Mixture of Confucianism with Marxism: The May Fourth Aftermath and Confucius Institutes
The May Fourth Movement and CCP

- Many Chinese intellectuals realised the need to learn modern Western culture and ideas to strengthen China after the defeat by Japan in 1894 (甲午战争) and the beginning of the Reform Movement (维新运动) in 1895. Many studied Western ideas and thoughts in Europe and Japan.
- An increase of Western cultural influence in the cities of China since the late 19th Century through Western education institutes and Christian churches.
- Emergence of bourgeoisie class (e.g. capitalists) in the cities of China since the late 19th Century.
- A significant number of Chinese intellectuals influenced by modern Western culture and ideas emerged in the cities of China in 1910s.
• In response to the attempts to use Confucianism as a means to restore authoritarianism and imperial rule (e.g. Kang Youwei 康有为 launched the Confucian Religion Movement 孔教运动 to preserve Chinese traditional culture and establish Confucianism as the state religion of China in the early 1910s/ Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 promoted Confucian teachings to support his authoritarian rule and becoming the emperor between 1914 and 1916), as well as the intensification of foreign aggression (e.g. Japan’s Twenty One Demands二十一条款) in the 1910s, some Chinese intellectuals influenced by Western ideas and values criticised traditional Chinese culture (e.g. Confucianism, traditional family systems and ethics) as incompatible with modernity, hindering modernisation, inferior to and should be replaced by modern Western culture during the New Culture Movement (新文化運動).
• Chen Duxiu (陈独秀) was the founder of New Culture Movement/published New Youth 新青年 since 1915 to advocate modern Western ideas.

• In ‘The Way of Confucius and Modern Life 孔子之道与现代生活’ (1916), Chen argued that traditional moral codes, modes of thinking and customs closely linked with Confucianism were irrelevant to modern life. Chen criticised the attempt to impose the moral codes, customs and rites of the time of Confucius on modern people.

• Chen pointed out that the traditional Chinese family system and relations based on Confucian ethical principles like ‘Three Bonds’ (三纲) and ‘Filial Piety’ (孝) were incompatible with a modern political and economic system based on individual political belief and financial independence. The Confucian ethics which stressed hierarchy, authority and status were contradictory to modern Western ideas of equality and human rights.
• Chen was inspired by the Russian October Revolution in 1917 and shifted from advocating democracy to communism as the solution to China’s problems.
• Li Dazhao (李大钊) and Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白) also shifted from radical democrats to Marxists soon after the October Revolution.
• The Treaty of Versailles (凡尔赛和约) in 1919, which transferred Germany’s rights in Shandong (e.g. Qingdao 青岛) to Japan, sparked off the May Fourth Movement.
• The May Fourth Movement made many Chinese intellectuals (e.g. Hu Shi 胡适 and Fu Sinian 傅斯年) think traditional Chinese culture was a major cause of China’s problems and advocated the rejection of traditional Chinese culture, as well as using modern Western ideas (e.g. democracy and communism) as the solutions to China’s problems.
• After the May Fourth Movement, Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao continued to advocate Marxism, socialism and communism through *New Youth*/ Chinese communist party (CCP) was established in 1921 and Chen was elected secretary of the Central Bureau at the First National Congress of the CCP/ spread communism in China

• CCP retreated to the rural areas after Kuomintang (KMT) purged CCP members following the breakdown of the first cooperation between KMT and CCP (第一次国共合作) in 1927.

• The communist movement mixed with the peasant revolution in China.

• The Jiangxi Soviet (江西苏维埃) was established in 1931/ The CCP Red Army (红军) retreated (Long March 长征) from Jiangxi (江西) in October 1934 and arrived in Northern Shanxi (陕西) in October 1935.
• Mao Zedong (毛泽东) resumed the Red Army military command at the Zunyi Conference (遵义会议) in Jan 1935 during the Long March.
• Mao Zedong’s tactic of using the rural areas to encircle the cities (农村包围城市) was different from the revolutionary path of launching revolution in the city advocated by the Soviet Union and the Communist International.
• The Sinicization of Marxism-Leninism was in line with the need of using Marxism-Leninism to guide the Chinese peasant revolution.
Sinicized/ Confucianised Marxism

• The contents which adapted to the needs of the Chinese rural revolution was added to Marxism-Leninism, connecting the actual situation of China's revolution with Marxism-Leninism.
• Marxism-Leninism's basic principles of armed seizure of power combined with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, marking the formation of Mao Zedong Thought (毛泽东思想).
• The CCP peasant revolutionary leaders turned Marxism-Leninism into an ideology with moral idealism/ Marxism-Leninism mixed with Confucian moral idealism.
• The Seventh National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (中共七大) in 1945 stipulated Mao Zedong Thought as the guiding ideology of the CCP.
Mao classified Confucianism as part of the past to be overcome. In “On New Democratism” (新民主主义论) (1940), Mao claimed that those who worshipped Confucius and advocated reading the classics of Confucianism stood for old ethics, old rites and old thoughts, which were against the new culture and new thought. As imperialist culture and semi-feudal culture which served imperialism and the feudal class, they should be eliminated (在中国，又有半封建文化，这是反映半封建政治和半封建经济的东西，凡属主张尊孔读经、提倡旧礼教、旧思想、反对新文化新思想的人们，都是这类文化的代表。帝国主义文化和半封建文化是非常亲热的两兄弟，它们结成文化上的反动同盟，反对中国的新文化。这类反动文化是替帝国主义和封建阶级服务的，是应该被打倒的东西).
• Marxism became the official ideology of China after 1949.
• Traditional Chinese culture like Confucianism was criticised as ‘feudalism’ (封建主义) by CCP.
• CCP’s view that ancient Chinese culture should not be totally rejected but should be accepted discriminately/ the “critical inheritance” of Confucianism/ eliminated the “feudalistic waste” and unreasonable elements of Confucianism with the materialist critical spirit (唯物主义批判精神) and preserved those elements which were useful to building a socialist society
• Traditional culture like Confucianism were totally rejected as “old ideas, old culture, old customs, old habits” (Four Old 四旧) during the Cultural Revolution (文化大革命) of 1966 to 1976.
• As the official ideology of PRC, Marxism was Sinicized in the process of its dissemination in China (Sinicized Marxism).

• Scholars like Jin Guantao (金观涛) have pointed out the mixture of Marxism with Confucianism (Confucianised Marxism 儒家化的马克思主义) in China under the People’s Republic.

• Confucian sedimentation in the ideologically constructed Sinicized Chinese Marxism/ traditional elements manifested in the form of Marxism

• Sinicized Marxism (Mao Zedong Thought) was promoted in China on the deep structure and influences of traditional Chinese culture/ a combination with traditional Chinese culture
• Mao Zedong Thought is a cultural system with the same structure as Chinese tradition especially in terms of values/ demonstrates a new value system which Chinese intellectuals are familiar with in way of thinking and easy to identify with/ Chinese intellectuals naturally realized the transformation of value system.

• The pursuit of the proletarian/ communist moral ideal was similar to the pursuit of moral ideal of becoming a sage (聖人) in Confucianism.

• The self-cultivation process is very similar to the Confucian tradition of moral cultivation (道德修养) in both the way and the structure.

• The proletarian position (无产阶级立场) replaced the inner moral conscience (道德良知) in traditional Confucian moral idealism.

• Study of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought replaced the study of Confucian classics.
• After the establishment of PRC, CCP used this new moral idealism to transform Chinese intellectuals, providing a new value system with different contents but similar structure, which made it easier for the intellectuals to complete the transformation of value system.

• CCP launched an ideological transformation movement of intellectuals (知识分子思想改造运动) in 1951, calling on them to study Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and make self-reform (自我改造).

• The stronger the influence of traditional values is on the subconscious mind of the intellectual, the more he would consciously accept the ideological transformation.

• The influences of Confucian ethics and values on the belief, attitude and behaviour of Chines people could still be found under the PRC (e.g. the stress on authoritarianism, hierarchy and loyalty).
Confucius Institutes

- In the cultural competition between the increasing influence of Western ideas and the preservation of the Chinese tradition, the significance of Confucius as a transcultural and transnational figure became decisive.
- The economic rise of China and its competition with the economic status of the United States took on a cultural component. In view of the pervasive presence and availability of American cultural products (e.g. TV series, movies, music and online communication), the Chinese government launched their own programs of cultural messages.
- President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) tried to counteract the dominance of American soft power and proposed a Chinese soft power initiative.
- Soft power is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion. A country’s soft power rests on its resources of cultures, values and policies.
• The field of cultural diplomacy became a new component of public diplomacy in an effort to promote the Chinese language and culture along with the public perception of China abroad.
• In view of the long tradition and status of Confucius and Confucianism, which were re-established in the Opening up and reform (改革开放) period, the name of Confucius was used for the new cultural institutes of China (Confucius Institute 孔子学院).
• Confucius is used as the cultural symbol of China.
• In the International Confucian Association‘s commemoration of the 2,545th anniversary of Confucius's birth in 1994, it was announced that Confucius remained not only the great presence of China but would be China's greatest gift to the world.
• The Confucius Institute program began in 2004 and is overseen by Hanban (汉办), the Office of Chinese Language Council International. The institutes operate in co-operation with local affiliate universities around the world, and financing is shared between Hanban and the host institutions. As of 2014, there were over 480 Confucius Institutes.

• The implementation of the cultural diplomacy by Confucius Institutes is linked with President Xi Jinping (习近平)’s new Silk Road initiative and the One Belt One Road (一带一路) project announced in 2013.

• The economic program of revitalizing the Chinese trade routes on land and sea also enhances transcultural exchange and communication.

• Confucius and his advancement of the moral constitution of humankind and of the moral basis of statecraft could serve as ideal transcultural links.
End of Presentation

Thank You!