy of moral values as the basis of social order. As D. Weymin aptly remarks, one should not exaggerate the pragmatic tendencies of Confucian Asia, because “one should not underestimate the inherent potential of these societies for developing a more sustainable and more humanistic communal spirit” (Weymin, 2017). For more than 2,500 years, Confucianism has encouraged all members of society to become disciples of supreme wisdom, a wisdom that defines the norms of justice, righteousness, and human harmony, regardless of one’s social position. Yet from the very outset, a precise question must be posed: if Confucian values shaped the development of this civilization for two and a half millennia, to what extent do they continue to do so under modern conditions?

3.2. Confucian Political Values in the Modern Context

To clarify this issue, we turn to sociological research, particularly the data of the Institute of Sociology at Renmin University of China, since political scientists predict that China will assume a leading position in the Asia, Pacific region in the twenty-first century. In the late 1980s, this university conducted large-scale surveys across 13 provinces and cities in China, interviewing more than 1,800 individuals who were truly representative of all social strata and groups. Among the fourteen “basic personal qualities,” the following were ranked highest: conscience, loyalty (xin) and filial piety, humaneness (ren), wisdom

(zhi), love of labor (diligence), frugality (economy), magnanimity (the virtue of the junzi), and moderation. All of these are closely connected to the Confucian value system. These were followed by values that were ranked lower: pragmatism, utilitarianism, personal dignity (individual morality), obedience, envy, and hypocrisy (Sun, 2016).

Thus, according to sociological research, the majority of contemporary Chinese people continue to endorse traditional values and regulate their social behavior accordingly. In the book *After the Cold War*, former Japanese Prime Minister Y. Nakasone and his associates (economists, political scientists, and sociologists) also emphasize the loyalty of modern Japanese society to its national cultural traditions: the communitarian values of Confucianism are carefully preserved and constitute an inseparable part of Japan's modern democratic system ("adaptive collectivism").

It should be noted that not long ago, in the 1960s and 1970s, Western political scientists widely shared the view that Confucian values were obstacles to the development of Eastern societies, and that Confucian doctrine was hostile to economic development and social modernization (Do, 2014). This misconception largely stemmed from the influence of the famous works of M. Weber. He regarded Confucianism as a conservative ideology that promoted passive adaptation to reality: Confucian adherents might enjoy contemplating beauty, but it was difficult to imagine them as merchants striving for success; consequently, Confucian societies were seen as lacking moral dynamism (Weber, 1994).

Western scholars identified four basic principles of Confucian social organization that they believed served as the "pillars" of the feudal imperial system and hindered modernization. These were: (1) the hierarchical nature of society, which prioritized family interests (an obstacle to large-scale industrial production); (2) equal inheritance rights for all descendants (a factor fragmenting capital); (3) excessive concern with personal accumulation (an obstacle to capital circulation); and (4) strict social stratification, in which artisans and merchants occupied the lowest positions (an obstacle to the formation of a strong middle class) (Wright, 2017).

However, the socio-economic development of the "Pacific dragons" has refuted these Western assumptions. In fact, the so-called "Pacific miracle" became possible precisely because of traditional Confucian values, the dynamic development of what has been called "Confucian capitalism." Based on patriarchal ethics and traditional authority, the "Pacific dragons" cultivated an uncompromising attitude toward irresponsible lifestyles and economic waste, both among wealthy entrepreneurs and among workers. This ethos ensured unprecedented rates of accumulation, more than one-third of gross national product.

At the same time, the state guaranteed strict protectionist regimes for national industry and commerce: transnational corporations were not allowed to enter domestic markets until local enterprises

had acquired the real capacity to compete with them. There was to be “no privileged consumer society and no outflow of revenues abroad” (Prebisch, 2012). Contemporary scholars argue that Asia, Pacific countries consistently resisted the monetary prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund, which provoked particular reactions from Western public opinion and academia. All the achievements of the “Pacific dragons” were interpreted through the lens of radical Westernization and modernization: specialized studies were published that attributed to the Near Eastern model “features of economic liberalism that were not inherent to it,” thereby concealing the most important factor, the decisive role of the state, the restructuring of production, and subsidies for productive investment (1996).

3.3. The Principle of State Centralism in Confucianism in the Modern Context

It should be noted that the development of political culture in any civilization is always closely connected with the evolution of its dominant political institution, namely, the state. Since the bureaucratic stratum originally contributed to the formation of Confucianism, it selectively appropriated from Confucius’ doctrine those ideas and propositions that served to stabilize imperial power. As contemporary scholars observe, this process has never been interrupted and continues to this day: the state bureaucracy (more precisely, the top-level bureaucratic elite) has arbitrarily appropriated for itself the status of the “junzi” (the noble or superior man). What Confucius spoke of approvingly regarding benevolent intellectuals was automatically transferred to the state bureaucracy, though with a significant modification: their rights were exaggerated, while their ethical obligations toward the people were narrowed (Perelomov, 2017).

In the Confucian tradition, the state is conceived as something organically inherent in the natural order of the world. Accordingly, the political culture of Confucian civilization can be described as statist in nature (a statist culture is one that is intrinsically linked to the ethical duty of subjects to serve the state). In such a society, the state justifies its supervisory role by constructing a system of internalized values. Since the state itself is perceived as a moral entity, there is never a clear separation between the state and religion. For example, the Japanese traditionally believed that, due to his divine origin, the emperor was kin to the entire people and functioned as the head of the national family (Prokrite & Ladanov, 1985).

In the contemporary political cultures of Pacific Rim countries, statism is combined with a market economy. State patronage of economic and scientific-technological development manifests itself in the fact that government agencies simultaneously play the role of sponsors of future innovations, regulators of sectoral development, and financial guarantors against potential losses. For instance, in 1996, Japan announced a large-scale government subsidy program aimed at strengthening promising

trends in electronics, liquid metal applications, and biotechnology. The Ministry of Trade and Industry assumed responsibility for the full implementation of the program (1996).

A Chinese newspaper published an analysis of the Asia-Pacific region's economic development in 1996, concluding that one of the main causes of the Asian economic miracle was the desire of governments in many Asian countries to play a decisive role in the economy, particularly through the formulation of economic development plans. The newspaper noted that Singapore implemented two five-year plans and two ten-year plans, while Taiwan carried out six four-year plans and one six-year plan. Naturally, these were not command-type plans, but indicative ones, defining goals and directions of development; nevertheless, private capital was obliged to adapt to these state guidelines (1996).

However, despite the clear manifestation of statism, the Confucian tradition has always sought social harmony and striven to improve secular life through political means. Confucian ethics provides a solid foundation for political organization because it regards the fulfillment of social duties as the supreme goal. The political and social world is divided into clearly structured hierarchies: old, young, master, servant, leader, subordinate. As noted above, this political culture is characterized by strict vertical stratification, and relations are predominantly hierarchical, while horizontal relations appear to have little significance. This means that relations between individuals of equal status (master, master, servant, servant) are far less important than relations of subordination (master, servant) (Hendry, 2017).

All of this creates a distinctive space of power and political, social relations that permeates every sphere of individual and collective life. In this context, the central government consciously frees itself from the influence of any external actors, from the pressure of corporate or guild interests. Since horizontal relations are relatively weak, the strategy of exerting pressure becomes difficult. Consequently, the central government acquires the capacity to implement policies independently of oversight not only from lower social strata but also from privileged elites. In this way, a compromise of service-based interests among different social strata is formed.

These principles of centralized state organization are based on unified political rules that were established in ancient times (1993). The hierarchical division of political space was consistently applied to the administrative division of national territory. This division was intended to break traditional clan-based and patron-client relationships and replace them with purely administrative relations supervised by the central government. For example, the division of traditional Chinese provinces into centrally administered counties weakened the authority not only of hereditary aristocracy but also of local self-governing institutions, replacing them with hierarchical central-state power relations: "The governance of the country's counties must follow a uniform model; then those counties that deviate from the righteous path will not dare to change this administrative system, and if someone commits an offense

and is dismissed, they will no longer be able to conceal those who appointed them” (1993).

3.4. The Confucian Conception of the Relationship Between the Ruler and the People and Its Contemporary Relevance

In a strong centralized state, political leaders are highly revered and, in many respects, sacralized. Confucian wisdom holds that the relationship between superiors and subordinates resembles that between wind and grass: when the wind blows, the grass must bend. We encounter here the image of the ideal person who respects elders and those in power (1993). Developed over centuries, this attitude of obedience and submission has shaped a specific type of political personality: law-abiding, loyal, compliant, disciplined, and respectful. Many contemporary political scientists emphasize that in this cultural tradition, personal loyalty is far more important than party affiliation (Hendry, 2017). H. Almond and S. Verba have described this type of political culture as a subject culture.

However, it is not obedience and loyalty alone that determine the essence of Confucian political culture. This spiritual, religious tradition also contains powerful impulses for practical political action: the motivation to improve secular life is constantly emphasized in this culture. A law-abiding subject has the right to revolution. If the world is good but the laws are unjust, people must restore harmony in society through political action. The purpose of such politics is coexistence and mutual advancement. According to Confucius, a government that does not enjoy popular support loses the Mandate of Heaven and is immediately overthrown. This idea constitutes the moral foundation of revolution (1995). Loyalty, peace, harmony, collectivism, these are the most important values of political culture in the Confucian spiritual tradition. Duty, obligation, hierarchy, and the subordination of individual interests to group interests prevail here. But at the same time, there exists the right to defend all these values, even through violence. If one were to summarize all of this in a single phrase, this type of political culture could be described as a culture of compromise and duty.

Modern Japan, China, and South Korea demonstrate the dynamic nature of Confucian political culture under conditions of modern society. Despite relative political stability, all of these societies periodically experience major political upheavals, mass protests uniting millions of people when certain political groups believe their interests are being violated. Once “justice” is achieved, all return to the values of duty and loyalty, harmony and compromise, and order and harmony once again prevail. For example, according to Chinese perceptions, all people are “brothers and relatives.” As V. G. Burov notes, for many millennia the Chinese have lived within the same geographical space, and thus “it was natural for them to develop the belief that they share common ancestors and are kin” (Burov, 1998). If the family is a miniature state for the Chinese, then the state is a large family: every person must demonstrate loyalty

to the family (neighbors, friends, classmates, fellow countrymen) throughout their entire life. To this day, these relationships play a decisive role in Chinese communities around the world: they influence career paths, the formation of the civil service, parliamentary elections, and business practices. Family-based collectivism represents a typical counterpoint to Western individualism, providing warmth and emotional richness to interpersonal relations in Confucian civilization.

4. The Role of Confucian Political Culture in the Political Modernization of China

First of all, it should be noted that the political modernization of China involves the appropriation of political values from other cultures. In this context, it is particularly important to clarify an intriguing issue: how does a society with a long-standing tradition and strong internal social cohesion assimilate political values from other cultural systems?

T. Ishida has examined this issue in detail through the experiences of the Japanese and Chinese in their appropriation of Western democratic values. He concludes that concepts familiar to Westerners, such as “civil society,” “political freedom,” and “human rights,” were initially alien to the Japanese and Chinese. He emphasizes that specific problems arise when translating the concept of “freedom” into Japanese or Chinese. The terms selected to translate the English nouns freedom and liberty often carry semantic connotations of selfishness and arbitrariness, that is, pejorative meanings (Ishida, 2017).

When the Japanese scholar Fukuzawa published his book *The Situation in the West* in 1869, which introduced the content of the American Declaration of Independence, he felt compelled to write a special preface warning readers not to interpret the term “freedom” (*jiyū*) as selfishness. Fukuzawa explained that this was because there was no equivalent term in Japanese. As is well known, the noun “freedom” entered the political vocabulary of both Japanese and Chinese only in the twentieth century, during periods of political movements oriented against authoritarian regimes.

This example clearly demonstrates the fallacy of the widespread belief that Confucian culture is closed and ego-centered. On the contrary, it is fully capable of flexibly assimilating foreign cultural values, but only after those values have undergone a process of “domestication” or adaptation. In a certain sense, the integration of Western values with the Confucian spiritual tradition has largely shaped the political development of modern Asia, Pacific countries.

It should be recalled that the legendary leader of China’s enlightened nationalism, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, sought to adapt Western ideas to the task of national revival. He formulated a model of China’s modernization based on three principles: people’s rights, nationalism, and people’s livelihood. Later, building upon the Western theory of the three branches of power (legislative, judicial, and executive), Sun Yat-sen added two more, examination and control. These two branches had, in fact, existed in China

since the time of Confucius. The examination power was always associated with the training of enlightened, virtuous, and loyal officials for all levels of state authority. Interestingly, this system continues to exist in modernized form in China today, in the form of civil service examinations.

The next stage in adapting Western theories to the construction of a new China was represented by the thought of Mao Zedong, famously summarized in the slogan “using the past to serve the present.” Later came Deng Xiaoping’s doctrine of national modernization. Mao’s ideas are now interpreted in China as a creative synthesis of the general principles of Marxism with China’s concrete realities. Deng’s doctrine, often referred to as the work of the “architect of reform,” is regarded as an original theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. As early as 1979, Deng Xiaoping declared that the goal of socialism with Chinese characteristics was to achieve a moderately prosperous society by the year 2000, linking this slogan to the construction of a “strong state.”

Deng Xiaoping formulated the basic principles of China’s path toward socialism, which the Chinese leadership continues to uphold. These principles are relatively simple: orientation toward China’s traditions and specific conditions in building socialism; opposition to dogmatism, practice as the criterion of truth; priority to scientific and technological development; long-term orientation of social reforms (given China’s economic and cultural backwardness); special emphasis on economic development and productive forces; the use of a market economy together with the general principles of socialist governance; the creation of special economic zones as a means of attracting foreign capital and advanced technology; and political transparency toward the outside world.

Modern Chinese political leaders emphasize that the main task of Chinese socialism is modernization, while preserving the vitality of one of the world’s oldest civilizations. China employs socialist instruments not as a fixed social model, but as a unique means of accelerating modernization. For this reason, Chinese political culture has not become socialist in the sense of proletarian primacy under the leadership of the Communist Party; rather, it remains deeply traditional.

It is no coincidence that Deng Xiaoping used the phrase “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” According to many contemporary scholars, reference to China’s specific conditions allowed him to justify many theoretical and practical orientations incompatible with classical Marxism: the idea of intellectuals as part of the working class; peasants’ rights to land use; the recognition of private property as legally equal; the construction of mixed enterprises (with foreign capital); and the establishment of special economic zones (Burov, 1998). Hence, there are grounds to hope that a modern democratic society with a market economy will gradually emerge in China.

At the same time, the multi-layered revival of traditional Confucian values in politics has strengthened China’s cultural and social unity. In 1989, at a ceremony marking the 2,540th anniversary

of Confucius's birth, General Secretary Jiang Zemin emphasized the importance of Confucian ideas for the moral education of young Chinese citizens. In April 1990, deputies of the National People's Congress called for the formation of a "clean leadership" and the adoption of a law "on clean governance." They proposed reviving traditional Confucian mechanisms of state supervision: establishing a Supervisory Committee under the National People's Congress to directly oversee the activities of the country's leadership (1997). In other words, the state, represented by "virtuous men" and guided by "humane laws," should perform organizational, regulatory, and supervisory functions.

All of this has led contemporary researchers to conclude that an active process of restoring Confucian moral values is taking place in China's domestic policy, along with a renewed belief in the effectiveness of the "junzi" (the noble person) as an indispensable factor in the functioning of society and governance (Perelomov, 1997). The ideals of moral self-perfection, rejection of excessive consumption, reverence for ancestors and tradition, and harmony between humans and nature, these lofty values bring China closer to other Asia, Pacific nations, making it more attractive in the modern world.

Most Asia, Pacific countries have officially embraced the idea of building a "cultural era" as a phenomenon of modern civilization. We face an interesting paradox: the more open the "Asian dragons" become to the world, the more prominent Confucian values grow in their political culture. The activities of the Confucius Foundation in contemporary China are highly illustrative in this respect. One of its core objectives is to study the role of Confucianism in China's modernization and to reinterpret its basic concepts in accordance with contemporary conditions.

Professor D. Weymin argues that "Neo-Confucianism" is fully capable of responding to the challenges of modernity because it emphasizes respect for the individual, personal autonomy, and competition based on fair principles. Confucian ethics does not insist on human rights as such, but on responsibility: it prioritizes social unity and seeks an acceptable position for every person within society. Such a model of behavior requires individuals to engage in self-improvement and voluntary self-restraint, both spiritually and psychologically. Social consensus here is achieved not through the imposition of ideological templates, but through a prolonged process of compromise and gradual harmonization of viewpoints, which requires the development of a cooperative spirit in society (Weymin, 1999).

Scholars associated with the Confucius Foundation propose reinterpreting the traditional concept of ren (humaneness) as "becoming truly human." They emphasize that when Confucius promoted ren, he aimed not only to regulate interpersonal relations within kinship systems, but also, and more importantly, within a hierarchically organized state, and even in interstate relations. Other representatives of the Foundation particularly stress participatory political culture and the development

of Confucius's ideal of the "harmonious person" in a modern sense. They emphasize that the Confucian school has its own distinctive style of social engagement, devoting its full effort to public service, governance, and moral rectification, and opposing passive withdrawal from secular affairs (1997). One particularly interesting development is the attempt to justify the inevitability of modernization in China through reinterpretations of Confucian texts such as the Book of Songs. Although Zhou was an ancient kingdom, its destiny was new. Today, China is also an ancient kingdom, but with a new destiny, modernization. Efforts must be made to preserve the unity and uniqueness of the ancient kingdom while simultaneously fulfilling its new destiny (Lomanov, 2016).

Scholars associated with the Confucius Foundation not only reinterpret Confucian values in ways compatible with China's modernization, but also provide convincing arguments that Confucianism can actively promote the humanization of the globalized world. For example, Taiwanese researchers argue that technological interaction between the global community and nature, through its ecological consequences, confirms the Confucian view that humanity, society, and nature can only develop together (Burov, 1998). They suggest that the dissemination of Confucian values can curb environmental pollution, prevent the reduction of humans to mere cogs in machines, and restrain the spread of violence and other social pathologies of modernity. This is related to the fact that Confucianism is not only an ethical, political doctrine but also a cosmological system.

Behind these intellectual pursuits lies not merely the desire to preserve an ancient philosophical tradition. They possess a clearly articulated political orientation: activating social consciousness in the spirit of the democratic ideals of modern urban society, where the "harmonious person" must not simply contemplate the perfection of the world but actively participate in realizing ideals of harmony in social life.

5. Conclusion

All of the above demonstrates that national elites in the Asia, Pacific region associate the political revival of their civilizations with a renewed interpretation of traditional political culture and political consciousness. These elites possess a crucial capacity to formulate "grand objectives" in politics by drawing upon antiquity ("using the past to serve the present"). In order to achieve such objectives, nations are able to mobilize their entire spiritual potential, thereby ensuring broad popular support and the legitimacy of reforms. Thus, the most fundamental characteristic of Confucian political culture should be recognized as its flexibility, its capacity to reinterpret traditional values in a modern spirit, to undergo internal renewal, and to creatively assimilate and adapt external cultural influences through the mediation of national tradition. It is precisely here that the main secret of the "Asia, Pacific miracle", the

breakthrough achievements of the “Asian dragons” across all spheres of life, resides. The experience of these countries once again confirms that the prosperity of a nation is not shaped solely by economic indicators, but also arises, to a significant extent, from spiritual unity and a shared belief in collective strength. This insight leads to a broader conclusion: in the context of modernity, it is necessary to actualize the constructive potential of traditional political cultures, not by idealizing them, but by critically reinterpreting and integrating them into contemporary processes of political modernization.

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Received: 02/2026

Approved: 05/2026