

Religious solutions

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My name is Huang Li-liang and I am a political and policy advisor to our leader, Jung Shang. As a legalist, and expert in government affairs, I have observed that our country has slowly deteriorated, and I believe that it is time for me to offer assistance to my fellow countrymen in solving this problem.

It is apparent that our ruler, Jung Shang, has become weak, inefficient, and corrupt, and therefore, our people are likely to revolt. Shang does not inflict discipline and punishment where it is due and all members of his government are merely his friends; I have only managed to gain the position as his advisor by being a friend of his father, Piao Shang. The people of our once great country of China are now angry and undisciplined. Their crimes are unacceptable yet our ruler accepts their disrespect. The citizens steal from one another, they incite riots and engage in conflicts which cause great unease and chaos in our country. I believe that it is time to change our system of government and therefore, I will offer three possible solutions, Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism, to resolve our country's current crisis.

As a Legalist, I believe that Legalism is the most effective solution, however to be fair, I will explain the facts relating to each form of government, as well as the potential results that will arise via each of these rules of law. One of these three options should replace the system of laws utilized by our current government. The first government policy to examine is Confucianism. Based upon this philosophy, which was founded by Confucius, a Chinese thinker, our country could be reformed by a change of ethical code. While Confucianism stipulates that man is capable of pondering and understanding philosophical questions that are deemed abstruse, it is also believed that

these types of quandaries would not solve society's social and political issues. Additionally, followers of Confucius' ideology believe that political harmony would not come about through bureaucracy, rather by the appropriate categorization of human relationships, with the focus placed upon " junzi," which are superior individuals who are capable of dealing with political and social affairs.

This Confucian code of ethics emphasizes the principles of ren, li and xiao. Ren requires that all citizens remain altruistic and humane towards other individuals in their community. Through Li, citizens are directed to uphold righteousness and moral goodness towards one other. Additionally, in living by xiao, a system of filial piety, citizens are required to respect their elders. Based upon these principles of benevolence, crime rates could potentially decrease due to a general love for one's fellow man.

However, it is unreasonable to expect all citizens to modify their ways in order to conform into the perfect ethical and moral person, as man is ultimately ruled by his untamable emotions and corresponding opinions. Chaos would ensue, as there would be no penalty to keep society in check. Therefore, Confucianism seems an illogical and irrational choice of government. The next form of government to consider in order to solve the problem of corruption and inefficiency is Daoism. With this rule of law, our country might be rescued through passivism and faith.

As outlined in the wuwei, Daoists believe that individuals should not pursue issues that are thought to be beyond man's intelligence or his ability to comprehend those challenges; nor that he should strive to achieve more

than his fellow citizen, but rather that man should work to understand society's and nature's basic character, and how best to find harmony in that relationship. Furthermore, Daoism focuses on the effort that man must make in understanding the governing principles of nature, as well as to focus on self reflection in order to find harmony. Therefore, if all men emphasize an introspective approach to living, over the extent of their lifetime, as well as refrain from worrying about matters beyond their own intellect, then harmony would ultimately be achieved. As noted in the Daodejing, a Daoist text, dao is the force of the cosmos, an everlasting and unchanging principle that rules over all of the world. However, it is a passive force, soft and yielding, but so powerful that it washes away all resistance (Traditions and Encounters153).

Basically, individuals should follow this ideology while refraining from any involvement in political affairs; they should just live simply. However, while this rule of law for society is appealing, what is to come when citizens disagree on the message of this cosmic force? How will they react when their government attempts to rule based upon this “ force,” but man's interpretation of the message diverges from the government's perspective and mandate? How will citizens feel should the government become corrupt again while acting in the name of this cosmic force? Through Daoism, our citizens may be united in their pacifist endeavors, but how will the more complex and serious issues of running our country be addressed if no one takes action to solve our problems? Furthermore, Daoists believe that all of life's circumstances or conflicts occur according to dao, or “ the Way,” and they mustn't be altered or prevented because it is a result of this force of the

cosmos. While it can be argued that a world of ease and passivity is attractive, chaos would result, as the work of running the country and solving both domestic and foreign issues needs to be considered in order for our society to flourish. The final resolution to consider is Legalism. Under this rule of law, our government would be founded upon strict laws, as well as logic and rational thought. Consequently, emotions would be laid aside.

If a citizen were to break the laws set in place, he would be punished, and a punishment's severity would depend upon the harshness of the crime.

According to The Book of Lord Shang, which encompasses the doctrine of Shang Yang, a Chinese Chief Minister to the duke of the Qin state in western China, society's strength should be based upon its military prowess as well as its success in agricultural pursuits. Additionally, the idea is that strictly defined laws, combined with severe penalties would keep the citizens in check and therefore harmony and peace would be achieved. Furthermore, the Legalistic belief that a "principle of collective responsibility" for upholding the country's laws would prevent crime is imperative, as family members would face severe punishment if they failed to report a violation to government officials. Therefore, the government's goal would solely be to strengthen and expand the state ruthlessly and with no leniency once the laws and their corresponding penalties are established.

Additionally, the government's laws would not be based upon ethics or nature but rather to keep the state and its people disciplined and structured, in order to avoid inefficiency, weakness and corruption. However, it must be noted that due to the severity and strictness of a Legalist government, rebellion is a possibility, but with firm, clearly mandated laws which are

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enforced with a strong military, there should be no dissent. Therefore, after examining each government policy, I believe that Legalism is the most effective form of government to establish in order to solve the problems of crime and disorder stemming from the corrupt leader in our country. It has been proven in the past to be an extremely successful method. For example, Legalism was the only system of government that solved the problems in China during the Period of the Warring States.

This proves the effectiveness of Legalism, so it is the most practical rule of law for our country to follow. It is not an option for our citizens to simply continue in this manner, as they must change their lawless behavior, otherwise our society will crumble into anarchy. Since Daoism and Confucianism leave room for free thinking with no consequences, this allows room for dissent, which will very likely lead to rebellion. Conversely, Legalism provides a structured and absolute system of law, while Confucianism and Daoism direct citizens to possess morals and faith with no governmental control. Moreover, Legalism simply requires obedience to the government to prevent chaos. Therefore, I believe that Legalism will save our country by ending the fear of a potentially destructive rebellion, as well as to reduce crime and disorder under the corrupt hand of our current government.