

REVIEW

## Seven laws of conservatism in the story of Qi and Loo

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What does Conservatism mean? In ancient times, it often referred to ensuring as less political change as possible. This paper examines the conservative story of Qi and Loo. Both were at war. Both States were of similar size but had different levels of resources. The State of Qi had bountiful assets and chattels. There were many temples and shrines as well as deep water wells in its territory. The State of Loo had fewer resources, but the people were obedient and hardworking. The leaders of Qi focused on amassing wealth, self-aggrandization, and a powerful army and navy. They ensured that their children and relatives had the best education and best facilities in health and housing. This would safeguard the future of Qi and help groom a new generation of leaders. The State of Loo had few resources and the people struggled every day to survive: it was a Spartan experience. This article examines the *Seven Laws of Conservatism* in the fictional States of Qi and Loo based on the records from the non-fictional Cambridge University Chinese Collections.

**Summary of Research Methods:** This is a theoretical exploration based on the non-fictional Cambridge University Chinese Collections. The method involves a historical analysis of the two ancient Chinese states of Qi and Loo in terms of the purported Seven Laws of Conservatism. The framework for analysis uses these seven laws to analyze the politics, governance, military, agriculture, political leadership, customs, and people of the two states.

**Keywords:** conservatism, political economy, political science, society, gender

### Introduction to the seven laws of conservatism

The Chinese Collection at the University of Cambridge in the UK houses approximately 1 million ancient records and titles, some bound and others unbound, including epigraphical rubbings and other archival documents. This is the story of two ancient Chinese cities that bear a resemblance to many modern ones. In 470 B.C., in the ancient Kingdom of Qi, the people followed the law of the state because they feared punishment. It was the fear of being punished that made them obey the law. Peasants lived in despair and walked in darkness. The light was not much brighter in the Kingdom of Loo. The people appeared to have more democratic rule even in those ancient days. But democracy was more like the rule of the mob. Hence, the people also lived

with the dread of despair and walked cautiously in a state of darkness.

The First Law of Conservatism tells us that “coercion” backed by “military force” ensures that orders will be followed. When people are forced to follow laws against their will, much suffering will commence. An intense period of suffering causes resentment. Coercion backed by military force or police coercion in a police state will lead to suffering. Suffering causes resentment over time. And such resentment will contravene the first Law of Conservation. When the State of Qi introduced forced labor among the peasants, there was a widespread revolt arising out of the peasants’ resentment over time. This happened during the dictator’s father’s time, but the younger dictator had forgotten the lesson; the ministers in his cabinet were apprehensive about reminding him as they dreaded retribution from the dictator. However, these were not as efficient as they have been written in the historical records.

The Second Law of Conservatism tells us that resentment causes hatred. When the people hate the laws, they also hate the government. When they hate the government, rebellion appears on the horizon. Therefore, one should not cause resentment among the people or it will lead to hatred of the laws and hatred of the government and may result in rebellion. This is a highly explosive situation in which resentment causing hatred may lead to rebellion against the government. When the State of Loo faced a poor harvest for the second time in 5 years, there was widespread resentment. Fortunately for them, there were sufficient reserves and rice stocks to quell the levels of resentment held by the people and there was no rebellion against the government.

The Third Law of Conservatism states that no change can be good. In other words, it is better not to change than it is to change. Changes cause unknown problems in society to emerge and mysterious problems lead to terror and anxiety. When the people of Loo had to accept a new assembly of leaders, there was much unhappiness due to a fear of political change. Political change is upsetting to the people because they are already set in their own ways and are creatures of habit. Between relying on something old and doing something new instead, the people prefer to rely on something old. Conservatism is about using tried and tested ways. In the State of Qi, the dictator's father introduced forced enlistment into the military. It was basically military labor as the peasants were not used to fight any war but were used to build palaces, gardens, lakes, and grand canals for the aggrandizement of the dictator's father who used these luxuries to entertain his foreign guests. However, these were not always accurate accounts as they have been purported to be in the ancient ethnographies.

The Forth Law of Conservatism is the Wisdom of the Ages (WoA). People prefer to rely on what is already known rather than to risk their livelihood on what is unknown. The Wisdom of the Ages is about learning from the knowledge of past leaders' decisions. And avoiding the mistakes that would have appeared had the WoA not been applied. In the State of Loo, the WoA was not applied during the special annual festival for the New Year. This was because the Assembly of Governors (AoG) themselves did not believe in such festivals. The people were antagonized by the lack of sensitivity to the religious dimension that had existed since the time of their ancestors including the importance of filial piety to previous generations of Loos. As a result, the people harbored thoughts of ill-feeling against the AoG. And in the next General Election (GE) of the AoG, the entire cabinet core of the AoG lost their democratic seats even though they had been careful in their undertakings and responsibilities.

The Fifth Law of Conservatism is the Rule of Law (RoL). This means that the laws of the land must be known widely and made available for all to read, understand, and learn. The history of the RoL laws is also important in order to show how these laws came about, how they emerged, and what their legal etymology is. The RoL was applied differently in the State of Qi than it was in the State of Loo. In the case

of Qi, the RoL was often forced upon the peasants, while in Loo, the people were engaged and had long discussions with their elected representatives in the AoG, and hence the people had a feeling of participation in their own government. This was why the RoL worked in the latter, but not in the former. However, these were not as real as they have been claimed to be in the old chronicles.

The Sixth Law of Conservatism is the Law of Prudence. This means that it is better to judge and anticipate negative changes in the future than to bank on the possibility of positive changes. Negative risks are easier to anticipate while positive ones are more difficult to ascertain. Prudence or carefulness in forward-thinking involves walking along the safe side rather than on the risky one. The lack of clear policies and fiscal refinement in the State of Qi resulted in the perception that there was no real far-sightedness in that state. However, the clarity and careful planning in the State of Loo meant that fiscal logic and financial prudence reigned in manners that were acceptable by the people. Without prudence or judiciousness, there can be no genuine justice. Without justice, the RoL and AoG would not work effectively in public policies.

The Seventh Law of Conservatism is the Law of Group Thought and Collective Action. To think as a group and to make use of a collective set of people's ideas usually and almost always provides a safer outcome than a decision made by a single person, dictator, or autocrat. Collective action always provides safer results rather than individual decision-making that ends in negative consequences. However, these were not always as accurate nor as reflective of those ancient days.

## Discussion

It has been said that the rich do what they want, and the poor suffer what they must. So too the wealthy children of the rich can become poor if they mismanage their wealth, and the poor children will then take over their belongings and their properties. In the adjacent Kingdom of Loo, the people followed the law of the state because they respected the law. It was their respect for the law that motivated them to follow the law. They did not adhere to the law out of fear but out of legitimacy. This means that only legitimate laws possess full authority. The people follow and respect authoritative laws to enhance the state's power and the wealth of the nation. The creation of a state is simple, but a state cannot last without the building of a nation. A nation stands united when it is protected by legitimate authority and a strong state apparatus.

Both states were religious and had certain religious values. The State of Qi believed in many different gods who possessed different levels of power. The most important of their gods was Luan. He was the chief god who was feared by all other gods. There were also Xi, Lung, Mian, and Pu who were the gods of agriculture and farming, death and the

underworld, storms and the sea, and heavens and earth. On the contrary, the State of Loo had only three gods: the god of piety, the god of piety in ancestor worship, and the god of piety in wealth. The god of piety reminded the people of Loo of the importance of each household remaining pious and humble. The god of piety in ancestor worship reminded the people of Loo to respect their elders when they were alive and to honor them when they died no matter regardless of the number of each familial generation. The god of piety of wealth reminded the Loos that they had to show mercy and empathize the poor and those who were unfortunate in life. The Loo god of piety of wealth reminded them to be prudent in their financial affairs and to give alms to the poor and food to their neighbors.

## Governance and political leadership

Wherever there are signs of public disorder, it means that social decay has set in; when social decay becomes rampant, it turns into political decay. This means that all along, moral decay had set in. When the ruler is immoral, society will be corrupt.

The ruler of Qi was authoritative and abusive. He held a large harem to entertain himself and his cronies. The families of his concubines were held hostage and murdered their relatives if the ladies tried to escape. He neither worshipped the gods of the Qi nor did he respect them. He governed with an iron fist. Those who disobeyed his decrees were severely tortured. Some were killed after being tortured.

The Kingdom of Loo was governed by an assembly of elder men who were elected from the provinces. They were required to pass the stringent public examinations and were only promoted based on merit. Courtly life was dominated by a single class of Junzi that was made up of rightly-guided scholars who had attained distinction through public examinations. Selected from all walks of life, the Junzi were well rewarded with land and gold. Yet they had to prove themselves worthy of the state's benevolence by living an austere life devoid of worldly goods. Every year, they had to pass examinations on such topics as humility, kindness, integrity, honesty, respect, and filial piety. They were tested on their individual chastity sometimes on a daily basis to see if succubus and virgins could distract them from their vow of celibacy.

Time was to be spent on reading the classics and on self-cultivation. By cultivating the mind, they would discipline the body. By disciplining the body, they would commit to universal moral obligations—values that would inhibit immorality, sinfulness, and depravity.

## Prayers and rituals

*Ru Zhao* and *Kong Zhao* involved ritualistic devotion to prayer, merit, and teaching. This was widely held by the

people of both states. However, by not observing rituals and prayer, the Qi ruler angered the people. By holding the most beautiful ladies in his harem, he lost the respect of the nobility and increasingly antagonized the commoners. By sleeping with young boys and supporting bisexual orgies, he lost the respect of his own family members and the people. So, is it better not to make any contributions to mankind? Like the Qi ruler who contributed nothing, he was in fact contributing something. This is because nothing is lighter than water and does not erode the earth. However, it erodes the individual soul and dampens the public spirit. Providence was what the heavens would bestow on those who adroitly followed *Ru Zhao* and *Kong Zhao*; it was the universal sublimation of the spiritual value that could elevate the genuine followers and teachers of proper conduct and ritual.

The human will was predestined or fated to create evil and to succumb to immoral acts. To escape from such universal predestination and fate, the good man and Junzi would need to use their minds to control their bodies and their bodies to control their spirit. This enabled a proper social contract between man and heaven that could change their fate as they moved toward their destiny. It would make the path to the future smooth and uneventful.

The dictator was an egotist with a general disaffection for those who did not obey his commands. In spite of his autocratic regime, the King of Qi—as the people secretly referred to him mockingly—was a very optimistic leader who was also very superstitious. He allowed his mood to be determined by his soothsayers. To enable a good mood in their leader, the courtiers ensured that there were always positive signs of hope and good fortune around. These included a nine-tail swallow, grand purple peacocks, and long-legged flamingos in the palace lakes and grounds.

## Agriculture

Qi had bountiful harvests before the start of the war with the Loo. But their storehouses were gradually emptied of their harvests as the war with the Loo progressed. As the war raged on, the Qi demanded more supplies from its people, peasants who were peasants and could hardly produce sufficient staple food to feed themselves and their families. Agricultural taxes were not levied on the King's family members, kith and kin, as they were not farmers, raised animals, or were involved in animal husbandry. The King always imposed high levies on the farmers and peasants but in return provided subsidies that at the end of the year were supposed to equal half to a third of the levies imposed at the start of the harvest season. So, in the end, the farmers and peasants paid agricultural taxes of 25% per annum. A hefty sum.

The Qi commanders were confident that the Loo would eventually lose the war as they had fewer agricultural resources than the Qi. This was seen to be true. The Loo generals were on a spartan diet and often had to live off the land even though both territories were of a similar size.

Since Neolithic times, and in recorded history, the Loos did not have any agricultural land and relied instead on growing hydroponic vegetable farms and a fledgling fishing industry. Because of the war, fishing boats could not venture far from the coast and coastal fishing did not bring in large catches. Thus, the Loos depended heavily on overland imports of staples, 30% of which were often lost to barbarians and the Qi, as the Qi leaders believed that this was an acceptable level of loss for feeding their families. Everyone in Loo ate the same food and no one received special treatment. Although their food-growing techniques were advanced, they appeared primitive when compared to their military tactics.

## Military tactics

The two states were at war in the decade before 470 B.C. Note that Sun Tzu's famous Art of War was only written between 475 and 485 B.C. This means that neither the Qi nor the Loo had heard or read of the Art of War, and hence their military strategy and tactics pre-dated Sun Tzu's writings. Their general strategy was to live off the land to wipe out the enemy. But because both sides were not guided by a thoughtful strategy, the war raged on for more than a decade.

Both Qi and Loo had different military tactics. Qi had a strong army and navy while Loo had a small regular army and regular navy. Its regular army and navy were complemented by a citizen militia of paramilitary soldiers who were former professionals and retired soldiers from the regular army.

The use of bows and arrows as well as chariots signified the advances in military technology of the time. The bronze shields used by the charioteers and bowmen were specially designed to distort the accuracy of enemy arrows. It is often believed that where there is smoke, there is fire. In the ancient states of Qi and Loo, military signaling took the form of smoke signals at the crests of mountain ranges and took several minutes to hours to travel. This was especially difficult in the nighttime and on cloudy days or bad weather. Nevertheless, the ancient Chinese believed that when there is smoke, there is fire and where there's wind, there's rain. This led to many occasions of false mobilization and the loss of resources.

## Sexuality of the people

Most of the people in Qi and Loo were heterosexuals. But each state had a small minority of homosexuals and transgendered persons who were very vocal. What did the laws say about homosexuality and transgendered persons in the societies of Qi and Loo? In fact, there were clear laws against homosexuality, but there were none against transgendered acts since the former is a modern invention.

Beginning with acts of innocent love but the ruling classes, homosexual acts eventually gained acceptance widely and

resulted in the taking of male as well as female concubines. This was also part and parcel of how Qi and Loo's high society reflected their power and their wealth in terms of the bodies of co-gendered persons.

Politically, the ladies of the court were not alone in making use of their appearances to entice the ruler; servant boys and eunuchs also competed for the King's attention in any way they could. Their actions were highly favored by other Royal Courtiers and members of the AoG themselves. Same-sex romances were common among the Qi and Loo people, regardless of their social, economic, or political classes. The use of homosexual enticement was used widely for entertainment among members of the Cabinet and the Royal Courts. These affairs were widely accepted and only discussed in hushed tones among the people and the peasants of Qi and Loo. It appeared to be widely accepted because of the tensions that rose between the power-submission matrix of those societies.

There were also economic consequences. The lack of control over homosexuality as a *de jure* and *de facto* socio-economic issue in Qi and Loo became a significant contribution to the downfall of both states. This was because as the populations grew, things such as rice and millet became far more expensive. The inflationary pressures led the ordinary peasants and people to find a scapegoat and they found the perfect scapegoat in the homosexual community. The homosexual communities were also always fighting for power among themselves and were insufficiently organized to defend themselves or articulate their interests when they were in positions of power. Culturally, most people and peasants of Qi and Loo had less to no regard or respect for those acts as they offended the gods and the homosexuals often dispensed with the importance of religious rituals and observances. The destruction of the social fabric was a result of the resentment, hatred, and spiteful acts that emerged.

## Conclusion

In ancient times, it became clear that the warring States of Qi and Loo benefitted no one since only one state lasted 200 years and the other only 50. How much more worthy or valuable would another 150 years be? Importance of having a conservative political ideology.

The two States eventually realized the importance of having a conservative religious belief system and not one that entertained all kinds of sexual orientations that would displease the gods. But it was all too less and all too late as the WoA was not applied and they did not take heed of the fact that when there is smoke, there is fire; when there is water, there is rain, as the sages decried.

The seven ancient principles or laws of Conservatism exist for the moderns to accept and understand lest they fall into the same traps as they ignore the writing on the wall.

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