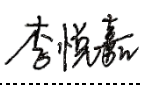




PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

Undergraduate Dissertation coversheet & feedback form

PLEASE COMPLETE THE TOP SECTION OF THIS FORM AND SUBMIT ONE COPY WITH YOUR DISSERTATION

<i>For completion by student:</i>		
Student Name: Yuejia Li (李悅嘉)		
Student University Email: 1803942@student.uwtsd.ac.uk		
Module code: SICH6013	Student ID number: 1803942	Educational support needs: No
Dissertation title: Studies on Laozi's International Political View of 'Softness better than Hardness' 淺探老子「柔弱勝剛強」的國際政治觀		
Supervisor: Prof. Shi-San Lai		Word count: 8,049
I confirm that this is my original work and that I have adhered to the University policy on plagiarism.		
Signed 		
<i>For completion by the first marker:</i>		
Comments:		
First Marker's Mark: Signature:		Date:

For completion by the second marker (if appropriate):

Comments:

Second Marker's Mark:
Signature:

Date:

NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.

For completion by the External Examiner:

Comments:

Proposed Mark:

Signature of External Examiner:

Final Agreed Mark:

University of Wales: Trinity Saint David

E-Thesis Deposit Agreement

Details of the Work

I would like to deposit the following item in the digital repository maintained by the University, and/or in any other repository authorized for use by the University:

Title: Studies on Laozi's International Political View of 'Softness better than Hardness'.....

淺探老子「柔弱勝剛強」的國際政治觀.....

This item is a product of my own research endeavours and is covered by the agreement below in which the item is referred to as “the Work”. It is identical in content to that deposited in the University Library, subject to point 4 below.

I agree that the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David may electronically store, copy or translate the Work to any approved medium or format for the purpose of future preservation and accessibility. The University is not under any obligation to reproduce or display the Work in the same formats or resolutions in which it was originally deposited.

UW: TSD Digital Repository

I understand that work deposited in the digital repository will be accessible to a wide variety of people and institutions, including automated agents and search engines via the World Wide Web.

I understand that once the Work is deposited, the item and its metadata may be incorporated into public access catalogues or services, such as national databases of electronic theses.

I agree as follows:

I. That I am the author or have the authority of the author/s to make this agreement and do hereby give the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David the right to make available the Work in the way described above.

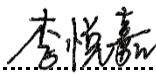
II. That the electronic copy of the Work deposited in the digital repository and covered by this agreement, is identical in content to the paper copy of the Work deposited in the University Library, subject to point 4 below.

III. That I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the Work is original, and to the best of my knowledge, does not breach any laws including those relating to defamation, libel and copyright.

IV. That I have, in instances where the intellectual property of other authors or copy right holders is included in the Work, gained explicit permission for the inclusion of that material in the Work, and in the electronic form of the Work as accessed through the open access digital repository, or that I have identified and removed that material for which adequate permission has not been obtained and which will be inaccessible via the digital repository.

V. That University of Wales: Trinity Saint David does not hold any obligation to take legal action on behalf of the Depositor, or other rights holders, in the event of a breach of intellectual property rights, or any other right, in the material deposited.

VI. That I undertake to indemnify the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David against all actions, suits, proceedings, claims, demands and costs occasioned by the University in consequence of any breach of this agreement.

Name: 

Date: 26/03/2021

Studies on Laozi's International Political View of 'Softness better than Hardness'

淺探老子「柔弱勝剛強」的國際政治觀

A dissertation submitted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David
In fulfilment of the requirements for BA (Hons) in Sinology Degree

威爾士三一聖大衛大學

漢學文學學士

學位論文

Name: Yuejia Li

姓名：李悅嘉

Student Number: 1803942

學號：1803942

Date: 26 March 2021

日期：2021 年 3 月 26 日



**BA (Hons) in Sinology Degrees by Examination and
Dissertation Declaration Form**

1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Name: 李悦嘉

Date: 26/03/2021

2. This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Sinology**

Name: 李悦嘉

Date: 26/03/2021

3. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Name: 李悦嘉

Date: 26/03/2021

4. I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying, inter-library loan, and for deposit in the University's digital repository.

Name: 李悦嘉

Date: 26/03/2021

Supervisor's Declaration

I am satisfied that this work is the result of the student's own efforts.

Name: 杨锡三 Lai Shi San

Date: 2021.3.23

Abstract

‘Softness better than hardness’ is one of the most important propositions of Laozi’s philosophy. This thought is not only seen in natural world, but also manifested in many aspects of human society. When reflected in international politics, it includes the humanistic pacifism and the international relationship, which is being modest without contention, following the Dao of heaven to maintain the Mean, and seeking common ground while respecting differences. However, it is important to note that whether in the view on war or the international relations, the application of ‘softness better than hardness’ is not strategy or tactics. It is a kind of broad-minded compassion in line with the Dao, the ethical concern full of empathy and the wisdom of everlasting harmony and win-win coexistence.

Key words: Softness, View on War, International Politics, Laozi

摘 要

柔弱勝剛強，是老子哲學思想中非常重要的一個命題。這一思想既見諸自然界，也體現在人文社會的方方面面。這一思想反映在國際政治上，便是人道主義反戰思想，以及倡導謙下不爭、循天守中、求同存異的國際關係。然而，需要特別注意的是，不管在戰爭觀還是國際觀中，柔弱勝剛強的運用絕非為達目的的手段或權謀之術，而是循道而行的慈柔任讓、充滿悲憫的倫理關懷，更是一種長久和諧、共贏共生的智慧。

關鍵詞：柔弱，戰爭觀，國際政治，老子

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
摘 要.....	ii
Bibliography	29
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Softness Better than Hardness	6
3. View On War.....	11
3.1. Pacifism.....	11
3.2. The Martial Arts	17
4. The Modest International Relationship.....	21
4.1 Being Modesty Without Contention, All Attaining Their Ends.....	21
4.2 Following the Dao of Heaven and Maintaining the Mean Lead to All-Win	22
4.3 Seeking Common Ground While Reserving Differences, Co-existing with Broadminded Virtue	24
4. Conclusion	26

1. Introduction

Laozi lived at the end of the Spring and Autumn Period 2500 years ago, which was an era of Propriety-Music Disintegration(禮崩樂壞). With the decline of Zhou's status and power, more and more vassal states gained political independence. Therefore, Laozi was in a political environment which was international-like environment. The conflicts of interests between vassal states and the competition for hegemony resulted in frequent wars and social turmoil. Rulers' pursuit of power and desire made life impossible for the people. Laozi, as the archivist at the royal court of the Eastern Zhou dynasty,¹ had read a great deal of books, knowing the rule of past sage kings and the reasons for the decline of past dynasties. He had also personally experienced the chaotic political situation since the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, deeply realizing the truth that change is the only constant. Laozi's thought came into being under such a background.

Laozi's political philosophy is the top priority of his thoughts. Just as Chen said, 'What Laozi cared about was how to resolve the disputes in human society and how to make people's lives happy and peaceful.'² Mitchell clearly pointed out in the preface of his translation work that Laozi deeply cared about society and *Daodejing* is a treatise on the art of government.³ Laozi's international political thought is also an important part of his political philosophy, which mainly involves the concept of war and the way of peaceful coexistence between countries. Since Laozi was living in an international-like society, especially witnessed the rapid changes in society and the severe disasters brought to the people by wars, his international political thought does hit home and plays an important guiding role even to this day.

There are numerous annotations, commentaries and researches on Laozi.

Wang Zhen, a general of Tang dynasty, wrote a book called *Daodejing Lunbing Yaoyishu* 道德經論兵要義述, which mainly focuses on Laozi's thoughts of non-coercive action (無為) and non-contention (不爭), lamenting the disasters brought about by war and sparing no effort to advocate the anti-war thought.⁴ Wang Li in the fifth chapter of his work *Laozi Yanjiu* 老子研

¹ Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi Ji* 史記[Records of the Grand Historian] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju,2013),p.2589.

² Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Laozi Jinzhu Jinyi ji Pingjie* 老子今註今譯及評介 (Xinbei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan,2017), p.xxii.

³ Stephen Mitchell: *Tao Te Ching* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1988), p.vii .

⁴ Wang Zhen, *Daodejing Lunbing Yaoyishu* 道德經論兵要義述 in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 1* 老子集成·第一冊

究 specially sets up a section named ‘anti-war’ to analyze Laozi's idea of keeping softness and opposing to war.⁵ There are also journals of Wang Xiuli,⁶ Li and Song,⁷ Meng Xiangcai⁸ and so on, which research into Laozi's thought of war from different perspectives.

As for the discussion of Laozi's international view, Chen in his journal talks about international political issues in the past century, and the inspiration of Laozi's thoughts for the current world situation.⁹ The fourth paragraph of Lu's journal talks about the content of international relations. He believed that Laozi advocated peace and the key is to humble each other.¹⁰ Li in his research makes an in-depth comparative analysis of the differences between Laozi's ‘softness’ and Nye's ‘soft power’ theory.¹¹ Ma's thesis takes Laozi's political philosophy as a starting point and extends to the field of international politics for an in-depth and comprehensive discussion.¹² Besides, Xia,¹³ Feng¹⁴ and some other persons' theses also roughly involve Laozi's international political thoughts in some chapters.

In recent centuries, *Daodejing* has been widely translated into the languages of different countries, and the study of Laozi's thought has become a fashion in the international sinology community. The interpretation of Lao Tzu's international political thoughts can be seen in these translations or some general works. There also exists some studies, taking it as a topic to discuss. For example, Moeller, in his works *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*, specially set a chapter

[A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 1] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), pp.561-583.

⁵ Wang Li 王力, *Laozi Yanjiu* 老子研究[A Study of Lao-Tze] (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1928), pp.91-94.

⁶ Wang Xiuli 汪秀麗, ‘Analysis of Laozi's War Thoughts’, *Journal of Anhui University(Philosophy and Social Science)*, 26.05(2002), pp.28-30.

⁷ Li Cheng 李承, Song Xinfu 宋新夫, ‘Laozi's Military Humanist Political View’, *Military History Research*, 03(2006), pp.152-160.

⁸ Meng Xiangcai 孟祥才, ‘A Review of Lao Zi's Outlook on War 老子戰爭觀述評’, *Sunzi Studies*, 24.06 (2018), pp.43-47.

⁹ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, ‘Chongtu Shijie zhongde Hexie Duihua: Laozi Hexie Shijieguan gei Shiren de Qishi 衝突世界中的和諧對話——老子和諧世界觀給世人的提示’, *China Taoism*: 05(2007), pp.20-22.

¹⁰ Lu Jianhua 陸建華, ‘Daojia Zhengzhi Sixiang de Dangdai Jiazhi 道家政治思想的當代價值’, *Academic Research Journal*, 11(2013), pp.40-44.

¹¹ Li Dinghua 李定華, ‘Laozi Fanshi Zhong Roushili yu Joseph S. Nye, Jr Ruanshili de Bijiao Yanjiu 老子範式中「柔實力」與約瑟夫·奈「軟實力」的比較研究’, *Hubei Social Sciences*, 03(2017), pp.44-49.

¹² Ma Rui 馬睿, *A Study on the International Political Significance of the Lao Tzu's Thought* 論老子思想的國際政治意義. (Unpublished LLM thesis, Yanshan University, 2013).

¹³ Xia Yang 夏陽, *An Insight into Political Philosophy of Laozi* 老子政治思想研究. (Unpublished MPhil thesis, Anhui University, 2013).

¹⁴ Feng Guoli 馮國麗, *Lun Daojia de Shengtai Zhengzhi Zhaxue Yiyun* 論道家的生態政治哲學意蘊. (Unpublished MPhil thesis, Hanzhou Normal University, 2010).

named ‘On War’, which shows an insightful view.¹⁵ Zhang’s journal also discusses about Laozi’s thought of war and peace.¹⁶

Generally speaking, compared with the internal affairs part, there are few studies on Laozi's international political thought in academic circles, and most of which specialize in Laozi's view of war. Besides, it is still a highly controversial topic that whether Laozi’s military theory is a kind of tactic or not.

Based on the analysis of Laozi's text, this essay mainly explores Laozi's idea of ‘softness better than hardness’ and how it reflects in his outlook on war and the handling of international relations. It is also an attempt to seek solutions to the chaos of international politics for today from Laozi’s thoughts.

2. Softness Better than Hardness

Lvshi Chunqiu 呂氏春秋 summarizes the characteristic of Laozi’s theory, ‘Laozi gave priority to softness.(老聃貴柔¹⁷)’ From the core spirit of valuing softness and weakness, Laozi also extended a proposition that softness and weakness are better than hardness and strength, which seems to be a paradox. In order to have a more relatively accurate grasp of Laozi's international political thought, we should first have a general understanding of Laozi's basic spirit of ‘softness better than hardness(柔弱勝剛強)’.

In Chapter 76, Laozi said,

‘While living, people are supple and soft, but once dead, they become hard and rigid cadavers. While living, the things of this world and its grasses and tress are pliant and fragile, but once dead, they become withered and dry. (人之生也柔弱，其死也堅強。萬物草木之生也柔脆，其死也枯槁。)’¹⁸

This is a description of the natural trend of the internal development. Laozi experienced the

¹⁵ Hans-Georg Moeller, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.74-86.

¹⁶ Ellen Y. Zhang, ‘Weapons Are Nothing But Ominous Instruments’, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 40.3(2012), pp.473-502.

¹⁷ Xu Weitong 許維通, *Lvshi Chunqiu Jishi* 呂氏春秋集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju,2009), p.467.

¹⁸ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.264.

Dao by observing the myriad things, and then realized the truth:

‘hard and rigid things are the companions of death; while supple and soft things are tree companions of life. (堅強者死之徒，柔弱生之徒)’¹⁹

On the other hand, this is also the inevitable result of encountering the external environment. Due to the action-reaction force, hard things are more likely to be opposed to the impact of external forces and then destroyed. Just like the teeth might be gone but the tongue remains, and the rigid trees are easier to snap, the soft often lasts longer than the hard. This is also because of the law of nature that things turn into their opposites when they reach the extreme. Laozi said,

‘It is better to desist than to try to hold it upright and fill it to the brim. Pounded out to a point, its sharpness cannot be long maintained. (持而盈之，不如其已；揣而銳之，不可長保。) (Chapter 9)’²⁰

If it is too full and overflowing, it will overturn and cause disaster. If it is too sharp, it is easier to be damaged.

Chapter 22 explains this principle from another perspective.

‘Crimped then whole, bent then upright, hollow then full, worn then new. (曲則全，枉則直，窪則盈，弊則新。)’²¹

Just like the Top Nine of *Qian* in *I-Ching* says, ‘Dragon becoming haughty, there is regret. (亢龍有悔)’²² The haughty dragon here represents things that reach the limit. It shares a similar meaning that the state of abundant cannot last long. Most people tend to cling to the obvious appearance of things, taking things with hard characteristic such as stiffness or expansion as strong, while regarding things with soft characteristic such as yieldingness or concession as weak. Therefore, people often rush to the obvious, struggling for the so-called ‘strong’, ‘whole’, ‘full’ and ‘victory’, which lead to endless competition, conflicts and even wars. These would ultimately lead to the tragedy of destruction of both sides. Laozi, with his observation of nature

¹⁹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.265. With slight modification.

²⁰ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.103.

²¹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), pp.135-136.

Hans-Georg Moeller, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.104,

²² Alfred Huang, *The Complete I Ching: the Definitive Translation* (Toronto: Inner Traditions, 2010), p25.

and rich life experience, put forward the idea that keeping weak and soft is the real strength. This principle is just the opposite of the stubbornly erroneous views of common people.

From Laozi's point of view, 'sages grasp oneness to be the shepherds to the world (聖人抱一為天下式)'.²³ The 'oneness (一)' is the truth as Zhuangzi said, 'Heaven and earth were born at the same time I was, and all things are one with me (天地與我並生，而萬物與我為一。)'²⁴ In other words, the 'oneness' is the co-existent relationship, in which all things are correlative with each other. A slight move in one part may affect the whole situation. In order to achieve the true wholeness and success, we should let go of the current focus and stubborn pursuit of 'hardness'. A opener and broader mind enables us to realize that those seemingly independent individuals are all in a coexistent relationship, in which all are bound together for good or ill. Unbridled self-enhancement and self-expansion will turn to be self-destruction. Besides, it will bring conflicts or even wars, leading to total loss or ruin of self and others. Thus, people should soften the strong sense of self, keeping the softness of modesty and leaving room for others. Only if we adjust to a balance, can we achieve a win-win result and sustainable development.

What calls for special attention is that most interpretations of '柔弱勝剛強' regard 'softness' and 'hardness' as opposite ends. There is an imperceptible misunderstanding, which explains the character '勝' as 'defeating' or 'vanquishing' while '柔弱勝剛強' means 'defeating hardness with softness'. In such an understanding, 'defeating hardness' would unconsciously be seen as the aim of Laozi, and softness, at the same time, would be regarded as the tactic to reach this aim. In fact, softness and hardness cannot be easily understood as opposite ends. Meanwhile, '柔弱勝剛強' is neither strategy nor trickery that deliberately showing weakness in order to win. It is a natural manifestation of the Dao, the law of nature.

In the text of *Laozi*, the character 勝 appears 16 times, among which include 2 kinds of explanations. One is used to describe the competitive relations, which means 'defeating' or 'conquering'. For example, Chapter 33 says, 'To conquer others is power, to conquer oneself is strength. (勝人者有力，自勝者強。)'²⁵ Another explanation can be seen in comparison

²³ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant"* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.136.

²⁴ Burton Waston, *The Complete works of Zhuangzi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p.13.

²⁵ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant"* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.163.

between two characters, which often show the meaning of ‘to surpass’ or ‘be better’, like ‘the female is often better than the male by its stillness. (牝常以靜勝牡。’²⁶) (Chapter 61)’ It is obvious that ‘柔弱勝剛強’ is more similar to the latter, which compares the characters of softness and hardness to see which one is better. It shows a kind of value judgment or choice. This viewpoint can also be supported by Bai.²⁷

In Laozi’s philosophy, softness and weakness are rooted in the Dao. Chapter 40 says, “‘Returning’ is how the Dao moves, and “weakening” is how it functions.(反者道之動；弱者道之用。)’²⁸ Since ‘weakening’ is the manifestation of the Dao, which can also be understood as the Dao of heaven(天之道), Laozi’s thought of valuing softness and weakness actually implied to return from the way of human(人之道) to the Dao of heaven. In other words, people should imitate the Dao, returning to the original state of being soft, weak and co-existent.

In *Laozi*’s imagery, water is one of the most special represents of softness and weakness. Laozi believed, ‘nothing in the world is as soft and weak as water.天下莫柔弱於水’²⁹ Water, in the context of *Laozi*, is highly appraised and even used as a metaphor for the Dao or virtue(德). Chapter 8 straightly pointed out,

‘The highest good is like water. Water benefits everything by giving without taking or contending. It is content with the place others disdain. It is this that makes water so close to the Dao.(上善若水。水善利萬物而不爭，處衆人之所惡，故幾於道。)’³⁰

‘The highest good(上善)’ is also the goodness of ‘highest virtue(上德)’. The reason why Laozi put forward the highest virtue is to distinguish it from the ‘lower virtue(下德)’, which defines good and evil as binary opposition. Compared with the lower virtue, highest virtue is a non-dualism state that people were unaware of goodness, beauty or virtue. This kind of state seems chaotic, but it is precisely the manifestation of the Dao. The highest goodness of water, just

²⁶ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Laozi Jinzhu Jinyi ji Pingjie* 老子今註今譯及評介 (Xinbei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2017), p.252.

²⁷ Bai Xi 白奚, ‘Dao yu Shu: ‘Laozi Sixiang de Benyi he Yinshenyi 道與術：老子思想的本義和引申義’, *Philosophical Research*, 01(2013), p.55. (51-57)

²⁸ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.180. With slight modification.

²⁹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.268.

³⁰ Xu Yuanchong 許淵沖, *The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*(Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2003), p.16.

like the highest virtue of the Dao to all things, is a kind of softness without judgement, contradiction or opposites. It is completely tolerant and grand, equally nurturing and nourishing everything. In this philosophical category, the dualism and contradiction between good and evil, right and wrong, have fallen into the level of lower virtue.

There is a story in *Zhuangzi*. Helter and Skelter, who were the rulers of South Sea and North Sea respectively, were the representatives of binary opposition. Chaos, the ruler of the Central Region, was a metaphor of no intention, non-coercive action and profoundest consonance(玄同). Helter and Skelter often met each other in the land of Chaos. Chaos treated them very well. In order to repay his kindness, they helped Chaos bore seven apertures, which in the end lead to his death.³¹ Zhuangzi used this story as a metaphor, saying that once being attached to the dualism or contradiction, people will lose the goodness of highest virtue, which can ‘soften the glare and bring things together on the same track(和光同塵)’.³² In other words, they will lose the ability of tolerance, acceptance, softness and co-existence.

In fact, the thing behind the lower virtue is the strong ‘ego’ or ‘self-extension’, which is also embodied in the stubborn desire for power and control. Laozi, through the paradoxical expression such as ‘highest virtue is not attached to virtue (上德不德)’, wanted people to let go of the contradiction and dualism, and the resulting stubbornness of the so-called ‘goodness’ and moral judgment. He valued ‘softness’ to remind people to soften the strong ‘ego’, reversing strong desire for control and coercive action (有為). As a result, we can gradually return to the relationship of the oneness, the original ethics of highest virtue, and the state of softness, coexistence and profoundest consonance. This is also the key point of Laozi’s non-coercive action (無為). Thus, Laozi said, ‘The softest things in the world ride roughshod over the hardest things... This is how we know that doing things non-coercively is beneficial.’³³

From the discussion above, we can conclude that in Laozi’s philosophy, softness and weakness are both the characteristics of the Dao, which shows a tolerant, open-minded and modest attitude towards all things, leaving room for them to develop along their own lines, selflessly

³¹ Wang Rongpei 汪榕培, *Zhuangzi*(Changsha: Hunan Renmin chubanshe, 1999), p.123.

³² Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.218.

³³ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), pp.188-189.

benefiting so that all things can be satisfied with their own place. Softness and weakness are also manifestations of non-coercive action, enabling the Dao to achieve its function and greatness of growing all things without taking credit for them. Correspondingly, the proposition of ‘softness better than hardness’ is indeed in accordance with the Dao instead of tactic(術). It goes beyond the categories of dualism of softness and hardness or the logic of life-and-death struggle. What it emphasizes is to reverse and transform the stubborn sense of ‘ego’, eliminating the strong desire for control, returning and integrating into the coexistent harmony between each other. Only in this way can we imitate the Dao and create an everlasting and win-win situation.

Xu evaluated the aim of Laozi’s study, saying that the Daoist cosmology is just a byproduct of the philosophy of life. The establishment of cosmology is indeed for human to determine the life attitude corresponding to the origin of universe, so as to get a safe foothold in life.³⁴ Chen also believed, ‘The real motivation of Laozi’s theory is to ease the conflicts in human society, The root of conflicts is exploiters’ wanton expansion of their own possessiveness.’³⁵ It seems that the proposition ‘softness better than hardness’ is Laozi’s observation and description of the law of nature. In fact, it is also the basis to find the ideal of life from the empirical world. Basing on the grasp of this proposition, we can have a better understanding of Laozi’s international political outlook.

3. View On War

The relationships between countries can be roughly divided into two conditions: war and peace. Thus, view on war is a part of the outlooks on international politics.

3.1. Pacifism

Just as Moeller stated,

‘War—as the continuation of politics by other means—can well be defined as the worst-case scenario of such political crises and conflicts, and if the sage’s function is to prevent political crises, then this implies, perhaps most importantly, the prevention of war.’³⁶

³⁴ Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo Renxinglun Shi: Xianqinbian* 中國人性論史·先秦篇(Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian,2001),pp.287-288.

³⁵ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Laozi Jinzhu Jinyi ji Pingjie* 老子今註今譯及評介 (Xinbei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan,2017), p.48.

³⁶ Hans-Georg Moeller: *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.76.

Laozi has only roughly 5,000 words, but there are many chapters talking about the thought of war. Wang, in his work *Research on Laozi* 老子研究, pointed out, ‘the anti-war thought of Laozi is rooted in his idea of valuing softness, which is also the reason why one would never contend.(老子之非戰，根於守柔。守柔，斯不爭矣。³⁷)’ It is obvious that Laozi's attitude towards war can be traced to the same origin of his thoughts of keeping softness.

Chapter 30 and 31 both clearly show Laozi's anti-war attitude:

‘Those who use the Dao to minister to the ruler do not seek to make him strongest in the world by force of arms.(以道佐人主者，不以兵強天下。)’ (Chapter 30) ³⁸

‘Military weapons are inauspicious instruments and are so generally despised. Those who follow the Dao do not resort to them.(夫兵者，不祥之器，物或惡之，故有道者不處。³⁹)’ (Chapter 31)

Those who truly follow the Dao would not advocate to conquer the world by warfare. This is because warfare shows the characteristic of being violent and aggressive. ‘Weapons cannot be separated from their function, they are the technology of aggressive action and violent desire.’⁴⁰ Actually, the aggressive action and violent desire behind is the extremely strong will of self-expansion, which shows the sense of hardness. Just as rigid things are doomed not to last long, strong will of self-expansion will also lead to the impossibility of co-existence and even the lose-lose destruction. The result of warfare would inevitably plunge all lives into abyss of misery.

In Chapter 46, Laozi describes the effects and causes of the war:

‘When the Dao prevails in the world, the finest racing steeds are used to provide manure for the fields. But when the Dao does not prevail in the world, warhorses are bred just outside the city walls.(天下有道，卻走馬以糞。天下無道，戎馬生於郊。)’

There is no crime more onerous than greed, no misfortune more devastating than avarice.’ (咎莫大於欲得；禍莫大於不知足。)(Chapter 46) ⁴¹

³⁷ 王力 Wang Li, *Laozi Yanjiu* 老子研究[A Study of Lao-Tze] (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan,1928), p.91

³⁸ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.156. With slight modification.

³⁹ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Laozi Jinzhu Jinyi ji Pingjie* 老子今註今譯及評介 (Xinbei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan,2017), p.166.

⁴⁰ Hans-Georg Moeller: *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.78.

⁴¹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe,

‘War is, in other words, a harmful eruption of desires.’⁴² The root of war is often the insatiable greed and overwhelming ambition of the rulers. Driven by endless desire and the will to expand, the rulers launch wars. However, the disasters brought about by the warfare make life impossible for the people. Even the animals are out of their place, being forced to struggle in the flames of wars. In order to avoid all of these disasters, Laozi especially emphasized contentment, ‘Those who know contentment avoid disgrace, and those who know where to stop avoid danger. They will be long-enduring. (知足不辱，知止不殆，可以長久。)(Chapter 44)’⁴³ Contentment is also a manifestation of softness. It is the reversal of the strong sense of self and self-expansion. Only by being content, can we avoid humiliation and danger. This is the way of being enduring.

Chapter 30 describes the results of war from another perspective:

‘Such a business would likely come back to haunt them. Wherever armies bivouac, brambles and thistles will grow. In the wake of great armies, lean years are sure to follow. (其事好還。師之所處，荊棘生焉。大軍之後，必有凶年。)’⁴⁴

War is indeed the most ignorant and cruel act of human. Firstly, it is reflected in the cycle of retribution and endless killings. Conquering by force of army seems to gain an advantageous position in the present moment, however, it has already made too many enemies indeed. The behavior of destroying other’s homeland and killing people will certainly plant the root of hatred and blood debts, crying out for endless cycle of retribution and fierce battle. For instance, French–German enmity lasted for several centuries, while the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War even turn to be the main cause of World War I. Secondly, the aftereffects of wars will last long. For instance, war will exhaust the people, and the fields will lie waste and barren. With the development of science and technology, the lethality of weapons today is far beyond that of cold weapons in the past, especially the power of nuclear weapons can even destroy the world. The Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 could be an evidence. Even to this day, the pollution caused by nuclear radiation still cannot totally dissipate. For decades, plenty of innocent people have been suffering from radiation sickness and eventually lost their

2004), p.194. With slight modification.

⁴² Hans-Georg Moeller: *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.76.

⁴³ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.190.

⁴⁴ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.156.

life. With the massive casualties and devastation caused by military operations, wars must be followed by a long-term economic dilapidation. The people would have no means of livelihood.

It is precisely because Laozi lived in an era of frequent war and deeply felt the abysmal agonies brought to the people, his attitude towards wars is to prevent them as far as possible. Never use military force unless it is absolutely compelled.

‘Weapons are not the tools of the noble man. Weapons are the tools of ill omen. When he cannot do otherwise, he uses them-to him staying calm is the best. Do not regard them with delight. To regard them with delight-this is to enjoy the killing of men. Well, by enjoying the killing of men one is unable get what one wants in the world.(兵者不祥之器，非君子之器，不得已而用之，恬淡為上。勝而不美，而美之者，是樂殺人。夫樂殺人者，則不可以得志於天下矣)

...

When masses of people are killed, this is faced with grief and sorrow. When a war is won, the occasion is treated with funeral rites.(殺人之衆，以悲哀泣之，戰勝以喪禮處之。)(Chapter 31)⁴⁵

The love of weapons and the proudness of winning the war are manifestations of bloodthirst. In Laozi’s opinion, war is filled with slaughter and disaster. Virtuous persons never be happy with victory since they clearly know that the winner is built on misery. The victory of the war is purchased at a great cost of precious lives of those who are the same as you and me. Behind these thousands of lives, there are countless families, with parents who devote all their care and love to their children, and children who are yet waiting to be raised and pray for their father’s return. Of all the soldiers, whether of which side, who would not like to enjoy the happiness of family reunion. However, these beautiful wishes are all buried in the smoke of gunpowder, being replaced by the loss of countless innocent lives, the ruin of countless families and countless heartbreaking stories. Therefore, in Laozi’s view, no matter what reason the victory for, is not worthy of songs for the triumph, nor is it the glory of heroism. It is social disaster and suffering, which should be mourned with grief and remorse and treated with funeral rites. This is also Laozi’s humanitarian anti-war thought, which is very different from the heroism war view in the West.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hans-Georg Moeller: *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.78.

⁴⁶ Hans-Georg Moeller: *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.82.

However, even when it comes to the last resort to take up arms to defend the homeland, it is always better to follow the principle of ‘恬淡’.

Due to the different versions,⁴⁷ the term ‘恬淡’ in this chapter has two distinct understandings. Some scholars like Gao,⁴⁸ Chen,⁴⁹ Ames⁵⁰ and Moeller⁵¹ assume that ‘恬淡’ represents a cool or calm attitude. Some disagree with this, annotating ‘恬淡’ as ‘sharp’ and assuming that Laozi advocated to use sharp weapons when having no alternative but to resort to arms. This opinion is represented by Lao⁵² and Qiu⁵³.

These two interpretations are quite different. However, if the term is put back to the text of this

⁴⁷ On the basis of the Heshang Gong version 河上公, we can commonly see ‘恬淡’ in the current edition. Wang Bi version 王弼 Fuyi version 傅奕本 write as ‘恬憺’, which shares the same meaning with ‘恬淡’. It is also respectively written as ‘銛襲’ in *Guodian* 郭店楚簡 and *Mawangdui* (text A) 馬王堆帛書甲本 manuscript and ‘銛懽’ in *Mawangdui* (text B) 馬王堆帛書乙本.

The philologists who reorganized these manuscripts hold the view that ‘銛襲’ and ‘銛懽’ are totally the same as ‘恬淡’, which represents a cool or calm attitude.

(1) Heshang Gong 河上公, *Daodezhenjing Zhu* 道德真經註 in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 1* 老子集成·第一冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 1] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), p.153.

(2) Wang Bi 王弼, *Daodezhenjing Zhu* 道德真經註 in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 1* 老子集成·第一冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 1] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), p.219.

(3) Fu Yi 傅奕, *Daodejing Gubenpian* 道德經古本篇 in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 1* 老子集成·第一冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 1] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), p.50.

(4) *Laozi Daodejing* (Guodian Chujiaben) 老子道德經（郭店楚簡本） in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 1* 老子集成·第一冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 1] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), p.6.

(5) *Laozi Daodejing* (Mawangdui Boshu Jiaben) 老子道德經（馬王堆帛書甲本） in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 1* 老子集成·第一冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 1] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), pp.17,19.

(6) *Laozi Daodejing* (Mawangdui Boshu Yiben) 老子道德經（馬王堆帛書乙本） in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 1* 老子集成·第一冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 1] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), pp.27,29.

⁴⁸ Gao Ming 高明, *Boshu Laozi Jiaozhu* 帛書老子校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), pp.390-391.

⁴⁹ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Laozi Jinzhu Jinyi ji Pingjie* 老子今註今譯及評介 (Xinbei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2017), p.168.

⁵⁰ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.156.

⁵¹ Hans-Georg Moeller: *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.78.

⁵² Lao Jian 勞健 stated that ‘恬淡’ is a misuse of ‘銛銳’. The characters ‘銛’ and ‘銳’ both mean ‘sharp’.

Lao Jian 勞健, *Laozi Gubenkao* 老子古本考 in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 15* 老子集成·第十五冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 15] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), pp.315-316.

⁵³ Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 indicated that ‘恬淡’ should be ‘銛功’. Both ‘恬淡’ and ‘銛功’ mean ‘sharp’.

Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, ‘Guodian Laozi jian Chutan 郭店《老子》簡初探’, *Daojia Wenhua Yanjiu*, 道家文化研究, Vol.17(1998), p.51.

chapter and Laozi's thought system, it is not difficult to make a choice. At the beginning of this chapter, Laozi said that weapons are inauspicious instruments. After that, he also emphasized even the winner of the war should treat it as funeral rites with grief, instead of being delighted and proud of it. All we can strongly feel between the lines are the indifference to war and the high respect for life. Therefore, if the '恬淡' is interpreted as 'sharp', it will be out of line with the tone of this chapter. In addition, it is contrary to Laozi's thought of keeping softness, running counter to his emphasis that the sharpness cannot be preserved for ever(揣而銳之，不可長保).

Laozi's attitude towards war can also be seen in other place.

'Able commanders look only to achieve the right results without seeing victory as a source of empowerment. They get their results without arrogance. They get their results without becoming self-important. They get their results without bragging about them. They get their results and accommodate them only as a last resort. This is called getting the right results without forcing them, and creates a situation that is likely to endure.(善有果而已，不敢以取強。果而勿矜，果而勿伐，果而勿驕。果而不得已，果而勿強。物壯則老，是謂不道，不道早已。)(Chapter 30)'⁵⁴

Just as Wang annotated, 'Good generals will only take up arms to weather the storm. They will not use the military force to conquer.(善用師者 趣以濟難而已矣 不以兵力取強於天下。)'⁵⁵ What Laozi stressed is that even if it is a self-defense war, it should still be treated with indifference and grief. The goal is to end the war as soon as possible, and to save life as much as possible. Once this goal is achieved, the war must be stopped. It should not turn to be a place of showing off the strength.

This also reflects the slightly different attitudes of Confucianism and Daoism towards war. In Confucianism, wars with a just cause or to vindicate authority are acceptable. This is not the case of Laozi. Throughout the full text, Laozi had never defined the nature of army, such as justice or injustice, but only talked about his attitude towards war. In this regard, Liu has a precise commentary:

'According to the principle of Laozi, all wars should not be promoted except for 100% self-defense... It does not mean that Daoism confuses right and wrong, but takes the emulation of the law of nature as the highest principle, giving priority to the harmony of humans and

⁵⁴ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant"* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), pp.156-157.

⁵⁵ Wang Bi 王弼, Collected and Annotated by Lou Yulie 樓宇烈: *Laozi Daodejing zhu Jiaoshi* 老子道德經注校釋(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016), p.78.

universe. One key point of emulation of the law of nature is to emphasize that the harmony of humans and society is higher than one's own right and wrong. Otherwise, there will be no natural order of human and society, but only the compulsory order of imposing one's own right and wrong to others.(按照《老子》的原則，除了百分之百的自衛戰，一切戰爭都是不應該提倡的……道家不是不講是非，而是以道法自然為最高原則，把人類宇宙的和諧看得更高、更重要。道法自然的意義之一就是強調人類的、社會的自然和諧高於一己、一派的是非，非如此則沒有人類的、社會的自然的秩序，而只能是以己之是非壓迫他人是非的強制的秩序。⁵⁶)

Laozi's attitude towards war is of great significance. He never connected war with moral or political standpoint such as justice, national identity and collective pride, which are commonly seen in Western images. Some countries even repeatedly used this as an excuse, openly provoking war under gorgeous pretexts, such as the crusaders who carried out aggression and plunder under the banner of holy war. Nowadays, some unilateralist countries in the world wage war against other countries under the banner of maintaining peace, democracy and freedom, but bring them fear, death and disaster in reality.

At this time, if we look back on Laozi's view on war, going back to Laozi's era, when there was also continuous wars, to make a spiritual communication with him, we will find that his humanitarian spirit in dealing with war is beyond time and space, shining in the long river of history. Even to this day, we can still feel the greatness and softness of being in harmony in virtue with heaven and earth of Laozi's thought.

3.2. The Martial Arts

Laozi's merciful and soft thought of pacifism can also be seen in his theory of the way of military use.

In Chapter 67, Laozi mentioned his three prized possession. The first one is compassion. Compassion is also an embodiment of softness, which conforms to the way of co-existent harmony of all things. Jiang stated, 'When talking about war or military use, Laozi's purpose and method are nothing more than "compassion".'⁵⁷ 'The brave must take compassion as the

⁵⁶ Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Laozi Gujin: Wuzhong Duikan yu Xiping Yinlun* 老子古今：五種對勘與析評引論 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 2006), p.330.

⁵⁷ Jiang Xichang 蔣錫昌, *Laozi Jiaogu* 老子校詁 in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 14* 老子集成·第十四冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 14] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), p.679.

foundation... Nowadays people attend to trifles and neglect essentials, this is taking the road to doom.’⁵⁸ The compassion advocated by Laozi is the sage's breadth of mind of being sympathy for the world. It is as profound as the Dao to all things, which is just providing without asking for anything. According to Jiang, the word ‘brave’ in this chapter means ‘bravery in retreat, bravery in defense, instead of bravery in struggle nor in aggression... Leaders have compassion, then the soldiers have the courage to defend.’⁵⁹ ‘It is this unrequited compassion that inspires all people to love and help each other, taking care of each other when injured, cherish and support each other when fighting. As a result, no one can defeat such a troop.’⁶⁰ However, what Jiang considered was mainly from the perspective of the soldiers and people of our own side. It is, wittingly or unwittingly, regarding the result of defeating the enemy as the purpose of compassion.

There is an imperceptible subtlety that needs special attention. Just as Laozi’s proposition of ‘softness better than hardness’, in which overcoming hardness is not the purpose of softness, bravery in conquering the enemy is not the purpose but the natural result of compassion. If it takes ‘to defeat the enemy’ as the purpose of compassion, it can only be regarded as limited compassion since it is just shown to the troop and people of one’s own side. This may even be interpreted as stratagem or tactic with purpose. In fact, Laozi's ‘compassion’ is not selective but selfless, following the Dao. It is a kind of broadminded virtue of being co-existent, truly and equally loving all people and even all things in the world. Such a virtue enables all things to be satisfied with their own place. The contradiction between the enemy and us is only a temporary event. Laozi, with a more thorough insights, seeing the lively lives and oneness behind. It is also such a broad-minded compassion to all things that can naturally move and appeal to the world. As a result, wherever such a person goes, he will be invincible since he has no enemy. In fact, this thought is consistent with the proposition of ‘softness better than hardness’.

⁵⁸ Jiang Xichang 蔣錫昌, *Laozi Jiaogu* 老子校詁 in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 14* 老子集成·第十四冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 14] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), p.680.

⁵⁹ Jiang Xichang 蔣錫昌, *Laozi Jiaogu* 老子校詁 in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 14* 老子集成·第十四冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 14] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), p.680.

⁶⁰ Jiang Xichang 蔣錫昌, *Laozi Jiaogu* 老子校詁 in the *Laozi Jicheng: Book 14* 老子集成·第十四冊 [A Collections of Editions and Commentaries for the Laozi: Book 14] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011), p.679.

King Tai of Zhou Old Duke Danfu(古公亶父), a great leader of Zhou clan during Shang dynasty, was one of the model characters. At that time, the prosperity of Bin(邠), where was the ancestral home of the Zhou clan, led to repeated attacks from the barbarian tribes. After several attempts to buy them off failed, Danfu chose to relocate his family to the foot of Mount Qi(岐山) rather than lead his people into battle. This was because he could not bear to see people die of war. As a result, the people of Bin was deeply moved by Danfu's compassion and followed him to move to Mount Qi. The rapid success of the new location then caused the allegiance of many neighboring tribes.⁶¹ Dannfu, who seemed to be constantly retreating, won the support of more people with his softness of compassion and laid a solid foundation for the Zhou dynasty, which last for 800 years. In the film *Kingdom of Heaven*, Balian, as the guardian of the holy city Jerusalem, leads the people to resist the attack of Saladin's Muslim army. After 3 days of defending, he finally negotiates the surrender of Jerusalem to Saladin, with the ransom for the people to leave Jerusalem unharmed. It seems that Balian give way to Saladin. But from a long run, it is his concession that save the holy city from being ruined and the lives of numerous people.

This thought of Laozi is also scattered in other chapters.

‘Those who are good warriors are not belligerent. Those who are good at battling do not get angry. Those who defeat their enemies do not engage them.(善為士者，不武；善戰者，不怒；善勝敵者，不與。)(Chapter 68)’⁶²

This part is more specific about conducting operations. ‘Belligerent 武’, ‘angry 怒’ and ‘engage 與’ are all manifestations of aggressive and violent behaviors, behind which is the strong sense of ‘self’ in the situation of contradiction between two sides. Therefore, ‘non-belligerent’, ‘non-angry’ and ‘do not engage’ mentioned here mainly emphasize on softening and reversing the strong ego. This reversal is also a concrete manifestation of an indifferent or calm state of mind. Facing the unavoidable war, one can still transcend the contradiction between two sides and the logic of life-and-death, returning to the softness of compassion and integrating into the relationship of coexistent harmony.

Chapter 69 says:

⁶¹ Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi Ji* 史記[Records of the Grand Historian](Beijing: Zhonghua shuju,2013),p.148.

⁶² Hans-Georg Moeller: *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.80.

‘There is a saying about using the military: I would not think of taking the offensive but only of defending my ground; I would not think of taking an inch but only of giving up a foot.(用兵有言：吾不敢為主，而為客；不敢進寸，而退尺。)’⁶³

‘The martial arts of the *Laozi* are founded on passivity and defense.’⁶⁴ Even if we had no choice but to be involved in the war, we can adopt a passively defensive position, never taking initiative to attack or stir up the war.

‘Deploying forward without bringing the troop, throwing a punch without raising a hand, grasping tightly without having a weapon in hand, launching an assault without confronting an enemy. (行無行；攘無臂；扔無敵；執無兵。)(Chapter 69)’⁶⁵

In this sentence, Laozi used the paradoxical language of *wu* 無⁶⁶ to get rid of the obstinate position of opposition between enemy and us. Just as Lou stated, ‘These are all explaining that due to the ‘humility’ and ‘reluctance to become preeminent in the world’, others cannot even find the opposite side when they want to fight or launch troops.(此均為說明，由於「謙退」、「不敢為物先」，因而使得他人欲戰、欲鬥、欲用兵、欲為敵而都找不到對立之一方。)’⁶⁷ Laozi said, ‘Hence, when two armies, evenly matched, cross swords in combat, it is the side that laments the need to do so that wins the day.(故抗兵相加，哀者勝矣。)(Chapter 69)’⁶⁸ ‘Those who lament to do so cannot bear to kill but have to fight. They will most certainly win whether from the perspective of the Dao or the ways of world.(蓋哀之者存不忍殺人之心，處不得不戰之境，在天道人事皆有必勝之理也。)’⁶⁹ With the wisdom of *wu* 無, the hardness of defeating the enemy was transformed into the softness of selfless compassion, which transcends the boundaries between different nations, races or persons. The smoke of war and mutual slaughter on the battlefield, will also dissipate with the broad mind of being oneness with all things. As a result, one will conform with the Dao of heaven and win the war without going to battle(不爭而善勝).

⁶³ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.251.

⁶⁴ Hans-Georg Moeller: *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.80.

⁶⁵ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.251.

⁶⁶ ‘*Wu* 無’: Laozi often used the character *wu* 無 to express some negative meanings, which is commonly translated as ‘without’, ‘non-’ and so on.

⁶⁷ Wang Bi 王弼, Collected and Annotated by Lou Yulie 樓宇烈: *Laozi Daodejing zhu Jiaoshi* 老子道德經注校釋(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016), p.174.

⁶⁸ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.251.

⁶⁹ Gao Heng 高亨: *Chongding Laozi Zhenggu* 重訂老子正詁(Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), p.139.

Laozi, in his works of only roughly 5,000 words, repeatedly admonished the thought of anti-war. There is endless compassion between the lines, which show a great humanitarian breath of mind. As Chen noted:

‘Because of his compassion for mankind, Laozi put forward the word Compassion 慈 to urge the Great Powers to show their compassion and love the people instead of killing them light-mindedly. In that war-torn era and society full of fierce competition, Laozi admonished earnestly and maternally, being very eager to resolve human disputes. There are many motivations for Laozi to write this works. However, only from this perspective can we understand the real intention of Laozi's theory. And from this point of view, we can realize that Laozi still had a positive mind to save the world. (他對人類的哀憫之心，因而提出『慈』字，要列強發揮慈心，愛養百姓而不可輕殺。在那兵禍連年的時代，在那爭奪迭起的社會，老子苦口婆心，極欲解決人類的爭端。老子著書的動機是多方面的，然而從這一方面作為出發點去了解，才能把握老子立說的真正用意，並且從這點上去體認，當可知道老子仍是具有積極救世的心懷。⁷⁰)’

4. The Modest International Relationship

Laozi opposed war and the handling of international relations by means of force, power and expansion. At the same time, he also described an ideal blueprint of a harmonious international society for the world.

4.1 Being Modest Without Contention, All Attaining Their Ends

In Chapter 61, Laozi illustrated the principle of being modest and not contending in dealing with international relations:

‘A great state is like the lower reaches of water’s downward flow. It is the female of the world. In the intercourse of the world, the female is always better than the male by her equilibrium. It is this equilibrium that places her properly underneath.(大國者下流，天下之交，天下之牝。牝常以靜勝牡，以靜為下。)’⁷¹

Laozi realized that in international conflicts, great states are often the dominant, who play a decisive role in regulating and restricting international relations. In such a context, the

⁷⁰ Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Laozi Jinzhu Jinyi ji Pingjie* 老子今註今譯及評介 (Xinbei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2017), p.49.

⁷¹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.230. With modification.

diplomatic principles adopted by big states have a vital impact on the international environment. In general international relations, large states often treat small states with a pushy, domineering and superior attitude. Coercion, bribe, annexation and oppression are nothing new, making the space of coexistence between states full of deterrence and tension. However, in Laozi's opinion, big countries should not coerce and conquer small countries by means of power or force, nor should it be driven by greed to invade other countries, provoke wars, disturb the world and even lead to tragedies of mutual destruction. Just as the Chapter 66 says, 'What enables the rivers and seas to be king over all the valleys is that they are good at staying lower than them.(江海所以能為百谷王者，以其善下之，故能為百谷王。)'⁷² Therefore, big countries should hold a soft and humble attitude and a broad mind as the spirit of seas to deal with the international relations.

'Hence if the great state is able to underneath the small state, it can rule the small state; If the small state is able to get underneath the large state, it can get to be ruled by the large state. Hence some get underneath in order to rule and some get underneath in order to be ruled. Now, the great state want no more than to win over the other state and tend to it, while the small state want no more than to offer the other state its serves. If they are both getting what they want in the relationship, then it is fitting for the great state to take the lower position.(大國以下小國，則取小國；小國以下大國，則取大國。故或下以取，或下而取。大國不過欲兼畜人，小國不過欲入事人。夫兩者各得其所欲，大者宜為下。)'⁷³

Laozi was not concerned about the interests of either big states or small states, but from the standpoint of the whole world. The softness of being humble and tolerant enable all countries to attain their ends. Big countries attain the sincerely respect and trust, while small countries, on the other hand, also naturally gain the respect and tolerance of the big countries. Thus, the world shows a peaceful atmosphere, achieving the sustainable development and harmonious coexistence.

4.2 Following the Dao of Heaven and Maintaining the Mean Lead to All-Win

Laozi's principle of maintaining the mean, which is in line with the Dao of Heaven, also provides a concrete way of international resource allocation.

⁷² Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant"* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.244.

⁷³ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant"* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), pp.230-231.

Nowadays, the allocation of resources in the international society is more based on the way of human, which is 'taking away from those who do not have enough in order to give more to those who already have too much(損不足以奉有餘)'.⁷⁴ 'Great powers are rarely content with the current distribution of power;...This unrelenting pursuit of power means that great powers are inclined to look for opportunities to alter the distribution of world power in their favor.'⁷⁵ However, when every player wants to fight for the maximum benefit or final victory, the only winner must be based on the failure of other players. This process must be centered on the unlimited expansion of strong self-centredness and must be full of competition, struggle, killing, and plunder. However, international relations cannot escape the law of nature that things must turn into the opposites when they reach the extreme. In Laozi's philosophy, being too strong will only lead oneself to the abyss of death, and it is easy to turn all-win into all-lose.

'Throughout the history, most of the declining hegemonic countries have gone into decline because of overexpansion and overdraft of their rigid power. The power of big countries grow in regional defending but dissipate in worldwide expansion.(縱觀歷史上衰落的霸權國家，大多是因為過度擴張，透支國家的剛性力量，結果便走向了衰落。大國力量增殖于地區性守成，消釋於世界性擴張。'⁷⁶) In Chinese history, the Qin Dynasty conquered the six states and established a powerful centralized state. *Huainanzi* says, 'The king of Qin, Zhao Zheng, died of the annexation of the world.(秦王趙政兼吞天下而亡。'⁷⁷)' The regime of the Qin dynasty was based on extremely strong will to power. Such a strong and violent rule made it difficult for the people and the remnants of the original six countries to endure, so they all revolted. The mighty Qin seemed to be prosperous for a while, but it was a flash in the pan, lasting only for 14 years. Nowadays, some powerful countries rely on their strong economic and military strength to plunder other countries' resources, resulting in an increasingly wide gap between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak. In order to deal with the problems faced, some countries shift the burdens of their crises onto others. Some countries even made some excuse to launch wars since they want to plunder others' oil resources. As a result, the

⁷⁴ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant"* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.266.

⁷⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp.2-3.

⁷⁶ Li Dinghua 李定華, 'Laozi Fanshizhong Roushili yu Joseph S. Nye, Jr Ruanshili de Bijiao Yanjiu' 老子範式中「柔實力」與約瑟夫·奈「軟實力」的比較研究, *Hubei Shehui Kexue*, 3.(2017), p.46.

⁷⁷ He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi Jishi* 淮南子集釋(Beijing:Zhonghua shuju,1998),p.1255.

war caused oilfield fire. They not only lost oil resources and polluted the environment, but also buried the root of hatred. With the development of the globalization, the dominant mode of the way of human may temporarily bring abundant resources to some powerful countries. But the game is not worth the candle. In the long run, it has broken the balance of the co-existence, and even leading to the backfire of turning from all wins to all losses.

The Dao of heaven, on the contrary, ‘is to let some go where there is excess and to augment where there is not enough.(損有餘而補不足)(Chapter 77)’⁷⁸ In other words, it does not emphasize a single winner. All things involved can go in parallel, maintaining a moderate and optimum state in a dynamic adjustment between each other. Laozi advocated the return from the way of human to the Dao of heaven, which is to find the basis for human behavior from the laws of the nature and universe. Reflected in international relations, the interactive adjustment is not a kind of compulsory control and domination, but mutual respect, tolerance and benefit without harm. When developing the country, we should also take the interests of other countries into consideration, keep the softness of providing others with a living space, and even help and support the development of weak countries. By doing this, the world will become a community of shared future in which everyone has a stake. Just as Laozi said, ‘The more they have done for others, the more they have gained themselves. The more they have given to others, the more they have gotten themselves. (既以為人已愈有，既以與人已愈多)(Chapter 81)’⁷⁹ This will bring a sustainable development with win-win cooperation.

To sum up, the return from the way of human to the Dao of heaven is the application of the thought of ‘softness better then hardness’ in international relations.

4.3 Seeking Common Ground While Reserving Differences, Co-existing with Broadminded Virtue

With the development of globalization, the world is increasingly interconnected. At the same time, the differences on politics, cultures, races and so on have become more and more important factors affecting the international political map. On the one hand, the differences

⁷⁸ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.266.

⁷⁹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.276.

promote exchanges and mutual learning. On the other hand, conflicts, disputes and even wars caused by various differences also occur from time to time. Laozi's idea of 'profoundest consonance(玄同)'⁸⁰ has provided a unique perspective on how to deal with these.

The term 'profoundest consonance' appears in Chapter 56:

'Back up the openings, shut the gateways, soften the glare, bring things together on the same track, blunt the sharp edges, untangle the knots. This is what is called the profoundest consonance.(塞其兑，閉其門，挫其銳，解其分，和其光，同其塵，是謂玄同。)'⁸¹

Most of the time, the reason why differences cause disputes is because at least one side take themselves as the best and the others as the inferior. Some even launch wars of aggression or colonial expansion under the banner of bringing advanced civilization to other countries. Laozi was aware of the strong self-centeredness behind, so the 'profoundest consonance' proposed was in a diametrically opposite way.

'The realm of "profoundest consonance" removes personal bias, eliminates all boundaries and barriers, and transcends the narrow limitations of ordinary personal relations in order to make room for approaching all people and things with an open and unprejudiced state of mind.(消除個我的固蔽，化除一切的封閉隔閡，超越於世俗偏狹的人倫關係之局限，以開豁的心胸與無所偏的心境去對待一切人物。)'⁸²

The proposition is aimed to dispel the habit of distinguishing and discriminating in real life, radically eliminate the contradictions in human society, transcend the binary opposition of gains and losses, the close and the distant, the high and the low, so as to return to the indistinguishable state of virtue and good and the nondualism state of highest virtue. This transformation is also the embodiment of 'softness better than hardness'.

Laozi's thought of 'softness' is often compared with Nye's 'soft power'. Compared to the coercive-based 'hard power 硬實力', which often forces other countries to make change, soft power refers to the ability to attract others to achieve goals by the assets such as attractive personality, culture, political values and so on.⁸³ However, Laozi's 'softness' is different.

⁸⁰ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant"* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), p.218.

⁸¹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant"* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), pp.217-218.

⁸² Chen Guying 陳鼓應, ed. and translated by Paul J.D'Ambrosio, Xiao Ouyang, *The Annotated Critical Laozi* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp.314-315. With slight modification.

⁸³ Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Soft Power: the Means to success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p.6.

‘Laozi’s approach went well beyond, recognizing other parties’ needs and embracing the natural world, instead of staying self-centered to try to get what “I” want. Daoist soft power is in harmony with others like water in light of natural interconnections between oceans and rivers.’⁸⁴

Thus, when applied to international relations, Laozi’s profoundest consonance of keeping softness is an attitude of respecting differences and seeking common ground. This kind of soft respect and tolerance can also achieve the broad-minded coexistence. In Laozi’s point of view, just as every form of beauty has its own uniqueness, all cultures and values are self-so and have their own preciousness. They do not need to be changed. Since diversity and integrity can accomplish beauty, to appreciate and cherish others’ cultures as our owns with openness can also bring the universal harmony in a world.

4. Conclusion

Living in the in the troubled times of the Spring and Autumn, Laozi witnessed the repeated fights, the turmoil of society and the misery of people. With a profound and positive mind of saving the world, he offered a set of specific solutions in line with the Dao of heaven, for solving international problems and seeking harmonious development. Just as Chen indicated:

‘Far from being divorced from reality, the social ideals of Daoism is rooted in reality. It shows not only the characteristics of idealism, but also strong pertinence to reality, thus forming a distinctive feature of society that combines reality and ideals.(道家的社會理想不但未離開現實，恰恰置根于現實，既表現了理想主義的特徵，也表現了強烈的現實針對性，從而構成了現實與理想相結合的社會的顯著特色。’⁸⁵

Laozi’s philosophy of ‘softness better than hardness’ is a manifestation of the Dao. It also means to return from the way of human, which is often the relation of mutual harm, to the Dao of heaven, which is in co-existent harmony with each other. What needs special attention is that the softness advocated by Laozi is neither the cowardliness of being slaughtered by others at will, nor the negativity of blindly escaping. Just as the potential energy of water, the softness itself does contain tenacity and vitality inside, enabling it to flexibly respond to the environment. However, softness is also not a tactic that falls to the level of ‘skill 術’. Compared with a kind

⁸⁴ Yueh-Ting Lee, Honggang Yang, and Min Wang, ‘Daoist Harmony as a Chinese Philosophy and Psychology’, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 16.1 (2009), pp. 76. (68-81)

⁸⁵ Chen Gujia 陳谷嘉, ‘Xianqin Shiqi Daojia Zhengzhi Xueshuo Lvelun 先秦時期道家政治學說略論’, *Chinese Cultural Research*, 02(2000), p.38.

of behavior or form, Laozi's 'softness' puts more emphasis on a state of mind. It comes from the Dao, which shows the attitude of the Dao to all things. It is a tolerant and broad mind, which softens the strong self-centredness, respecting and cherishing every existence, leaving them room to grow freely and benefiting without contention. Laozi's idea of 'softness better than hardness' runs through his international political outlooks. When facing the war, the softness reflects on the humanitarian pacifism thought with the universal love, equality and compassion, which make it win the hearts of the world and have no enemy. When dealing with international relations, the softness enables a country to shift from nation-orientation to the broad-mindedness of the whole world. Only with the principles of being humble without contention, following the Dao of heaven to maintain the Mean and seeking common ground while respecting differences, can we achieve win-win result and co-existent harmony in the world.

The current international situation seems to be superficially peaceful but turbulent in fact. The crisis of war has never really disappeared, especially under numerous problems such as the games between big countries, the invasions of big countries to small countries, the conflicts of interests between small countries. People among the world all live in the worries and anxieties about the war. In the era of globalization and multi-polarization today, it becomes an extremely urgent issue about how to eliminate human's strong desire for expansion and possession, mitigate the social conflicts, reduce war casualties caused by international disputes, and seek a harmonious, peaceful, co-existence and win-win way.

'The world today is almost a replica of China in the Spring and Autumn period. The world urgently needs a cultural ideology that can transcend the supremacy of country, nation, race, group and individual interests, so as to reverse the distorted situation caused by the law of the jungle and human's overwhelming desire over the past 500 years.(今日之世界，幾乎是2500 春秋時代中國的翻版，世界迫切需要一種能夠跨越出國家、民族、種族、集團及個人利益至上的文化思想來扭轉或改變 500 年來弱肉強食、人欲橫流所造成的的扭曲局面。⁸⁶)'

Where will the development of the international community go? In this era of competing for strength, Laozi's paradoxical proposition of 'softness better than hardness' precisely may provide us with another possibility to look at the world and the relationship between strength

⁸⁶ Zou Mulun 鄒牧侖, *Daodejing Pangshuo* 道德經旁說(Shenzhen: Haitian chubanshe, 2003), p.404.

and weakness. It also gives us an opportunity to calm down to re-examine the current situation, and even offers important lessons for us to solve these problems. We might as well go back to 2.000 years ago and learn from Laozi, deriving his wisdom of promoting harmony among all nations. Just as Nietzsche said, ‘Laozi’s thoughts are like an inexhaustible well, full of treasures, and you can put down the bucket and get it at your fingertips.’

Bibliography

Books

- Alfred Huang, *The Complete I Ching: the Definitive Translation* (Toronto: Inner Traditions, 2010).
- Burton Watson, *The Complete works of Zhuangzi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
- Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Laozi Jinzhu Jinyi ji Pingjie* 老子今註今譯及評介 (Xinbei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2017).
- Chen Guying 陳鼓應; ed. and translated by Paul J.D'Ambrosio, Xiao Ouyang, *The Annotated Critical Laozi* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).
- Gao Heng 高亨: *Chongding Laozi Zhenggu* 重訂老子正詁(Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956).
- Gao Ming 高明, *Boshu Laozi Jiaozhu* 帛書老子校注(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996).
- Hans-Georg Moeller, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
- He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi Jishi* 淮南子集釋(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998).
- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001).
- Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Soft Power: the Means to success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).
- Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Laozi Gujin: Wuzhong Duikan yu Xiping Yinlun* 老子古今：五種對勘與析評引論(Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 2006).
- Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant"* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2004).
- Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi Ji* 史記[Records of the Grand Historian] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013).
- Stephen Mitchell: *Tao Te Ching* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1988).
- Wang Bi 王弼, Collected and Annotated by Lou Yulie 樓宇烈: *Laozi Daodejing zhu Jiaoshi* 老子道德經注校釋(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016).
- Wang Li 王力, *Laozi Yanjiu* 老子研究 [A Study of Lao-Tze] (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1928).

- Wang Rongpei 汪榕培, *Zhuangzi*(Changsha: Hunan Renmin chubanshe, 1999).
- Xiong Tieji 熊鐵基 and Chen Hongxing 陳紅星, *Laozi jicheng* 老子集成 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011).
- Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo Renxinglun Shi: Xianqin pian* 中國人性論史·先秦篇(Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian,2001).
- Xu Yuanchong 許淵沖, *The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*(Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2003).
- Xu Weitong 許維通, *Lyshi Chunqiu Jishi* 呂氏春秋集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju,2009)
- Zou Mulun 鄒牧倫, *Daodejing Pangshuo* 道德經旁說(Shenzhen: Haitian chubanshe, 2003).

Journal articles

- Bai Xi 白奚, 'Dao yu Shu: 'Laozi Sixiang de Benyi he Yinshenyi 道與術：老子思想的本義和引申義', *Philosophical Research*, 01(2013), p. 51-57.
- Chen Gujia 陳谷嘉, 'Xianqin Shiqi Daojia Zhengzhi Xueshuo Lvelun 先秦時期道家政治學說略論' , *Chinese Cultural Research*, 02(2000).
- Chen Guying 陳鼓應, 'Chongtu Shijie zhongde Hexie Duihua: Laozi Hexie Shijieguan gei Shiren de Qishi 衝突世界中的和諧對話——老子和諧世界觀給世人的提示', *China Taoism*: 05(2007), pp.20-22.
- Ellen Y. Zhang, 'Weapons Are Nothing But Ominous Instruments', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 40.3(2012), 473-502.
- Li Cheng 李承, Song Xinfu 宋新夫, 'Laozi's Military Humanist Political View 老子軍事人道主義政治觀芻議', *Military History Research*, 03(2006), pp.152-160.
- Lu Jianhua 陸建華, 'Daojia Zhengzhi Sixiang de Dangdai Jiazhi 道家政治思想的當代價值', *Academic Research Journal*, 11(2013), pp.40-44.
- Li Dinghua 李定華, 'Laozi Fanshi Zhong Roushili yu Joseph S. Nye, Jr Ruanshili de Bijiao Yanjiu 老子範式中「柔實力」與約瑟夫·奈「軟實力」的比較研究', *Hubei Social Sciences*, 03(2017), pp.44-49.
- Meng Xiangcai 孟祥才, 'A Review of Lao Zi' s Outlook on War 老子戰爭觀述評', *Sunzi Studies*, 24.06 (2018),pp.43-47.
- Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, 'Guodian Laozi jian Chutan 郭店《老子》簡初探', *Daojia Wenhua Yanjiu*, 道家文化研究, Vol.17(1998), pp.25-63.

Wang Xiuli 汪秀麗, 'Analysis of Laozi's War Thoughts 老子戰爭觀剖析', *Journal of Anhui University(Philosophy and Social Science)*, 26.05(2002), pp28-30.

Yueh-Ting Lee, Honggang Yang, and Min Wang, 'Daoist Harmony as a Chinese Philosophy and Psychology', *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 16.1 (2009), pp. 68-81.

Theses

Feng Guoli 馮國麗, *Lun Daojia de Shengtai Zhengzhi Zhexue Yiyun* 論道家的生態政治哲學意蘊. (Unpublished MPhil thesis, Hanzhou Normal University, 2010).

Ma Rui 馬睿, *A Study on the International Political Significance of the Lao Tzu' s Thought* 論老子思想的國際政治意義. (Unpublished LLM thesis, Yanshan University, 2013).

Xia Yang 夏陽, *An Insight into Political Philosophy of Laozi* 老子政治思想研究. (Unpublished MPhil thesis, Anhui University, 2013).