Peacemaking in Confucianism
The Warring States Period
(475-221 BCE)

The warring states was a time in Chinese history when leading families fought deadly civil wars. Shattered by their losses, people eventually engaged in discussions called a “Hundred Schools of Thought.” Four of these schools- Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism, and Mohism- emerged prominently in this period and produced ideas which endure to this day.
Positive Peace Visions in China about 500 BCE

Confucius said “Rulers should govern to insure the happiness of the people.” and “What you do not wish done to you, do not do to others.” “Live in harmony with yourself, and be at peace with all humanity.”

Mencius said “Benevolent governance will strengthen the state.”

Mozi formulated a universal conception of morality and held “Universal caring for each other will bring universal love.”

Sun Tzu “Use of force should be a last resort.”
Legalism
While Confucianism, Taoism, and Mohism all stood for positive peace, many people would say Legalism, founded by Han Fei Tzu, represented negative peace. It promoted strict laws and a powerful, authoritarian government. It favored severe punishments and believed everyone should take full responsibility for seeing that the law was strictly obeyed. Political dissent was a high crime punishable by death. To stay in power, rulers should crush opposition. The government arrested dissidents and rebels.
Confucianism

- 5 Sacred Relationships will promote order, justice, and stability
  - Wife obeys husband, Children obey parents, Younger children obey older children, Friend is loyal to Friend, all People obey Emperor
- Ancestor Worship, Work Ethic, Human Heartedness, Reciprocity
- Written down in Analects
There was a pacifist character to Confucianism because it emphasized sociability through concepts such as *ren* (humanness and benevolence), *ji* (justice), *shu* (knowing what other people want), and *li* (rules of proper behavior).

Traditional, original Confucianism even taught that politically the people should be the arbiters of the standards upheld under the Emperor’s Mandate of Heaven.
Nevertheless, in Confucius’ times, his teachings were not accepted, and his ideas for virtue were not in favor. Rather, people who promoted wealth and power, military generals and strategists who maximized their own advantages, legal administrators and economists who worked in jobs taxing and conscripting people had the upper hand.

These civil servants sometimes paid bribes, disguised their intentions, and manipulated appearances despite the backdrop of the Zhou dynasty’s (1122-256 BCE) principled norms of interstate relations – no surprise attack, no attacking a state whose ruler just died, no employing someone who used to work for the enemy, no harming enemy convoys, killing POW’s, or injuring civilians.
For all of the high ideals and peace visions of Confucius, Mencius, Lao Tzu, and Mozi, in actuality peace in their times was merely a state of non-war imposed on small states by larger states. This framework seemed to mirror what the Greeks of this era thought “It is the law of nature that the strong dominate the weak.”
Confucian Peacemaking in Imperial China (221 BCE-1911 CE)

Huang Di, China’s first emperor, ruthlessly conquered China’s first empire and ruled using Legalist principles. Strict laws and harsh punishments were put in effect. A very mixed Confucian pacifist/militarist heritage emerged.
Han Dynasty rulers claimed to rule with Confucian benevolence, but they actually employed the harsh Legalism of the Qin Dynasty in their governance. Expanding the borders of the empire, they conquered neighboring lands and used harsh laws and brutal punishments to control their own people.

Thus original, traditional Confucianism turned into imperial Confucianism. Imperial Confucianism was actually Legalism with a Confucian patina. It became a common mode of governing during the imperial period of Chinese history, from 221 BCE to 1911 CE.
Under original, traditional Confucianism, the Emperor was vested with the Mandate of Heaven to rule with the Chinese people as arbiters of heavenly standards. But what actually happened was the Emperor himself, as the Son of Heaven, became the arbiter of the Mandate of Heaven. He decided what the heavenly standards should be. If anyone refused to submit to the Emperor’s wishes, they were shamed, vilified, and harshly punished. Bandits and rebels were crushed. Foreigners were required to kowtow and pay tribute to the Emperor.
A lengthy Confucian exam to enter government service required years of study. This exam tested applicants on the original, traditional Confucian classics. But later, scholars who passed the exams and got jobs working for the government realized the original Confucian principles of benevolence, goodness and respect were often compromised and weakened by military campaigns against foreigners and punitive campaigns against domestic rebels and dissenters.

Chinese Emperors, to their credit, did make every effort to provide relief aid for the victims of earthquakes, storms, drought and famine. They maintained large state warehouses full of food for these emergencies.
The Chinese tribute system, which required foreigners to bring gifts and pay tribute to the Chinese emperor, facilitated diplomatic exchanges only if the foreigners publicly acknowledged Chinese superiority. Diplomats from Vietnam, Korea, and Japan submitted to this practice because they did admire Chinese Confucian civilization and wanted to maintain good relations with the Chinese.

But this ritual was specified on Chinese terms and the tribute system in itself was a form of Chinese expansionism and coercive foreign policy. China was considered superior at the top of a hierarchy of cultures.
Chinese upper class officials hung onto beliefs that they were superior and, therefore, they found it difficult to bring themselves to negotiate with Mongols who they considered “primitive barbarians.”

In the few instances in Chinese history when the Chinese were militarily weak and had to negotiate with foreigners from a position of weakness, they considered the “unequal treaties” humiliating. In those cases the Emperor justified the treaties to the Chinese people saying the use of force would be inappropriate under Confucian principles and the need to give people a break from war was evident.
Examples of Unequal Treaties

• Treaty between Tang Dynasty and Tibet 783 CE

• Treaty of Shanyuan 1005 (Northern Song paid Mongols silk and silver to stop fighting)

• Opium War Treaties with Britain, France and US to pay for opium seized and allow trade and European presence in China (1842 and 1860)
Conclusions about Chinese Imperial Government

- Chinese Emperors used a mix of authoritarian Legalism and original Confucianism as their two ruling doctrines. Confucianism was used to embellish and sugarcoat harsh Legalist practices that underlay imperial China. Taoism and Buddhism offered positive spiritual outlooks through the centuries which softened the harshness of Legalism.

- Chinese foreign policy manifested the considerable pride Chinese officials had in China’s imperial civilization. When China endured periods of weakness and division and was forced to negotiate treaties from weakness, it did so with great humiliation.
The Chinese People

Even though the Chinese government may have used Legalism through the centuries, the Chinese people tried to live by the best beliefs of traditional Confucianism. *Ren* is their obligation of altruism and human heartedness to family and other people. *Yi* is their moral obligation to do good and be fair. *Li* is proper behavior and etiquette in everyday life.
Everyday signs of peace in China

Chinese street names

• Beautiful water street
• Peaceful road
• Humanity Road
• Brotherly Love Road
• Ever Healthy Street
• Harmony
• Kindhearted
• Fidelity
• Restoration
• 8 Virtues

Take 8 Virtues to Restoration, turn right, then take Restoration to Fidelity.
Tien An Men
Heavenly Peace Square
城管队员向您提示：
为塑造中国公民的良好形象，做大家自律行为，做文明游客。

May we remind you: Please be self-restraint and be a good tourist to mold a well-mannered imagination.
LUXURIANT GRASSLAND PLEASE DON'T TRAMPLE

芝生に入らないでください
Bibliography


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