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公共政策與法律研究中心

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大一統思維、台海關係，及兩岸政策



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國立臺灣大學公共政策與法律研究中心
Center for Public Policy and Law, NTU

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壹、計畫背景

一、計畫內容

回顧過去，利用歷史性的材料，檢驗大一統思維的來源。研究以大一統思維為前提，揣摩這種思維的現實意義和對未來的啟示。其次，前面各節的論述，基本上是實證式的鋪陳，讓證據來說話，有智識上的興味。下面的分析，既然涉及現況評估和對未來的揣測，涉及公共政策的利弊得失，不免直接間接有價值判斷；規範性的成分，將明顯的增加。下面將針對三方面，試著闡釋大一統思維的涵義。具體而言，由內而外，將探討中國大陸本身問題、台海問題、和中國大陸的對外關係。

(一) 主要問題

具體而言，大一統思維的來源，一般所熟知的是「治水社會/河域共治」說(和類似的「抵禦外患」說)；除了這種解釋之外，事實上還有其他的假說。釐清哪一種解釋更有說服力，本身就有智識上的興味。而且，檢驗不同的假說，是一種論證的過程，涉及邏輯結構和佐證資料。透過相關的論述，也有助於了解大一統思維的現實基礎。也就是，希望能掌握，總體現象(大一統思維)的個體基礎(現實條件)。在這一層意義上，本文是一種開創性的嘗試。其次，大一統思維，並不是遺世而獨立；經過千百年來的積累，已經成為傳統思想觀念的一環。抽象來看，這種觀念是思維架構/制度矩陣 (mental construct / institutional matrix) 的一部分，連帶的影響華人社會的諸多面向，包括政治制度和權力運作等等。檢驗這種思維的來源，能烘托出華人文化傳統的某些面向；對於了解華人文化，有積極而正面的意義。

再其次，大一統的思維，不只是抽象的理念，而影響了具體的公共政策。譬如，前面提到，中國大陸對台灣的政策，不折不扣的是以大一統思維為依據。透過探討這種思維的源頭，可以更清楚的分析大一統思維的含義；可以更持平客觀的評估，各種公共政策的利弊得失。最後一點，蘇聯和中國大陸，原來是社會主義/共產主義的兩大陣營；1980年以後，早已分道揚鑣。蘇聯解體，國力當然今非昔比。相對的，中國大陸走資之後，經濟快速發展，即將成為世界第二大經濟體。在國際社會的重要性，與日俱增；在國際社會上，不僅是主要的參與者 (participant), 在許多方面將是遊戲規則的制定者和裁判 (enforcer)。這種角色上的轉變，和傳統自居中土、萬國來朝的狀態，相去何止千萬里。「大一統」思維，是華人社會的一種自我認知，也是一種世界觀；透過對這種思維的探討，有助於了解中國大陸在國際社會的舉措、以及今後的走向。

(二) 研究方法

除了序說之外，第2節的重點將是介紹大一統思維的兩種主要假說。而後，第3節和第4節，將由不同的角度，檢驗兩種假說之間的高下。第5節將轉移焦點，論證大一統思維的含義；和公共政策的關聯，焦點有三：中國大陸的典章制度、台海問題、中國大陸在國際社會的走向。對於這些問題的分析，免不了有揣測的成分，但至少是有憑有據 (reasoned conjectures) 的揣測。最後一節，是回顧和結論。

往下論述之前，值得先澄清一下。在方法論上，本文有兩個層次：第一個層次，把大一統的思維，看成是一種傳統文化上的「均衡」；而後，提出兩種對立的假說，並檢驗哪一種假說更有解釋力。第二個層次，是在具體的公共政策上，闡釋大一統的涵義；而後，再試著評估，大一統思維所隱含的利弊得失。此外，本文的主旨，是大一統思維的「源頭」和「涵義」；千百年來大一統思維的「演變」，將不是重點。當然，大一統思維的「演變」，也是饒有興味的課題，和下面的論述也不容易截然劃分。不過，權衡輕重，關於「演變」的探討，將是後續研究的主題，而不會是下面分析的著力所在。

(三) 計畫目標

本研究預期成果，將完成中英文論文各一至二篇；論文將投稿到相關刊物，發表在國際學術期刊。

二、 相關文獻探討

(一) 相關研究

關於大一統的來源，有些學者由古代典籍中著手；論證在某些古籍中，可以找到「大一統」思維的蹤影或字眼 (許仟、何湘英, 2002; 楊向奎, 1989; 邱久榮, 1993)。這是一種文本式分析 (textual analysis)，由社會科學的角度來看，說服力有限；原因是，這些思維的出現和成為傳統，有更現實具體的條件支持。本文採取的方式，不是停留在典籍溯源上，不以引述典籍為滿足；而是由社會科學的論述裡，整合相關的觀點。希望追究更根本、更實質的因素，以解釋「大一統」思維的來源和支持條件。關於大一統的思維，目前最廣為人知的見解，是「治水社會」說：黃河長江流域常有水患，治水工程跨越廣大幅員，需要統一強制的組織，因而形成專制制度，隱含大一統的思維。

然而，根據河域共治，卻不容易解釋大一統所涉及的諸多問題。譬如，河域共治，主要是處理公共財的問題，和道德沒有直接的關聯。可是，大一統的思維，卻有濃厚的道德成分：大

一統不僅是合宜的，而且是正確的；反對大一統，不僅是錯誤的，而且是邪惡的、是不道德的、是可以懲罰的；為什麼？還有，根據河域共治，台灣不是黃河長江流域的一部分，因此和大一統相去不可以道里計。然而，在台灣問題上，中國大陸官方和民間的立場，無分軒輊的是：「台灣是中國不可分割的一部分」；為什麼？由此可見，河域共治說和大一統思維之間，還有很大的探討的空間。

（二）國內外制度分析

中華文化，公認是世界最古老、最主要的文明之一。華人文化的某些特質，也廣為人知。在私領域裡，家庭之內推崇孝道，百善孝為先；家庭之外講究仁，人際之間要和諧、禮義、和忠恕，等等。在公領域裡，「大一統」(The Grand Unification)的思維，幾乎是眾議僉同的特色之一。「大一統」明確精準的內涵，可能眾說紛紜；但是，核心的觀念幾乎毫無爭議——中華大地應統一，是一個完整的政權。千百年來，大一統的思維，不但凡夫俗子信奉不貳，更是歷朝歷代自居上國、維繫政權的基礎。大一統的思維，最早見諸於戰國時代；秦始皇併吞六國，統一天下，具體實現大一統的理念。然而，令人訝異的是，關於大一統思想的來源，論述卻並不多。

三、 研究結果

North (1990) 強調：長期來看，決定一個社會榮枯興衰的，是有沒有好的典章制度 (institutional matrix)；然後，他再登上高峰，以今日之我取代昨日的我：追根究柢，決定一個社會發展軌跡的，其實是人們的思維方式 (mental construct; Denzau & North, 1994)。這是他的智慧結晶，恢宏而深刻。然而，要實際檢驗這個智慧結晶，卻並不容易；本文所處理的，和這個智慧結晶相關，但是範圍要狹隘得多。

具體而言，在華人文化這個古老文明裡，「大一統」的思維即使不是支柱 (pillar) 之一，也是重要的成分 (ingredient) 之一。對於大一統思維的探討，過去大部分是偏重在典籍文本裡引述論證。本文嘗試另闢蹊徑，由社會科學的角度探索大一統思維的現實 (社會) 基礎。先由不同的文獻裡，整合出相關的兩種假說——河域共治／共同防禦、和單一權威；而後，由理論和實際資料兩方面，檢驗這兩種假說的合宜與否。經由多方面的考量，歸納出明確的結論：由單一權威的角度，可以更簡潔明確的聯結到大一統的思維，而且也和諸多史實更為契合。當然，單一權威的觀點，是否適用在其他社會和地區 (如日本、南北韓)，是有興味的課題，值得作進一步的探討。而且，單一權威在其他領域的涵義，例如和語言的關聯、和宗教的關係等等，同樣值得作更深入周全的探究。本文的第二部分，是闡明大一統思維的涵義。針對傳統社會的內部結構、兩岸關係、和國際社會這三個主題，論證大一統思維 (華人社會的世界觀) 確實影響華人世界的過去 (內部結構)，現在 (兩岸關係)、和未

來(國際社會)。人們的思維方式和社會的發展軌跡,確實密切呼應;North 的智慧結晶,的確得到相應的佐證。

四、立法建議與結論

(一) 立法建議

無

(二) 衝擊與效益分析

無

(三) 結論

這一趟知識之旅的收穫是:第一部分的體會,由單一權威的角度容易理解大一統;第二部分的心得,則是由文化的高度來看大一統思維,可以體會到這種思維潛在的侷限和不足。對中華文化而言,大一統的思維,是一種資產,也是一種限制。對內,有助於凝聚社會,降低治理成本;對外,思維上卻幾乎是空白,無所措手足。更進一步,大一統的思維一旦形成,因為路徑相依的特性,對一個社會而言,事實上排除了嘗試其他軌跡的可能性—即使時空變化,環境裡的條件已經迥異於往昔。中國大陸改革開放後進入國際社會、以及兩岸的微妙關係,無疑是對大一統思維的考驗與挑戰。當然,對一個古老的文明來說,這無疑的也隱含著諸多契機!



貳、計畫工作項目及期中成果

一、會議與出版品摘要

(一) 研討會

無相關會議辦理規劃

(二) 座談會

無相關會議辦理規劃

(三) 記者會

無相關辦理規劃

(四) 政策白皮書

無相關規劃

二、計畫績效指標及人力投入

(一) 績效指標說明

■量化成效			
指標構面與項目		篇數	說明或附件別
著作成果	論文總計		2
	國內（研討會或期刊）	篇數	1 「大一統的源起和含義」，法令月刊，即將刊登
	國外	篇數	1 Pacific Economic Review, under review (SSCI)
	研究報告（指書籍裝訂成冊者）	本數	
	出版品（指經政府出版品管理辦法而發行者；ex.年鑑/白皮書等）	項數 本數	

會議	座談會 (含論壇)	場次(人次)	
	研討會	場次(人次)	
	說明會 (含發表會、展覽活動)	場次(人次)	
	其他	場次(人次)	
■其他效益說明 (上表無法呈現之預期成果，請填列於下表。)			
其他績效指標		成果	

(二) 參與人力簡歷

編號	姓名	職稱	最高學歷	聘任期間	總支用經費
1	李顯峰	計畫主持人	德國畢勒斐大學 博士	102/1~102/12	0
2	熊秉元	協同主持人	美國布朗大學經 濟博士	102/1~102/12	97,920
3	曾政燁	研究助理	台灣大學經濟系 學士	102/1~102/12	159,877
4	張佳敏	研究助理	淡江大學經濟系 學士	102/1~102/12	68,598

參、附件

投稿論文

如附件



國立臺灣大學公共政策與法律研究中心
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大一統的源起和含義 *

(China's Grand Unification: Its Origin and Implications)

熊秉元 **

(Bingyuan Hsiung)



* (北京)清華大學社會系沈原以及香港城市大學經濟暨金融系陳順源，都對論文主題提供諸多意見，作者深表感謝。黃源典對論文初稿提供諸多意見，作者也深表感謝。台灣大學社會科學院和浙江大學社會科學部，提供研究經費上的支持，作者同樣感謝。研究助理為張佳敏。

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大一統的源起和含義

(China's Grand Unification: Its Origin and Implications)

摘要

大一統的思維，是傳統中華文化的一部分，也是多數華人的世界觀。對大一統的探討，過去以思想和文本分析為主；本文另闢蹊徑，探究這種思維的現實條件。針對文獻上相關魏特夫的「治水社會」說 (Wittfogel, 1957) 和 Hsiung (2011) 「單一權威」說，在理論和實證上檢驗，哪一種假說較有說服力。而後，以大一統思維為前提，探究這種思維對具體公共政策的影響，包括中國大陸的政治制度、台海問題、和中國大陸的對外關係等。本文的主要意義有二：首先，對於傳統的思維模式(mental construct)，嘗試和現實條件聯結，希望能掌握傳統文化的現實基礎。其次，在文化（而不是政權）的層次上，分析大一統思維的利弊得失。在漫長歷史中的每一個時點，「大一統」的思維都符合當時的利益結構，都是「政治正確」(politically correct) 的；然而，由文化長遠利益的角度著眼，卻未必是「文化正確」(culturally correct) 的。大一統思維，在短期（政權）和長期（文化）的利益上，未必一致。



Keywords: grand unification, hydraulic society, single authority, Taiwan Strait conflict, despotism, public good.

關鍵詞：大一統，治水社會，單一權威，台海問題，專制主義，公共財。

JEL classification: K10, K11, K19, D62, D70.

1. 前言(Introduction)

中華文化，公認是世界最古老、最主要的文明之一。華人文化的某些特質，也廣為人知。在私領域裡，家庭之內推崇孝道，百善孝為先；家庭之外講究仁，人際之間要和諧、禮義、和忠恕，等等。在公領域裡，「大一統」(The Grand Unification)的思維，幾乎是眾議僉同的特色之一。¹「大一統」明確精準的內涵，可能眾說紛紜；但是，核心觀念幾乎毫無爭議——中華大地應統一，是一個完整的政權。千百年來，大一統的思維，不但凡夫俗子信奉不貳，更是歷朝歷代自居上國、維繫政權的基礎。大一統的思維，最早見諸於戰國時代；秦始皇併吞六國，統一天下，具體實現大一統的理念。然而，令人訝異的是，關於大一統的思想來源，論述卻並不多。

關於大一統的來源，有些學者由古代典籍中著手；論證在某些古籍中，可以找到「大一統」思維的蹤影或字眼（許仟、何湘英，2002；楊向奎，1989；邱久榮，1993）。這是一種文本式分析，由社會科學的角度來看，說服力有限；原因是，這些思維的出現和成為傳統，有更現實具體的條件支持。本文採取的方式，是不停留在典籍溯源上，不以引述典籍為滿足；而是由社會科學的論述裡，整合相關的觀點。希望追究更根本、更實質的因素，以解釋「大一統」思維的來源和支持條件。關於大一統的思維，目前最廣為人知的見解，是「治水社會」說：黃河長江流域常有水患，治水工程跨越廣大幅員，需要統一強制的組織。因而形成專制制度。²

然而，根據河域共治，卻不容易解釋大一統所涉及的諸多問題。譬如，河域共治，主要是處理公共財的問題，和道德沒有直接的關聯。可是，大一統的思維，卻有濃厚的道德成分：大一統不僅是合宜的，而且是正確的；反對大一統，不僅是錯誤的，而且是邪惡的、是不道德的、是可以懲罰的；為什麼？還有，根據河域共治，台灣不是黃河長江流域的一部分，因此和大一統相去不可以道里計。然而，在台灣問題上，中國大陸官方和民間的立場，無分軒輊的是：「台灣是中國不可分割的一部分」；為什麼？由此可見，河域共治說和大一統思維之間，還有很大的探討的空間。

本文有兩個主要的目標：第一，是針對「大一統」思維的源起，提出別於「河域共治說」的論點，並且比較分析，以檢驗不同論述的說服力。第二，探討「大一統」思維的含義，包括對華人文化的典章制度，以及在公共政策和今後發展等方面。無論是哪個部分，都涉及寬廣的時間和空間；要得出令

¹ 「眾議僉同」最好加上引號，下面將有更細緻的分析。

² 河域共治說之外，「抵禦外患說」是類似觀點，下面有進一步的論述。

人信服的結果，困難可想而知。因此，本文可以看成是一種引言，或是一趟智識之旅的起點；不過，在理論和實務上，都有相當的價值。

具體而言，大一統思維的來源，一般所熟知的是「治水社會/河域共治」說(和類似的「抵禦外患」說)；除了這種解釋之外，事實上還有其他的假說。釐清哪一種解釋更有說服力，本身就有智識上的興味。而且，檢驗不同的假說，是一種論證的過程，涉及邏輯結構和佐證資料。透過相關的論述，也有助於了解大一統思維的現實基礎。也就是，希望能掌握，總體現象(大一統思維)的個體基礎(現實條件)。在這一層意義上，本文是一種開創性的嘗試。其次，大一統思維，並不是遺世而獨立；經過千百年來的積累，已經成為傳統思想觀念的一環。抽象來看，這種觀念是思維架構/制度矩陣 (mental construct / institutional matrix) 的一部分，連帶的影響華人社會的諸多面向，包括政治制度和權力運作等等。檢驗這種思維的來源，能烘托出華人文化傳統的某些面向；對於了解華人文化，有積極而正面的意義。

再其次，大一統的思維，不只是抽象的理念，而影響了具體的公共政策。譬如，前面提到，中國大陸對台灣的政策，不折不扣的是以大一統思維為依據。透過探討這種思維的源頭，可以更清楚的分析大一統思維的含義；可以更持平客觀的評估，各種公共政策的利弊得失。最後一點，蘇聯和中國大陸，原來是社會主義/共產主義的兩大陣營；1980年以後，早已分道揚鑣。蘇聯解體，國力當然今非昔比。相對的，中國大陸走資之後，經濟快速發展，即將成為世界第二大經濟體。在國際社會的重要性，與日俱增；在國際社會上，不僅是主要的參與者 (participant)，在許多方面將是遊戲規則的制定者和裁判 (enforcer)。這種角色上的轉變，和傳統自居中土、萬國來朝的狀態，相去何止千萬里。「大一統」思維，是華人社會的一種自我認知，也是一種世界觀；透過對這種思維的探討，有助於了解中國大陸在國際社會的舉措、以及今後的走向。

往下論述之前，值得先澄清一下。³ 在方法論上，本文有兩個層次：第一個層次，把大一統的思維，看成是一種傳統文化上的「均衡」；而後，提出兩種對立的假說，並檢驗哪一種假說更有解釋力。第二個層次，是在具體的公共政策上，闡釋大一統的涵義；而後，再試著評估，大一統思維所隱含的利弊得失。此外，本文的主旨，是大一統思維的「源頭」和「涵義」；千百年來大一統思維的「演變」，將不是重點。當然，大一統思維的「演變」，也是饒有興味的課題，和下面的論述也不容易截然劃分。不過，權衡輕重，關於「演

³ 就像對於「關係」(guanxi) 的討論，文獻上通常引述孔子學說 (仁義) 為起點。然而，是哪些條件引發了孔子思維，又是哪些條件支持了孔子的學說，卻往往付諸闕如。同樣的，Benedict (1946) 和 Brigg (1981) 這兩本人類學著作裡，都有豐富的材料；然而，卻缺乏理論結構，對於現象沒有解釋「為什麼」。相形之下，Posner (1981) 的第 6 和 7 兩章，就是由社會科學 (特別是經濟學) 的角度，分析初民社會的結構和律法。

變」的探討，將是後續研究的主題，而不會是下面分析的著力所在。

本文的結構如下：除了本節的序說之外，下一節的重點將是介紹大一統思維的兩種主要假說。而後，第3節和第4節，將由不同的角度，檢驗兩種假說之間的高下。第5節將轉移焦點，論證大一統思維的含義；和公共政策的關聯，焦點有三：中國大陸的典章制度、台海問題、中國大陸在國際社會的走向。對於這些問題的分析，免不了有揣測的成分，但至少是有憑有據 (reasoned conjectures) 的揣測。最後一節，是回顧和結論。

2. 大一統思維的來源：兩種假說 (The Origin of Grand Unification: Two Competing Hypotheses)

這一節將先列舉大一統思維的主要學說，而後闡釋在評估學說之間良窳時，所涉及的考量。

2.1 治水社會說 (The Hydraulic Society Hypothesis)

河域共治的理論，是由魏特夫 (Karl Wittfogel) 在鉅著《東方專制主義》所提出，他用的名詞是「治水社會」 (hydraulic society)。他認為，黃河長江兩大流域，經常潰堤氾濫；基於治水的需要，需要龐大的官僚組織，因此會形成專制政權。雖然他沒有明確提出「大一統」的概念，但是專制政權和大一統的思維，只是一步之隔，是一體的兩面。他的主要論點，可以由下面的引句中看出：

“如果灌溉耕作取決於有效地管理大量的水源供應，那麼水的明顯的特性——大量聚集——在制度上就成為具有決定性的意義的了。”□

“要有效地管理這些工程，必須建立一個遍及全國或者至少是及於重要人口中心的組織網。因此，控制這一組織的人，總是巧妙地準備行使最高政治權力。”□

“在治水文明中，執政者阻止一切非政府性質的團體在組織上的結合。他們的國家變得‘比社會強大’。使其代表者具有控制臣民的無限制權力的任何組織，都可以被認為是一種‘工具’。和多中心社會的被控制的國家不同，單一中心的治水社會國家是一種名符其實的‘工具’國家。”□

“治水社會的軍隊是農業管理者官僚機構的組成部分，佔優勢地位的宗教也是密切地依附國家的。正是這種重要職能令人生畏的集中，才使治水政府具有真正專制的 (極權的) 力量。”

魏特夫的貢獻，至少有兩點：首先，對於專制極權主義的研究，一向是把焦點放在西方，而且一向把焦點放在二次大戰前後；他把視野轉向東方，是探索範

圍的擴大 (任劍濤, 2009)。其次, 對於中國傳統的專制政權, 以往的探討多半是針對思潮和意識型態; 他把注意力轉移到集權主義的現實基礎 (治水社會)。為總體現象提供了個體基礎, 這是方法論上的提昇 (Coleman, 1990)。

和「河域共治說」相關的, 是「抵禦外患說」; 顧名思義, 是為了共同抵禦外來的威脅, 形成共同的組織, 也是處理公共財的問題; 因此, 抵禦外患說和河域共治說, 在性質上幾乎無分軒輊。在涉及的層面 (對生命財產的威脅、動員的人力物力等) 上, 乃至威脅的性質 (平時需要投入, 危機出現的時間不確定), 兩者都非常類似。而且, 抵禦外患, 和軍事行動有關; 抵禦外患所隱含的公權力和強制力(暴力), 甚至要超過河域共治。

2.2 單一權威說 (The Single Authority Hypothesis)

單一權威說, 是由 Hsiung (2011) 所提出, 主要的推論如下: 地理結構上, 中國大陸是一個面積遼闊、平坦完整的區塊, 是自給自足的一大片土地。南方的寮越高棉等, 有丘陵峽谷高原等相隔, 歷史上從來沒有北侵、造成困擾過。左邊有沙漠阻絕, 形成天然的屏障; 零星的商旅僧人, 可能往返跋涉, 但是大規模的軍事行動, 卻鞭長莫及。右邊是大海, 船堅砲利之前, 不成問題。剩下的, 只有北方來的強敵。因此, 只要能擋得住北方的威脅, 中原大地自成體系, 唯我獨尊--萬里長城修建在北方, 是明顯的例證。這個完整而相對封閉的地理區塊, 面積很可觀; 經過千百年的發展之後, 累積了億萬人口。和相鄰的高麗、泰國、越南等相比, 規模上當然相差很多。

在這種特殊的地理條件下, 只要交通運輸的能力發展到某一程度, 政治權力自然而然就會擴及整個地理區塊, 形成單一權威。歷代朝廷無不自視為「中土」, 皇上自居為「天子」; 大一統的思維, 應運而生, 再延續和傳承。英國和印度, 都曾是獨霸一方的強權。然而, 歷史上, 英國始終和歐洲大陸的德法等國交流競爭; 印度, 和中東回教文明的互動往返, 也無日無之。兩相對照, 華人的歷史經驗, 和英國和印度大不相同; 因為地理上的特殊結構, 華人文化自成一格, 而且定於一尊, 可以說是自強自足。

2.3 混合和對立 (Qualifications)

在下一節檢驗假說之前, 最好對於各假說之間的關係, 先作一些釐清。河域共治說和抵禦外患說, 本質上都是公共財 (public goods); 集合眾人之力, 而提供攸關眾人福祉的財貨或勞務。單一權威說的特質, 主要是權力的演化和運用, 當然也有公共財的成分; 因為, 在單一權威下, 必然對民眾提供某種法律秩序、道路交通等。所以, 這些假說之間, 並不是彼此排斥、截然劃分。其次, 河域共治和抵禦外患, 在性質上比較接近; 所以, 在下面的論述裡, 不會分開處理, 而是合而為一, 並且以河域共治為代表。如果抵禦外患說隱含特殊考量, 會進一步敘明。

最後，在歷史的發展裡，大一統的思維，很可能受到好幾種因素的影響。河域共治、抵禦外患、和單一權威，可能都是促成大一統思維的重要因素；結合這三者的「混合說」，可能最完整，最有解釋力。然而，雖然四平八穩，在學術探究上，卻失去稜角，無法突顯各種理論間的差距和對比。因此，在以下的論述裡，「河域共治」和「單一權威」將是兩種對立的假說。採取極端的立場，希望突顯彼此的差別，盡量萃取其中的涵義，加深對大一統思維的理解。

3. 驗證假說：邏輯 (Verifying the Hypotheses: Logical Evidence)

對於兩種學說的高下，將從邏輯和實際資料兩方面來檢驗。這一節處理的是邏輯問題，下一節的重點則是實際資料。關於邏輯上的檢驗，將先列明評估的尺度，而後以這些尺度，判斷兩種學說在邏輯嚴謹和完整上，何者較有說服力。

3.1 邏輯尺度 (The Measurement of Logic)

關於評估理論的高下，有很多種尺度；弗里德曼 (M. Friedman) 認為，假設的真實與否並不重要，重要的是能預測。寇斯則認為，理論是組織思維的基礎。此外，證偽論 (falsification test) 認定，能被資料證實不為「偽說」的論點，才是好的理論。這些方法論上的考量，重要而且有智識上的興味。然而，和本研究關聯並不大。相對的，本節將提出兩種指標，由邏輯上來檢驗河域共治和單一權威這兩種學說。

首先，社會科學裡，一個理論可以簡單的分為幾個組成部分：起始條件 (initial conditions)、行為互動 (interaction)、均衡條件 (equilibrium)、和變遷。起始條件，是體系或狀態最初的狀態；相關因素互動交錯，是過程；達到穩定的狀態，是均衡。辨認支持均衡的條件，有助於了解均衡；當均衡面對內在或外在的刺激 / 衝擊，(可能) 會發生變遷。大一統思維，可以看成是一種「均衡」。辨認這種均衡的形成、支持條件和變遷，就可以烘托出各種學說邏輯上的嚴謹與否。

其次，利用相關性指標 (the relevance criterion)，作比較分析。大一統思維和華人社會一些廣為人知的現象，密切相關。檢驗兩種學說和這些特定的社會現象的關聯，就可以看出關聯的高下強弱。如此一來，可以間接的評估兩種學說裡，何者更可以解釋大一統的思維。具體而言，華人文化裡濃厚的道德成分、以及台灣問題，將是援用的指標。

3.2 運用邏輯量尺 (Employing the measurement of logic)

就理論的結構而言，單一權威說的初始條件，主要是地理條件和舟車運輸等科技。只要武力能得到充分的支持，政治勢力就會擴充到整個大陸區塊：南是高山峻嶺、西是沙漠、東是大海、北是草原/長城。武力的強弱，決定了帝國/朝代

範圍的大小；但是，在帝國之內，只有單一的權威。為了捍衛單一權威，除了政治制度之外，還會發展出其他的配套措施；大一統的思維，可以說就是配套措施的一環。透過宣傳教化，一旦民眾信奉大一統，增加了中央政權的合法性，可以降低統治的成本。因此，由邏輯上看，單一權威和大一統思維之間，關係非常直接而緊密。單一權威表示幅員之內只有一個權威，所以必然是大一統；相反的，大一統也隱含著表示整個地理版塊，已經為統一的狀態，自然而然不會是多個權威，而是單一權威。這兩者之間，可以說是互為表裡，互為因果；彼此既是充分條件，也是必要條件。⁴

相形之下，河域共治是處理公共財的供給，主要的起始條件，就是黃河長江兩大流域，特別是經常潰堤氾濫的區域；河流氾濫有嚴重的外部性，修堤疏導要籌措資金，會有搭便車 (free-riding) 的問題。因此，要形成某種組織，而且具有強制力；也就是，基於河域共治的需要，形成常設性的組織，並且擁有武力，在邏輯上完全合情合理。然而，這種觀點有三個潛在的缺失。第一，河域共治，是以黃河長江 (和其他支流) 的流域為主；面積當然遼闊，可是並不能涵蓋整個大陸區塊。由河域共治要推導到專制主義/大一統，中間有相當的間隙；這不是邊際上微量的擴充，而是間斷和不連續的跳躍 (林甘泉, 1997; 李祖德, 1997)。只限於河流整治、生產、居住等問題，範圍相對的有限。

第二，除了河域共治的組織之外，地理區域內必然有其他的組織，處理交通治安、軍事賦稅等事宜。由河域共治形成的組織、人事、運作，未必能直接聯結到整個帝國的政治、司法、軍事等。也就是，治水組織和其他組織的關係如何，如何處理職權上必然有的重疊和衝突—治水的稅負和一般稅負輕重，先後如何？築堤防洪時，調用人力的權限如何？平時灌溉用水的分配，先後如何？等等。即使在法治高度成熟的現代社會，這些具體的問題都不容易解決；在傳統社會，更難想像。⁵相反的，根據單一權威，在邏輯上簡單明白；單一權威之下，有正常的行政組織。根據職能劃分，自然可以循指揮體系，處理整治、灌溉、賦稅等問題；一切的作為，都是正規政事的一部分，都有清楚的公權力為後盾。因此，在邏輯上，由河域共治解釋大一統，遠不及由單一權威解釋大一統來得順理成章。⁶

⁴ 單一權威的概念，也見諸於討論權力和國家形成的文獻；譬如，參考 Carniero (1970) 和 Olson (2000) 裡的描述。此外，在魏特夫的書中，也多次運用「單一中心」這個名詞。單一中心和單一權威及專制主義，當然關係密切。可惜，對於單一中心的概念，魏特夫並沒有多作發揮；而且，他認為河域共治，必然導致政權上的單一中心；在理論和實證上，這種聯結都過於簡單，說服力有限。

⁵ 美國田納西流域的管理，可以作為對照。流域管理所涉及的行政和法律問題，參考 Selznick (1980) 和 Chandler (1984)。

⁶ 邏輯上，抵禦外患說和河域共治說一樣：抵禦外患主要是與軍事有關，涵蓋的範圍有限，和完整的政權有一段相當的距離。而且，外患主要來自北方，和大部份土地人口無關。由抵禦外患推

第三，河域共治和單一權威的背後，地理特性/自然條件都是重要的決定因素。但是，也有微妙的區別：在中國大陸，河域共治涉及的幅員較小，而單一權威涉及的幅員要大得多。河域共治只是一種功能性的組織，針對治水和稅負；然而，單一權威，涵蓋政治經濟軍事等方面。即使河域的地理範圍和單一權威的地理範圍一致，河域共治和單一權威的涵義還是相當不同。⁷ 因此，由河域共治發展出的均衡狀態，無論在水平方向（地理區域）和垂直方向（事務範圍）這兩方面，在邏輯上和大一統之間，有明顯的差距（李琪，1997；葛劍雄，1997）。⁸

其次，在兩個相關指標上，河域共治說和單一權威說的對比，也極其明確直接。傳統華人文化裡，道德性的成分非常濃厚；以儒家思想為主，仁義理智信等教條，不但是中央執政的依據，更是一般民眾服膺不二的準則（Huang, 1981）。對於治理幅員遼闊、人口眾多的帝國而言，訴諸聖人教化和道德守則，兼具簡單和有彈性兩大優點；一言以蔽之，可以大幅降低統治的成本。就單一權威的運作而言，維持權威的單一和絕對，是重要的目標。道德性的成分，正好可以降低操作成本。大一統思維，本身就有濃厚的道德性成分，正反映了單一權威的特性。相對的，河域共治是功能導向，以解決具體問題為主；抽象的程度很低，並不需要道德的介入。河域共治和大一統所隱含的道德，很難說是彼此相通、兼容並蓄。⁹

相關指標的第二項，是台灣問題。以這個指標作為檢驗基礎，河域共治說和單一權威說的對比更為明顯。河域共治主要是解決潰堤氾濫、灌溉運輸等問題，限於黃河長江兩大流域。¹⁰ 台灣和中國大陸隔了台灣海峽，和長江黃河流域毫不相關。要由河域共治引申到台灣問題，顯然需要極其豐富的想像力、以及跳躍式的邏輯思維。相對的，由單一權威的角度著眼，台灣的問題一清二楚。只要武力所及，單一權威會儘可能擴充幅員。歷史上，清朝才把台灣納入版圖，設督置府

論到大一統，說服力很有限。

⁷ 類似的例子，是聯合國、世界銀行、和世界衛生組織等，都是功能性的機構；旨在發揮某些功能，和道德幾乎無關。

⁸ 對於魏特夫的論著，很多學者提出批評，參考李祖德、陳啟能（1997）主編的《評魏特夫的〈東方專制主義〉》；這些批評，各有一得之愚，可是有三個共同的特點：第一，由「治水社會」論證傳統的「專制主義」，這兩者之間的聯結沒有說明力；第二，對於中國歷史中「專制主義」的傳統，沒有爭議；第三，在批評魏氏論點之餘，對於「專制主義」的傳統，卻沒有提出替代方案，提出其他可能、更合理的解釋。本文所提「單一權威」的解釋，就是這麼一種嚐試。

⁹ 文獻上「單一主人」的概念，剛好可以和「單一權威」作一對照。單一主人，是用來設想「交易成本為零的世界」（Coase, 1960）。典型的例子是上下游工廠，權益發生衝突；或者，貨船遇上暴風雨，船員、船主、託運貨主的權益，彼此未必一致。單一主人，就是想像上下游工廠為同一人所擁有，或是船員、貨船、貨物等都由船長一人所有；由單一主人運用資源，結果是有效率的。單一主人通常隱含有前例或類似事項，可以作為行為取捨的基準；資源運用的效率，通常有公認的尺度。相形之下，單一權威的概念，主要是描述一種權力結構的狀態。至於單一權威具體的表現形式(configuration)，則是相對的模糊，也不一定是關心的重點。大略來說，單一主人的重點在「主人」，而單一權威的重點在「權威」。

¹⁰ 河域共治涉及河流氾濫，也涉及水利灌溉；氾濫事關生命財產，水利事關生產農事，有輕重之分。

(1683); 甲午戰敗, 割讓台灣 (1895); 二次大戰之後, 中華民國接收台灣 (1945)。新中國 1949 年成立, 主張: 中華人民共和國, 是唯一合法代表中國的政府, 而且「台灣, 是中國不可分割的一部分」。基於單一權威, 自然會有這種主張; 而這種主張契合大一統的思維, 正是直接明確的佐證。¹¹

最後, 兩種學說和大一統之間的關聯, 還可以藉著一種假設性的思維來比較。「如果」中國大陸是完全平整獨立、封閉的地理區塊, 「但是」沒有黃河長江等大的流域; 那麼, 河域共治不會存在, 大一統和單一權威還是會出現。相對的, 「如果」有了黃河長江流域, 「但是」地理區塊不是完整封閉, 而是平坦延伸, 並且和印度、歐洲、和中亞等連結。¹² 那麼, 某個範圍裡, 河域共治的狀態還是會出現; 因為幅員大而開放。大一統和單一權威卻未必會出現。因此, 從邏輯上看, 由單一權威來解釋傳統的大一統思維, 比較有說服力; 在理論的嚴謹程度上, 河域共治說相形見绌。

4. 驗證假說: 實證 (Verifying the Hypotheses: Empirical Evidence)

上一節是由理論和邏輯的角度, 檢驗兩種主要的假說; 這一節則是利用史實, 評估兩種假說的解釋力。論證的方式, 是以「單一權威/大一統」和「河域共治/大一統」這兩種組合, 分別考量列舉華人歷史上的一些事實; 而後, 再評估這兩種假說和史實之間, 是否能夠契合 (compatible)。

4.1 單一權威說

華人文化有文字記載的歷史, 就橫跨三千年以上; 要歸納出簡單的幾點特質, 不但容易掛一漏萬, 而且更容易引起爭議。針對本文的主題, 可以由對內和對外兩方面, 提出一些爭議較少的史實。

首先, 在各個朝代之間, 內部的政治制度上, 大約都具有三點特質: 行政權獨大、司法不獨立、中央集權。行政權獨大, 是指皇權透過行政體系, 治理全國; 司法不獨立, 是指在主觀客觀條件下, 一直沒有發展出獨立自主、可以節制行政權的司法體系; 中央集權, 是指中央政府大權在握, 並且有意削弱和抑制地方的

¹¹ 本文所提出的論點, 很可能被歸類為「地理決定論」; 不過, 這種認定過於簡單。單一權威的假說, 地理因素當然非常重要; 除此之外, 還有兩點重要的因素, 支持了單一權威這種「均衡」。首先, 整個地理區塊內, 有大量漢人; 幾千年的文化積累, 思想上同質性高。其次, 運輸科技使然; 對內, 舟車發展到某一程度, 就足以通達整個地理區塊; 對外, 18 世紀蒸氣機發明之前, 西方船堅砲利還不足以抵達中國大陸。因此, 單一權威和大一統的傳統, 有充分的時間形成。最後而且是最重要的一點, 本文的主旨是探討大一統的可能來源, 以及這種思維的涵義。地理因素和單一權威, 只是論述的一部分而已。

¹² 闢如, 尼羅河流域面積極廣, 但是幅員相對的開放而不封閉, 就不容易形成單一權威; 參考 Butzer (1976) 和劉文鵬 (1997)。

權限。換一種描述的方式，西方所發展出「制衡」(checks and balances) 的觀念和機制，基本上不存在；節制皇權，只能訴諸於監察御史的規勸，以及道德性的呼籲。在這些條件下，歷代王朝的興頹似乎成了一種宿命式的循環：朝政腐敗，民眾揭竿而起(或外敵入侵)，結果改朝換代；開國之初，吏治清明，銳意革新；傳宗接代之後，官僚體系和朝政逐漸腐化，民生凋敝，革命或外患又起，等等。因此，單一權威、行政權(皇權)獨攬大權、缺乏獨立的司法、沒有競爭制衡的力量、大一統思維等等，可以說環環相扣，同時成立、彼此支持。單一權威和大一統思維之間的聯結，直接而具體。

其次，大一統的思維，主要是對內的一種思維，和「外患」並沒有直接的關聯。北方修築長城之後，基本上(或大部分時間裡)解決了外患的問題。元清兩代，是外族入主中原；本身就是外患，但是一樣的強調大一統。¹³ 在對外的關係上，歷朝歷代自居中土、上國、和天朝；在人口、幅員、和經濟規模上，國力都凌駕於周圍的國家。雖然強弱大小非常明顯，各個朝代對外的態度，大致上有兩點：第一，不對外侵略，除了元清兩朝入侵高麗之外；第二，對鄰近國家，採取羈縻政策—只要承認朝廷的宗主地位，就可以由象徵性的進貢中，得到豐厚的賞賜。

再其次，英法德荷等老牌殖民國家之間，歷史上有過無數爭戰；多回合賽局(repeat game)之下，發展出投降的遊戲規則：交戰時，只要官兵陣亡超過 1/4 或 1/3，指揮官就可以下令投降。¹⁴ 然而，在傳統中華文化裡，沒有「投降」的遊戲規則，由單一權威的角度，很容易體會這種「均衡」：地理區塊之內，只容許單一的權威，勝者為王；容許投降，意味著將有潛在的敵人，隱含著對權力的威脅。明成祖即位之後，派鄭和七次出海，遠至非洲東岸的索馬利亞(行程約六千海浬)；主要目的之一，就是搜尋掃蕩前朝的殘餘勢力，特別是明惠帝！因此，就中華文化而言，單一權威和這些史實可說是密切契合。

4. 2 治水社會說

關於魏特夫的「治水社會說」，和華人歷史有很多扞格之處。就時間的先後來看，中國古代王權的形成，是在夏商周時期；而唐宋明清等朝代的傳統，是封建專制。可是，這兩者都和治水沒有直接的關聯(林志純, 1997; 周自強, 1997)。關於大規模的治水，並不是由民間自發性組織處理，而主要是由政府透過專責單位處理；歷史上，對於河域的治理，主要由河務和漕運兩個部門負責。這兩個部門的首要任務，並不在於治水灌溉，而是發揮兩大功能：軍事和運糧，而且承平時是以後者為主。把糧食準時運送到京師，重要性要高於給水灌溉。漕運要經過

¹³ 二次大戰前後，國共內戰你死我活；和「外患」無關，是內戰，是政權之爭，是單一權威之爭。

¹⁴ 在《菊花與劍》這本人類學經典裡，Benedict (1946) 提到：日本文化傳統裡，交戰時只有切腹、投海、跳崖等，教戰守則裡沒有「投降」這兩個字。

廣大區域，又經管糧食驗收，所以是肥缺。而且，歷史上掌管水利的官署，並不是中央直屬機構；“不僅不是國家機構的全部，而且不屬國家權力中樞”（劉修明，1997；李祖德，1997）。¹⁵

此外，秦暉（2007）指出：元朝勢力最盛、版圖最大，但是關中灌溉區域卻縮為 80 至 90 萬畝，不及北宋最盛時的一半；皇權的權力大，而公共服務的責任卻很小；民間形成水利組織，卻又受到專制體制的抑制和打壓。治水的潛規則是“農民可以種不成田，官府不能運不成糧。”“不治水，同樣要專制。”謝霖（1992）也指出：“國家的形成不以水利灌溉為前提；相反，大規模的水利灌溉卻以國家的形成為條件。”王亞南（1981，第 4 章）提到：“[絕]不是專制官僚統治由治水要求而產生，而是他的反面，大規模的講求水利，只有在專制統一局面下才特別有可能與必要。”魏氏「專制為治水，治水為專制」的觀點，和河域治理的實際狀況，有很大的落差（張弓，1997；余樹聲，1997。）¹⁶ 因此，就華人歷史而言，「治水社會」的論點並不符合史實。

4. 3 小結

針對以上兩節理論和實證上的檢驗，可以簡單總結一下。魏特夫理論的缺失，主要有兩部分：第一，邏輯上由治水社會不容易推論到專制制度；第二，由中國歷史來看，並不成為所謂的「治水社會」。相形之下，單一權威的支持條件，主要是地理特性、科技因素、和權力特質。「治水社會」說和「單一權威」說相比，單一權威說更能呼應大一統的思維。

5. 大一統的涵義 (Implications of the Grand Unification)

前面幾節的重點，是先列舉大一統思維起源的主要假說；再由理論和實際資料兩方面來檢驗，兩種假說的說服力。根據邏輯和史實這兩方面的論證，單一權威說能更有效說明大一統思維的來源。在這個基礎之上，將探討大一統思維的涵義；和前面的敘述相比，以下的論述有兩點不同。

首先，前面各節的內容，基本上是回顧過去；利用歷史性的材料，檢驗大一統思維的來源。下面的論述，主要是往前看；以大一統思維為前提，揣摩這種思維的現實意義和對未來的啟示。其次，前面各節的論述，基本上是實證式的鋪陳，讓證據來說話，有智識上的興味。下面的分析，既然涉及現況評估和對未來的揣測，涉及公共政策的利弊得失，不免直接間接有價值判斷；規範性的成分，將明

¹⁵ 魏特夫書中，提到傳統政治上「單一中心」的概念，有點類似本文的「單一權威」。但是，他的「單一中心」，是來自於治水這個主要因素。此外，許任、何英湘（2002）強調，大一統可以分成三個層次：從廣義的「天人之一統」，到「夷下之一統」，再到「諸侯奉正朝，形式上之一統」；此外，兩位作者再三論證，歷史上「中國」是文化傳統的概念，並非近世紀主權國家的概念。

¹⁶ 這些對魏氏「治水社會」的批評，以及所列舉的理由，剛好可以間接證明：由單一權威的角度，更可以體會歷史發展的脈絡、以及傳統社會的實際狀況。

顯的增加。下面將針對三方面，試著闡釋大一統思維的涵義。具體而言，由內而外，將探討中國大陸本身問題、台海問題、和中國大陸的對外關係。

5.1 中國大陸 (Mainland China)

前面指出，就對內而言，大一統/單一權威同時意味著行政權獨大、司法權不獨立、中央集權；結果之一，是朝代興衰起伏，幾乎是宿命式的循環。在 21 世紀初，中華人民共和國 (PRC) 是最主要的華人社會，規模上遠超過台灣和香港。在 PRC 裡，這三點大一統/單一權威的特色—中央集權、行政權獨大、司法權不獨立—依然鮮明無比。而且，在政府 (國家) 組織之上，共產黨的特殊地位，更是畫龍點睛、具體而微的反映了大一統/單一權威的文化傳統。建國 60 年後的 21 世紀初，中國共產黨的地位還是不折不扣的單一權威。還有，1949 年中華人民共和國建國，至少到 1978 年改革開放為止，馬克思主義具有至高無上、不容挑戰和質疑的地位。

然而，自改革開放後，一直維持很高的經濟成長率；32 年之內 (1978-2010)，GDP 翻了 110 倍，每人所得翻了 78 倍。呼應了 Przeworski & Limongi (1993) 的論證，一黨專政政體下經濟成長率，並不遜於民主國家。¹⁷ 隨著近 30 年來經濟的快速成長，這三種傳統文化特質，正面臨不同程度的挑戰，未來將更為嚴峻。如何才能因應各種挑戰，其他社會的經驗顯然可以借鏡。觀察的角度，可以由水平方向和垂直方向著眼。隨著經濟快速成長，都會區大幅擴充，中產階級逐漸形成，數量與日俱增。當中產階級成形、享受經濟方面的權利之後，自然而然的會要求政治上的權利。也就是，經濟發展之後，政治問題的重要性將會漸漸增加。政治過程的投入參與，看起來是政治問題，其實是考驗司法體系。捍衛政治體制的長城，最後還是可靠的司法。因此，在水平方向上，獨立的司法和某種形式的制衡，幾乎是必然的發展趨勢。行政權不可能持續獨大，司法獨立的重要性日益增強。會不會出現西方社會、行政立法司法三權分立，還在未定之數；然而，水平方向上，行政體系和司法體系之間，必然將發展出既競爭又與援的關係。

在垂直方向上，中央集權的傳統，也必然會慢慢調整。人類歷史上，還沒有出現過十三億人口的社會，採取大陸法系，而能有效運作。隨著經濟規模的擴充，中央集權的操作成本愈來愈高；不效率、衝突、不穩定，幾乎是同義辭。因此，某種程度的地方分權，將是大勢所趨。事實上，實證研究一再證明，在公共治理上，層級式組織 (hierarchy) 的效能、比不上水平式組織 (polyarchy) 的效能。¹⁸

5.2 兩岸關係 (Cross-Strait Relation)

¹⁷ 文革的十年浩劫，人民流離失所、死於橫禍的不下千萬人，是同一個政治體制。單一權威下，沒有權力的節制，由此可見。單一主人和單一權威的微妙區別，也清清楚楚。

¹⁸ Ostrom (2007) 清楚的論證，一條鞭式的警察組織，在效率上比不上水平、彼此不隸屬、職權有某種程度重疊的警政單位。

在兩岸關係上，根據大一統的思維，兩岸當然應該合而為一。然而，除了這種直接、直覺式的推論之外，有幾點相關的考量，值得深思。大一統思維，主要是地理條件和相關因素使然，透過追求單一權威而逐漸形成。一旦雕塑形成，就成了均衡，成為人們思維模式 (mental construct) 的一部分，是一種世界觀 (worldview)。隨著時空條件的改變，均衡可能會緩慢變化；然而，變化的軌跡，是路徑相依 (path dependent)。而且，特定的思維模式，通常是利弊參雜。Kuran (2004) 強有力的論證，早期伊斯蘭教的律法，千百年後阻礙了回教世界的經濟發展。

大一統思維，是追求單一權威自然而然的後果；然而，一旦把考慮的層次提高，視野放大，由文化的角度著眼，主張或堅持大一統下的「兩岸統一」卻未必有益於中華文化。盎格魯—撒克遜文化 (the Angle-Saxon culture) 的發展軌跡，剛好是一個鮮明的對照。在 21 世紀初，英文是國際上最通用的語言；使用英語的國家，包括英國、美國、加拿大、紐西蘭、和澳洲等。這些國家，都源自於英倫三島和大英帝國，現在遍佈全球，是最強勢的文化 (之一)。美國和加拿大比鄰，都是英國移民形成的國家，可是各領風騷，沒有「大一統」的問題。可見得，由文化的高度/角度著眼，要台灣「重回祖國的懷抱」，對中華文化未必有利。

事實上，道理簡單而明確，競爭比壟斷好！因緣際會，台灣和中國大陸，是中華文化傳承中的兩個政治個體。彼此競爭，有助於文化的更新防腐，這是歷史上從沒有出現過的機緣。兩岸和平競爭，有密切的經貿關係，友善互惠，就像美國和加拿大一樣；對彼此都好，對中華文化更好。因此，至少在兩岸問題上，大一統思維隱含的弊要大於利。由兩岸問題上，可以反映出大一統思維的侷限和來源。由文化的角度思考兩岸問題，是由一時一地的政權 (中國大陸和台灣)，提昇到跨越時空的文化；這是層次的提高，也是時空的延伸和擴充。在漫長歷史中的每一個時點，「大一統」的思維都符合當時的利益結構，都是「政治正確」(politically correct) 的；然而，如果站在旁觀者的立場，由文化長遠利益的角度著眼，「大一統」的思維就未必是「文化正確」(culturally correct) 的。

5.3 國際社會 (International Community)

前面的論述闡明，大一統的思維，主要是由地理結構和運輸武力等因素所決定。大一統思維和單一權威，互為表裡。對內，根據大一統/單一權威，各種典章制度和思維上的配套措施，粲然大備。對外，自居中土上國，不主動出擊，沒有擴張的思維或舉止；對規模相形見絀的鄰近各國，採取積極政策。

換一種描述方式，大一統是一種對內的世界觀；對外，可以說是一片空白，對於世界情勢，沒有興趣，並不了解，想當然耳。兩件近代史上的事實，可以稍稍佐證。首先，清末八國聯軍入侵，慈禧太后和大臣們，竟然相信義和團們可以憑著拳腳和符咒，面對洋槍大砲。其次，滿清末年面對西方的船堅砲利，知識分子推展「洋務運動」，希望能振衰起弊，和洋人一較短長。然而，洋務運動的指導

原則，是「中學為體，西學為用」一天真的認為，知識可以輕易的劃分，只要師夷人之長技，就可以制夷！

大一統思維下的自居中土上國，自我封閉，對外在世界了解貧乏；結果就是，幾世紀以來的屈辱經驗。1858年英法聯軍以降，八國聯軍、甲午戰爭，古老文明一再潰敗，割地賠款，備受屈辱。八年對日抗戰，死傷慘重。傳統的大一統思維，加上近世紀來的這些經驗，使得華人社會歸納出兩點具體明確的心得：仇日、不要再受欺侮。隨著經濟快速發展，一旦 PRC 的每人國民所得接近 1 萬美元，13 億人口的經濟規模，就將超過美國，舉世無雙。毋需再仇日，也不會再受欺侮；然而，在國際社會，華人社會（以 PRC 為代表）如何自我定位，如何自處？這些問題，不但令一般民眾困惑，恐怕領導階層和社會菁英都不能從容以對。原因很簡單，因為傳統文化的世界觀裡，並沒有對應的思維。

在國際社會裡，大一統思維的世界觀，顯然不足恃。傳統的世界觀，也顯然需要重新組裝，填上某些空白。而填補空白、形成較完整的世界觀，必然是一個自我省察 (soul searching) 和學習 (learning by experiencing) 的過程。當塵埃落定，新的世界觀趨於穩定、達到均衡時，有兩點幾乎可以確定：第一，修正大一統/單一權威的觀念，變成多重權威的思維。第二，在國際社會裡，PRC 將是兩大超級強權之一；但是，在文化的層次上，華人文化和其他文化，將是各領風騷、各擅勝場、共存共榮的局面。

6. 結論 (Conclusion)

在他的集大成之作裡，North (1990) 強調：長期來看，決定一個社會榮枯興衰的，是有沒有好的典章制度 (institutional matrix)；然後，他再登上高峰，以今日之我取代昨日的我：追根究柢，決定一個社會發展軌跡的，其實是人們的思維方式 (mental construct; Denzau & North, 1994)。這是他的智慧結晶，恢宏而深刻。然而，要實際檢驗這個智慧結晶，卻並不容易；本文所處理的，和這個智慧結晶相關，但是範圍要狹隘得多。

具體而言，在華人文化這個古老文明裡，「大一統」的思維即使不是支柱 (pillar) 之一，也是重要的成分 (ingredient) 之一。對於大一統思維的探討，過去大部分是偏重在典籍文本裡引述論證。本文嘗試另闢蹊徑，由社會科學的角度探索大一統思維的現實 (社會) 基礎。先由不同的文獻裡，整合出相關的兩種假說—河域共治/共同防禦、和單一權威；而後，由理論和實際資料兩方面，檢驗這兩種假說的合宜與否。經由多方面的考量，歸納出明確的結論：由單一權威的角度，可以更簡潔明確的聯結到大一統的思維，而且也與諸多史實更為契合。當然，單一權威的觀點，是否適用在其他社會和地區 (如日本、南北韓)，是有興味的課題，值得作進一步的探討。而且，單一權威在其他領域的涵義，例如和語言的關聯、和宗教的關係等等，同樣值得作更深入周全的探究。本文的第二部分，是闡明大

一統思維的涵義。針對傳統社會的內部結構、兩岸關係、和國際社會這三個主題，論證大一統思維（華人社會的世界觀）確實影響華人世界的過去（內部結構）、現在（兩岸關係）、和未來（國際社會）。人們的思維方式和社會的發展軌跡，確實密切呼應；North 的智慧結晶，的確得到相應的佐證。

這一趟知識之旅的收穫，還不只於此。第一部分的體會，是由單一權威的角度容易理解大一統；第二部分的心得，則是由文化的高度來看大一統思維，可以體會到這種思維潛在的侷限和不足。對中華文化而言，大一統的思維，是一種資產，也是一種限制。對內，有助於凝聚社會，降低治理成本；對外，思維上卻幾乎是空白，無所措手足。更進一步，大一統的思維一旦形成，因為路徑相依的特性，對一個社會而言，事實上排除了嘗試其他軌跡的可能性—即使時空變化，環境裡的條件已經迥異於往昔。中國大陸改革開放後進入國際社會、以及兩岸的微妙關係，無疑是對大一統思維的考驗與挑戰。當然，對一個古老的文明來說，這無疑的也隱含著諸多契機！



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China's Grand Unification: Its Origin and Implications*

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Abstract

The idea of Grand Unification is an important element of the Chinese culture, as it has been part of the worldview of numerous Chinese people over the centuries. While inquiries into the idea have mostly been textual analysis, the present study attempts to explore the substantive conditions that gave rise to the idea. The competing theses of the Hydraulic Society (Wittfogel, 1957) and the Single Authority (Hsiung, 2011) are examined both theoretically and empirically. Then, the implications of the idea of Grand Unification for public policy are discussed, with a particular focus on China's political system, the conflict across the Taiwan Strait, and China's presence in the international community. The present study has two main implications: First, the idea of Grand Unification as a mental construct in the Chinese cultural tradition is related to substantive social factors, thus providing a firmer understanding of the idea. Secondly, assessment of the idea's impact on public policies is made with respect to cultural and not political considerations. At each juncture along China's long history, the idea of Grand Unification may be *politically correct* from the standpoint of contemporary interests; from the perspective of long-term interests of the Chinese civilization, however, the idea may not be *culturally correct*.

Keywords: hydraulic society, Grand Unification, Cross-Strait relations, single authority, despotism, public goods.

JEL Classification: K10, K11, K19, D62, D70.

1. Introduction

The Chinese civilization is recognized to be one of the oldest on earth, and some of its

characteristics are well known. For instance, in the private domain, filial piety is closely observed within the family and interpersonal harmony is carefully cultivated outside the family. In the public domain, the idea of Grand Unification seems to command general assent.¹⁹ While the exact contents of the idea may be hard to pin down, the core of the idea, or its spirit, is without dispute: Grand Unification means that the Chinese should be united in an integral political state. Over the centuries, the idea has not only been faithfully accepted by the ordinary people, it has become the basis of legitimacy for the dynasties. The earliest record of the idea appeared in the Warring States period (400 BC; Hsu and Her, 2002); the idea was turned into a reality when Emperor Shi Huang of the Qin Dynasty conquered the other six states and unified the mainland (221 BC). Interestingly and surprisingly, however, discussions of *the origin* of the idea of Grand Unification have been rare.

Concerning the origin of the idea, a few studies have focused on ancient texts, hoping to trace the terms of Grand Unification or related thoughts from written records (Qiu, 1993; Yang, 1989). These are essentially textual analyses and are not particularly persuasive from the social sciences perspective, for the simple reason that the creation of the idea of Grand Unification and its adoption into the cultural tradition did not occur in a vacuum. There must have been more substantive factors to account for both. The present study takes discarding textual analysis as a departure point and looks for more persuasive explanations. By invoking relevant discussions in the social sciences, hopefully a firmer ground for the idea can be identified. The widely known thesis of *the hydraulic society* proposed by Wittfogel (1957) provides a starting point. In short, as the two main rivers in mainland China, the Yellow River and the Yangtze River as well as their branches, have had periodic floods, a comprehensive flood control and irrigation system has been developed; this compulsory organization then gradually transformed itself into a despotic apparatus that exerts total control over the area.²⁰

However, the hydraulic society thesis is not without difficulties on issues intimately related to the idea of Grand Unification. For instance, the hydraulic organizations are in essence dealing with the problem of public goods. As such they are not in any sense related to morality *per se*. But the idea of Grand Unification is heavily ingrained with moral elements. The idea is not only appropriate, it is morally correct; opposing the idea is not only mistaken, it is evil, immoral, and thus punishable. But, why? Moreover, Taiwan is clearly not part of the Yellow River or Yangtze River basins, therefore it is remote, theoretically and physically, from the hydraulic society and the implicit Grand Unification. Nevertheless, concerning the Taiwan issue, both the official stand of the People's Republic China (PRC) and the general sentiment in the mainland have been the non-negotiable *One-China Policy*—Taiwan is an integral and inseparable part of China. Again, why? Evidently, there is a large gap between the theory of the hydraulic society and the idea of

19 The term “general consent” better comes with a quotation mark as the idea of Grand Unification often invokes different reactions for people in the three major Chinese communities (Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China).

20 In addition to the hydraulic society theory, the common defense theory suggests a similar explanation. See the analysis below.

Grand Unification.

The present study has two main objectives. The first is to suggest an alternative thesis as a possible origin of the idea of Grand Unification and then make a comparative study of the two competing theses. The second objective is to explore the implications of the idea of Grand Unification with respect to public policies. Both objectives necessitate covering wide spans of space and time and, to say the least, it is difficult to produce convincing results. As such, the present inquiry can be seen as initiating a dialogue or taking a step on an intellectual journey. However, the significance of the endeavor cannot be overstated.

The idea of Grand Unification has become part of the conventional wisdom and an integral ingredient of the Chinese cultural tradition. It is arguably an important element in the mental construct, i.e., the worldview, of the Chinese people. Tracing the origin of the idea would help identify the microfoundation of a macro phenomenon, thus obtaining a firmer grasp of the traditional belief. Moreover, the idea of Grand Unification is not just an abstract concept, for it has influenced practical public policies. For instance, the PRC's official policy towards Taiwan, as indicated above, is based on the very idea of Grand Unification. By examining the origin of the idea hopefully a more thorough and balanced assessment of various public policies can be reached. Finally, since the recent reform launched in 1978, the PRC has made significant economic progress and it will soon become the second largest single economy in the world. Concurrently, its role in the international community has become drastically different—it has become not only an important participant but more often than not one of the rule-setters and the rule-enforcers. This is in sharp contrast to the traditionally self-contained and inward looking stance as implied by the idea of Grand Unification, a point that will be pursued more fully below. Consequently, by looking back and examining the origin of the idea one gains a better sense of the current and future of the PRC with respect to international affairs.

A few clarifications need to be made at this juncture.²¹ Methodologically speaking the present study involves inquiry on two different levels: On the first level, the idea of Grand Unification is seen as a cultural equilibrium, and two competing theses are advanced to see which provides a better account of the equilibrium. On the second level, the idea of Grand Unification is taken as given and its implications concerning public policies are derived and assessed. Alternatively, the focus of the present study can be seen as *the origin* and *the implications* of the idea of Grand Unification, as such *the evolution* of the idea over the centuries will not be pursued. While it is obvious that the evolution of the idea is itself intellectually interesting and that the evolution cannot be easily separated from the following discussions, space constraint renders it a topic to

21 This is similar to the discussions of *guanxi* in the literature. Most writers identify the teachings of Confucius as the basis of its importance in the Chinese society, but the questions of why would Confucius emphasize *guanxi* and what were the factors supporting such Confucian thought have seldom been raised. Similarly, both Benedict (1946) and Brigg (1981) contained fascinating anthropological observations but neither suggested a plausible theoretical framework to account for the rich materials collected. By contrast, Posner (1981, chapters 6 and 7) first outlines a theory to explain the structure of the primitive society and then analyzes the legal system of the primitive society based on the theory.

be taken up on other occasions.

The paper is organized as follows. The first section explains the background of the present inquiry. The next section outlines the competing theses of the idea of Grand Unification. Then in sections 3 and 4 a comparative study of the two main theses will be made from both theoretical and empirical angles. The focus of attention will be shifted in section 5 to deriving the implications of the idea and three specific public policies will be discussed: the institutional structure of China (PRC), the conflict across the Taiwan Strait, and PRC's presence in the international community. Some of the observations made in this section are conjectures at best, but they are reasoned conjectures based on the analysis in previous sections. The final section contains some reflections as well as concluding remarks.

2. The Origin of the Grand Unification: Two Competing Theses

This section will first outline the major theses concerning the idea of Grand Unification and then point out some qualifications in making a comparative study of the competing theses.

2.1 The Hydraulic Society Thesis

The term *hydraulic society* was used by Karl Wittfogel (1896-1988) in his treatise, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, published in 1957, as well as in his other writings. The basic idea is that in a hydraulic society there are flooding and irrigation problems on a large scale. To effectively deal with the problems a comprehensive organization will come into place and over time it will evolve into a despotic state. While he did not explicitly use the term Grand Unification in the context of China, the connection between the despotic state and the idea of Grand Unification is more than obvious, a fact tellingly indicated by the title of the book. His major arguments can be expressed by the following quotes:

“If irrigation farming depends on the effective handling of a major supply of water, the distinctive quality of water—its tendency to gather in bulk—becomes institutionally decisive.” (p.18)□

“The effective management of these works involves an organizational web which covers either the whole, or at least the dynamic core, of the country's population. In consequence, those who control this network are uniquely prepared to wield supreme political power.” (p.27)

“In hydraulic civilizations the men of the government prevented the organizational consolidation of all non-governmental groups. Their state became ‘stronger than society.’ Any organization that gives its representatives unchecked power over its subjects may be considered an ‘apparatus.’ In contrast to the controlled state of multi-centered societies, the state of the single-centered hydraulic society was a veritable apparatus state.” (p.50)

“...the army of hydraulic society was an integral part of the agro-managerial bureaucracy, and the dominant religion was closely attached to the state. It was this formidable

concentration of vital functions which gave the hydraulic government its genuinely despotic (total) power.” (p.100)

There are in essence three components that constitute Wittfogel’s thesis: the hydraulic society, the despotic state, and the link from the former to the latter. All three components will be examined in the following analysis. Suffice it to say at this point that he has made at least two significant contributions. First, previous discussions of despotism have been mostly about the West, but Wittfogel has shifted the attention to the East and his descriptions of the despotic states are vivid, alarming as well as persuasive (Ren, 2009). Secondly, while analyses of China’s despotism have mostly been discussions about the relevant schools of thought or descriptions of its configurations, Wittfogel attempts to put despotism on a solid, social basis, linking a macro phenomenon to micro factors. Methodologically speaking this is an important advance (Coleman, 1990).

An auxiliary of *the hydraulic society* thesis is *the common defense* thesis. As the term suggests, to face a common threat of external enemies an organization is needed. In the context of China the common threat refers mainly to the horse-riding cavalry from the great prairie in the north. Essentially this is also a public-goods scenario. Compared with the problems of flood control and irrigation, the tasks involved in common defense are arguably very similar—life and property are in danger, normal maintenance between times of emergency is needed, and organizations are to be maintained, etc. The only major difference is that the task of common defense would involve a routine use of violence.

2.2 The Single Authority Thesis

Proposed initially to explain the importance of *guanxi* in the Chinese community in Hsiung (2011), the main arguments of *the single authority* thesis are as follows. Geographically speaking, the mainland of China covers a wide but integrated area that is relatively flat. To the south there are sharp mountains and deep valleys that separate the mainland from Thailand, Vietnam, etc. Therefore, in its written history of over three thousand years, China has never faced an invasion launched by forces from the south. To the west there are large areas of deserts, constituting natural barriers for potential enemies. Groups of merchants and determined monks might pass the deserts to reach the mainland, but military maneuvers of a large scale are beyond question. To the east is ocean; and before the arrival of long-range vessels made possible by the technological advances brought about by the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, no enemies would come from this direction. What is left, clearly, is the north. Invaders have come from the north more than once, and the construction of the Great Walls in the north speaks for itself. This means that if potential invaders from the north can be deterred, then the mainland is a large, self-supporting, and unified area. Over China’s long history of thousands of years, the population gradually increases in this large area. By the time Emperor Shi Huang of the Qin Dynasty conquered his competitors, the population in the mainland had reached an estimated 20 million. Compared to neighboring Korea, Vietnam, and Thailand, etc., China’s size is of a very different order of

magnitude.

Given this unique geographical characteristic, it seems natural that once transportation has technologically advanced to a sufficient degree, the vast unified area will most likely be occupied and ruled by a single political power.²² Gradually, the idea of a unified empire will gradually become a generally accepted worldview for the people living in this unified area. Dynasties over the centuries in Chinese history have all considered themselves the *Central Empire*, and the emperors saw themselves as *Sons of Heaven*. This means that geographical features combined with advances in transportation would lead to a single political authority, a centralization of power. Moreover, due to concerns with potential threats of revolutions and sole occupation of power, the central government would purposefully suppress local powers.

The scenario in the mainland is very different from that in other parts of the globe. For instance, both England and India have been significant regional powers at different time. But practically speaking, England has been in constant contact and in competition with countries such as France and Germany, etc, in the continent, and India similarly has always been in contact with the Middle East. In both cases the interaction has not been one-sided, something drastically different from China's relations to its neighbors over the centuries.

2.3 Qualifications

A few words of clarification are needed before moving on to the next section, which logically examines the hypotheses. First, it is clear that both the hydraulic society thesis and the common defense thesis are related to the problem of providing public goods. By contrast, the single authority thesis seems to be mainly the result of an evolution of political power. But this exaggerates the difference, for the single authority, once achieving its monopoly status, has to provide certain public goods such as law and order, roads and defense, etc. Seen in this light, the theses are not mutually exclusive. Secondly, the hydraulic society thesis and the common defense thesis are closer to each other; therefore, in the following discussion they will not be treated separately. Whenever the common defense thesis needs additional discussion, elaborations will be made.

Finally, the idea of Grand Unification might have been the result of a number of factors, with the hydraulic society, the single authority, and the common defense being the major contributing factors. A hybrid theory that includes all of the three theses, and possibly others, might be the most persuasive. While the hybrid theory might offer the most comprehensive explanation, it loses sharpness from the theoretical point of view. It will then be difficult if not impossible to illuminate the strengths as well as weaknesses of the competing theses. Consequently, in the following analysis, the hydraulic society thesis and the single authority thesis will be seen as two competing theses opposed to each other. This somewhat extreme stance is meant to emphasize

²² Olson (1993, p.575, f10) cited the observations of the anthropologist Carneiro (1970) that the earliest states in history emerged mainly in so-called 'environmentally circumscribed' areas, i.e., "areas of arable land surrounded by deserts, mountains, or coasts."

the implicit differences, to sharpen the contrast, and to deepen the understanding of the idea of Grand Unification.

3. Verifying the Competing Theses Logically

A comparative analysis of the two theses will be pursued both logically and empirically. This section deals with the logical aspect and the next section focuses on the empirical aspect. To verify the logical soundness of the competing theses, two kinds of criteria will be used to examine the hypotheses logically.

In particular, the first criterion is related to the concept of equilibrium. As generally understood, the basic structure of an equilibrium contains a few elements: the initial conditions, the interaction among the agents or entities, the equilibrium conditions and the change. With this set-up the idea of Grand Unification can be seen as an equilibrium, and by identifying the initial conditions, how the initial conditions help form a stable equilibrium and how the equilibrium might evolve over time, the logical soundness of the hypotheses can be verified. The second kind of criteria involves a couple of benchmarks that are well known in the Chinese communities when invoking the idea of Grand Unification. The benchmarks will be employed to assess the theses and thus indirectly verify their respective logical persuasiveness. The two benchmarks employed will be the moral element in the Chinese culture and the conflict across the Taiwan Strait.

3.1 The Equilibrium Criterion

Consider first the theoretical structure of the single authority hypothesis. The initial conditions are the geographical characteristics and transportation capabilities. Once the military forces command sufficient logistic support, the dominant political power will expand so as to control the whole mainland, with the geographical barriers setting the boundaries of the expansion: the prairito the north, the ocean to the east, the deserts to the west and the mountains to the south. The military strength essentially determines the size of the empire, but within the conquered areas there is only one all powerful authority. Moreover, to cultivate the single authority, important supporting measures are developed along with the political institutions, and the idea of Grand Unification is arguably one such ingenious device. Once such a belief becomes ingrained in the general public, through repeated propaganda and various forms of indoctrination, the single authority increases its legitimacy and thus lowers the cost of governing. Consequently, the relationship between the idea of Grand Unification and the single authority tradition is logically very intimate. A single authority means that there is only one political authority in the relevant geographical areas, therefore this is a situation of Grand Unification by definition. Conversely, when the idea of Grand Unification prevails, it naturally follows that the relevant geographical areas are united as a single entity, and therefore multiple authorities should not exist. As such, logically speaking, the idea of Grand Unification and the existence of single authority are two

sides of the same coin, so to speak.²³

By comparison, the logical relevance of the hydraulic society to the idea of Grand Unification is somewhat problematic, to say the least. Specifically, to deal with the problems of flood control and irrigation, certain forms of organization will be developed. In mainland China, this refers to dealing with problems of the two major rivers, the Yellow River and the Yangtze River, and the areas they pass through. In order to overcome the free-rider problem in providing public goods, the hydraulic organizations, most likely not temporary but permanent ones, must have certain coercive powers. This makes perfect sense.²⁴ However, to go from the tasks of dealing with hydraulic problems to the despotic state (and the accompanying idea of Grand Unification), at least in the Chinese context, involves two significant difficulties, geographical and organizational. First, the area covered by the two major rivers and their branches is indeed vast, but it accounts for approximately 26.6% of the mainland only. There lies a significant gap between organizations dealing with flood control as well as irrigation and a despotic state; that is, to go from the former to the latter involves not a marginal expansion but a discrete jump (Lin, G.,1997; Li, Z., 1997).

Secondly, in addition to the hydraulic organizations, there are evidently other organizations dealing with problems such as roads, transportation, military, taxation, etc within the same geographical area. The hydraulic organizations cannot be extended straightforwardly to administer the overall political, military and judicial institutions of the entire empire. That is, the relations between organizations administering the hydraulic system and other administrative agencies of the empire cannot simply be assumed away. How do they develop working relations with each other and resolve their difficulties in times of emergencies? What is the priority in mobilizing manpower with respect to flood control and defense, and what is the priority of taxation for the hydraulic system and for defense, etc? These practical problems are thorny ones even for an advanced, mature, and highly developed modern society; it is hard to imagine how they would be resolved in a traditional, agrarian society such as China, when a bottom-up approach is taken such as in the hydraulic society thesis.²⁵ By contrast, with the single authority thesis, these problems are easily resolved. Given a single authority, there is an administrative system and various bureaucracies, and all the potential conflicts are resolved through the normal

23 The idea of a single authority is also invoked in the discussions of power and the process of nation formation. See, for instance, Galbraith (1983) and Olson (2000). In addition, Wittfogel mentioned more than once the term of a single-centered state. The idea of a single-centered state is obviously related to a single authority and the despotic state. However, Wittfogel simply takes it as given that a hydraulic society is a single-centered, despotic state, and he does not provide a convincing link between the hydraulic society and the single-centered, despotic state.

24 A few quotes illustrate Wittfogel's tendency to use vague phrases to give readers the impression that the link between the hydraulic society and a despotic state is natural and has been established: "The masters of the hydraulic state, who monopolized coordinated military action, could—if they so wished—raised large armies."(p.63) "The confiscatory measure of the hydraulic state therefore hit with particular harshness the owners of mobile—and concealed—property."(p.73) "In the majority of all cases hydraulic regimes seem to have been either theocratic or quasi-theocratic."(p.92) "The despotic character of hydraulic government is not seriously contested."(p.101) "Having access to sufficient arable land and irrigation water, the hydraulic pioneer society tends to establish state-like forms of public control."(p.109)

25 To get a picture of the problems involved, the case of TVA is illustrative. See, for instance, Selznick (1980) and Chandler (1984).

chain of command, with the overriding authority, the Emperor, as the ultimate arbitrator. Consequently, from both the horizontal perspective (the geographical factors) and the vertical perspective (the organizational factors), it is hard to go from the hydraulic society thesis to the despotic state and the accompanying idea of Grand Unification (Li, Q., 1997; Ko, 1997).²⁶

Finally, the relative soundness of the two competing theses can be illustrated using a couple of hypothetical scenarios. Specifically, *if* the mainland of China were an independent and isolated vast area, *but* there were no large rivers such as the Yellow River or the Yangtze River, *then* the hydraulic society thesis will not stand while the single authority thesis and the idea of Grand Unification would still hold. Conversely, *if* the Yellow River and the Yangtze River existed, *but* the mainland of China was an open geographical continent connected with India, Europe and the Middle East, etc, *then* one or several hydraulic systems will be set up with different scales, but obviously a single authority is not likely to appear and consequently the idea of Grand Unification is not likely to come into existence either.²⁷ This implies that, at least in the case of China, the geographical characteristics are more important than the hydraulic factors. In short, logically speaking, the single authority thesis is more persuasive than the hydraulic society thesis.²⁸

3.2 The Benchmarks Criterion

The contrast between the competing theses is equally significant when two well known issues are employed as benchmarks to help illuminate the implications of the hypotheses: the moral element in Chinese culture and the conflict across the Taiwan Strait.

Consider first the moral element in the traditional Chinese culture. It is a well documented fact that the Chinese culture has always had a strong flavor of being moral-oriented. Confucian thought has been the official doctrines since the Han Dynasty (200 BC), and the moral principles Confucius preaches have become not only the basis of the ruling dynasties but also the guidelines followed by the lay public in their daily lives (Huang, 1981). This is perfectly understandable from the governance perspective. To govern an empire that covers a vast area and sustains a large population, relying on moral principles has two clear advantages: First, the principles are easy to understand; secondly, the principles are flexible in interpretation. In short, it is cost effective. For the single authority to function properly, it is important to help cultivate two

26 The hydraulic society thesis advanced in Wittfogel (1957) has produced numerous subsequent discussions; see the informative volume edited by Li and Chen (1997). When commenting on Wittfogel's 'Oriental Despotism,' the commentators all make valid points and the discussions share three characteristics: First, all agree that the link between the hydraulic society and despotism is not persuasive. Secondly, there is consensus that the Chinese dynasties have been despotic. Third, while Wittfogel's thesis is forcefully criticized, none of the commentators offers an alternative explanation as to why the dynasties in Chinese history over a few thousand years have all been despotic. The single authority thesis suggested in the current inquiry is one such attempt.

27 For instance, the Nile covers a vast geographical area also, but it goes through a large, open area. As a result it is difficult to form a single authority to rule the whole area. See the discussions in Butzer (1976) and Liu, W. (1997).

28 Logically speaking the common defense thesis is similar to the hydraulic society thesis: the defense for external threats comes from the north and it covers only a limited area. Practically speaking, the problem of common defense is remotely related to most of the people and most of the geographical areas. To go from the common defense to the despotic state and the idea of Grand Unification is too much of a stretch to be persuasive.

characteristics—singleness (uniqueness) and authority (read absoluteness). The moral element serves this purpose perfectly well. Therefore, the strong moral flavor of Grand Unification is in total accord with the single authority of the dynasties over the centuries. By contrast, the hydraulic institutions are function-oriented in solving practical problems of flood control and irrigation.²⁹ There is no need for the moral element. Therefore, it is difficult to relate the hydraulic society thesis to the moral element as implicit in the idea of Grand Unification.³⁰

The second benchmark is the conflict across the Taiwan Strait and it offers even greater contrast between the competing theses. Specifically, the hydraulic society in the case of China is presumably defined, and thus limited, by the two major rivers on the mainland.³¹ Taiwan is separated from the mainland by the Taiwan Strait and is in no way related to the two rivers in any sense. To invoke the idea of the hydraulic society and include Taiwan within its boundary is to stretch imagination to unconceivable extremes. In comparison, from the single authority thesis, the Taiwan issue is straightforward. The single authority by definition would expand its domain until it reaches insurmountable geographical barriers. Historically, Taiwan was included in the territory of the Yuan Dynasty and a local government was installed in 1281. It was passed to Japan following the defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, and returned to the Republic of China after WWII in 1945. The People's Republic of China was established in 1949 and has claimed ever since that "The PRC is the only legitimate government that represents China" and that "Taiwan is an integral part of China." The PRC's claim meshes well not with the hydraulic society thesis but with the single authority thesis.³²

4. Verifying the Competing Theses Empirically

29 Similarly, the U.N., the World Bank, and the WTO, etc are functionary organizations. Their purpose is to serve certain functions but the moral element is essentially non-existent in these organizations.

30 The concept of *the single owner* in the literature can be fruitfully contrasted with the idea of *the single authority*. The single owner is a conceptual device employed to imagine the world of zero transaction costs (Coase, 1960). A typical case is that interests of the factory upstream and the factory downstream are in direct conflict (e.g., the former pollutes the water used by the latter). In this scenario one can imagine that both factories are owned by a single owner and it is evident that the single owner will resolve the potential conflict to his own advantage; i.e., the single owner will allocate resources efficiently. This means that the idea of efficiency is implicit in the concept of a single owner, as there is a generally accepted criterion of efficiency for the single owner to employ. By comparison, the idea of a single authority describes the status of the reigning power. The exact configurations of the single authority are relatively vague. Generally speaking, the concept of the single owner emphasizes *the owner* aspect, while the idea of single authority emphasizes *the authority* aspect.

31 The hydraulic system deals mainly with flood control and irrigation, i.e., protecting life and property as well as serving agricultural needs, respectively. The priority of the tasks could be different in during times of emergencies.

32 The single authority thesis proposed in the present study might be labeled as geographic determinism, but this is misleading. The geographic factor is certainly critical for the single authority thesis but two additional factors are equally important for the thesis to hold. First, in the essentially closed and unified vast area of mainland China, a large population accumulates over a long period of thousands of years, if not longer. The population and cultural tradition are relatively homogenous. Secondly, the factor of technological advance is also critical. When the mainland of China could be reached by vehicles and the logistic problems were resolved, the conditions were ripe for a single authority to cover the whole area. Alternatively, before the long-range vessels made possible by the steam engine, a product of the 18th century Industrial Revolution, large numbers of foreigners from the West could not reach China via sea. This means that the tradition of single authority, and the accompanying idea of Grand Unification, has more than enough time to form and crystallize. Finally, the present study explores both the possible origin and the implications of the idea of Grand Unification. Geographical considerations and the single authority are only part of the inquiry.

In the previous section the two competing theses were examined from the logical perspective. In this section they will be subject to empirical verification. In particular, the hydraulic society/Grand Unification combination and the single authority/Grand Unification combination will be put against well known facts of Chinese history to determine which combination is more compatible with the historical facts.

4.1 The Single Authority Thesis

The Chinese civilization has a long history with more than three thousand years of written records. It is certainly hard to single out a few facts that are representative of the civilization. Considering the focus of the present inquiry, however, some generally accepted facts can be suggested. In particular, there are three salient features of the political structure of the dynasties throughout Chinese history: a dominant executive branch, the lack of an independent judicial system, and a highly centralized government structure.

Specifically, throughout the dynasties, the Emperor has always wielded an unquestionable supreme power at the top, and governed through an administrative system that combines the executive, the judicial and the legislative branches in one. But the executive branch is the center of the system and the other two are affiliated to the executive branch. No independent judicial system ever existed or was even attempted, for the simple reason that it would be incompatible with the absolute power of the Emperor. The central government assumes a dominant position in administration and it purposely weakens the local and regional governments. Alternatively put, the idea and institutional arrangements of checks and balances in the West have not become part of the Chinese political tradition. The checks on the Emperor, nominal at best and non-existent at worst, come from moral suasion by a few designated officials and from the Emperor's self restraint. Therefore, the lack of effective competing forces both within the empire and with respect to the much smaller neighbors becomes a salient feature of Chinese history. Given this structure, the dynasties in Chinese history seem to follow a predetermined destiny, a cursed one essentially. A dynasty that has been in power for a few hundred years decays through corruption and mis-management; peasants take up arms to become bandits, and after several attempts succeed in overthrowing the old dynasty. A new dynasty is born, and, after changing the name and installing a new bureaucracy, it promises a brave new world. In the beginning all is well and progress is made. But the built-in weaknesses of the system (of the single authority) gradually set in. After a few decades or a few hundred years at most, the dynasty is again plagued by corruption and mis-management. The economy is in distress, the uprisings are on the horizon and the cycle continues. This sadly has been a characteristic of Chinese history and when pushed to the limit, everything comes into place: the single authority, the supreme executive power, the lack of independent judicial system, the lack of internal and external checks, and the idea of Grand Unification are all compatible with each other. The link between the single authority and the idea of Grand Unification is thus direct and concrete.

Alternatively, the idea of Grand Unification is in essence an inward looking perspective, as it is

not directly related to anything that is external to the (unified) system. After the Great Walls were constructed, the threat of external enemies from the north by and large disappeared, most of the time anyway. Interestingly, in Chinese history the only two exceptions were the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 AD) and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912 AD); they were established by mounted conquerors from the northern prairie, establishing the so-called foreign regimes or becoming conqueror-rulers. But once the empire was in place, these two dynasties also adhered to the idea of Grand Unification.³³ This clearly shows that the dynasties throughout China's long history have all found the idea of Grand Unification beneficial to their governance. Concurrently, the idea of Grand Unification has also enabled the dynasties to adopt a particular outward stance, especially towards its immediate neighbors. While the dynasties have assumed different names, they have all considered themselves the *Central Kingdom*, the *Heaven Empire*, and this self-image has been aided by the fact that the neighboring countries are all of a much smaller scale in sizes. With the evident gap in scale between the ruling dynasty on the mainland and its neighbors, the Chinese have developed or adopted two strategies towards its neighbors: First, it has no interest in expanding its territory, with rare exceptions by the two foreign regimes (Yuan and Qing) in attempting to invade Korea and Japan. Secondly, the dynasties have adopted the *Gimi policy* (the leash-and-goodies policy) towards its neighbors—as long as the neighboring countries send their delegations to pay (nominal) respect to the Central Kingdom, they will be rewarded with generous luxury gifts from the Emperor.

In addition, the idea of Grand Unification has manifested itself in a delicate way that echoes the single authority thesis. In particular, it has been documented that through countless wars over the centuries, the imperial powers of the West such as Germany, England and France have developed a generally accepted doctrine in battle. When the casualties reach a quarter or one-third of the engaging force, the commanding officer could surrender, so as not to suffer further, heavier losses (Benedict, 1946).³⁴ However, no such doctrine exists in the Chinese civilization and this non-existence, an equilibrium in an abstract sense, can be readily explained from the single authority thesis. In the closed geographical mainland, only a single authority is to reign. To grant the losing opponents the privilege to surrender is to allow the opponents the opportunity to regroup and thus become a potential threat to the throne. This is acutely demonstrated by Zheng He's famous seven long voyages. After Emperor Cheng (ruled 1402-1424) of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) assumed power in a coup, he sent the reliable Zheng He (1371-1433) to lead an enormous entourage (approximately 250 ships and 28000 men) to sail to as far as Somalia (6000 nautical miles from China). The official goal was to explore business opportunities and demonstrate condescendingly the strength of the Central Kingdom, but the real purpose was presumably to purge and eliminate any remaining factions of Emperor Jianwen (ruled

³³ The Chinese civil war immediately after the WWII between the Nationalists and the Communists had nothing to do with external enemies; it was a typical civil war, with the two sides fighting for the ruling power, fighting to be the single authority.

³⁴ In the classic, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Benedict (1946) indicates that in the Japanese tradition, the warriors could commit suicide, jump off cliffs or drown themselves during battles, but there is no such thing as surrendering.

1398-1402), the ousted emperor.

4.2 The Hydraulic Society Thesis

Recall that Wittfogel's hydraulic society thesis has three components: the hydraulic organizations, the despotism, and the linkage from the former to the latter. In the previous section it was argued that while Wittfogel provided vivid descriptions of despotic states, of which China has been one, he did not provide a convincing link from the former to the latter. In this subsection the focus is on the first component of his thesis, i.e., whether the Chinese can be characterized as a *hydraulic society*.

To begin with, the initial phase of Chinese imperial history is generally believed to be the period of the Xia, Shang and Zhou (2070-256 BC), and the major dynasties of the Tang (618-970), Song (960-1279), Yuan and Ming are known to be despotic states, but none of these has been directly related to flood control or irrigation (Lin, Z., 1997; Chou, 1997). In addition, flood control on a large scale has not been done by spontaneous organizations from the grass roots but by the designated government agency. Historically speaking, the administration of rivers and canals is the responsibilities of the department of river affairs and the department of canal transportation. The major tasks of these two departments are not flood control or agricultural irrigation *per se*, but military transportation and food transportation. During the peaceful years, food transportation is the main task, since shipping food and other supplies from the south to the capital in the north on time is of a much higher priority than agricultural irrigation. The latent rule of running the system is that "It is acceptable that the farmers cannot cultivate their fields, but it is not acceptable that the government agencies fail to ship food (to the capital)." The vessels travel across large areas and the food and other supplies pass through the control of many officials. Those in charge of the tasks are wielding enviable discretionary powers and such lucrative posts are eagerly sought after. (Qin, 2007).

Moreover, Hsieh (1992) points out as a matter-of-fact that, "The formation of the state is not based on irrigation or flood control; on the contrary, the existence of a state provides the basis of flood control and irrigation on a large scale." Similarly, Wang (1981, chapter 4) emphasized that, "it is not that the hydraulic needs produce the despotic state and its bureaucracy; it is the opposite—only with a unified despotic state does serving hydraulic needs on a large scale become possible and necessary." (Chang, 1997; She, 1997).³⁵ Alternatively, Qin (2007) points out that the Yuan Dynasty was the most powerful empire with the largest territory, but during its reign the irrigated area in the Guanzhong Plain (near the Shaan Xi Province today) was only 0.8 to 0.9 million *mu* (approx. 570 square kilometers), and this was not even half of what it was during the Song Dynasty. Thus, the Empire and the sovereign were powerful but the corresponding responsibility for public goods provision was limited, not the scenario of

35 Wittfogel (1957) mentioned that the hydraulic societies share the characteristic of being single-centered states. While the idea is similar to the idea of single authority, it is problematic to go from the hydraulic organizations to the single-centered, despotic state, as argued previously.

something that can be termed a hydraulic society. Finally, it was argued forcefully that throughout Chinese history, the department in charge of hydraulic affairs has not been a cabinet-level agency but of a much lower rank, as it was “neither the whole of the apparatus of the state nor part of the power center of the apparatus.” (Liu, H., 1997; Li, Z., 1997).³⁶ Consequently, in the context of China, the state is very far from what one might equate with a hydraulic society. The hydraulic society thesis is not supported by the historical facts, as there is a significant gap between Wittfogel’s descriptions and the reality.

4.3. Brief Summary

Concerning the logical and empirical examination of the competing theses, a brief summary is in order. The hydraulic society thesis proposed by Wittfogel, while ambitious, has two weaknesses: First, logically speaking, it is difficult to go from the hydraulic problems and the relevant organizations to the despotic state. Secondly, empirically speaking, based on the historical facts of China, it is also difficult to label China as a hydraulic society. By contrast, the single authority thesis nicely echoes the geographical and technological characteristics of China as well as the very nature of power. Consequently, between the competing theses of the hydraulic society and the single authority, the latter is more compatible with China and the idea of Grand Unification.

5. Implications of the idea of Grand Unification

In the previous sections the two main theses for the idea of Grand Unification were outlined first, followed by a comparative study of both logical and empirical aspects. It was suggested that the single authority thesis is more compatible with the idea of Grand Unification. Based on this tentative result the following inquiry will explore the implications of the idea of Grand Unification. Compared to the previous sections the following inquiry is different on two aspects.

To begin with, the previous sections were essentially backward looking, dealing with historical materials and hoping to identify the origin of the idea of Grand Unification. The following exposition will be mostly forward looking instead—by taking the idea of Grand Unification as the starting point, efforts will be made to derive its implications with respect to public policies. Analysis in the previous sections was basically logical and empirical, thus positive in nature. As discussions of public policies will be the focus in the following analysis, assessments of current conditions and conjectures about future developments will be contemplated. This implies that value judgment will be involved, thus the normative element will inevitably increase. Specifically, concerning the implications of the idea of Grand Unification, three public policy issues will be addressed: the political institutions of China (PRC), the conflict across the Taiwan Strait, and PRC’s presence in the international community.

5.1 China’s Political Institutions

³⁶ The criticisms of Wittfogel’s hydraulic society thesis actually lend support indirectly to the single authority thesis as being more persuasive concerning the historical facts of the Chinese society.

It was pointed out above that concerning political institutions, the single authority implies three significant characteristics: the dominant executive branch, the lack of independent judicial system, and the centralization of administrative power. In the beginning of the 21st century, the People's Republic of China is the major Chinese community, surpassing both Taiwan and Hong Kong by a wide margin in scale, and in the PRC all of the three characteristics just stated are very much visible. Moreover, while 60 years have passed since the birth of the PRC, the Communist Party still enjoys the unique and unchallenged (or un-challengeable) position, a modern configuration of the single authority in the fullest sense. In addition, from 1949 to 1978, the year the PRC was born to the year the reform policy was adopted, Marxism enjoyed a supreme status and was the official guiding principle in all spheres of life, unquestionable and unquestioned. All of this attest to the salient feature of the single authority tradition in a delicate and subtle way.

Since the reform policy has been under way, however, things started to change. From 1978 to 2010, a span of slightly longer than three decades, the real GDP increases 19.6 times and the real per capita GDP 14 times. This provides direct support to the arguments of Przeworski and Limongi (1993) that authoritarian states may enjoy faster economic growth than democratic countries.³⁷ The fast economic growth for over three decades has brought numerous challenges to the contemporary flag bearer of the old civilization. The political problems can be approached from both the horizontal and vertical perspectives. Consider the horizontal aspect first. With fast economic progress, metropolitan areas have expanded with an alarming speed and in conjunction with this a sizable middle class has developed. When the middle class secures their economic rights and begins to enjoy the fruits of their labor, they gradually express their wishes to enjoy similar rights in the political sphere. That is, economic progress will usher in political demands, the importance of which will increase with each passing year. While the quest for political participation appears to be a political issue, it is in essence a test of the judicial system, since the ultimate defense of political institutions lies in a reliable and generally supported judicial system. Therefore, horizontally speaking, developing an independent judicial system and cultivating a certain degree of checks-and-balances, in essence if not in form, will be an inevitable task. The executive branch will not be the dominant branch any longer and the judicial branch will attract more attention as economic progress continues. Whether the western style checks-and-balances with the executive, judicial and legislative branches will be installed is an open question, but there is little doubt that, horizontally, the executive branch will have to share its once dominant power with other branches of the government.

Vertically speaking, the traditional centralization of power is also likely to change. In the history of mankind, there has never been a country of 1.3 billion people that can function effectively with a centralized civil law. As the economy expands, the complexity of the society increases

³⁷ During the Great Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) an estimated ten million people died of starvation or political causes, and this happened under the same political regime. It shows vividly and sadly the fact that the single authority often acts without any restraint and the consequences may be fatal. The difference between the single owner and the single authority suggested above is also demonstrated clearly.

rapidly and this implies that the costs of maintaining a centralization of power will become intolerably high. Inefficiency, conflict, and instability will follow. Consequently, maintaining the centralization of power is not likely to persist, and a certain degree of power sharing with local governments will be inevitable. As a matter of fact, empirical studies reveal again and again that in organizational structures, the performance of a hierarchy is often worse than that of a polyarchy.³⁸

5.2 Cross-Strait Relations

According to the idea of Grand Unification as commonly held, Taiwan is part of China and should certainly be united with the PRC. This intuitively clear and straightforward stance notwithstanding, the issue can be examined from different angles to gain alternative insights. As suggested previously, the idea of Grand Unification was created as a result of several factors, including the geographical characteristics, the technological advancement, and the pursuit of a single authority. Once the idea is cultivated and generally accepted, it becomes an element of the mental construct that is part of people's worldview, i.e., an equilibrium in an abstract sense. In an evolutionary process the equilibrium will change in response to the changing environment, but the change is gradual and path dependent. More importantly, the mental construct is often a mixed bag of pluses and minuses.³⁹

The idea of Grand Unification is a natural result of the pursuit of absolute power, and it seems to follow that Taiwan should be united with the PRC to form a single authority again. But an alternative and arguably more illuminating perspective is possible, as the proposal of unification is not necessarily persuasive. A similar or even parallel case is illustrative—the case of the Anglo-Saxon culture. As is well known, in the beginning of the 21st century, English is the most commonly used language internationally. The English speaking countries include Britain, the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, etc. Historically all of these countries come from England and the English culture has been a major culture over the globe for a long time. Both the U.S. and Canada are countries established by immigrants from England and the two countries are friendly neighbors, most of the time anyway. There is no such thing as a Grand Unification between the U.S. and Canada, or with England for that matter. Therefore, the cry for Taiwan to return to the motherland of China is not necessarily sound from the perspective of culture or civilization.

The rationale is actually quite simple—competition is better than monopoly! Through a series of un-planned twists and turns, Taiwan and the PRC have become two independent political entities. For Taiwan and the PRC, it is mutually beneficial to develop an intimate, friendly, and peaceful relationship, just like the one between the U.S. and Canada, in trade as well as in other areas. The close relation is advantageous not only to Taiwan and the PRC but more importantly to the

³⁸ Ostrom (2007) argues with rich and convincing empirical evidence that the performance of centralized policy organizations is worse than that of decentralized, parallel policy organizations.

³⁹ Kuran (2004) forcefully illustrates that ancient Islamic legal doctrines become, centuries later, detrimental to the economic development of the Islamic world.

Chinese civilization. The reason is that the existence of two competing entities would increase the vigor of the culture and become a natural deterrent against the decay embedded with the single authority that has plagued the dynasties through-out Chinese history. The conflict across the strait offers a rare opportunity for the Chinese culture to have an endogenous competition. Consequently, on the issue of cross--strait relations at least, the idea of Grand Unification does more harm than good; it also illustrates acutely that the idea of Grand Unification has its potential problems. By examining New light is shed on cross-strait issues by examining them from the perspective of culture and not politics. In a nutshell, the idea of Grand Unification has been congruent with the interests of the political structure at each point in time along the long continuum of Chinese history, and as such it is *politically correct*. However, by taking the viewpoint of a bystander and considering the long-term interests of the Chinese civilization, the idea of Grand Unification is not necessarily *culturally correct*!

5.3 PRC and International Community

It was argued above that the idea of Grand Unification is essentially an inward-looking perspective, as the single authority cares more about its absolute status within its empire than about the world outside which is not relevant to its interests. This implies that the mental construct is basically a vacuum when it comes to the outside world. Two incidents in recent Chinese history are indicative of this characteristic. First, when the military forces of the Eight-Nation Alliance invaded China in 1900, Empress Tze Xi of the Qing Dynasty and her senior officials believed that the Boxers were capable of using their Kung-fu to fight the artillery of the allied forces. Since the flesh and blood was obvious no match for the guns and rifles; the fading dynasty again suffered humiliation and signed the Boxer Protocol in 1901 with handsome compensation paid to the invading nations. Secondly, in the waning years of the Qing Dynasty, the intellectuals pushed for reform to face the increasingly threatening foreign powers. A series of actions were taken under the banner of the Westernization Movement. However, the guiding principle of the Movement was “Chinese knowledge as the body, and Western learning for use.” Without a proper understanding of the Western world, the intellectuals naively believed that knowledge could be divided easily and that all they needed was to master the “sharp guns and speedy battleships” of the West. The popular slogan of the time was “learn the technology of the barbarians (the foreigners) to subdue the barbarians!”

The idea of Grand Unification thus implies a self-centered worldview, a complacent attitude towards the immediate neighbors, and an ignorance of the world outside. This particular state of mind was relatively harmless before the Industrial Revolution that brought about long-range vessels. However, the complacency resulted in repeated Chinese defeats in recent history when the long-range vessels knocked on the door in the middle of the 19th century. The British-French Allied forces struck the first blow in 1858, followed by the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, and the Eight-Nation Alliance invasion in 1900. The ancient civilization was resoundingly defeated again and again, giving up large geographic areas and paying huge sums of money. These unhappy

memories have made it a goal of the Chinese people to try to catch up with the West, so as not to become an easy target again. Once the per capita of the PRC reaches \$10,000 USD, the country of 1.3-billion people will surpass the U.S. and become the largest economy in the world. It is not likely that the Chinese people will be taken advantage of by the foreigners again, but how would the Chinese (the PRC in this instance) position and conduct itself in the international community? The answer to this question is not at all clear, to the general public as well as the social elites and the national leaders. The reason is quite simple: The traditional worldview of the idea of Grand Unification has never faced this scenario, and as a result no corresponding thoughts can be called upon in response. One possible way out is to apply the Confucian doctrines of harmony and courtesy etc of interpersonal relations to international relations. But appearances are often deceiving, as the Chinese interpersonal relations actually imply a hierarchical structure that may not be consistent with the one-nation-one-vote nature of international relations practiced on many occasions.

Consequently, for the PRC, the idea of Grand Unification will evidently not provide any guidelines for behavior in the international community. The traditional worldview obviously has to be modified, and some missing elements must be filled in so to speak. The process of adjusting the mental construct is presumably a long journey, a process of soul searching and trial-and-error. When the dust is settled and the new worldview is firmly in place, i.e., when a new equilibrium for the mental construct is reached, a couple of characteristics are likely to be present. First, the single authority implicit in the idea of Grand Unification will fade away and be replaced by the perception of a multi-authority world. Secondly, in the international community and politically speaking, the PRC is likely to be one of the two super powers; but along the cultural front, the Chinese culture will just be one of the (major) cultures, a hundred-flower blooming scenario.

6. Conclusion

In his now classic treatise North (1990) emphasizes that what determines the economic performance of a society in the long run is whether it has a good institutional matrix. Then, he goes further to argue that what determines the trajectory of a society in the long run is actually the mental construct of the people, i.e., the worldview of the people (Denzau and North, 1994). These are insightful remarks but it is difficult to verify the insights generally. The present study is related to North's remarks but the scope is much more limited.

Specifically, in the ancient Chinese civilization, the idea of Grand Unification has been an important ingredient, if not an indispensable pillar. Discussions of the idea have been mostly textual analysis, hoping to identify the place where the idea was first mentioned and discussed. The first part of the present study adopted a different approach and tried to identify, from the social sciences perspective, the substantive basis of the idea. Two competing theses were suggested from relevant literatures: the hydraulic society thesis and the single authority thesis. Then, to determine which thesis is more plausible in offering an explanation of the origin of the idea of Grand Unification, a comparative study was conducted from both logical and the

empirical perspectives. It was concluded that the single authority thesis provides a better explanation, as it is logically and empirically more compatible with Chinese history. Whether the single authority thesis is relevant or even equally plausible in other countries such as Japan, India, or Korea, etc is an interesting topic worthy of pursuit. Moreover, the likely implications of the single authority thesis in other contexts, e.g., its relevance to language or religion, are attractive topics for further inquiry as well. The second part of the present study focused on the implications of the idea of Grand Unification with respect to the political structure of the PRC, the cross-strait relations between Taiwan and the PRC, and the PRC's presence in the international community. The discussions illustrate clearly that the idea of Grand Unification is important to the Chinese in the past (the political structure), the present (cross-strait relations) and the future (the international community). The trajectory of a society is indeed intimately related to the mental construct of the people, thus echoing North's insight. But the intellectual rewards gained from the journey undertaken in the present study are greater than this.

In particular, discussions in the first part of this paper indicate that the single authority thesis provides a more convincing account of the social basis of the idea of Grand Unification. Analysis in the second part shows that from the cultural perspective the potential weaknesses as well as the limitations of the idea of Grand Unification should receive more attention. With respect to Chinese culture the idea of Grand Unification is both an asset and a constraint. It is an asset because the idea once accepted by the general public can greatly lower the governing costs faced by the emperor and the regime. It is a constraint because the idea of Grand Unification practically implies a blank attitude towards the outside world. In addition, the path dependent characteristic means that once a society steps on a particular trajectory, other possibilities down the road are likely to be ruled out, even when the change in the environment calls for an adjustment. The relevance of this to the PRC is very much straightforward. The political structure cannot rid itself of the burden of the past easily, but the pressures for change and adjustments both vertically and horizontally are evident. Concurrently, the on-going delicate relations between Taiwan and the PRC still resemble a tight-rope walk. Furthermore, with the reform policy steadily advancing, the PRC's presence in the international community is becoming more and more important. All of these are obviously challenging issues related to the idea of Grand Unification. For an old civilization the challenges also imply opportunities for thoughtful reflections and shrewd actions!

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