

BELT ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI): A *YIN-YANG* SOLUTION

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With China's rise to new heights in the international scene, it now faces the question of continuity; hence, in order to extend this upward trend, the Chinese government now implements the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) which reflects one of the major principles of Chinese philosophy: the *Yin* and *Yang* theory.

Yin and *Yang* refers to the major concept of two opposing things or aspects that remain unified and related to one another in Chinese Philosophy. These two concepts could be found in all objects and phenomena in the world around us. For example, *Yin* is female, water, earth and night. On the other hand, *Yang* pertains to male, fire, heaven and day.

The concept of *Yin* and *Yang* originated during the *Zhou* Dynasty (周朝), specifically from the "*I Ching*" or "*Book of Changes*" 《易經》. This book contains ancient Chinese system of divination, cosmology and philosophy. *I Ching* is composed of debates, readings, commentaries and interpretations that centers on the ideas of processes of change such as *Yin* and *Yang*. Symbolically, this book was often used to provide guidance for moral and decision making

problems that ancient people faced. Similarly, this is still being practiced in modern times, especially in Confucianism and Daoism.

The *Yin* and *Yang* theory has four major concepts: opposition, interdependence, wax-wane - transformation. There is always an opposition between *Yin* and *Yang* existing in all things and phenomena in nature: cold and heat, organic and functional, exit and entrance. However, despite this opposition, neither *Yin* nor *Yang* can exist without the other and remain to be in a state of interdependence. Without heaven, there is no earth and without earth, there is no heaven. The two concepts tied to one another, together, *Yin* and *Yang* makes up a whole. Nonetheless, the balance between *Yin* and *Yang* does not remain static; rather it is in a state of constant change. There is a possibility of quantitative change because *Yin* and *Yang* is not absolute, but relative. As *Yin* wanes, *Yang* waxes; as *Yang* wanes, *Yin* waxes. This could be seen in the climatic changes of the four seasons from winter to spring to summer to autumn and to winter. The change in temperature is because of the difference between the relative balance of *Yin* and *Yang* present during that specific season. Aside from a quantitative change, a qualitative change is also possible. *Yin* may turn into *Yang* and *Yang* into *Yin*. Also, *Yin* and *Yang* could further be subdivided into *Yin* and *Yang*. For example, *Yin* could be further subdivided into two parts: *Yin* within the *Yin*, and *Yang* within the *Yin*. Likewise, there is a *Yang* within a *Yang* and a *Yin* within a *Yang*.

Application

The *Yin* and *Yang* philosophy is the main foundation of many philosophical schools of thought under Chinese Philosophy which includes Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, Legalism and many more. Aside from this, the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* has always been strongly associated with the Chinese culture. There are many establishments, products and media highlighting, alluding and showing the symbol for this concept. Furthermore, this concept still continues to guide the daily lives and decision making of many Chinese today. Similarly, this could also be applied to governance and policy making.

DYNASTIES AND LEADERSHIP

China is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. With more than five thousand years of history, China has experienced the rise and fall of many dynasties. As many historians and researchers such as David Zhang have pointed out, the rise and fall of these dynasties are directly related to the ‘mandate of heaven’ and follows a pattern called the dynastic cycle.

Mandate of Heaven

The ‘Mandate of Heaven’ pertains to the degree of ‘Heaven’ or ‘*Tian*’ (天). Heaven is seen as a supreme god that either nourishes or destroys the dynasties. It is believed that heaven intervenes with the political affairs of the country and the emperor is the person who is

responsible for maintaining the harmony between heaven and the human sphere. As long as the emperor fulfills his responsibilities by ruling with justice, he retains heaven's trust. However, once he betrays heaven's trust by failing to protect his people from invaders or containing internal revolt, he loses the mandate. All in all, this concept is generally used as a justification for the overthrow of dynasties. Once revolutions successfully overthrow the old dynasties, the ruler is considered to have exhausted the "Mandate of Heaven."

Dynastic Cycle

The dynastic cycle is an important political theory that explains the cultural, economic, political and social rise and decline of each dynasty. It is the pattern in every five dynasties of long duration. Each regime would always start with efficiency, flourishing and improvement in the quality of life of the citizens. However, after a period of time, it would experience a decline in economic well-being and order would slowly degenerate. Corruption and natural calamities soon follow and the people will subsequently rise in revolutions in protest. When the revolution succeeds, the succeeding dynasty would typically improve the economic situation and restore order but eventually follow its predecessor's path of decline, thereby repeating the pattern as the cycle continues.

Dynastic Cycle and Yin-Yang Theory

Based on the *Yin- Yang* theory, the dynastic cycle could be divided into two parts: (1) the establishment and improvement and (2) the decline and revolutions. The first part of the cycle pertains to the establishment of each dynasty where the new monarchs would initiate improvements to make the government more efficient. This movement could be seen as ascending which pertains to *Yang*. On the other hand, the second part pertains to the economic decline and corruption which then fuels revolutions to overthrow the dynasties. This shows the descending movement which could be classified as *Yin*.

In addition to this, the four major concepts of the *Yin- Yang* theory, namely opposition, interdependence, wax-wane and transformation could also be seen in the cycle. New dynasties could not be established if the old ones are not destroyed. In the same way, each dynasty would not exist without its beginning and end. This reflects the opposition and interdependence concepts of *Yin* and *Yang*. Furthermore, with the gradual improvement and decline in each dynasty, the *Yin* and *Yang* balance undergoes a state of change which then eventually leads to transformation. During the improvement period, *Yang* waxes as *Yin* wanes. However, as the decline ensues, the balance in between shifts as *Yin* waxes and *Yang* wanes. Eventually, as the dynasty ends, *Yang* would then turn into *Yin*. However, the rise and fall of the different dynasties did not

continue until today. The cycle eventually ended with the last dynasty.

CENTURY OF HUMILIATION

It was during the First Opium War (1839-1842) when the “century of humiliation” (bainian guochi) 《百年国耻》 started and lasted until 1949 when the People’s Republic of China was founded.

The First Opium War began when the Qing foreign policy assumed that foreign merchants would follow the status quo when conducting business in China, which meant that foreigners could only conduct transactions with the Hong merchants. China was already perceived as a profitable trading market. The British then sought a reciprocal trading market by selling Indian opium. The entry of opium started to affect the military, the *Qing* court, and the general population. Emperor *Daoguang* ordered governor general *Lin Zixu* to eliminate all opium imports but opium consumption continued in spite of a ban on the sale of opium. In February 1839, a smuggler was executed in front of the foreign-run factories in *Guangzhou* which caused an increase in Sino-British tensions. Within seven months, the First Opium War began. In the First Opium War, a large British military force captured the city of *Canton* (now known as *Guangzhou*) before reaching the coastline and entering central China at the *Yangtze* River delta. China was defeated by the British and the Convention of *Chuanbi* was negotiated which authorized Britain to take control of *Hong Kong*, pay a \$6 million

indemnity, and widen trade in new ports in accordance with British terms. A subsequent treaty gave the British immunity from the punishment of Chinese laws. To officially end the First Opium War, Britain and China signed the Treaty of *Nanking* which obliged China to give in to significant concessions which included payment of indemnities, the cede of *Hong Kong* to Great Britain, opening of five additional ports, agreeing to diplomatic relations with Britain on terms of equality and application of tariffs on imports and exports. This started the decline in power of China as *Yin* slowly waxes. Since China did not want to participate in normal international diplomatic relations, this unequal treaty system provoked rebellion and in less than twenty years, the Second Opium War began.

More opium trade was forced by the British on China during the Second Opium War (1856-1860), also known as the Arrow War, and more treaty ports were opened. Both the British and French governments were not happy with China's progress of acceding with the Treaty of Nanking. The Chinese refused to grant demands from the British for protection from piracy for their ships which navigate along the Pearl River. On October 8, 1856, Chinese police boarded and seized a British-captained ship called the Arrow. The British flag was hauled down by the police which angered Great Britain. *Ye Mingchen*, the Viceroy of *Guangdong* and *Guangxi* provinces declined to apologize and this event triggered the start of war. *Guangzhou* was attacked by Britain in the spring of 1857 and by December 1857, *Guangzhou* was captured by a joint Anglo-French

force. The following year, the *Xianfeng* emperor signed the Treaty of *Tianjin* with Great Britain, which was followed with parallel treaties with the United States, Russia, and France.

Among the provisions of this unequal treaty was giving Great Britain more access to more ports, direct liaison with *Peking (Beijing)*, and tariff revision. Immediately after the withdrawal of the British fleet, the emperor ignored the treaty. So, for another two years, further negotiations continued until the British and French signed separate Treaties of *Beijing*. Russia, playing the role of arbitrator, was able to acquire 1,722,342 square kilometers of territory under the Treaties of *Aigun, Beijing, and Tarbagatai*.

It was during this period (1860) when the looting and burning of the Old Summer Palace, also known as *Yuanmingyan*, by British and French troops took place. The *Yuanmingyan* is composed of an exquisite array of buildings, lakes and parks which served as the primary residence of the imperial court. It was done by the British as an act of retribution to crush the pride and feelings of an emperor. Plunder of the palaces, which contained an immense amount of priceless artifacts lasted into 1860. The gardens were reduced to ruins. This demonstrated the superior strength of the British and crumbled the conviction of the emperor's universal sovereignty. The destruction of the Summer Palace was more of a psychological defeat because militarily, the palace had no significant value. The major target here was the extinguishing of an emperor's pride and feelings.

Approaching the end of the nineteenth century, China's adversaries shifted from Western countries to Japan. Japan was beginning to emerge as a major regional power. While Japan asserted that it is no longer a vassal of China, it wanted more influence in Korea. The Sino-Japanese War was a fight for control of Korea. There was the Li-Ito Convention which allowed both China and Japan to post troops in Korea. In 1894, a pro-Japanese Korean leader named Kim Ok-kym was assassinated in *Shanghai*. His body was repatriated to Korea but was put on display to serve as a warning to people not to support Japan. The Japanese government took offense against this activity. When the *Tonghak* rebellion broke out in Korea, the Chinese government sent reinforcements. This was considered by the Japanese as a violation of the Li-Ito Convention such that they also sent troops to Korea. On August 1, 1894, Japan declared war and this ended on April, 1895. China was again defeated during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) where China was forced to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Not only was Formosa (Taiwan), the adjoining Pescadores, and part of the *Liaodong* Peninsula in Manchuria ceded to Japan, but China was made to open more ports and was also forced to pay a huge war indemnity that was several times Japan's GDP at the time. China was also forced to recognize the independence and autonomy of Korea.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the *Qing* dynasty and Chinese peasants were concerned about China being influenced by foreigners occupying China. An organization known as the Society of

the Righteous and Harmonious Fists rebelled against the Westerners in the Boxer Rebellion. The society coined the slogan “Revive the *Qing*, destroy the foreigners.” The society was called Boxers by the Westerners because they performed physical exercises and rites that the Boxers believed would withstand bullets. On June 20, 1900, a siege was undertaken by the Boxers where foreign embassies were attacked and soon after, *Qing* Empress Dowager *Cixi* declared war on the foreign nations operating within China’s territory which include the United States, Germany, Japan, Britain, Russia, France, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. At first, the *Qing* Dynasty ordered the army to help the Boxers but when it was apparent that the Boxers were losing, the Chinese Army was ordered to change sides and help the foreign armies instead which ultimately defeated the Boxers. Another peace treaty, the Boxer Protocol, was signed and accepted by the *Qing* court in 1901. The *Qing* court was to pay an indemnity of 450 million taels of silver over thirty-nine years, and designate the *Dongjiao Minxiang* as the embassy area for the eight-nation alliance. In addition, all forts from *Beijing* to *Dagu* are to be destroyed, and foreign troops are to be allowed to be stationed at thirty-three strategic locations along the railroad between *Beijing* and *Shanhaiguan*. Eventually, the imperial court fled into exile.

In ten years, the dynastic rule in China ended. Under the leadership of *Sun Yat-Sen*, the Republic of China was born. During this time, China was seen as inferior to Japan. In 1915, the Japanese imposed the Twenty-one Demands on the Chinese government. This

was composed of five sets of secret requirements pushed by Japan. The first two sets consist of agreeing to Japan's dominant position in strategic locations such as *Shandong*, Manchuria, and eastern Inner Mongolia. The third set compelled China to recognize Japan's special interests in an industrial complex in central China. The fourth set banned China from relinquishing any territory to foreign nations except Japan. The fifth set obliged China to install Japanese advisors in key leadership positions including government, military, and financial institutions. On May 25, 1915, Chinese President Yuan accepted and signed the Twenty-one Demands with the exception of the fifth set.

Even if China was among the victors of World War I, due to the result of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, the German concessions on *Shandong* peninsula were transferred to Japan instead of returning to China.

Ten years after the First Sino-Japanese War, Russia lost to Japan for control of the Manchurian territory. Within six years of Japanese occupation of Manchuria, Japan declared war on China. By 1938, The Chinese had evacuated its capital in Nanking and lost the *Yangtze* River Valley. The Japanese military took the key cities and industrial complex of China. Over 300,000 civilians were murdered during the *Nanjing* Massacre and around 80,000 women were raped. Japan's occupation ended during World War II when it was defeated by the Allies.

Finally in 1949, The Communists won the Civil War. On October 1, 1949, Chairman *Mao Zedong* stood atop Beijing's Gate of Heavenly Peace, declared that the Chinese people have stood up and proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China thereby putting to end the "century of humiliation" which actually lasted 109 years. This event now serves a turning point. After going through this period of chaos and humiliation, China now takes steps in order to turn international humiliation into recognition.

DEVELOPMENT

After the century of humiliation, the succeeding leaders of China took steps and implemented programs in order to improve and develop the country. As this happens, *Yin* starts to wane and *Yang* waxes.

Mao Zedong (1893-1976) played a major role in the establishment of the Red Army. He assumed the post of Party Chairman in 1945. He relied heavily on the peasantry and depended on guerilla warfare which were both essential to the victory of Communism in China. He initiated many political initiatives which included land reform, the regulation of agriculture, and the spread of medical services. He was cautious of his subordinates' approach to development. He initiated the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" which successfully removed many officials who opposed his policies. Until his death, there continued to be a struggle between those who benefited from the Cultural Revolution and defended its policies and rehabilitated

veterans who believed that the Cultural Revolution had harmed China. After *Zhou Enlai's* death in January 1976, *Mao* chose *Hua Guofeng* to continue with his vision. After *Mao's* death, *Hua* led the arrest of major radical figures which included the “Gang of Four”, considered to be counter-revolutionary forces. After *Mao's* death, there has been a reversal of most of what *Mao* stood for. In June 1981, the Party Central Committee approved a solution that criticized *Mao's* rule after 1958 but recognized him as a great leader and ideologist of the Chinese Communist revolution.

Zhou Enlai was a supporter of *Mao* in the Cultural Revolution. He mediated numerous political quarrels and played a critical role in rebuilding political institutions. *Zhou* advocated China's opening to Japan and the West to counter the Russian Threat. His policy of “Four Modernizations” received the full endorsement of the new leadership. This entailed the development of industry, agriculture, defense and science and technology.

Deng Xiaoping was the architect of China's economic opening whose goal was economic development. He dismantled the communes set up during *Mao's* time and replaced them with the Household Responsibility System (HRS) wherein each household is held accountable to the state for only what it agrees to produce, thereby keeping the surplus output for private use. He also encouraged farmers to engage in private entrepreneurship and sideline businesses to supplement their incomes. For him, the economic policy does not matter whether it be socialist or capitalist

as long as economic growth is attained. He also advocated for leadership succession according to legal guidelines instead of personality struggles. They initiated decollectivization in agriculture, decentralized decision-making in industry, and granted greater autonomy to enterprises. They increased marketization and commercialization of the domestic economy. This started a series of reforms which was basically adapting a mix of policies and innovating and modifying. Authority has now been dispersed among the leaders. Policy making is more systematic. Policy options are debated within government bodies. Specialists are now being called by the top leaders for professional advice. Future leaders now have to meet new professional criteria. A new kind of technocratic elite has been created, which includes an increasing number of individuals who possess the skills required to lead and guide China into the modern world. Their basic approach is towards political relaxation and liberalization, They have allowed increased diversity although within limits. They have adopted many individual laws and regulations and are developing systematic codes. The legal system is still evolving, as it still puts primary importance to protecting the state and preserving social order rather than on individual rights. Harsh punishments are still being imposed on violators of party-defined norms, as well as those guilty of crimes and corruption. Intellectuals are now holders of important positions or serve as consultants to the party, government and other institutions.

However, China still has a one-party system. Its leaders are still not prepared to accept a free press, a competitive electoral process, or real opposition parties.

Nevertheless, foreign investment is now very much contributing to China's modernization. The open door policy also brought changes in China's foreign economic relationships. China has now signed a large number of economic and technical agreement with foreign governments. Even Chinese scientific and educational institutions now have established ties with their counterparts abroad. Scholars and students in the scientific and technical fields have been sent to capitalist countries.

Beijing intends to rely more on policies relating to prices, taxes, credit, interest rates, exchange rates than on specific quotas to steer the country's development.

Hu Yaobang encouraged and adopted some Western practices. He also sought to extend accountability of the leadership.

Jiang Zemin's contribution to China's guiding principles include his 'Three Represents' 《三个代表》 which can be summarized as '*Represents China's advanced social productive forces (importance of economic development); Represents the progressive course of China's advanced culture (development of cultural identity); Represents the fundamental interests of the majority (maintenance of people's mandate).*'

Hu Jintao led China through a period of rapid economic development from 2002-2012.

Xi Jinping promoted a major anti-corruption campaign, reshuffling the top leadership of China's ever-growing and upgrading armed forces, and promoting trusted allies to key provincial governments and major ministries. He likewise promoted the aspiration to a "Chinese Dream" where anyone can aspire to be rich and attain success by hard work. His policy is characterized as economically liberal but politically conservative. His 'Eight Honors and Eight Shames' had been widely promoted. These are: Love the country; do it no harm. Serve the people; never betray them. Follow science, discard ignorance. Be diligent; not indolent. Be united, help each other; make no gains at others' expense. Be honest and trustworthy; do not sacrifice ethics for profit. Be disciplined and law-abiding; not chaotic and lawless. Live plainly work hard; do not wallow in luxuries and pleasures.

BELT ROAD INITIATIVE

The China of today occupies one of the seats of power in the international stage. However, according to the *Yin* and *Yang* Theory, everything that goes up, must also go down. Hence, this now leads to a new problem for China: the question of continuity. If everything must eventually go down, why not attempt to slow down the upward trend in order to stay on top longer? This is exactly what the Chinese government today is doing through the planning and implementation of the Belt Road Initiative (BRI).

What is the BRI?

The Chinese government, under President *Xi Jinping*, introduced in September 2013 an initiative called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI or *yi dai yi lu*) 《一帶一路》, one of the largest infrastructure and investment projects in history which will connect Asia, Africa, Oceania and Europe. It is made up of a “belt” of overland corridors and a maritime “road” of shipping lanes. The project’s vision is to enhance regional connectivity and cooperation and embrace a brighter future on a trans-continental scale. It is a connectivity of systems and mechanisms where a unified large market is constructed to maximize the use of both domestic and international markets through cultural exchange and integration. This initiative will not only strengthen trade, infrastructure and investment links between China and more than 65 countries, it will also enhance mutual understanding and trust of member nations with the use of capital inflows, talent pool and technology database. The Belt and Road Initiative covers more than 68 countries, including 65% of the world’s population, 1/3 of world trade, 40% of the global GDP, and 75% of known energy reserves. Its estimated cost is around US \$4-8 trillion.

On October 2013, President Xi proposed building a close-knit China-ASEAN community, establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to finance infrastructure construction and offered guidance on constructing a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road

to promote maritime cooperation. This was followed by a call from the Communist Party of China to accelerate infrastructure links among neighboring countries so as to facilitate the Belt and Road Initiative. The annual Central Economic Work Conference promoted the connectedness of infrastructure and building of a community of common interests. On February 2014, Xi met with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin and reached a consensus on the construction of the Belt and Road. The first phase of a logistics terminal jointly built by China and Kazakhstan went into operation on May 2014, in the port of *Lianyungang*, in east China's Jiangsu province. This is a good platform for goods from Asian countries to reach overseas markets.

Twenty-one Asian countries joined the AIIB as founding members and on October 2014 established AIIB. It was agreed that Beijing will be the host city for AIIB's headquarters. China contributed \$40 billion to set up the Silk Road Fund which will be used to provide investment and financing support for infrastructure, resources, industrial cooperation, financial cooperation and other projects in countries along the Belt and Road. On January 2015, New Zealand, Maldives, Saudi Arabia and Tajikistan officially joined the AIIB. On March 28, 2015, an action plan was released by the National Development and Reform Commission on the principles, framework, and cooperation priorities and mechanisms in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Infrastructure investment is the initial focus, with the construction of railways, highways, power grids, and investments in real estate, and education.

However, the BRI is seen by others as Chinese dominance in global affairs with China in the center of a global trading network.

The BRI consists primarily of the *Silk Road Economic Belt* (丝绸之路经济带), linking China to Central Asia, Russia and Europe (the Baltic); China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and the Indian Ocean, and the *21st-Century Maritime Silk Road* (21世纪海上丝绸之路), designed to go from China's coast to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one route, and from China's coast through the South China Sea to the South Pacific in the other.

The land corridors include:

1. The New Eurasian Land Bridge which runs from Western China to Western Russia through Kazakhstan.
2. The China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor will run from Northern China to the Russian Far East.
3. The China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor will run from Western China to Turkey.
4. The China-Indochina Peninsula Corridor will run from Southern China to Singapore.
5. The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor runs from southern China to Myanmar.

6. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a collection of infrastructure projects throughout Pakistan.

In addition to this, the Ice Silk Road is being endorsed by *Xi Jinping* so that Russia and China will carry out the Northern Sea Route cooperation to foster development in the Arctic Region.

The BRI can transform the economic environment in which economies in the region operate. The new and improved transport infrastructure and policy reforms could substantially reduce trade costs and improve connectivity, which translates to improved growth in the affected region. However, the potential benefits of BRI may not be realized immediately in some regions due to some economic and policy challenges. In some individual countries, there might be a possible need to evaluate the needed policies and institutional reforms and the possible effects of participating in the BRI. Initial conditions are different for every country and the ability to reform varies.

There are risks, however, for countries involved. The Center for Global Development found eight more Belt and Road countries at serious risk of not being able to repay their loans. The eight nations, namely Djibouti, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, the Maldives, Mongolia, Montenegro, Pakistan and Tajikistan will owe more than half of all their foreign debt to China. In 2011, 1,158 sq km of disputed territory in Tajikistan was given to China in exchange for writing off an undisclosed debt. This strategy is called the “debt-trap diplomacy” where the lender country is able to extract strategic concessions, such

as over territorial disputes in the South China Sea or silence on human rights violations.

Another concern is that Chinese commercial presence around the world will eventually lead to expanded military presence due to its strategic advantage at sea. Observers say that almost all ports and other transport infrastructures being built can be used both for commercial and military purposes. Besides hard infrastructure, China also plans to set up international courts in *Shenzhen* and *Xi'an*, the former hub of the original Silk Road, to resolve commercial disputes related to Belt and Road. It may therefore be a mechanism for China to write new rules and establish new institutions based on Chinese interests. Chinese officials have said the courts will follow international rules and will invite legal experts from outside China to participate. There is, however, the possibility that the courts will favor Chinese parties over foreign firms.

Origin

The Silk Road opened during the first and second centuries B.C.E. to service the east-west trade routes between Greece and China. It also proved beneficial for both the Roman Empire and the Kushan Empire. However, it was only in 1877 when the German geographer and historian Ferdinand von Richthofen first used the term “Silk Road” to describe the trade routes.

The Silk Road actually refers to several thoroughfares which included a large network of trading post which are strategically

located, and markets designed to ease the transport, exchange, distribution and storage of goods.

Routes extended from the Greco-Roman metropolis of Antioch across the Syrian Desert and Seleucia on the Tigris River. From Seleucia, routes passed over the Zagros Mountains to the cities of Ecbatana (Iran) and Merv (Turkmenistan), where additional routes crossed to modern-day Afghanistan and into Mongolia and China. Silk Road routes also led to ports on the Persian Gulf which can lead to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Ports along the Mediterranean Sea can be connected to cities throughout the Roman Empire and into Europe.

Although silk was one of the important exports from the East to the West, products that were traded include fruits and vegetables, livestock, grain, leather and hides, tools, religious objects, artwork, precious stones, metals, and even the intangibles: language, culture, religious beliefs, philosophy and science. Among the most-traded items between the East and West were paper and gunpowder.

The Silk Road routes also opened up means of passage for explorers. Among them was Marco Polo who used the Silk Road to travel from Italy to China.

CONCLUSION

The *Yin* and *Yang* philosophy originated from ancient times, existing as early as the *Zhou* Dynasty. *Yin* and *Yang* pertains to the two opposing yet interrelated and interconnected concepts found in all objects and phenomena in the world. Through observations and

interpretations recorded in the *I Ching*, the ancient people of China was able to notice the process of change which they later called *Yin* and *Yang*. Here, change could be divided into four major concepts, namely opposition, interdependence, wax-wane and transformation. *Yin* and *Yang* are opposites, yet they remain dependent on one another. Without one, the other would not exist. At the same time, change is viewed as something ‘dynamic’, never always remaining the same. The quantity of change present in the harmony between the two concepts is relative and is subject to adjustments. However, despite existing since the dynasties, these two concepts still remain to be truly embedded and reflected in the Chinese culture and society today.

China is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. With more than five thousand years of culture, China has flourished since the time of the dynasties. Leadership in the dynasties was always directed to the ‘Mandate of Heaven’, which when lost would inevitably lead to the fall of the dynasty. However, each fall would always give rise to the establishment of a new dynasty. Nonetheless, each regime would start with efficiency, flourishing and improvement in the quality of life of the citizens. But, it would always be accompanied by a decline in economic well-being and degeneration of order in the later years. This pattern of establishment and termination of the many different dynasties is called the Dynastic Cycle and it reflects the *Yin-Yang* Theory. The establishment, improvement and rise of the dynasties pertains to *Yang*, and as it slowly encounters problems that causes its decline, *Yin* becomes more apparent. However, this cycle did not

continue until the present and eventually ended with the *Qing* Dynasty.

More specifically, the last dynasty ended around the time of the “Century of Humiliation” which started during the First Opium War in the mid-19th century. After this first defeat by Great Britain, many more wars followed such as the Second Opium War, Sino-French War, Sino-Japanese War, Boxer Rebellion and more. China lost almost all of the following wars and was forced to agree to unequal treaties which resulted to yielding large privileges to the great powers of that time. As a result, China was fragmented and divided between Britain, Germany, Russia, France and Japan, the foreign ‘spheres of influence’ during that time. This time period is classified as the darkest part of the history of China where the nation and its citizens faced international humiliation. This is the part that shows the decline in power and can be classified as *Yang*.

Following this, different leaders of China starting from *Mao Zedong* took steps in order to stop the decline. Currently, due to the efforts of these leaders, the country has made a 180 degree turn. Rising from one of the darkest parts of its history, China has made a turnaround of international humiliation to global recognition. The country has recently reached new heights as the second most influential economic power in the world and now claims a spot in the center stage on global affairs. However, this upward trend now poses the question of continuity: how long would this last? According to the *Yin* and *Yang* Theory, it is inevitable in the world that everything has a polar opposite. This could clearly be seen in the curving of up

and down in the long history of China. If there is a Yin, there should be a *Yang*. Where there is female, there should be male. Where there was day, there would be a night. While there was darkness, there was also light. While the flourishing was lively, the cheerless was in decline. Light cannot exist without darkness and vice versa. Thus, everything that reaches its peak, will always eventually wane and decline. With the new heights that China has recently attained, it now faces this new problem. Hence, the solution that the Chinese government currently uses is the implementation of programs and steps that would prolong its stay as one of the leaders in the international world such as the Belt Road Initiative (BRI).

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