

# Political Legitimacy and China's Transition

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*This study reveals a distinctive Chinese cognitive model of political legitimacy, and analyzes how political leaders in Beijing have maintained its legitimacy through cultivating different elements of this traditional model. The central argument developed in this study is that so far the government in Beijing has shown remarkable adaptability to a changing political environment. However, the transition towards a market economy has redefined the meanings of the century-old cognitive model. Consequently, the existing system of legitimization is being seriously challenged.*

## INTRODUCTION

After more than two decades of rapid changes, China's economic system has been transformed beyond recognition. However, the fundamentals of China's political system have remained largely unaffected. This lopsided development has created "the China paradoxes." Although the basic framework for a market economy has been put into place, China is still an authoritarian party-state. While economic freedom has become an engine of economic growth, the government retains tight control over the media and political organizations. And even though China has created a new miracle of economic take-off, it is still overwhelmed with all types of governing crises.<sup>1</sup>

The internal and external pressures for more political reforms have intensified in recent years due to many factors. The diversification of the economy, for instance, has created a favorable condition for a pluralistic society. Different voices from many new social classes as well as old ones can now be heard openly. The emergence of a new middle class is not only turning China into one of the world's largest consumer markets but is also creating stronger social support for political liberalism.<sup>2</sup> Many believe that, once this class gets stronger and more sophisticated, democratization will be only a matter of time.<sup>3</sup>

Cracks in the current political system can be seen in many areas. The once all-powerful Leninist and Maoist ideologies have been marginalized and weakened. Western ideas, such as human rights, individualism, political accountability, and transparency, are gradually taking roots in China's political life. Moreover, the on-going telecommunication revolution has reduced people's reliance on the government-run media. The Internet has increasingly made control over the flow of information by the government more and more difficult.

All of these factors have led to the erosion of the legitimacy of the party-state. This potential crisis of legitimacy is one of the top concerns of the political leaders in Beijing.<sup>4</sup>

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The newly proposed “theory of three represents” is the latest effort made by the China Communist Party (CCP) to address this concern.<sup>5</sup>

The legitimacy issue has puzzled many political observers in the West. After the 1989 Tiananmen Crisis, some Western observers anticipated a rather speedy downfall of the Chinese communist regime. Yet this did not happen. Now a decade later, we hear again the similar predictions of a “coming collapse of China.”<sup>6</sup> These predictions, in my view, may be proven wrong for the same reason: it underestimates the ability of the regime to stay in power, and the ability of the CCP to adapt to the changing political environment.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the oversimplification over the meaning of political legitimacy also contributes to the repeated failure of forecasting China’s political future. Many Western scholars have been unable to comprehend the system of legitimation in the context of Chinese political culture and history. As Feng Chen points out, “The theory of imminent collapse was flawed because it treated China as if it were a Western democracy where legitimacy directly determines the continuation of political rule.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, many studies pay little attention to the multifaceted nature of regime legitimacy. Some have mistakenly believed that only a democratic government can be legitimate.<sup>9</sup>

This paper will take an in-depth look at the issue of political legitimacy. Part I of this paper focuses on Chinese traditional theories of political legitimacy and the practices of political legitimation. Part II analyzes the elements of political legitimacy that the CCP’s party-state is able to cultivate in different eras. Part III takes a closer look at various challenges to the legitimate bases of the post-Jiang government and analyzes opportunities Beijing may use to strengthen its political legitimacy. The central argument developed in this study is that the government in Beijing has managed to legitimize itself through cultivating traditional moral and utilitarian supports. Contrary to many prevailing beliefs, the regime has demonstrated a remarkable level of adaptability to the changing political environment. However, the transition towards a market economy has redefined the meanings of the century-old cognitive model of political legitimacy. Consequently, the existing system of legitimation is being challenged. The regime might face a new crisis of legitimacy if it fails to deal with this new challenge.

## **POLITICAL LEGITIMACY IN THE CHINESE CONTEXT**

Governments everywhere and throughout history have always sought answers to a fundamental question: who deserves to have authority and why? The study of political legitimacy helps us find answers to this crucial question. There is no shortage of research on this subject due to the practical nature of the issue. The concept of political legitimacy in research is also defined in a variety of ways. Seymour Martin Lipset, for example, defines legitimacy as “the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society.”<sup>10</sup> David Beetham defines the concept as “a power relationship justified in terms of people’s beliefs.”

<sup>11</sup> Scholars also disagree on what constitutes as the basis of political legitimacy. But, in general, their analyses tend to focus on the following two issues: What makes people believe in the ruler’s right to govern? In what ways can a ruler maintain such a belief? The first question deals with a normative issue, and the second, an empirical one. Conventional theories of political legitimacy typically focus on the normative dimension.

To better answer these two important questions in the Chinese setting, a new analytical framework is clearly needed in light of the apparent weaknesses found in some of the existing studies. I want to introduce two new variables that serve as the core of this analytical framework: the original justification and utilitarian justification. Original justification refers to the origin of the ruling authority, and the utilitarian justification defines the rulers' staying power or capacity to maintain people's belief in their ruling authority.<sup>12</sup> Original justification may derive from a divine being, or from a leader of moral characters or some unique quality, or simply from the will of the people. It deals with the issue of who should govern, and provides the moral capital for those who govern.

The utilitarian justification derives from the capacity of the rulers to meet people's needs, such as material well-being or physical security. Greek philosophers referred it as the *eudemonic* legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> I prefer the term utility because it can be defined more broadly as the interest of the people rather than being merely the pursuit of happiness in the hedonic sense. The utility justification deals with both the process and outcome of achieving happiness or satisfaction.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, this concept is also closely related to the original justification. A regime with proper original justification can still suffer legitimacy crisis if the regime cannot effectively satisfy people's needs. A democratic regime, which has the expressed consent of the people, may not be the most effective government if its economic institutions are not compatible with the political institutions; therefore, it can suffer from chronic governing crises as well. An authoritarian developmental state may prove to be highly efficient in balancing the need for rapid economic growth on the one hand, and the need for full employment and low inflation on the other. It, thus, may turn out to be very stable and popular. For most governments, it is always an uphill battle to maintain a delicate balance between the original and utilitarian justifications. Sometimes, there may even be some kind of trade-off involved. The weakness in one area will force the political leaders to rely on the strength in the other area. However, a government with a solid basis in legitimacy tends to be the one who possess both strong original and utilitarian justifications. In the following discussion, I will conceptualize these assumptions and hypotheses through a reexamination of China's traditional political thoughts. The inquiry will help us develop more specific operational variables that can be further tested by empirical analyses.

China is one of the oldest civilizations. There were twenty-five dynasties, and more than four hundred kings or emperors. During the period of the last two and half millenniums, Chinese philosophers and political thinkers developed many elaborated and sophisticated theories of political legitimacy. These theories generated a distinctive cognitive model of political legitimacy. This pattern prescribes in detail the acceptable basis of political legitimacy.

Among many prominent schools of thoughts, Confucianism is the one that has the lasting impact on Chinese political system, and thus deserves some special attentions. Ironically, Chinese translation of the word legitimacy is *he fa xing*, which means literally lawful. But, in its application, the rule by law is less important than the rule by virtue to most Chinese rulers.

### **Original Justification**

As I mentioned earlier, the original justification is the moral capital of a political regime.<sup>15</sup> The idea of original justification is not new. Based on Max Weber's analysis, the claims of moral justification can be made on three grounds: supernatural, charismatic, and

legal-rational. Traditional authority is based on the claim of godly origin. For example, some Chinese rulers claimed to be the Son of the Dragon. Charismatic authority is based on the leader's personal charisma, heroism and other extraordinary individual qualities, such as virtue or popularity. Rational-legal authority is based on popular beliefs in the validity of legal statute and functional competence based on rationally created rules and procedures.<sup>16</sup> Weber's framework, however, stopped short of linking democratic legitimacy with the will of the people.<sup>17</sup>

Chinese traditional understanding of the original justification shares the similar insights as Weber's classification, but has not been systematically studied. The original justification of political legitimacy can be articulated by using four Chinese concepts: mandate of Heaven (*tian ming*), rule by virtue (*ren zhi*), popular consent (*min ben*), and legality (*he fa*).

**Mandate of Heaven:** Historically, legitimation of authority involved the use of abstract and religious ideas. The notion that a ruler's right to govern is derived from a supernatural force is as old as human civilization. Beginning in the West Zhou Dynasty, ancient Chinese emperors always legitimized their political power by "tian" or Heaven. The "mandate of Heaven" is based on the following principles: heaven grants a ruler's right to rule; there is only one Heaven, therefore, there can be only one ruler.

The similar ideas can be found in other civilizations as well. Saint Augustine, for example, wrote *The City of God*, in which he set out a theoretical framework for the institution of a Christian monarch.<sup>18</sup> French orator Jacques-Benigne Bossuet reinforced medieval notions of kingship in his theory of the "Divine Right of Kings." He argued that certain kings ruled because God chose them and that these kings were accountable to no one except God.<sup>19</sup>

**Rule by Virtue:** For centuries, legitimacy has not only a theocratic basis but also an ethical one. The moral teaching of Confucius had profound influence on Chinese rulers. Confucius believed that the ruler's virtue and the contentment of the people, rather than power, should be the true measures of a ruler's political success.<sup>20</sup> In the Confucian paradise of the Great Harmony (*da tong*), there was a system of moral hierarchy in which an emperor is supposed to be the most virtuous man on earth. Since virtue can be nurtured through education, all government officials should be recruited from "gentlemen" (*jun zi*) or learned scholars. Mencius pushed this virtue-based political idealism even further. He believed that government was primarily an exercise of ethics. The rule of a truly moral king, according to him, was characterized by his benevolence towards his people.

Ancient Egyptians also based their faith in a teenage goddess or *Ma'at* of the universe who benevolently ruled all aspects--human, material, and divine--of the universe. She was a symbol of justice and ultimate truth. In ancient Greece, Plato's classic account of the subject is centered on the concept of justice. Justice, according to Plato, is the recognition of each individual's unique role in society. Justice requires that everyone perform duties that he or she is by nature best fit to do. A state becomes just only when philosophers are given the authority to govern because reason and knowledge constitute the basis for claims to political legitimacy, and only philosophers are capable of discovering and understanding divine value—an eternal form of the heaven. In Plato's world, justice is the

highest goal of political life; the ability of the wise ruler to offer a just order is the foundation of the government.<sup>21</sup> Both Platonic and Confucian theories of legitimacy are based on the belief that there is an absolute truth. The source of the truth lies in either natural law or divine law.

**Popular Consent:** Although legitimate rulers demand people's voluntary submission to their authorities, the Chinese understanding of the relations between the ruler and the people suggests that rulers must constantly seek popular approval, not by way of expressed public opinions, but through winning the hearts and minds of the people. This understanding is reflected in Mencius's *min ben* ideas. *Min ben* can be translated as "regarding the people as the roots of the state." This concept resembles the concept of popular consent without its legalist tone. It focuses, instead, primarily on the need to look after the interest of the people.<sup>22</sup> Considering the following quotation from Mencius:

Here is the way to win the empire: win the people and you win the empire. Here is the way to win the people: win their hearts and you win the people. Here is the way to win their hearts: give them and share with them what they like, and do not do to them what they do not like. The people turn to humane ruler as water flows downward and beasts take to wilderness.<sup>23</sup>

*Min ben* has two meanings: First, people's interests are of utmost importance. Second, rulers must follow the will of the people, show respect for people's needs, and let people be the principal decision makers of their own life. After all, according to Mencius, people's interests are above the rulers' interests. Most significantly, *min ben* gives the traditional concept of "mandate of Heaven" a new meaning, namely, the acceptance of a ruler by the people shall be a true test of the will of the Heaven. Mencius even suggested that people had a right to overthrow a ruler who forfeited his mandate.<sup>24</sup>

**Legality:** Although morality is the central theme of Chinese traditional political theories, governing by established laws and regulations is also an important part of China's political tradition. Legality in Chinese context, however, is more often based on family rules, clan norms, community customs, and social traditions. Even emperors must observe rules set up by their ancestors. Violation of these rules may violate, weaken, or even destroy an emperor's right to be in power. The right of primogeniture, for example, determines the succession order of the emperorship. A breach of this norm will be considered to be usurpation of the throne and would provoke a rebellion against the usurper. Beginning in the Qin Dynasty, Chinese legalists began to emphasize the rule by law, mutual obligation and responsibilities. But the use of law was only considered to be a means to strengthen a ruler's power. Therefore, the rule by law significantly differs from a modern notion of the rule of law in which the ruler is also restrained by law.

### **Utilitarian Justification**

How to maintain people's belief that the political system is legitimate is equally important to the belief of who should govern. The modern rationalist school of thought believes that people will be happy and supportive of the government only if their needs are satisfied. According to Jeremy Bentham, a British philosopher of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the

principle of utility dictates an individual's approval or disapproval of a government's legitimacy. The legitimacy of a government, in this view, lies in its ability to maximize an individual's happiness and minimize his/her pain.<sup>25</sup>

The Chinese Confucianist and the Legalist also agree that common people are motivated primarily by profits and self-interests. To strengthen the mandate of Heaven, the Confucianist believes that rulers must make decisions on behalf of the people (*wei min zuo zhu*), and that those decisions must not do harm to the well-being of the people. This belief in the government's role as a provider of benefits has enabled Chinese governments to assume a more asserted role in managing the economy.<sup>26</sup> When dealing with utilitarian justification the Chinese have used the concepts of benefiting the people (*li min*) and equality of wealth (*jun fu*).

**Benefiting the People:** The concept of "*li min*" can be found in many Chinese classics. According to the book *Han Fei Zi*, "Profit is his [the ruler--added] means of winning over people."<sup>27</sup> *Li min* means asking rulers to give primary consideration to the welfare of the people. It is closely related to the concept of people's livelihood (*min sheng*). A good ruler should not be preoccupied with benefiting himself and indulging in his personal luxury and comfort. Instead, he should be concerned with the welfare of his subject first. Among the good deeds mentioned in the classics are those that state that rulers should not tax people heavily, should make sure people have enough food, shelter, and clothing, and should control flood and relieve poverty, etc.

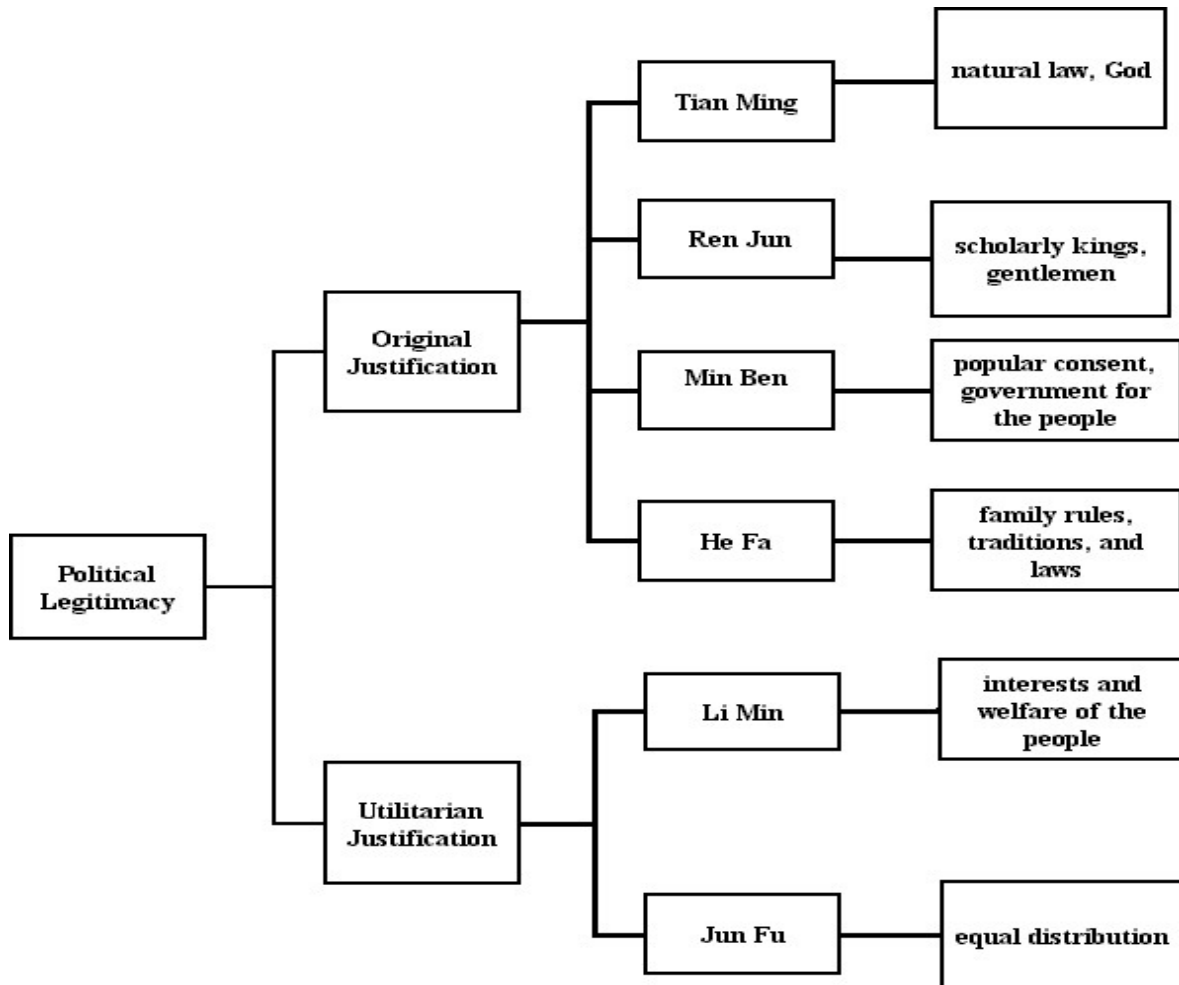
Modern political utility theory also emphasizes the importance of achievement and effectiveness of the government as a way of legitimatizing the government. In his study of social conditions for democracy, Seymour Martin Lipset considers the effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system to be of crucial importance.<sup>28</sup> Samuel Huntington also has discussed the importance of achievement in maintaining legitimacy.<sup>29</sup>

**Equality:** The idea of equality is deeply imbedded in Chinese political thought. China was known to be one of the most populated countries on earth for the past two millenniums. Scarcity of land, food, and resources caused chronic problems of famines and peasant uprisings. Peasants always dreamed of land ownership and equal economic distribution. Justice was always understood as a fair distribution of economic wealth to all. According to Mencius, people are not afraid of scarcity of wealth but are afraid of the unequal distribution of it. To ensure equal land distribution, he strongly recommended a well-field system—a communal land system supposedly used in Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC)—as a way of ensuring equal distribution of lands. Xu Xing, one of the Agriculturists in the period of Warring States, went even further by advocating social equality. He imagined a society with no distinction between those who worked with their minds and those who worked with their hands as well as between the rulers and the ruled.<sup>30</sup> Over the course of history, the idea of equal land ownership was carried out several times. During the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), "the equal-field system" assigned every adult, including women, a fixed amount of lands. Another example was the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864 AD). Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan combined traditional Chinese agrarianism with Christianity and tried to create a Chinese utopia, the Heavenly Kingdom of Eternal Peace (Tai Ping Tian

Guo), in southern China. He, too, set up a communal land system to ensure equal land distribution.<sup>31</sup>

Based on the proceeding discussion, we can summarize the Chinese cognitive pattern of political legitimacy as follows: a ruler, who has the mandate of Heaven, possesses the quality of virtue, shows respect to his subjects, follows the rules of the ancestors, and tries to win the hearts and minds of the people, will be considered a just and legitimate one. A just ruler will strengthen his legitimacy by promoting policies that will benefit the people, not himself, by ensuring relatively equal distribution of these benefits, and by allowing the people to do what they do the best. This unique cognitive model has influenced every government and its rulers throughout Chinese history. A complex system of legitimation has been developed based on this way of thinking, which can be illustrated in Concept Map I.

**Concept Map I. The Chinese Cognitive Model of Political Legitimacy**



## HOW HAS THE PARTY-STATE LEGITIMATIZED ITSELF?

Being a regime established through a prolonged armed struggle, the CCP is supposed to have some difficulties to justify its political power. Yet, in reality, the CCP and the new regime in Beijing were very popular and appeared to have acquired the mandate of the people easily. The support that the CCP received from workers, peasants, and intellectuals was genuine. There are a number of reasons for this. Communism appeals to many Chinese because it resembles the ideal society Chinese themselves are always longing for, namely the *da tong* (great harmony) society. The communal land system the Communist established helps peasants realize their economic dream of fair share of wealth. Its legitimacy is ratified not by ballot but by people's voluntary cooperation and participation in the movement. However, this moral capital will not last forever. In the absence of a divine justification, a constitutional order, and democratic elections, how the Communists have sustained their political legitimacy over a prolonged period of time that will be the main focus of discussion in this section.

### The Era of Mao Zedong and the Revolutionary Legitimacy

Many Western scholars have characterized the Maoist era as one of the brutal, totalitarian regimes. If so, how could the regime stay in power if it had no political legitimacy? The truth of the matter is that the majority of the people did regard the new government as a legitimate one. For a long time, the CCP relied primarily on revolution itself as a ground for political legitimation.

As a revolutionary party, the CCP cannot and does not seek approvals from all social classes; instead, it only claims to be the party of the workers and peasants. It uses a system of majority tyranny as a basis of legitimacy. Marxist ideology is cited as a mandate of history. Mao's personality cult is used as a basis of charismatic legitimacy. People are enshrined as "masters" of the society and their livelihood are taken care of through the state and the rural collectives. Overall, these efforts of support-building fit very well with the Chinese traditional system of legitimation and help secure both original and utilitarian justifications for the party and the state.

After the 1949 Communist Revolution, communist ideology was carefully used to replace the traditional idea of "mandate of Heaven." The official ideology was crucial to the institutionalization of CCP's legitimacy. "Without the ideology," wrote Peter Moody, "the Party would have no claim to legitimacy."<sup>32</sup> The theories of historical materialism, class struggle, and scientific socialism provided necessary moral justification for the new party-state. Communists believe that they have a historical mission to overthrow capitalism. They are destined to transform the existing society of injustice into an entirely new one. "The socialist system," wrote Mao, "will eventually replace the capitalist system; this is an objective law independent of man's will."<sup>33</sup> According to the theory of scientific socialism, the industrial working class, organized and conscious, is certain to overthrow capitalism and to create a society of abundance with universal brotherhood and true freedom.<sup>34</sup> The Russian leader Lenin insisted that an elite-based communist party must be established to serve as a vanguard of the industrial working class, which, in itself, was also a pivotal social force of a historical transformation. Once in power, according to Lenin, the Communists would not share power with anybody, and they must establish a one-party rule on behalf of the proletariat.<sup>35</sup>



Based on the Leninist party theory, the CCP established a “unified leadership” (*yi yuan hua*), and a party-state, after taking power in 1949. According to a decision made in 1949 by the CCP Central Committee, the party committees, instead of government agencies, were the highest decision making bodies in all work units, and decisions made by these committees must be obeyed and carried out unconditionally by all government agencies, military units, and mass organizations. This arrangement was at first meant to be a temporary measure to facilitate the command of the revolutionary forces. However, after taking over power, the unified leadership was imposed on all aspects of the society, and was frequently strengthened under the influence of the party radicals. Party committees were established in every governmental organization. Party secretaries held ultimate power.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the appeal of the ideology, the CCP also relied on charismatic leaders for public support. The Chinese Communist Revolution took place in an economically backward peasant society. Good emperors were peasants' best hope. Soon after coming to power, the Chinese Communists turned to a personality cult to build their popular support. All of the founding communist leaders became new god-like figures. Mao, in particular, was enshrined as the never-setting sun and a godly savior of the Chinese people. During the Cultural Revolution, the worship of Mao reached its peak. Mao's own writing became another source of legitimacy. As a god-like figure, Mao was not fallible, and his words became the ultimate truth. People would march on the street fanatically to celebrate Mao's latest directives. When Mao died in 1976, his successor Hua Guofeng had no choice but to rely on a Mao's personal note of approval as a basis of his legitimacy.

Mao was a strong believer of the traditional *min ben* idea. He became a master of the “mass line”—a term used by Mao meaning that all decisions must be “from the mass and to the mass.” “To link oneself with the masses,” Mao wrote, “one must act in accordance with the needs and wishes of the masses. All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well-intentioned.”<sup>37</sup> His most famous quote, “the people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history,” inspired millions of Chinese people to participate in his massive economic and political campaigns.<sup>38</sup> Mao, however, did not like spontaneous popular actions. He believed that people must be organized and controlled. For that reason, the Chinese Communists embraced state corporatism to put all mass organizations under the umbrella of the CCP and the party-state. Mao justified the party's control by saying that “without the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party, without the Chinese Communists as the mainstay of the Chinese people, China can never achieve independence and liberation, or industrialization and the modernization of her agriculture.”<sup>39</sup> Workers, women, and youth were organized into monopolistic organizations and became a part of the extended network. All political and social organizations had to accept the CCP's leadership.

On the utilitarian grounds, the Maoist era was heavily dependent on the following justifications: national independence, liberation, modernity, social economic equality, and fraternity.<sup>40</sup> Nationalist pride was especially important to the CCP's claim to power. China was unified for the first time since the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. The territorial map was restored to the pre-1911 revolution era with the exception of Outer Mongolia, which was made independent with the help of the former Soviet Union. No Chinese political force had been able to achieve this objective since China's humiliating defeat in the Opium War

(1839-1842). Later on, Mao's tough stand against the United States, the Soviet Union, and India reinforced China's national pride and made Mao himself a true national hero.

The persuasive power of national liberation was also applied in domestic politics. The Communists promised a new beginning, a government of the people – a government that would really care for the interests of the common people. Mao wrote,

We should pay close attention to the well being of the masses, from the problems of land and labor to those of fuel, rice, cooking oil and salt.... All such problems concerning the well being of the masses should be placed on our agenda. We should discuss them, adopt and carry out decisions and check up on the results. We should help the masses to realize that we represent their interests and that our lives are intimately bound up with theirs. We should help them to proceed from these things to an understanding of the higher tasks which we have put forward, the tasks of the revolutionary war, so that they will support the revolution and spread it throughout the country, respond to our political appeals and fight to the end for victory in the revolution.<sup>41</sup>

He promised that, in the new republic, people would truly become the master of the society, enjoying a wide range of democratic rights that have never seen before in Chinese history. The feeling of being “liberated” held by workers and peasants translated into enormous support for the regime.<sup>42</sup> The gratitude and affection people showed towards their new leaders provided the strongest moral capital for the new government.

Mao understood that the only way communism can appeal to most people was to bring a better life to them.<sup>43</sup> In the area of promoting social and economic equality, the government did have a strong record. For the first time, women were treated as “one half of the sky” and were promised equal pay for equal work. Women's participation in the work forces reached 49 percent, much higher than the world average of 34.5 percent. Chinese women made about 80 percent of men's income, while at the same time in the United States, women only made about 60-70 percent of what men made in spite of the passage of Equal Pay Act in 1963.<sup>44</sup>

Through land distribution and land reform, the CCP solved one of the major sources of inequality in China, land ownership. Land reform fulfilled the dream of million of peasants. From 1950 to 1952, over 60 million acres of farmland were confiscated from landlords and redistributed for free to over 300 million poor peasants.<sup>45</sup> However, the privatization of lands did not last long. The collectivization of agricultural lands soon followed. The establishment of People's Communes created a communal land system similar to those used during the Tang dynasty or in the Taiping Rebellion. The collective farms, soon proved to be inefficient, but they guaranteed economic equality among peasants, and provided a degree of economic and social security for poor villagers. Nonetheless, even during the Maoist era, inequality persisted. According to a document written during the Cultural Revolution, many former capitalists, intellectuals, artists, and state and party leaders received much higher salaries than did the common people. Some artists received a month salary as high as 2000 RMB (US\$ 240) a month, an astonishing figure if it were compared with the monthly wages of 30-50 RMB(US\$ 4-6) that a worker usually received.<sup>46</sup> By the end of the Cultural Revolution, much of the income gap was eliminated, and the pursuit of economic equality turned into extreme egalitarianism.

With a goal to emulate Soviet style of state socialism, China took only a few short years to eliminate all privately owned enterprises, commerce, transportation and craft-making industries as well as completing the initial stage of socialist transformation. Many state-owned factories were built during the periods of the first and second Five-year Plans. Millions of farmers joined industrial labor forces. In 1949 there were only 8 million workers in the state-owned enterprises. By 1981, this number jumped to 83.7 million.<sup>47</sup> The wage labor system was abolished. Workers were allowed to participate in the factories' decision-making process. Workers truly appreciated their newly acquired economic security and political equality. They were generally complacent about their improved economic status. As a result, they became the most important source of social support to the communist state.<sup>48</sup>

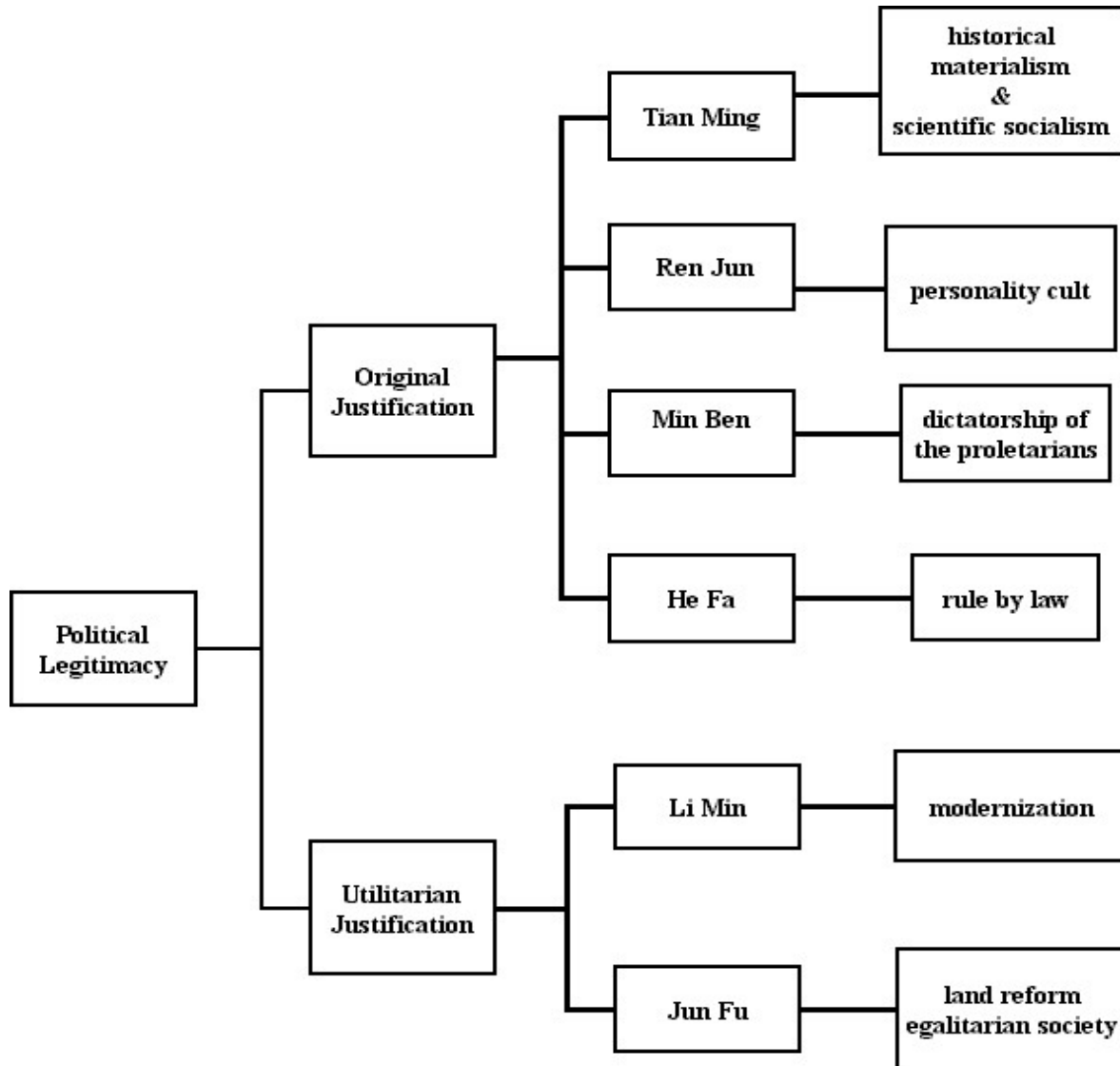
The magnitude of the radical social, political, and economic changes the new government engineered was truly unprecedented in Chinese history. Between 1952 and 1974 China's industrial output increased ten times, and agricultural output increased three times. China quickly became a major military power with a strategic nuclear force.<sup>49</sup> Even without a Western style democratic election, a free market economy, and the rule of law, the CCP could still govern without serious internal challenges. It survived even the most difficult years, such as in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

However, the rigid command economy and the endless political-style economic campaigns caused economic stagnation by the end of 1970s. The widespread shortage of consumer goods forced the government to set up a strict rationing system. Evidence from an analysis of the changes in the Engel Index (a ratio of expenditure on food against the whole expenditure reflects the changes of people's consumption patterns) showed very little improvement in people's standard of living between 1957 and 1981.<sup>50</sup> The revolution-based legitimacy was running out of steam. The Communist political legitimacy suffered the first major crisis in 1976 when people were not even allowed to mourn the death of Zhou Enlai, a highly respected premier, a moderate leader, and a proponent of China's continued modernization and economic development. Legitimation in the Mao era can be illustrated in concept map II.

### **The Era of Deng Xiaoping-Jiang Zemin and the Rational Legitimacy**

After the death of Mao, Deng Xiaoping quickly emerged as China's paramount leader. Deng realized the decade long political chaos and the failure to provide significant improvements in the living standard of the people had weakened the Party's legitimacy. As Deng himself acknowledged, "some people had disappointed feelings towards the Party and toward socialism."<sup>51</sup> And "in a country as big and as poor as ours, if we don't try to increase production, how can we survive? How is socialism superior, when our people have so many difficulties in their lives?"<sup>52</sup> Faced with a stagnated economy and eroded public confidence, Deng decided to put an end to the pursuit of class struggle and the mass movement. He redirected the people's energy to business and economic development.

**Concept Map II. Legitimation in the Mao Era**



In the next decade, he successfully put into practice the policy of economic reform and the opening-up to the outside. At the center of this new policy initiative was a determination to modernize China and to increase China's total GDP as fast as that could be done. The government came up with an ambitious goal of quadrupling the gross annual value of industrial and agricultural output in twenty years (1981-2000), and to have the per capita income reach about US\$800. The overall standard of living of the people would enter the era of "small comfort" (*xiao kang*). In the rural area, the reforms began with the abolition of the People's Communes and the establishment of the household responsibility system. The reform successfully stimulated the peasants' enthusiasm for increasing agricultural production. Millions of peasants were soon out of poverty and raised themselves above the subsistence level of standard of living. In the urban areas, a free

market economic system based on economic freedom and market competition was gradually introduced. Labor contract systems gradually replaced the lifetime employment systems in urban areas, and state-run business were made accountable for their own profits and losses. The stock market was reopened. Private businesses began to grow rapidly. Foreign investment poured in China to take advantage of China's non-expensive labor force.

The utilitarian approach is an affirmative action that effectively curtailed Mao's legacy of class struggle and politics-first mentality. It depoliticizes the society, helps heal the deep-rooted factionalism, and restores the economic vitality of China. While the profound market reform might strengthen the party-state's utilitarian justification, it also further weakened the CCP's moral capital. Soon after the reform began, intellectuals started demanding more political freedom. Deng quickly denounced the movement as "bourgeoisie liberalization" and came up with the so-called "four cardinal principles" to set limits on political changes.<sup>53</sup> To maintain political and social stability, he moved away from Mao's totalitarianism, and established a rational, authoritarian order. In this new order, the intellectuals enjoyed a limited freedom as long as it was confined in the big cage of four cardinal principles.

The legal system was also restored. The lawlessness of the Mao era and the experience of the Cultural Revolution helped foster a consensus that a socialist legal system must be established. The Constitution of 1982 was a major breakthrough in PRC's legal history. It recognized the principle of popular sovereignty, re-established the principle of the supremacy of laws, and restored a system of limited separation of powers and checks and balances.<sup>54</sup> A large number of statutory and administrative laws were enacted during this period. The system of administrative supervision was established to monitor state agencies and personnel. A law passed in 1989 allowed citizens to sue administrative agencies and to hold public officials accountable for their actions.

Although these efforts have not truly established a society based on the rule of law, progress has been made in many areas. The supremacy of law is being gradually established, and the protection for individual freedom has been strengthened. Moreover, according to Pitman Potter, "by relying on the socialist legal system as a source of legitimacy, the regime also strengthen its ability to justify specific actions by reference to law."<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, as one scholar points out, the legal reform is also a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it does put legal restraint on the power holders, but on the other hand, it gives legitimate tools for the government to use legalized oppression.<sup>56</sup> In the end, a "consultative rule of law regime" is established, "which is a rule of law regime supplemented by democracy rather than a democracy supplemented by rule of law."<sup>57</sup>

Deng belongs to the founding generation. He devoted to his entire life to the cause of communism. For that reason, he had no intention of abandoning Marxism, or even Maoism entirely. What he wanted was to rationalize these theories through reforms, and make necessary revisions to them. According to him, China "shall adhere to Marxism and keep to the socialist road. But by Marxism we mean Marxism that is integrated with Chinese conditions, and by socialism we mean a socialism that is tailored to Chinese conditions and has a specifically Chinese character."<sup>58</sup>

The first attempt to revise the theory of socialism was made in the early 1980s. The Party formally proposed the theory of primitive socialism, which held that China was still in the primitive stage of socialism. It did not have a strong economic foundation of a full-

fledged socialist society. Therefore private ownerships instead of public ones must be accepted, protected, and promoted to further advance China's economic development. While still holding on to the fundamental core of Leninism and Maoism, the new theory does make significant adjustment in its instrumental principles to reinterpret the nature of current task. The discrepancy between the two was blamed for the weakening role of the orthodox ideology as a basis of legitimacy.<sup>59</sup>

However, even with these moderate revisions of an outdated ideology, the problems the CCP faced during the painful transitional period were not easy to resolve. By 1989 the popular discontent over the rampant corruption and lack of political freedom escalated into the Tiananmen Crisis, the most serious crisis of legitimacy the Communist regime ever faced. Had the old guards decided not to use the military force to put down the student demonstration, the party's unified leadership could have been ended, and the regime would have been destabilized or collapsed. The willingness to use coercion cooled down the hope for an overnight change to the country's political system, and gave the regime some time to make self-corrections to address the public criticism. Nevertheless, the horrifying experience cast shadow on the regime's impressive economic accomplishment, and undermined the regime's legitimacy even further. Deng soon retired, and passed away in a few years. He will most likely be remembered as the last strong man of the authoritarian regime since no one else has replaced him with the same level of prestige and charisma.<sup>60</sup> His programmatic re-interpretation of Marxism was later enshrined as "Deng Xiaoping Theory."

When Jiang Zeming stepped in as the new leader amid the 1989 crisis, he represented the coming era of technocrats. Without any strong revolutionary credentials or major personal achievements, he did not enjoy the same level of respect and unquestionable authority. He must now earn people's respect through his own efforts. Like Deng, he continued to take a hard-line towards political reforms. But he has been more willing to further liberalize the economy. Under him, a full-scale urban reform program was launched, and some major breakthroughs were made. Most small and medium-sized enterprises were sold, merged or bankrupted. Stock ownership was used to diversify business property rights. The state's share of the overall economy declined quickly. The private and foreign owned companies mushroomed. The total foreign direct investments exceeded US\$400 billion. The average growth rate was kept at 8-9 percent for a decade. China successfully avoided the financial crisis of East Asia in the late 1990s.

The sustained economic growth brought significant improvement to people's living standard. China's population in poverty went down from 20% in 1981 to about 5% in 1997, and average per capita GDP in the same period increased from US\$200 to US\$750. The Engel Index in the urban areas dropped from 57.5% to 37.9% between 1978 and 2001, and in the rural areas, the Index also dropped from 67.7 to 47.8.<sup>61</sup>

The return of Hong Kong and Macao as well as being awarded the right to host the 2008 Olympic Game by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) also increased public confidence and national pride. These successes seem to have strengthened the regime's legitimacy. According to a survey of Beijing residents conducted by Chen Jie, *et al* in 1995, the regime enjoyed a moderately high level of affective support (citizen's evaluation of governmental legitimacy), and this provided a reservoir of diffused support that the system could draw upon in the future.<sup>62</sup> Another survey of Beijing residents in 1995 also found no apparent public pressure for democracy.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, the economic success had its cost. Among many other things, the growing economic inequality was the most troubling one. According Chinese official statistic, China's Gini Co-efficient, an international accepted measurement of the degree of inequality in the distribution of income in a given society, rose from a low level of 0.33 in 1980, to 0.40 in 1994, and 0.46 in 2000. China now joins these countries that have the worst records of unequal distribution of wealth.<sup>64</sup> The main cause of this dismal statistics has a lot to do with the widening income gap between the rural and urban areas. After a decade of agricultural recovery as a result of the initial rural reform, peasants have been once again left behind. Over 90 million of rural peasants have now become migrant workers floating between cities seeking jobs. To reduce the employment pressure, the government has called for the acceleration of the urbanization process and the reform of the household registration system.

Efforts were made to establish a social safety net to help people to better protect themselves in the era of market reform. A major reshuffle of the social security system, the health insurance system, the poverty relief program, unemployment and the insurance system were launched in 1992. The new social security network is quite extensive, yet it still covers primarily urban employees or one tenth of the total population. Peasants that make up sixty percent of the population still live without too much protection against aging, sickness, poverty, and unemployment. According to the official statistics, by the end of 2002, there were 147 million workers and retirees enrolled in the Old-age Insurance Program, 94 million enrolled in the Basic Medical Insurance Program, 101 million enrolled in the Unemployment Insurance program, 44 million enrolled in the Industrial Injuries Insurance Program, and 34 million enrolled in the Childbirth Insurance Program.<sup>65</sup> China still has a long way to go to perfect its social security system and to eliminate poverty. But, as China's economic strength continued to rise, the government will have plenty of opportunities to strengthen its legitimacy in this area.

During the Jiang era, the CCP's original justification for political legitimacy continued to erode. Jiang Zeming attempted to build up his personal image as a charismatic leader, but had little success. Official corruption got even worse. The exposure of corruption cases involving high-ranking officials, such as Cheng Kejie, the former vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC, and Li Jiating, the former governor of Yunnan, did little to repair the damages that had been done to the image of the Party.

The relationship between the CCP and the industrial workers has also been deteriorating quickly. The foundation of the communist rule used to be based on a socialist social contract between the party-state and the working class. At the end of Jiang's tenure this contract was essentially non-existent. The equal relationship between enterprise cadres and workers was gone when the wage labor system was restored. Over 50 millions workers of state-owned factories were either being laid off or were forced to accept early retirement.<sup>66</sup> According to Feng Tongqing, the relationship between workers and enterprise management "is now based primarily on an exchange of economic interests rather than on cooperative comradeship or collectivity."<sup>67</sup> In private enterprises, violation of workers' rights is a serious problem. In some worst cases, intimidation, physical violence, corporal punishment, and restriction of workers' freedom were reported.<sup>68</sup> The numbers of labor disputes have increased from 28,000 in 1992 to 181,000 in 2002.<sup>69</sup> The government agencies

at the local levels are weak in enforcing its own labor standard laws, but are harsh on labor activists who dare to organize strikes or independent unions.<sup>70</sup>

Jiang realized that in order for the CCP to survive in this environment of rapid social and economic changes, the Party must accelerate the process of transforming itself from a revolutionary party to a ruling party. The "theory of three represents" that he proposed before his semi-retirement in 2002 is part of the ideological reconstruction of the CCP. The theory is aimed at broadening the party's social support and boosting the party's image as a party of the people. With his strong lobbying effort, the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress officially adopted the new theory as a part of the party's new mission statement in 2002. However, what has most discussed about this new theory is the acceptance of private entrepreneurs to become party members. The theory helps justify the fact that one-third of the two million plus private business are actually owned by CCP members. These "red capitalists" employ over 7 million workers and control an estimated 600 billion RMB capital assets.<sup>71</sup> But their overall number is still very small. It is unclear to what extent their presence within the party will make any difference.

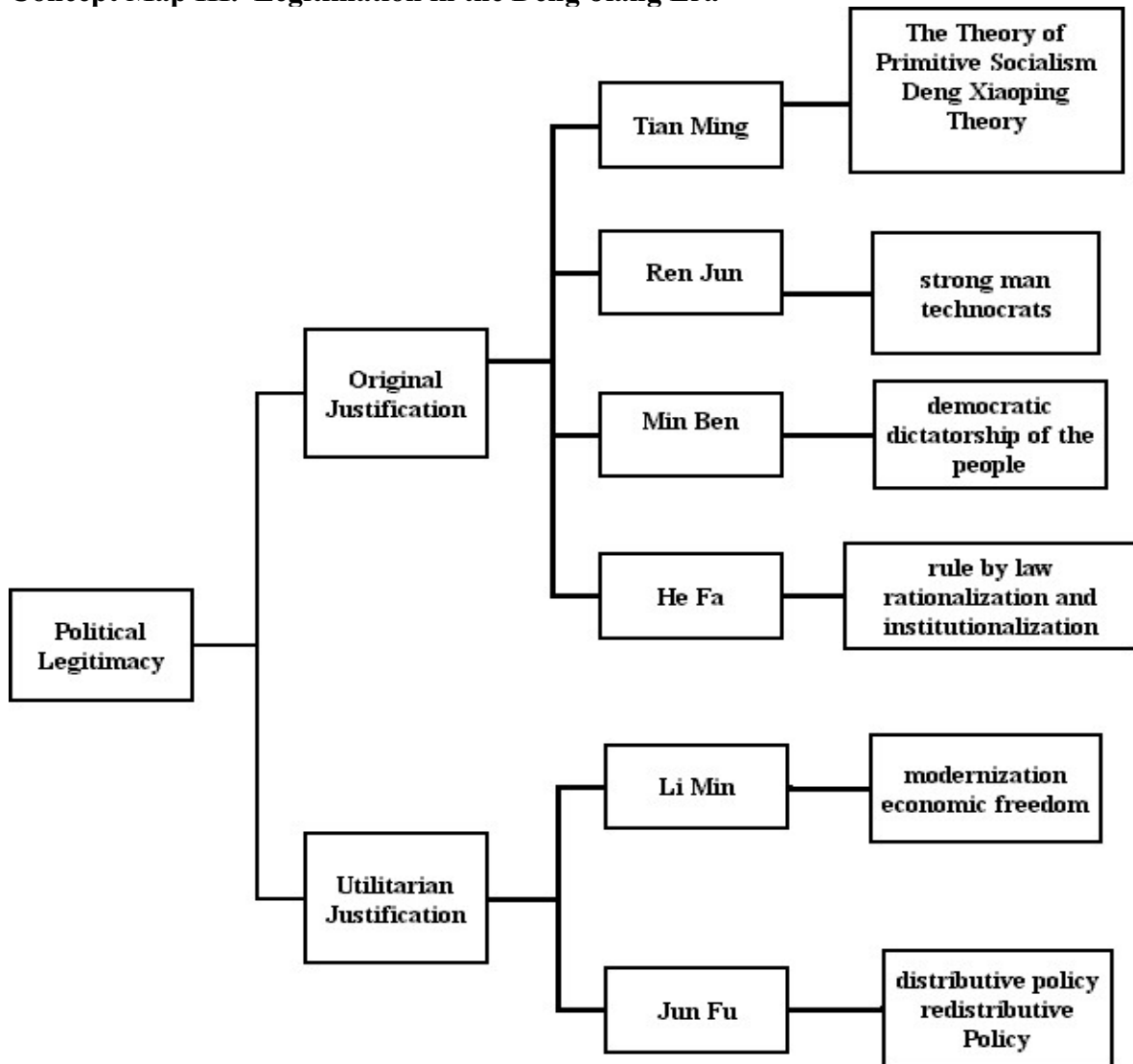
In sum, the basis for the party-state's legitimacy during the Deng-Jiang era significantly differs from the Maoist era. While at the Maoist era, the CCP relied on the revolution as a basis for legitimation, it relied primarily on rationalization as a basis for legitimation during the post-Mao era. Legitimation during this era can be illustrated in concept map III.

### **THE ERA OF HU JINTAO: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The 16<sup>th</sup> CCP Party Congress, held in November 2002, and the 10<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress, held in March 2003, completed the power transfer from the so-called third generation to the fourth one. The new leaders have pledged to continue the work of reforms began two decades ago. Wen Jiabao, the newly-elected Premier, vowed to focus more on the sustainable and comparatively rapid development of the national economy and improvement of people's living standards. He put the issues of unemployment, the social security system, increasing fiscal revenue and cutting public spending, and correcting and standardizing the economic order as his top priorities. It is apparent that the new administration is determined to push for a new type reform that will deal with the problems in economic equality and social justice.

The new leaders are all technocrats.<sup>72</sup> All of them joined the CCP after 1949, and they are therefore lacking revolutionary credentials. But they have accepted the Marxist ideology, and will not easily abandon that outlook. They all experienced the turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution and had many years of grass-root level working experience. They are all college educated and are proven problem solvers and practical bureaucrats. However, very few of them attended schools or worked in Western countries. They are still not familiar or comfortable with Western style democracy and may even share the xenophobic feeling existing among some Chinese groups. They are all selected by the old generations and are still working under the shadow of their old patrons. The lack of independent sources of legitimacy is therefore one of their weaknesses.<sup>73</sup> Their backgrounds indicate, although not totally, at least three things: Firstly, they are not going to "rock the boat,"<sup>74</sup> and they will continue to rationalize the system by focusing more on rules, procedures, and institutions. Secondly, they are very vulnerable and can be victimized by



**Concept Map III. Legitimation in the Deng-Jiang Era**

the unpredictable inner party power struggles. Lastly, in order to consolidate their power, they will need to make necessary changes to boost their popular images and utilitarian based achievements.

It is still too early to assess the new policies of the new administration. The outbreak of the SARS epidemic in the first half of the 2003 certainly has disrupted the work of the new government. However, the crisis did provide an opportunity for the new leaders to demonstrate their ability to handle a major national crisis like SARS, and, more importantly, their ability to restore public confidence. Since the outbreak of the SARS epidemic, the government handled very poorly in sharing of information with the public initially. Its credibility suffered enormously as a result. After hearing the open criticism from the World Health Organization (WTO), the newly elected government officials acted swiftly. The Minister of Health and the Mayor of Beijing were fired. Emergency quarantines were implemented, and SARS treatment centers and hospitals were established. After three

months of intensive efforts, the SARS outbreak was eventually contained for the time being. The SARS scenario not only showed the crisis management skills of this new administration, but also demonstrated the ability of the government to utilize the vast amount of national resources and organizational networks it still controls to combat a major epidemic outbreak.

Modernization and economic development will continue to be the primary focus of the new administration. The 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress has recommended quadrupling China GDP again in the next two decades. If China achieves this goal, it will have a ten trillion dollar economy (US dollars). This will most likely put China's economy on top of the world, second only to the United States. The sustained, rapid economic development will continue to boost the regime's legitimacy, but it may weaken it as well.<sup>75</sup> If the rise of people's expectation consistently exceeds what the economic growth can provide, the level of frustration will increase, and a crisis can occur even in a seemingly very good economic time. The growing unemployment, the widening gap between the rich and poor, the troubled financial sectors, the increase in labor disputes and peasant protests, the unstoppable official corruptions, the persistence of separatist movements, and the issue of Taiwan, are all serious challenges the new leaders will have to face.<sup>76</sup>

After becoming the Party's new General Secretary, Hu Jintao has delivered several major speeches. His governing philosophy has been gradually revealed. Like his predecessors, Hu holds strong *men ben* and *li min* ideas. Hu reinterprets the essence of Jiang's "three represents" as "three peoples," namely, "use my power for the people, link my feelings to the people, and focus my heart on the pursuit of public welfare."<sup>77</sup> In addition, the importance of the Constitution, rule of law, and the supremacy of laws are reemphasized. In a speech to a meeting celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the 1982 Constitution, Hu made it clear that all parties must live within the confines of the Constitution, and respect the authority of the Constitution. He acknowledged that the existing Constitution has not been observed adequately, and that the Constitution itself is also in need of amendment.<sup>78</sup> The process of amending the Constitution is already on the way. A working committee on constitutional amendment has been formed. A final proposal will be discussed by the upcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> plenary session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee, and will most likely be adopted during next year's NPC annual meeting. But do not expect major breakthrough yet. The new amendment is expected to formally endorse Jiang's theory, and strengthen the protection of private property.

Under Hu's leadership, the new administration promised new styles and new thinking to win over people's hearts and minds. For example, the official ceremony for leaders' foreign visitation has been simplified and the size of the delegations reduced.<sup>79</sup> The annual informal meeting and gathering in the Beidaihe Resort was cancelled this year. New efforts were made to humanize public policies. The exposure of the Sun Zhigang case by the media, for example, caused public outrage over how people were treated under the system of urban detention of homeless people.<sup>80</sup> The State Council acted very quickly to issue a new decree to abolish the system of detention for people who are homeless or without identification, and replaced it with a new system of homeless assistance. All former detention centers now have been converted to Public Assistance Stations to render assistances to people in need on a voluntary basis. I took a sample of news items in the official media on August 8, 2003 when I wrote this paper, and the following items were

among that day's headline:

- (1) Government-run official union issued a circular calling for unionization of migrant workers so they will be able to better protect their economic rights. The same circular also calls for the governments at all levels to force employers to purchase Industrial Accident Insurance for these workers.<sup>81</sup>
- (2) The Ministry of Public Safety just announced thirty measures to simplify the procedures for people who apply for household registration documents, passport, driver's license, and traveling abroad. Citizens in 100 major cities are no longer required to get their work unit's permission prior to applying for travel documents for overseas travel.<sup>82</sup> The similar requirements will soon be removed for marriage and divorce as well.<sup>83</sup>
- (3) The infamous population control policy has been relaxed in Beijing to allow more people to have second child.<sup>84</sup> Many other provinces or cities have already implemented such new policies.

These types of day-to-day changes have far-reaching significance. They show that individual freedom is expanding, and citizens' rights are better protected more. This helps create a positive image of a kinder and gentler government. If this process continues, the government's popularity and social support will likely be strengthened.

Hu's philosophy of "governing for the people" has been very popular among people. But it may also have its limits. For example, Hu has consistently emphasized the need to strengthen the party's leadership instead of putting restrictions on it. He continues to stress the need for a government "for the people" instead of "by the people." One wonders what's new in this line of thinking. Is this the same old rhetoric of father-son benevolence advocated by Confucianism two thousand years ago? Chinese traditional political philosophers all recognize the fundamental importance of the people. However they insist that the ruler is like a parent and should rule as such.

Paternalism is not true democracy,<sup>85</sup> because it is justified by a claim that those people interfered with by the state will be better off or protected from harm. The idea of democracy is based on political equality and popular sovereignty, not on "happy slaves."<sup>86</sup> Democracy assumes that people know their own interests better, and they can make better decisions on their own without being patronized. The idea of a party-state, however, is based on the assumption that the party knows best what is good for the people, and people cannot be allowed to decide for themselves if they want to be led by the party or not.

This is by far the weakest link in the party-state's moral justification. It is becoming increasingly irrational and unconvincing to more and more people. It needs to be rationalized and legalized. The essence of political democratization is "returning governing to its people." The focus of this administration is still on the "governing for the people." Therefore, one should not have unrealistic expectations about the "new deal" which the new leadership is about to launch during their tenure.

The process to institutionalize a rational-legal legitimacy will probably take many years to accomplish. There are many plausible reasons for that. First, without internal changes in the CCP's guiding theory and structure, substantial political changes are not going to happen anytime soon. The "theory of three represents" is just a beginning, not an

end, of such a theoretical reconstruction. There are discussions latterly about the possibility of developing an intra-party democracy. It is reported that the CCP is considering strengthening the function of party committees within the party, empowering party congresses to expand the base of power, and increasing intra-party competition.<sup>87</sup>

Secondly, even if the Party decides to endorse democratization, the legitimacy of the newly installed free market institutions may actually be undermined since the traditional Chinese culture put so much emphasis on social harmony, group cooperation, state intervention, and social equality.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, some have argued that the reason why the CCP is unwilling to speed up political reform is that China's economic success has delayed political reform.<sup>89</sup> The government is afraid that political reform will disrupt economic reform and let out the accumulated strong anti-capitalist sentiments such as those manifested by the laborers and peasants in recent years.

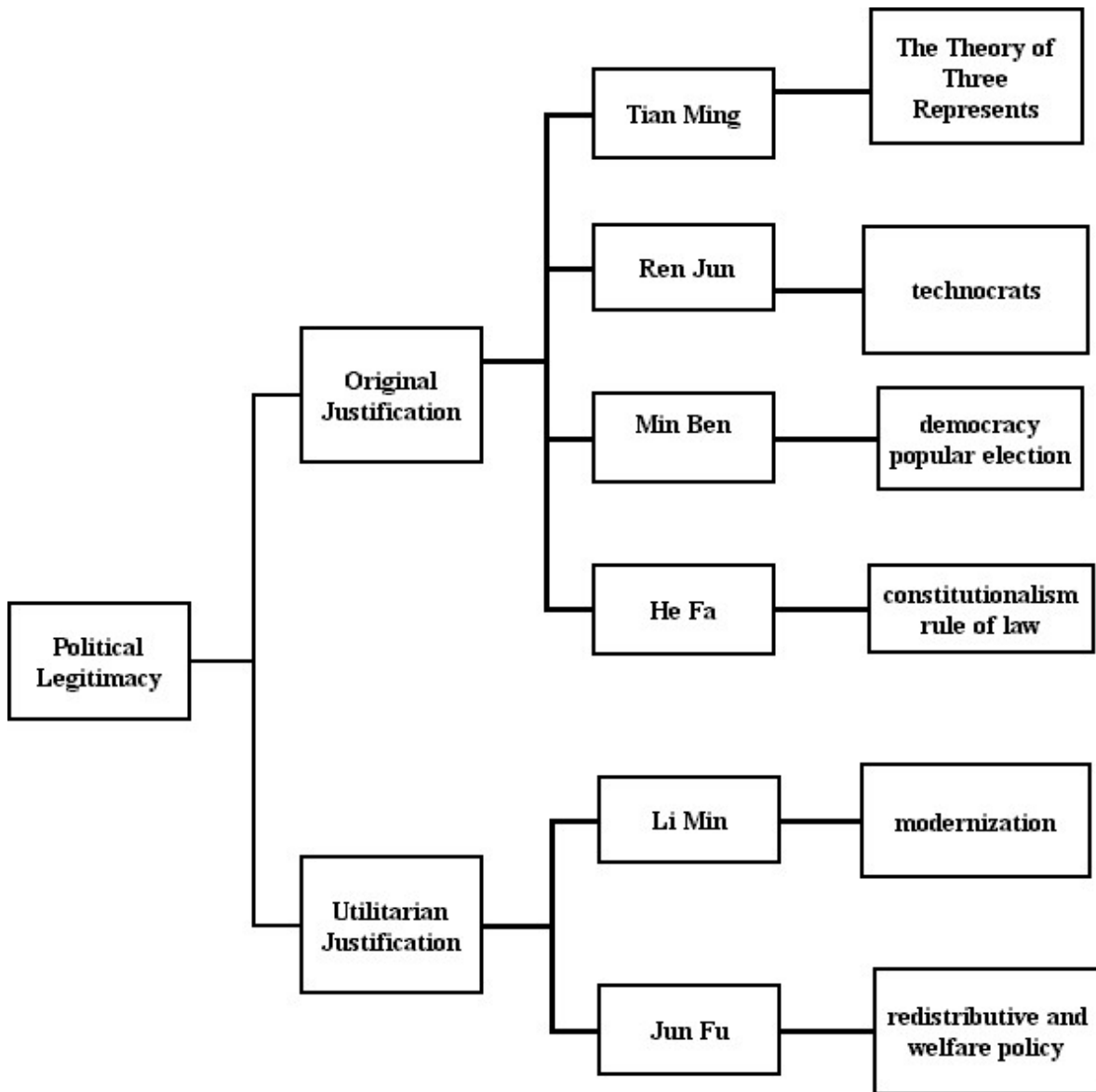
Thirdly, the transition from a revolutionary party to a governing party will face some serious theoretical challenges. Can the legitimacy of the CCP be based upon the will of majority of the people? Can the CCP be transformed from one class's party to a party of all people? Can Jiang's theory of "three represents" be materialized? Pan Yue, a known advocate of political reform within the CCP, points out that asking the CCP to represent all people may cause a problem of over representation, and this practice may actually violates the basic political principle of a party system. But he insists that this is not a theoretical issue. It is simply rectifying the fact.<sup>90</sup> Cao Siyuan, another well-known scholar, suggests that the party needs to change its name to "socialist party," to allow open competitions within the party, and to reform the party's finance.<sup>91</sup>

Lastly, to institute the rule of law and a system of democratic elections among a population of 1.3 billion is a daunting task. The current village-level elections have already been in place for a decade. It is very likely the system will be moved to a higher level. But Deng Xiaoping personally predicted that popular elections of state leaders would not be carried out for another fifty years.

Overall, this fourth generation of leaders will not bring China into a fully functional democracy, but will pave the road for its coming. Hu and other Politburo members have too much at stake in the existing system. Although some limited political reform programs will be carried out, the most likely scenario in this decade will be continued political liberalization without democratization. Incremental reform will likely to be the main pattern of political reform in China in the next couple of decades. The following diagram illustrates the possible course of action the current political leaders may take to move towards a new rational-legal legitimacy in China in the years to come. The changes that are anticipated during the Hu's era are illustrated in concept map IV.

## CONCLUSION

As a society in transition, Chinese Communist leaders have faced constant challenges to their political power. Like their predecessors, they have had to make frequent changes to strengthen their moral and utilitarian justifications, the two key components of political legitimacy. While the first generation of CCP leaders led by Mao relied heavily on using the revolution as a basis for legitimacy, the second and third generations had relied

**Concept Map IV. A New Rational-Legal Legitimation in China**

primarily on rationalization and institutionalization in the past two decades. Programatism and technocracy replaced idealism and personality cult that characterized the first generation. Economic development, instead of class struggle, became the top priority of the nation. As the fourth generation leaders take over the government, they, too, face the challenge of rebuilding the system of legitimation.

What we have learned from the history of the People's Republic of China is that the CCP is quite capable of making necessary adaptations to the constantly changing political environment and, thus, they can strengthen the CCP's political legitimacy by reinventing

itself. The new leaders are likely to continue to make evolutionary adjustments to redefine the CCP's legitimacy base. However, there is no guarantee that the evolutionary change will continue to be successful. In order to make its legitimacy stronger, for example, Beijing has to legitimize political participation from different social groups both inside and outside of the CCP. So far there has been no sign of such a change. But there has been some discussion of broadening inner party democracy. Many believe that China's coming transformation will "likely include measures to legitimize independent social organizations, give citizen groups increased input in policy making (in exchange for some limits on their activities), and develop greater intra-party democracy."<sup>92</sup>

The Chinese perception of legitimacy is deep-rooted in its historical and political traditions. However, this understanding also has its universal underpinning. The analytical framework developed in this paper synthesizes the findings of many existing studies. It provides theoretical reference points that can be used in the study of regime change and political transition in China, and, more importantly, it is constructed in a larger framework of comparative politics and political legitimacy theory. It, therefore, could be used as a theoretical framework of a broader comparative scope in the comparative study of political legitimacy across nations and regions around the globe. That is to say, although this theoretical framework is developed and used in Chinese context, some of the concepts used in this study can be further refined, amended, or adapted in other cultural contexts. This analytical framework can be applied to the study of political legitimacy elsewhere and can be tested and enriched by more empirical studies in different cultural setting.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Francois Mengin and Jean-Louis Rocca, *Politics in China: Moving Frontiers* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Tzy C. Peng, "The Middle Class in China," *Chinese American Forum*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2001, pp. 19-23.

<sup>3</sup> Zhao Suisheng, ed., *China and Democracy: Reconsidering the Prospect for a Democratic China* (New York: Rutledge, 2001); Jim Frederick, "Thriving in the Middle Kingdom: China Burgeoning Middle Class Holds the Key to the Future of the Country," *Time Magazine*,

[http://www.time.com/time/asia/features/china\\_cul\\_rev/middle\\_class.html](http://www.time.com/time/asia/features/china_cul_rev/middle_class.html)

<sup>4</sup> Zhengmin, "Hu Jintao Acknowledged the Crisis of Governance," *Boxun News*, <http://www.boxun.com>

<sup>5</sup> The three represents include: the CCP must represent the development trends of advanced productive forces, the orientations of an advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people of China. It is first proposed by the former CCP party chief Jiang Zeming.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Chang, *Coming Collapse of China* (New York: Random House, 2001); Ross Terrill, *New Chinese Empire: and What It Means for the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); Joe Studwell, *The China Dream: The Quest for the Last Great Untapped Market on Earth* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> For example, political scientist Bruce J Dickson believed that the CCP couldn't be transformed itself into a democratic party for its lack adaptability; see *Democratization in China and Taiwan: The Adaptability of Leninist Parties* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Feng Chen, "The Dilemma of Eudemonic Legitimacy in Post Mao China," *Polity*, vol. 29, no. 3, Spring 1997, p. 422.

<sup>9</sup> Allan Buchanan, "Political Legitimacy and Democracy," *Ethics*, vol. 112, no. 4, July 2002, pp. 689- 270.

<sup>10</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political man*, expanded ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981)

<sup>11</sup> David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1991), p. 11.

- <sup>12</sup> Roy Macridis and Steven Burg use the concepts of “affective support” and “instrumental support,” which is similar to the concepts used here. See Roy C. Macridis and Steven Burg, *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Regimes and Changes* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), pp. 8-12.
- <sup>13</sup> Feng Chen, “The Dilemma,” p. 423.
- <sup>14</sup> Aristotle considers the *eudemonia* to be a process instead of a state of happiness. See Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Book X, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1985).
- <sup>15</sup> John Kane, *The Politics of Moral Capital* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- <sup>16</sup> Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).
- <sup>17</sup> Rodney Barjer, *Political Legitimacy and the State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 52.
- <sup>18</sup> Saint Augustine: *The City of God Against the Pagans/Books Xii-XV* (Loeb, No. 414) [Abridged] trans. Philip Levine.
- <sup>19</sup> Jacques Benigne Bossuet, *Political Treatise*, in J. H. Robinson, ed. *Readings in European History*, 2 vols. (Boston: Ginn, 1906), vol.2, pp. 273-277.
- <sup>20</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, trans. D.C. Lau (New York: Penguin, 1979).
- <sup>21</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, ed. Allen Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1991).
- <sup>22</sup> Li Cunshan, “Rujia de renben yu renquan (Humanism and Human Rights in Confucianism),” *Yuandao*, vol.7, no.18, 2003, <http://www.yuandao.com/zazhi/7ji/rjdmbyrq.html>
- <sup>23</sup> Mencius: IV A:9 , cited in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, eds. WM Theodore de Bary, et al.(New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 93.
- <sup>24</sup> Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. D.C. Lau (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1970).
- <sup>25</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the principles of morals and Legislation* (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1948[1789]), p. I.
- <sup>26</sup> Lucian W. Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1988), p.165.
- <sup>27</sup> Roger T. Ames, *The Art of Rulership: A Study of Ancient Chinese Political Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 156.
- <sup>28</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*.
- <sup>29</sup> Samuel Huntington: *Third Wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma University Press, 1991).
- <sup>30</sup> Mencius, Book 3a sec. 4, tans. By D.C. Lau (London,1970), cited in Schrecker, *Chinese Revolution*, 23
- <sup>31</sup> Baogang Guo, “Old Paradigms, New Paradigms and Democratic Changes in China,” *China in the Post-Deng Era*, Ch. 4, eds. Xiaobo Hu & Gang Lin (Singapore: University of Singapore Press, 2001); Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company; 1997).
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