

## Building a Harmonious Society and Achieving Individual Harmony

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*Rapid economic growth in China is accompanied by economic disparity, corruption, crime, and a great deal of frustration among China's citizens. These social problems threaten the country's further development, social stability, and harmony. This study discusses the recent campaign in China for a harmonious society. Many Chinese scholars, officials, and citizens seem to believe that more effective and efficient social structures will result in social harmony. However, social harmony is a more complex social psychological phenomenon which is determined by the interactions among social values, people, and society. People achieve social harmony when they feel their values and desires are attainable in society. They have to make strong social and psychological effort if they want to successfully achieve harmony with nature, society, and themselves.*

Key words: *harmony, harmonious society, Chinese society, Chinese values, Daoism*

The notion of harmony often reflects the ultimate value and goal of Chinese people in life. "Tian ren he yi" (天人合一 "Heaven and people in harmony") is a prominent view in Chinese philosophy and has been the most desirable accomplishment for many in Chinese culture. Consequently, building a harmonious society has been the dream and pursuit of Chinese people for centuries.

The desire for harmony, however, became more intense and urgent in recent years in China's rapid economic growth and unprecedented social changes. On October 11, 2006, the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China passed a strategic document, "Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's Resolution on Major Issues of Building a Socialist Harmonious Society,"<sup>1</sup> at its sixth plenary session. Thereafter, the construction of a harmonious society became the central theme of China's economic, social, and political activities. People from all walks of life--party leaders, public officials, college professors, students, China's new economic elites, workers, farmers, school teachers--suddenly found themselves in the middle of a propaganda campaign for a socialist harmonious society. Recently, at the Seventeenth National Congress of the

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Communist Party of China, Hu Jintao, General Secretary of the party, reaffirmed the importance of building a harmonious society in China.<sup>2</sup> One may ask: What is the urgency? What is a harmonious society? How does harmony work? How do people achieve social harmony?

### **CHINA'S URGENT NEED OF A MORE HARMONIOUS SOCIETY**

While phenomenal economic development and social changes in the past two decades brought the Chinese people many benefits and opportunities, they have also presented major challenges to the country. As stated in the resolution, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCPC) believes the construction of a harmonious society is of strategic importance in addressing issues of "uneven urban, rural and regional economic development, increasing pressures from human resource conditions; employment, social security, wealth distribution, education, health care, housing, industrial safety, crime prevention and public security which have direct impact on people's life."<sup>3</sup>

Economic developments in different regions of China are uneven, and the gap of income among residents is increasing. According to a 2006 report compiled by China Economic Monitoring & Analysis, the average GDP per capita in Shanhai in 2003 was \$5,649, while the average GDP of Guizhou, a province further away in the west of China, only reached \$436.<sup>4</sup> The income of urban residents was 1.86 times higher than that of rural residents in 1985. However, it increased to 3.21 times in 2004.<sup>5</sup> In 2003 the average per capita dispensable income in rural area was 2,841 yuan (about \$355), which was only one third of the average dispensable income of urban residents. In Shanghai, the average per capita dispensable income reached 14,867 yuan (about \$1,858), about ten times as much as the lowest income in some rural areas.<sup>6</sup> According to an analysis, in 2005 China's income disparity was the worst in the world.<sup>7</sup> Official statement put the number of people living in absolute poverty at 57 million, about 6% of the rural population at the end of 2006.<sup>8</sup> About 2500 years ago, Confucius said that people are not bothered by having little but by not having equal amount.<sup>9</sup> The widening economic gap and the uneven and unfair distribution of wealth, often perceived by many, have brought forth all the problems known to be associated with such conditions.

Hoping to escape the economic trap in underdeveloped regions and rural areas, many people, mainly farmers, have left for the big cities, forming the largest army of migrant workers in Chinese history. It is estimated that there are over 120 million such migrant workers, about one fourth of China's farm labor.<sup>10</sup> This has greatly changed the social landscape and labor market of China. Inadequate, almost non-existent, labor laws and regulations provided no support and protection for these workers. While workers made some economic gains, they paid a heavy price. They not only worked long hours, about 9 to 12 hours a day and 6 to 6.5 days a week,<sup>11</sup> but also subjected themselves to poor and unsafe working conditions. Greedy employers exploited these migrant workers by providing low pay, usually only 40% of the pay of city workers for the same work, and often did not pay them

on time or at all. In several reported cases, workers were turned into slave laborers by their employers or some criminal enterprise with the protection of corrupted local officials. In addition, these workers were largely marginalized, if not completely excluded, from the prosperous city life to which they made valuable contributions. They often lived in very poor conditions, with many people crowded in one room, with no air conditioning in summer and no heat in winter. They stayed in crime-infested neighborhoods with little public service and no sanitary facilities. Their children were usually excluded from the local public school system, and private education is very much beyond their means. Moreover, they could not afford to be ill since they had no health insurance. These hard economic situations, unfair treatment, and isolation from other social and cultural activities led to an increasing number of conflicts.<sup>12</sup>

Workplace safety has also become a major issue in recent years. Work-related death remains high in several sectors of the economy. Several major coal mine disasters shocked the nation. In 2004, the number of coal mine incidents reached 3853, killing 6009 people. Although coal mining is a relatively dangerous job, the death rate in China's mines is usually high, 3.1 per million tons of coal, 100 times the rate in the United States. China's coal production is one-third of world production; however, its coal mine death accounts close to 80% of world total.<sup>13</sup> On December 5, 2007, one incident at Xinyao coal mine in Hongdong County of Shanxi Province killed 104 miners.<sup>14</sup> In Hunan Province, a bridge under construction collapsed, killing 64 people and injuring 22.<sup>15</sup> On November 20, 2007, a rock slide at the entrance of Gaoyangzhai Tunnel killed 31 people, including workers working on the entrance and passengers on a coach bus.<sup>16</sup> Many of these tragedies involved avoidable human errors such as negligence, profit-driven motives, corruption in business dealing, using cheap labor to cut cost, etc.

Safety issues with food, medicine, and water have become a persistent problem in the country. According to government issued statistics, in 2004 alone there were 2305 reported cases of food poisoning; a sample test of twenty-one different food products revealed that more than 10% failed to meet the standard, including 15% of meat products and 13% of dairy products. Worst of all, profit driven criminal behaviors in the production of food and medical products reached a very high level. 2,505 people were prosecuted for making bad milk powder, fake drinks, pharmaceutical drugs, fertilizers, and pesticides, a 56.9% increase from the previous year. Consumer anxiety was at an all time high. In the National Living Environment Index survey of 2007, 60.7% participants indicated that they had the least confidence in food safety,<sup>17</sup> and legitimate honest business people became collateral victims in an atmosphere of suspicion and disgust. The negative social and psychological impact has reached far beyond the economic domain.

Shortsighted, sometimes even self-destructive, development and sheer greed have taken a heavy toll on the environment. Precious natural resources are being wasted and misused. Pollution of air and water is everywhere, with big cities being the worst. For instance, the average amount of water resource per person in China is

only a quarter of the world average, but the water consumption for the same industrial activity is three to seven times more than the consumption in other developed countries.<sup>18</sup> Manufacturers produce more waste for the same unit of GDP. In summer 2007, a sudden outbreak of blue algae in Taihu, a major source of drinking water in South China, sent the residents of several surrounding cities and towns into a panic.<sup>19</sup> For several days, people had to use bottled water for drinking and could not shower or wash clothes. During the first ten months of 2007, there were 83 occurrences of red tide in China's coastal waters, covering an area of 11,039 square kilometers.<sup>20</sup> And 75% of China's lakes is "enriched" with excess nutrients from farmland run-offs and discharged sewage, ideal for algae outbreaks.<sup>21</sup> It was reported that over thirty billion tons of waste water had been discharged into Changjiang (the Yangtze River) in 2006, setting a record.<sup>22</sup>

The most disturbing aspect of China's social peril, perhaps the very one that prompted the drive for a harmonious society, is the chaos within China's social value system, a result of years' of neglect and the incompetent upkeep and cultivation of more positive Chinese social values. Laozi (Lao Tzu), a Chinese sage of 500 B.C., once said that when everyone knows beauty is beauty, there is only the opposite, disgust, exist; when everyone knows virtue is virtue, virtue is already absent.<sup>23</sup> When the Chinese President, Hu Jintao, proposed and asked the entire nation to focus on "Barong Bachi" (Eight honorable and eight shameful conducts)<sup>24</sup>, it was a clear indication that the society had lost its basic values and behavior code. Money-worshipping is everywhere. Some people believe that all methods are justified as long as money can be obtained.<sup>25</sup> There is a widely circulated notion that people are being laughed at for being poor instead of being in prostitution. Many believe that once they have money, they can even bribe the devil to work for them. In the past five years, China's public prosecution offices have prosecuted 34,939 corruption and embezzlement cases involving 100,000 yuan or more. 13,790 government officials at the county level or higher were prosecuted.<sup>26</sup> Corruption is so rampant that it has become expected in many economic and social activities. When some honest public officials refuse to take bribes, the first thought of those involved is not that these officials are good public servants, but that the bribe is too insignificant to take. It has reached a point where people assume the presence of corruption in all major public projects or business deals even when there is no corruption involved.

If major cases of corruption of government officials affect only big business deals or public projects, corruption in education and health care has a direct impact on ordinary citizens. Some of the corruption has become institutionalized. For instance, colleges and schools have devised many unethical ways to take money from students when they want to get into a college or school. At the time of admission to middle school or college, by simply manipulating the cut-off score schools can reduce the number of regular admits and then sell extra admission slots to those whose entrance scores don't make the first cut but are willing to pay to get accepted. No receipt and no record of the payment are kept. School teachers act as

salespersons for publishers of test review materials and get paid kickbacks. In an official report made to the CCPC, Wu Guanzheng, the director of CCPC Discipline and Oversight Committee, cited as an achievement that his committee confiscated 349 million irregular educational fees in 2006.<sup>27</sup> In hospitals, doctors are told to prescribe certain drugs or treatments so that the hospitals and doctors can receive kickbacks from the suppliers. Patients in hospitals are expected to present doctors and nurses with “gift” money to receive quality service.

A sense of common human trust, decency, dignity, compassion, and civility is quietly disappearing in many places. Prostitution is widespread in cities and towns. Extra marital affairs are present in almost every corruption case involving government officials. The infidelity rate is higher than ever when moral condemnation pales in the face of money and lust. Drug abuse is on the rise despite government’s forced rehabilitation program. From January to November 2007, China’s law enforcement agencies cracked 50,000 drug cases, an 18% increase over the same period in 2006.<sup>28</sup>

In 2004 a scandal surrounding a BMW car shattered public trust in government officials and China’s sports lottery network. At a giant sports lottery event in Xian, a scheme went wrong when one of the four winning tickets went to a young man instead of prearranged winners. The sponsors refused to present the young man the prize, a new BMW, and accused him of faking the ticket. The man was infuriated and caused a series of public stirs. With the media hot in pursuit, organizers of the event teamed up with corrupt local government officials and tried to cover up their scheme to cheat the public.<sup>29</sup> The saga unfolded on television for weeks. It amused and disgusted many across the country. Then a different kind of crime shocked the public to the core. On the night of December 27, 2005, Ma Yinghao, a 28-year old career driver, hit a pedestrian with his car. Instead of getting help for the victim, he turned around and drove his car over the victim a second time to make sure the victim was dead, figuring that a dead man cost less in compensation than an injured man.<sup>30</sup> In the end, the driver received the most severe punishment of the land – the death sentence.

While similar social ills or economic inequality, wealth disparity, government corruption, crime, and loss of human virtues or morals exist in almost every modern society on this planet, they have manifested quite different perception and reality in China because of its unique history and socio-political environment. While wealth disparities might be attributed largely to individual effort or accomplishment in the United States, they could be perceived by many in China as due to the intrinsic evil and deceptive nature of all merchants, brewing a feeling of disgust toward the rich. Or they could be blamed on the government, since the government is believed to control everything and used to dictate almost every detail of people’s life. The absence of a democratic mechanism and the feeling of being excluded from the political process and being helpless in effecting future changes make some people more desperate. To make matters worse, the neglect of people’s emotional and spiritual needs, the inadequate investment in social science and

humanities, and the failed party-line indoctrination have left people without sufficient means for self-regulation and enrichment. All in all, the lack of effective infrastructure and mechanism, an incomplete democratic legal and justice system, a decline of moral standards, trustworthiness, and honesty among members of the society, and the incompatibility of the character, competency, and working styles of some leading administrators have intensified China's social problem and threaten to wipe out the initial joy brought forth by its economic boom. Consequently, many people see the urgent need to build a more harmonious society.

### CONCEPTUALIZING A HARMONIOUS SOCIETY

Human societies have existed for several thousand years. Wise men from the West--Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and wise men from the East--Laozi (Lao-tzu), Siddhartha (the Buddha), Confucius, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, as well as philosophers and professors of modern times, have talked about human societies, democracy, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, communism, Utopia, etc. There is nothing that has not been said, yet there is still everything to say about human societies. China's harmonious society is among the latest to be talked about.

Since the official proposal of a harmonious society at the Fourth Plenary Session of the Sixteenth CCPC and the passing of the resolution at the Sixth Plenary Session, politicians, government officials, scholars, college students, and China's new elite professionals all have voiced their opinions about this new harmonious society. The notions are all but the same with regard to the concept of a harmonious society, perhaps a clear indication that harmony exists in differences and is complex.

In his article "Harmonious Society, China's New Theme," Lianbin Qing, professor of sociology from Zhongyang Dangxiao (The Central Party School of CCP), presents a summary of the different views Chinese scholars have about the harmonious society.<sup>31</sup> First of all, scholars recognize that in a harmonious society all sectors or essential constituents should be in a state of cooperation.<sup>32</sup> This idea recognizes that society is a complex system with many different components representing various interests and that these differences may pull the society in different directions. For instance, businesses are interested in maximizing profits. In pursuing such a goal businesses may want to pay workers less or invest little in measures to protect the environment or natural resources while other people may want just the opposite. For a society to function well or in harmony, the components need to cooperate and work together.<sup>33</sup> Cooperation implies conflicts, compromises, and mutual benefits. As people have come to know over several thousand years, cooperation is anything but easy, especially for something as complex as a society.

Some scholars characterize a harmonious society as one in which all people will do what they are capable of doing as individuals to contribute to the society and are granted the opportunity or position to do so. This characterization reminds people of the ideal society in *Utopia*<sup>34</sup> and the definition of an ideal communist society. One clear assumption is that people are capable of or are willing to do only

one kind of work but not others; if they are capable of doing the same good work, they would choose not to compete for it if others are doing it. Another assumption is that the society has all kinds of job available at all times for people to choose from. It also assumes people know what they are best at. This type of society has never been known to exist, and it is doubtful that it will ever exist. At present almost all high school graduates in China want to go to college and the majority of them want only to become “bailing” (white collar professionals) when they graduate. Thousands of people compete for one position in government agencies while many technical positions are left unfilled. It remains to be seen how the ideal society would make these people’s dreams come true.

Chinese scholars indicate that it is important for a society to be filled with vitality, and the view is echoed in the CCPC resolution in terms of development. It is stated that only a harmonious socialist society is able to liberate and improve productivity. This idea is based on the belief that development will lead to more material wealth; more material wealth will quench people’s desire for things and narrow the economic gaps, leading to a harmonious society. Granted that material possession is essential in people’s lives, it is a little too simplistic to think that more productivity or material goods alone will bring harmony to the people. It cannot explain the perils existing along with China’s current economic boom when there are far more development and material possessions than at any time in China’s history, yet people perceive society not as harmonious as it used to be. Nor can it explain other more harmonious regions that are less developed.

Some scholars distinguish the “socialist harmonious society” from the “traditional harmonious society” that existed in China’s past. They point out that “traditional harmonious society” achieved its harmony at the expense of individuals’ interest, and in contrast that the “socialist harmonious society” is capable of balancing the interest of individuals and that of society. The former was based on the exploitation of the majority by a minority group, lack of equity and justice, and did not last. But this focus on the term “socialist” is not a productive approach in the discussion of harmony. First, harmony is a feeling. It is inconceivable to have “socialist feelings” or “feudalist feelings,” differing not in essence but in name. Second, exploitation is not welcomed by people anywhere. Unless it was perceived as something totally different, it is hard to imagine exploitation would trigger “traditional harmony.” Last, the term gives the false impression that no one has to sacrifice anything in a “socialist” society.

Chinese scholars also affirmed the value of equal opportunity and social mobility between social classes as a main feature of a harmonious society. It is said that all social classes should be open and allow others to enter, and no social classes and people, especially those in the upper classes should deliberately set obstacles to exclude members of other social classes. This is a form of articulation against discrimination – a negative social value in modern society. It gives the wrong impression that all obstacles or discrimination for social mobility are clearly visible, deliberately set, and respond readily to human commands. It fails to acknowledge

the fact that the very existence of social classes and groups is a form of discrimination and that various exams or qualification tests in China and around the world are also forms of discrimination. It is inconceivable that all these will disappear at the moment of a declaration or resolution. It might be more interesting to look at what kind of discrimination will trigger harmony.

It would take up too much time and space to review all factors or values discussed by Chinese scholars as important for building a harmonious society. However, the list of social values compiled in Table 1 may serve as a quick overview.

It is evident that scholars in China recognize that a socialist harmonious society is a complex system. Following the CCP resolutions, most scholars focused on discussions about building the social infrastructures of a harmonious society. They identified major components necessary for a harmonious society, described the functions of each component, outlined standards for constructing these parts, and highlighted the principle values required such as democracy, law, equity, justice, honesty, trust, compassion, vitality, stability and order. However, not much has been said about the people and how harmony is to be realized.

While social infrastructures are important to harmony, they are not harmony itself. Harmony is the feeling realized in the interactions of individuals with the society or its structure. The feeling of harmony is evoked by interactions between the structure and the selected values and judgment of an individual at a particular moment. Social structures may have the potential to initiate harmony in people at different times under different circumstances, but the structures don't necessarily guarantee harmony. A standard or objective harmonious society acknowledged by all can exist only in the words themselves while many different harmonious moments or harmonious societies will materialize and disappear among people's harmonizing interactions with the society. In a sense, one can call something a harmonious society only when it can lead to harmony in the people. It is helpful to distinguish the harmonizing process in the individual from social infrastructures that may possess the quality of being harmonious. There is enough reason to call the former individual social harmony and the latter harmonious social structures or society.

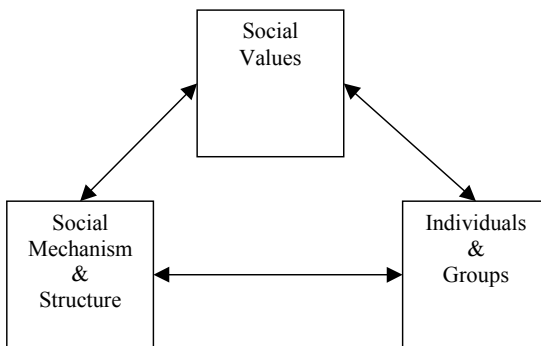
### **HARMONY AT WORK**

Three main components are at work in social harmony—collection of social values from individuals and groups, social infrastructure or the mechanism to realize social values, and individuals and groups. Social harmony depends on these components and is realized in the reciprocal interactions among them. Individuals have to navigate the network in their daily lives if they desire harmony. Figure 1 presents the reciprocal interactions among them.



**Table 1 Partial List of Social Values**

<b>Positive Social Values</b>	<b>Negative Social Values</b>
Equality	Disparity
Mutual benefit	Exploitation
Vitality and creativity	Stagnancy and conservatism
Cooperation	Conflict and confrontation
Compassion	Indifference or coldness
Fulfillment of people’s potentials	No social mobility
Democratic decision making process	Being dictated on what to do
Law and justice	Crime and no protection
Freedom	Oppression
Order and civility	Chaos and lack public courtesy
Fair competition	Monopoly
Personal safety	Violation and fear
Love and tolerance	Hatred and extremism
Honesty and trustworthy	Dishonest and deceptive
Hope	Hopelessness
Good, effective, efficient government	Corrupt, incompetent, wasteful government
Clean environment	Pollution
Affordable, good education	No quality education, expensive education
Good social security, health care system	Unemployment, expensive health care
Good work ethics and environment	Bad working attitude, boring job
Good moral standards and stable families	Disloyalty, infidelity, divorce
Peace, national sovereignty, unification	War, loss of sovereignty, loss of unity
National pride, patriotism	Smear of national image
Wealth	Poverty, no means of income



**Figure 1 Reciprocal Interactive Relations among People, Values, Society**

### **Collection of Social Values**

The collective social values consist of all things people see as important in their lives. The values come from individuals or social groups. Some are shared by all; others are held by certain individuals but not others. For example, the right to happiness and the rule of law are valued by all. The right to organize religious worship is important to religious groups, but not atheists. The right to confidentiality between lawyers and clients is important to lawyers, but they are often pressured to relinquish the right by police or investigators.

Values in a society have different significance levels or priorities to different people at different times. Freedom of expression in China may have higher priority than trade regulations for professors or news reporters and the reverse may be true for businessmen. The cost of education may have more significance than employment for students before they enter college. However, the order may change at the time of graduation.

When a social value reaches a level of high priority, it can be institutionalized as laws and regulations with corresponding government or social agencies to then enforce them. For instance, mandatory auto insurance was unheard of a few years ago, and it is required in all major cities in China now. Following the outbreak of SARS in China, the need to protect the public from communal diseases got high priority. Subsequently, a communication network was quickly set up in China and with major international health organizations. Policies and regulations were dictated to hospitals across the country. As a result, China is doing a much better job monitoring and reporting avian flu cases.

Social values in the collective pool can also lose their priority stature as a function of time or social change. Before the 1980s, especially during the Cultural Revolution people's family background was a very important aspect of social life. Since workers and poor peasants were given much higher social and political stature in society, family background was a factor in gaining one the opportunity for education, work, and even marriage. When young people dated, they were expected to find out the career background of each other's parents. Nowadays, high social stature is associated with power and money. Government officials and successful businessmen enjoy more privilege than workers and peasants do.

Social values often compete for priority or attention. From the start of China's reform movement, technology and natural science have been given a higher priority while philosophy, social science, and the humanities have been brushed to the side as far as funding and other government support. Scholars voiced their discontent at every opportunity they had and tried to persuade society to pay more attention to people's social and spiritual needs. However, scholars have not been successful until now when social harmony is recognized as vital to economic development. The same thing is true with China's desire for overseas human resources. Many more engineers, chemists, and bio-technicians than social scientists among overseas scholars have been invited to China.

As it is usually the case, shared group values, especially those backed by powerful and resourceful groups, can have a better chance of achieving the status of social priorities. Take the Xiwang Gongcheng (Hope Project) and Henan Province AIDS pandemic case, for example. The Hope Project was initiated by a foundation affiliated with the Chinese Communist Youth Central Committee and was designed to help students and schools in economically underdeveloped regions with their basic needs for education. The project renovates schools, pays student tuition, and provides school supplies with donations from individuals and charitable organizations. The project now has local offices across the country. For one thing, education is an important value shared by the Chinese people, and the project is backed by a powerful group. In contrast, the issues about the AIDS pandemic in Henan Province were raised by Gao Yaojie, a retired local doctor. Her attempt to get the attention of the public and authorities was a very long and difficulty one, even though she was able to alarm the top leaders of China in the end and get some help for AIDS patients and their families. One reason for the difficulty is that in China, perhaps in many other countries too, AIDS carries a stigma even though the people in Henan Province contracted the disease by means of contaminated needles when they sold blood to local dealers. And, Gao Yaojie was an individual with little power.

The collection of human values also has inherent contradictions. For instance, people value equal opportunity in education and freedom to choose different careers on one hand, and on the other hand they set up all kinds of screening mechanisms and tests to limit individuals' chances of receiving them. While society is concerned about depleting resources, it at the same time encourages people to consume more so that the economy can keep booming. While it encourages a free market economy and competition in business, the government also intervenes for other reasons. For instance, the government may set prices for food when inflation threatens social stability. When national security is at stake, people's privacy is often brushed aside. In recent years, many of these contradictory values have led to conflicts. For instance, in a booming housing market, many Chinese cities have numerous development projects being built day and night. The noise pollution annoyed many residents at night, so they joined together to block the roads to the construction site as a protest. Other times, people had to go to court to ask for injunctions. Consequently, some local governments had to issue regulations that no building operations were allowed after 11:00 p.m. Social values seldom exist in absolute terms. There are usually controls and opposites. Many see this as a frustrating reality.

The box "social values" in Figure 1 contains not only positive values, but also negative values, and values that cannot be judged to be good or bad at first glance. It is the total collection of human values. Negative and positive social values often are not as clear cut as people imagine, and both can lead to social changes or harmony. For example, corruption, as a negative value, may share the same root with prosperity – a widely accepted positive social value. Moreover,

negative values also lead to social changes or harmony in a different way. For example, today's drive for harmony is attributed, at least partly, to the presence of corruption. China has made a major effort in establishing preventative measures and institutions to deter and punish corruption within the government.

While it is usually the case that values held by a society's majority are approved or realized faster and more often, individual, unconventional values can also have major influences on society. Toward the end of the 70s, China's leader Deng Xiaoping held a clear minority view at that time. It is best known as "black cat vs. white cat." His value placed economic development and pragmatic attitude above the orthodox communist ideology and led China to historical change. The current leaders of China, such as Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, also believed in the minority value when everyone is for getting rich no matter how. They placed humanism at the center of economic development and social change, and initiated the campaign for a harmonious society.

### **Social Structures and Mechanism**

Social infrastructure and mechanism refer to laws, policies, institutions, organizations, measures, and means that are necessary for the operation of a society. First, these components directly represent and reflect people's social values at a particular time. For example, the recent legislation to include Qingmingjie (Clear and Bright Festival) and other traditional holidays as public holidays is a response to the Chinese people's wish to preserve their cultural heritage and revitalize traditional cultural values. Second, the formation of social infrastructure and mechanism is based on input from social values. For instance, it is inconceivable to have laws regulating travel to the moon at the moment, since people are not yet concerned about it. Finally, social structure is relatively independent and has a reciprocal interactive relationship with social values and people in society. This means although they are developed by people and derived from their social values, social structures, once created, can assume a life of their own. They will exert influence over people and their social values, either to serve them or hurt them. Therefore, it is of vital importance for people to build a harmonious social structure with great care.

As current Chinese leaders have emphasized, society should have humanism at its center. All social structures, such as laws, institutions, and working protocols should be created for the common good of humanity, working in accordance with human nature and positive desires, giving mankind security, freedom, and justice. Society should be created to bring people a sustainable living and allow them to pursue happiness. For example, many people would not like to eat at a restaurant where they have to show their ID every time they order a meal. They would not like to have to get government permission before they travel. They would be very upset if police knocked on their hotel room doors past midnight for a random check. They would not like to be searched whenever they enter or leave a shopping center. In almost all the banks in China, clerks work behind iron bars and thick bullet-proof

glass, separating them from customers. It reminds people of prisons and criminals every time they use the bank. Wouldn't it be more humanistic to have people sitting at the same table with flowers, coffee or tea? When local leaders decided to use marble for sidewalks, they definitely were not thinking about pedestrians. What's the point of having a beautiful sidewalk when people cannot walk on it because it is too slippery when it rains?

To build a humanist society does not mean to please or satisfy all human desires. On the one hand, it is impossible to do so. On the other hand, it is clear from the collection of human values that some of them are quite negative according to popular social standards in China. Social structures should be developed according to more positive, righteous, healthy human values. For example, smoking cigarettes gives some people pleasure, and the tobacco industry can generate tax revenues for the government. However, a society should not encourage smoking. Instead, social structures or measures should be developed to limit it or eliminate it. It was reported that one school principal came up with an unconventional way of helping his employees release their stress. In one designated room, he put his picture on punching bags and sheets of paper that could be torn to pieces, so that his teachers and staff could beat him, curse him, and torn him when they were not happy with the school and his decisions. In order to revive national pride and patriotism, some sectors of society are turning their eyes from nationalism, some quietly encouraging it. But these examples of catering to the dark side of the human value system should not be followed. A society should steer away from extreme human desires, competition, or similar values whenever possible and encourage more positive and harmonious values like compassion and cooperation instead.

Designing a society to benefit the majority is usually a better way to achieve social harmony, although it could be difficult. In time of extreme wealth disparity, it is wise and necessary to design policies that will take money from a small number of rich people and use it for the majority. However, this should be done with caution and wisdom so that other values are balanced. For example, increasing the fees and taxes on expensive luxury goods and second houses in China is a clever way to go. Also when the majority of people are not ready to give up the custom of lighting firecrackers on the Chinese New Year's eve, it is unwise to legislate a ban on it even if the practice is dangerous and not environmentally sound. If the majority of people in a city are using public transportation, traffic regulations should favor buses, and the government should invest more in better public bus facilities. If the majority of people are in need of affordable housing, regulations must make sure that housing developers don't just build expensive villas. To balance the need of the majority and that of the minority is a challenge for a society's will and wisdom.

Once social structures are created, they take on a life of their own; some grow into permanent entities, e.g., government, army, schools, while others are temporary, disappearing without people even noticing. The big ones often are stable and resistant to change. For example, the Chinese "Hukou" system (residential

registration) has lost many of its functions, and at times has become inefficient and problematic, and modifications come very slowly. It is still used in many places as a discrimination method to separate rural residents and urban residents, limiting education and career opportunities. The “Renda” (Chinese People’s Congress) and “Zhengxie” (Chinese People’s Political Consultative Political Conference) are two interesting social and political entities, overlapping greatly in their actual functions. It really should be one legislative body to save valuable social resources. However, they are very resistant to the changing trend around them. In contrast, temporary and small social structures and regulations are much more adaptive to changing trends and times. For example, many of the Chinese Olympic agencies will disappear after the games in 2008, and so will the odd-even tag traffic regulation of Beijing designed specifically for the Olympic Games. If all social structures could respond to social changes in as timely as this, it would become much easier to achieve social harmony.

Social structures are also designed to reinforce society’s rules so that socially sanctioned values can be put into operation and realized. A society has several options to make sure that its members follow adopted social values: education, guidance, incentives, pressures, force, deterrence, and elimination. If the first few are the dominant means used, a society can make its members feel more harmonious. For example, corruption is a behavior societies don’t approve of. It takes on different forms and exists in every country on this planet. In China, the variety of means people use to smooth their way in business and other social activities is dazzling: gifts, banquets, gold rings in moon cakes, club memberships, excessive bonus and appreciation fees, etc. Some people bribe without knowing what they are doing; others do it with clear criminal intention. The Chinese government has developed a system of preventing and punishing corruptions.<sup>35</sup> Educational programs are developed to inform and persuade government official and others to stand up to and stay away from corruption. Government officials receive much higher income than they did before as an incentive not to engage in corruption. Constant public discussions about corruption exert moral pressures on individuals. Carefully designed systems and procedures are used to guide individuals through or force them to avoid possible corruption traps. Well publicized punishment is used to deter individuals from corruption. Finally, people can be executed for very serious violation of the rules. In fact, several high-ranking government officials have been sentenced to death for serious corruption.

Sometimes society invents some very creative ways to deal with unwanted social behaviors. For example, gambling is not an accepted social behavior in many countries. It has been and continues to be a social problem for China. Many measures have been used in China to try to stop it: education, fines, imprisonment, etc. Then came a government-sponsored sports lottery system, clearly an idea borrowed from other countries as a result of the open-door policy. One rationale for having a public sanctioned negative behavior is that it will control something that was before uncontrollable and may do some social good, such as provide the

welfare for the needy. It is not clear how well this has worked. Nevertheless, as an idea for social control, it is a new approach in social harmony, at least making some people with the gambling urge feel a little better. This is called “Biantong” (changing with time and circumstance), a highly regarded strategy for applying rules and laws in China. However, this kind of flexibility built into social structures has both a positive and negative side. So, while balancing contradictory or opposite values is necessary in the search for social harmony, it should be done with caution.

### **Harmony for Individuals**

As stated earlier, an objective harmonious society does not exist without harmonious people or individuals.<sup>36</sup> For one thing, harmony is a feeling or perception people have when their values—what they treasure in life—are realized in their experiences. In a sense, harmony could be the easiest thing to achieve because it is just personal feelings, and it is within the power of the individual to achieve harmony. However, it also seems to be the most difficult thing to reach since people have been trying to achieve harmony for thousands years.

In general, people want similar things in life. Chinese intellectuals summarized these wants into seven pairs of desires and miseries<sup>37</sup>: life vs. death (the desire to live and not to die), young and old (the desire to stay young and the fear of aging), good health vs. illness (the desire to be healthy and not sick), love vs. loss of love (the desire to hold onto love and not lose it), friends vs. enemies (the desire to be with friends but not enemies), wants vs. the inability to have (desire to possess and not to be denied). Later, people elaborated the wish list to include money, power, fame, food, drinks, sex, music, etc. When desires are met, people have the feeling of harmony. How easy it is to achieve such a state depends on what people desire and how much they want. It is obvious from the list of desires that human beings have to handle at least three things in life successfully: harmony with nature, harmony with society, and harmony with themselves.

To be in harmony with nature, people have to make an effort to understand nature and follow the way of nature, which the Chinese call the Dao.<sup>38</sup> Philosophically, if people are in harmony with nature, they are at peace with everything. People’s concerns about health, living, aging, and dying have a lot to do with their relationships with nature. In this regard, people cannot simply tell nature to adhere to their likes and dislikes and deliberately work against nature if they want harmony with it. Indulging themselves in unhealthy pleasures such as smoking, abusing drugs, and staying up when they need to sleep are definitely not natural and will lead to health problems and reduced quality of living. While health is important and few people want an early death, many people do get pleasure from smoking, drinking, and using drugs. This creates a dilemma for many: pleasure now or later. Many choose instant pleasure because they desire for good health only when they don’t have it. It seems inevitable that people will have problems with harmony unless they exercise self-control and balance their choices.

It is sensible to say that people have no choice but to be humble when seeking harmony with nature. As a species, mankind should respect nature and live in harmony with it. Laozi once said “*tiandi buren*” (nature has no tolerance and mercy).<sup>39</sup> Even if their desire for economic gain is high, people should not abuse nature, depleting natural resources by cutting down all the trees, rounding up all the fish in rivers and lakes, and polluting the air and water. The looming threat of global warming and the blue algae outbreak in Taihu lake are reminders of the importance of being in harmony with nature. Clearly, being in harmony with nature will be a major challenge.

About 2,500 years ago, Laozi said “When people do not have self-interest, they can fulfill their self-interest.”<sup>40</sup> This means individuals seeking social harmony have to give up individual interest before their individual interest can be served, realizing self values through shared values. This is the key for people to achieve social harmony. For example, before they can drive cars in a city, people must subject themselves to traffic regulations. Without first letting go of individual interest, the group will not be formed, and nor will society. From the start, survival was high on people’s list of values. In a harsh living environment, they had to become a group before they could be individuals. Even though today’s people have many more resources and abilities, which allow for more independence, it is still true that people can better preserve liberty, justice, order, security, and civility for individuals as a society. To enjoy the benefits of society, people have to adjust or sacrifice individual interest and obey the laws of society. Not to run against but to flow with society was a strategy recommended by wise men in the past. Laozi encouraged people to adopt the character of water, always serving others, taking the shapes of the environment, being soft, but with overcoming power.<sup>41</sup> If individuals can accept this, achieving social harmony becomes much easier.

In theory, when a society works to serve the collective values of the group, the interest of individuals is automatically served. However, this is not always the case, and it is more difficult to meet individual’s needs in China. The issue derives from the very factor that brings a society together—a group of shared social values. When everyone wants the same thing or has the same seven desires outlined earlier, not everyone can get the same things. For example, China is experiencing a serious problem in the job market for college graduates. Far more college students want to stay in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai and get good professional positions with high pay and good benefits than there are positions available for them. In recent years, a great number of students competed for government administrative positions for job stability, a good pension and a benefit package. In 2008, the number of people who passed the qualification exams for government positions is 640,000. However, only one out of forty-six will be selected for each available position.<sup>42</sup> Undoubtedly the rest of the forty-six and far more people who did not even make it through the exam will feel disappointed. This creates a major challenge for society and employment management. Just as Laozi said when everyone knows beauty is



beauty, beauty is no longer beauty.<sup>43</sup> For individuals seeking harmony in life, competition for the same things in society is a difficult obstacle to overcome.

Is it still possible for individuals to find harmony when their desires cannot be fulfilled in society? The answer is positive if individuals can find ways to adjust their expectations.

Both desires and feelings of harmony reside deep in the center of the human consciousness, which the Chinese people call heart. Psychologists, social workers, and philosophers suggest that such problems must be dealt with in the heart. One remedy comes from Buddhism-- "Harmonious world begins from the heart."<sup>44</sup> According to Buddhism, all good and evil start with the heart. When people can set their hearts at peace, they can have peace with all things. Laozi also pointed out that "Zui modayu keyu. Huo modayu buzhizu."(No crime is worse than yielding to desire. No wrong is greater than discontent).<sup>45</sup> People need to have a better understanding of their desires and the ability to control them. Desires can be a motivating factor and can also bring negative consequences to hurt human feelings. People should learn to either steer away from a desire when they know it is unlikely to be fulfilled or to be prepared to deal with the negative impact.

It is more constructive for individuals to adopt a different value standard and move out of a crowded place where people desire the same thing. Instead of following the crowd and fashion, which focus on trendy career choices, individuals should recognize that other careers may bring the same reward and that no fashion will last forever. This realization may help them to avoid the bandwagon trap in modern society. People also need to learn how to live with failure. Even if they are unsuccessful in pursuing a job, they should move onto the next things they like or are good at instead of burying themselves under feelings of failure. They should realize that success comes after trials and failures. This way they may still achieve social harmony even if the initial desires are not met.

It might also be comforting for people to know that the feeling of satisfaction following a success is always short lived. Once a desire is fulfilled, it soon becomes less meaningful because it will be replaced with another desire. After people get a good job, they usually notice the bad side of it more than they did before. More fame may bring people more disturbances. For instance, big sports stars may have to put up with too enthusiastic fans. Higher positions mean more work and responsibilities and less time with families. Thoughts like these may help individuals approach either success or failure with a more peaceful mind and achieve social harmony.

Sometimes it might not be so bad to put oneself in a state of denial in face of failure. For example, people can tell themselves that the thing they initially sought is not as good as it seems to be. This will reduce the feeling of loss when they don't succeed at obtaining it. They may also decide that a failed attempt is the result of an accidental error and that they have the ability to get it right next time. In face of repeated failures, people could take them as a test of their will by a higher being and

believe the reward will be coming soon in different kind or in a time beyond this life. Self-deception or pretending sometimes can be beneficial to individuals.

A more rewarding and positive way to achieve harmony is to find ways to strengthen people's confidence, self-respect, and dignity. Instead of getting themselves in a situation where failure is almost certain, people should do more things they find easy to accomplish. It will be good if people can always give themselves hope. In the face of social problems, people should have the belief that it will not last and that things can only become better. Moreover, people can stay away from the desire of getting and learn to adopt the will to give. Laozi said, "What you would take, you should therefore give."<sup>46</sup> Actively participating in the construction of positive social change and having one's self value fulfilled in the process is a rewarding experience.

## CONCLUSION

Rapid economic growth in China is accompanied by swift social changes. Social changes are both negative and positive. In China's case, social problems are prominent and are evolving into a major great threat to the country's further development, social stability, and harmony. Economic disparity, corruption, crime, and an unsettled social value system are leading to a great deal of anger, frustration, and anxiety among China's citizens. The phenomena are attributed to an inadequate social infrastructure unable to keep up with rapid transformation in all social sectors, the prolonged neglect of social sciences and education in humanities, and people's inability to choose a balanced value system. Serious concerns over these issues have led to a major campaign spearheaded by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee to bring harmony to the nation. Discussions, efforts, and measures have focused on building a harmonious socialist society. Many citizens seem to believe that more effective and efficient social structures will result in social harmony. While it is appropriate for the government to focus more on social infrastructure, a simplistic view and approach clearly will not be sufficient to address the issue of social harmony – a far more complex social psychological phenomenon. More attention needs to be devoted to the people's harmony with society, and with themselves.

Harmony is people's feeling and perception of their relationship with other components in their social environment. It is realized in complex reciprocal interactions among a society's infrastructure, value system, and individual participants. The three are independent but related components in the "harmonizing" process. Individuals contribute their values, both positive and negative, to the value system. The total collection of values provides input for social policy and structure construction. Social structures and mechanism are created to reflect selected values. Then these social faculties operate to sanction or prohibit the behaviors of individuals. These three interact and influence one another in a continuous process. When individuals' values are reflected and fulfilled or when

they are perceived to be so, people will feel more harmonious with the society and themselves. Harmony can be achieved only by people and in a person's heart.

Social values derive from people's desires or needs. People have more or less the same desires in life. However, in social activities some values are shared by more people at a particular time than others; some values are deemed more positive while others are regarded as more negative by different social groups or individuals. People seem to be less aware and interested in the state they are in and tend to desire things they don't have. During a time of inactivity and stagnation, people seem to favor the values of competition, individuality, aggressiveness, unconventional strategies, etc., to stimulate change. When there are inequality, unrest, confrontation, instability, which are often the results of rapid change, people seem to value cooperation, compromise, and regulation more than anything else. The boundaries between negative and positive values are blurred from time to time. Positive values can lead to negative results, while negative values can result in positive outcomes. Given the nature of people's desires and the limitations of social infrastructure and mechanisms, it is impossible to meet different demands at the same time. Therefore, social harmony provided for everyone is not attainable.

While a more harmonious social structure is important for social harmony, people are the most important factor in attaining social harmony. Not only can people feel more harmonious when their needs or desires are fulfilled in social interactions, they can also achieve social harmony when they experience failures if they can find harmony within themselves. Like many cultures in the world, the Chinese culture has rich resources from which individuals can draw wisdom and strategies for achieving social harmony. It is recommended that people obtain a better understanding of nature, society, and themselves so that they can better control their desires and value selections in their interactions with nature and society. Individual social harmony, inner peace, and happiness are not too far away.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See "Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu goujian shehuizhuyi hexieshehui ruogan zhongdawenti de jueding" (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's Resolution on Major Issues of Building a Socialist Harmonious Society), *Renminwang/Shizheng/Zonghe baodao*, October 18, 2006, ([www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn)) <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/4932440.html>

<sup>2</sup> See Jingtao Hu, "Hu Jintao zai zhongguogongchandang dishiqici quanguo daibiao dahuishang de baogao" (Hu Jintao's general report to the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China), *Renminwang* October 25, 2007, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/67507/6429840.html>

<sup>3</sup> Translation of "chengxiang, quyue, jingjishehui fazhan bupingheng, renkouziyuanhuanjing yali jiada; ..." p.2 in "Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu goujian shehuizhuyi hexieshehui ruogan zhongdawenti de jueding" (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's Resolution on Major Issues of Building a Socialist Harmonious Society), *Renminwang/Shizheng/Zonghe baodao*/October 18, 2006, ([www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn)) <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/4932440.html>

<sup>4</sup> See Jiancheng Pan, and Nianxia Xi, “Jinshinian woguo diqujian chengxiangjian chaju chengkuoda qushi”(In past ten year, the country’s regional, urban and rural disparity has the tendency of widening), in *2005 China Economic Analysis Yearbook*, 96-110, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> See Zhicai Ye, and Jiancheng Pan, “Zhongguo jingji zengzhang de ‘chengben’”(The cost of China’s economic growth), in *2005 China Economic Analysis Yearbook*, 91-95, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> See Jiancheng Pan, and Nianxia Xi, “Jinshinian woguo diqujian chengxiangjian chaju chengkuoda qushi”(In past ten year, the country’s regional, urban and rural disparity has the tendency of widening), in *2005 China Economic Analysis Yearbook*, 96-110, 2006 p.

<sup>7</sup> See Chu-Yuan Cheng, “China’s New Development Plan: Strategy, Agenda, and Prospects,” *Asian Affairs*, 47-59, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> See Baosheng Gao, “Nongcun jueuidpinkun renkou jianzhi 2148wan” (Rural absolute poverty population reduced to 21 million), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.3, December 12, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> See Confucius *Lunyu—Jishi* 16

<sup>10</sup> See Zhicai Ye, and Jiancheng Pan, “Zhongguo jingji zengzhang de ‘chengben’” (The cost of China’s economic growth), in *2005 China Economic Analysis Yearbook*, 91-95, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> See Zhicai Ye, and Jiancheng Pan, “Zhongguo jingji zengzhang de ‘chengben’” (The cost of China’s economic growth), in *2005 China Economic Analysis Yearbook*, p.92, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> See Andrea Mandel-Campbell, “Ready for Revolution,” in *Maclean’s*, Vol. 118, 35: 28-31, 8/29/2005, database: Academic Search Premier, accessed November 18, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> See Zhicai Ye, and Jiancheng Pan, “Zhongguo jingji zengzhang de ‘chengben’” (The cost of China’s economic growth), in *2005 China Economic Analysis Yearbook*, p.92, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> See Zhaokun Wang, and Junwei Teng, “Kuangnan 33 zerenren beikongzhi” (Thirty-three people responsible for mine disaster are detained), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.4, December 8, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> See “Taqiao shigu zerenren shouyancheng” (Persons responsible for bridge collapsing got sever punishment), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.5, December 26, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> See Chong Shen, and Xiwei Yang, “Quanmian diaocha Gaoyangzhai sudaokou tanta shigu” (Full investigation of the collapsing accident at the entrance of Gaoyangzhai Tunnel), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.4, November 26, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> See Youjun Li, “Huanbao minsheng zhishu (2007) chulu” (Living Environment Index 2007 published), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.5, January 8, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> See Zhicai Ye, and Jiancheng Pan, “Zhongguo jingji zengzhang de ‘chengben’” (The cost of China’s economic growth), in *2005 China Economic Analysis Yearbook*, p.91, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> See “Jiangsu Taihu lanzao baofa, wuran shuizhi” (Outbreak of blue algae in Taihu, Jiangsu province contaminates water quality), Renminwang (People’s Network), 2007. <http://env.people.com.cn/GB/8220/84923/index.html>.

<sup>20</sup> See Zhe Wen, “Woguo jinhai jinnian fasheng chichao 83ci” (China’s coastal water had 83 instances of red tide this year), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.3, December 8, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> See Kangsheng Huang, and Pingling E, “Ba wuran fangzhi zuowei zhong zhong zhizhong” (Making pollution prevention the most important task), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.3, December 1, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> See Zhe Wen, “Changjiang liuyu nianwushuipaifang yu300yidun” (Changjiang annual discharge of waste water exceeded 30 billion tons), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.3, November 17, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> There are different interpretations of this statement of Laozi, thus different translations. Please see *Lao-tzu’s Taoteching* translated by Re Pine for more interpretations. My interpretation here is based on the observations that things usually exist in pairs in human reality. When people realize something pleasant, then they must be in or have been in something unpleasant. My teacher of Daoism, Lu Jinchuan used the analogy of scratching a mosquito bite. The scratching on healthy kin does not produce the same pleasure. There are two other aspects to this statement of Laozi, which I am not going to discuss here. See Laozi’s *Dao De Jing*, Chapter Two.

<sup>24</sup> See Yitang Wang, “Barong bachi shifei ming” (Eight honors and eight shame, clear standard of right and wrong), *People’s Daily*, March 7, 2006, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/misc/2006-03/07/content\\_4267285.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/misc/2006-03/07/content_4267285.htm)

<sup>25</sup> See Pingjun Wang, “Chuantong daode, gongjulixin yu shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming” (Traditional virtues, rationalization of means, and spiritual civilization), *Renmingwang*, April 4, 2006, <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/40537/4269007.html>

<sup>26</sup> See “Jiancha jiguan wunian pipu 410duowan ren” (Public prosecutors arrested more than 4.1 million people in five years), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.3, December 27, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> See Guanzheng Wu, “Shenru tuijin danfen lianzheng jianshe he fanfubai douzheng” (Further advance the construction of party ethics and the struggle against corruption), *Renmingwang*, February 15, 2006, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/8198/25106/32656/5401263.html>

<sup>28</sup> See Youjun Li, “Zhongguo duojucuo daji dupin fanzui” (China takes many measures to fight drug related crimes), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.5, December 26, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> See “Baoma caipiao shijian zhuzhong” (Follow up news on the BMW lottery incident), *Xinhuanawang*, May 13, 2004, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2004-05/13/content\\_1466072.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2004-05/13/content_1466072.htm)

<sup>30</sup> See Zhanyong Li, and Jun Yu, “Zhaoshi siji Ma Yinghao yin erci nianya zuori shoushen” (Hitting victim twice, driver Ma Yinghao was tried in court yesterday), *Yanzhaodushibao*, May 31, 2006, <http://yzdsb.hebnews.cn/20060531/ca620645.htm>

<sup>31</sup> See Lianbin Qing, “hexie shehui zhongguo xinzhu—yinianlai lilunxueshuji guanyu ‘hexie shehui’ yanjiu zongshu”(Harmonious society, China’s new theme—synthesis of one year’s academia’s research on “harmonious society”), *Renmingwang*, March 7, 2005. <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/8198/70195/70201/4757608.html>

<sup>32</sup> See Lianbin Qing, “hexie shehui jiuishishuo shehui xitong de gege bufen, yaosu chuyu yizhong xianhu xietiao de zhuangtai,” *Renmingwang*, March 7, 2005. <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/8198/70195/70201/4757608.html>

<sup>33</sup> See N. Luhmann, *Social Systems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> See Thomas More, “A day in Utopia” Excerpt from *Utopia*, 1515, in Sylvan Barnet, and Hugo Bedau, eds., *Current Issues and Enduring Questions* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1993).

<sup>35</sup> See Chengbin Sun, and Yajie Li, “Hu Jintao zai zhongjiwei dierci quanti huiyishang fabiao zhongyao jianghua” (President Hu Jintao delivers important speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Session of CCP Discipline and Oversight Committee), *Renmingwang*, January 15, 2008, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1024/6778730.html#>

<sup>36</sup> For different views about human society, see Youlan Feng, *Rensheng Zhexue* (Philosophies of life), (Guangxi, China: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> It is known in Chinese as “Rensheng qiyou qikuo” (life’s seven desires and miseries). It is largely influenced by Buddhism and its notion that people miseries originate from their desires of their hearts, therefore, the best way for the relief of misery in life to quiet the heart and its desires.

<sup>38</sup> Dao refers to the overarching principle by which nature operates. See Laozi *Dao De Jing*.

<sup>39</sup> See “Tiandi buren, yi wanwu wei zougou,” Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* Chapter 5.

<sup>40</sup> See “Yi qi wusi, gu neng cheng qisi,” Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* Chapter 7.

<sup>41</sup> See “Shangshan ruoshui, shuishan liwanwu, er buzheng” (The best are like water, bringing benefit to all without competing), Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* Chapter Eight.

<sup>42</sup> See Qun Xu, and Yiyang Shang, “Kaowan zu Fengmi daxue xiaoyuan”(College students rush to job qualification exams), *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p. 3, January 17, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> This is another interpretation of the same statement from Laozi. When everyone thinks something is good and compete to get it and when everyone has it, it will no longer the good thing it used to be. See Laozi’s *Dao De Jing*, Chapter Two and note 22.

<sup>44</sup> See Xiaowen Ye, “Hexie shijie congxin kaishi”(Harmonious world begins from the heart), paper delivered at the 2005 First World Buddhist Forum (April 13<sup>th</sup>—16<sup>th</sup>, 2005) held in Hangzhou, China, *World Buddhist Forum*, [http://www.wbf.net.cn/ltwz/t20060627\\_1343.htm](http://www.wbf.net.cn/ltwz/t20060627_1343.htm)

<sup>45</sup> See Laozi’s *Dao De Jing*, Chapter 46, translated by Red Pine, 1996.

<sup>46</sup> See Laozi’s *Dao De Jing*, Chapter 36, “Jiangyu duozhi, biguyuzhi,” translated by Red Pine, 1996.