

Chan comments hint at war being waged in China

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The recent uproar over Jackie Chan Kong-sang's comments regarding China's assimilation away from traditional authoritarian mores toward Western capitalism and its attendant chaotic mess is instructive, for it highlights several key issues that ought to dominate the thinking of policymakers as they scurry to continue maintaining China's westward course.

Namely, the servitude that accompanies adherence to imposed ideology, the sense ratios that constitute the informing membranes of individuals and culture, and how China will view its immediate future in light of a dominant Confucian past.

Two significant points to ponder. First, the failure of Marxism in Asia led to an unqualified embrace of liberty and capitalism. The Asiatic counterirritant from Marxism remains another form of servitude. Without significant development of personal, cultural autonomy to solicit the moral, aesthetical ideals (in a word, humanism), the gains of the past 15 years will be lost.

Second, absent such an enlightened humanism, China's embrace of Western manufacturing will continue the fictitious mythology so gratuitously peddled and embraced in cocktail lounges, universities and foreign offices. Namely, a culturally sophisticated yet prostrate China surrounded by alien foes bent on exploiting the Middle Kingdom.

The key to avoiding both errors is found in Confucian thought known as Wen. Confucius understood that ultimately, victory goes to the state with the most exalted culture. Wen is such an ideal. Ironically, it was Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward that both spurned China's Marxist demise and inculcated a desire to face West.

A return to the development of Wen, as witnessed throughout Chinese history, is vital in avoiding the collapse of the Chinese embrace of Western liberty and capitalism. The contemporary problem resides psychologically and politically.

"One country, two systems" is not indicative of a unified whole whereby an individual feels free to act boldly with integrity. The Chinese have historically favored strong monarchies built on meritocracy as witnessed throughout its history. Chan's comments are rooted in such a milieu.

Chan rebuked the current Western embrace in acknowledging an unwelcomed ubiquitous "chaotic mess" so unpleasant to historically minded older Chinese.

Properly acknowledged as such, this "chaotic mess" is creative destruction at its best. The current social, political, and economic irritants are disguised Wen pentup and now finally released into an aspiring vacuum in need of form.

Adam Smith's "invisible hand" now meets the "principle of subsidiarity" as advocated by Karol Wojtyla, better known as Pope John Paul II.

It's a roaring mess to those older, rear-looking Chinese uncomfortable without firm commands. To the young, it remains more than hope, it's a new fresh beginning. Lest we forget, it will always remain the sovereign domain of lovers or the young, to maintain a steady desirous gaze of a future unimpeded.

Thucydides understood best the informing intrinsic relationship between geography, history and personality development. Such synoptic repose is best witnessed in studying the (current ever shifting) relations of Chinese sense ratios demonstrated in its cultivation of arts, this relates to how the Chinese think of themselves.

This is significant for it allows one to discover an evaluative rubric to measure the continuous flux of history and time.

China, geographically isolated by mountains in its west, vast oceans to the east was primed to turn inward and wait command.

Before its embrace of Western capitalism, Chinese gaze was of an imposed order, commanded from a monarchy meticulously crafted as forced assimilation of Confucian ideals. This imposition was not without a response, known as Taoism. Nevertheless, the weight of such an enforced past was suffocating in its denial of individualism.

In our efficacious need to break with the past embodied as slavery, the United States "so conceived" required civil war to bond itself to its founding. And the war came. Abraham Lincoln embraced it, warts, chaotic mess and all.

The current embrace of capitalism in the Chinese mainland is its equivalent as demonstrated in the strained domestic relations between equals and family members.

The war has come ... The Chinese will no longer be fed gruel of a past unfit to navigate contemporary life.

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