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THE FAMILY: THREE ASSAULTS ON IT OVER THE PAST CENTURY, AND THE CHOICE WE HAVE MADE

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[This long essay reviews the challenges posed to the Chinese family system by modernization. The first major challenge came from young modernist liberals, rebelling against the authority of the old family system. The second challenge came during the People's Republic and especially the Cultural Revolution, when politics took over the older functions and demanded the same allegiances as had the earlier family. The author provides some horrendous descriptions of brutality and betrayal during the Cultural Revolution, but seems to believe that the final blow to the family has come with the "infiltration" of "economic rationality" into all spheres of life. His argument is that economic rationality has only limited scope, and it is the family as an institution that makes human life human. But the author does not rest content with defending family values on their own terms, but, perhaps hoping to persuade a wider audience, asserts (without much evidence) that a strong family system is necessary for a powerful and prosperous state. The state should, therefore, do more actively to support family values.]

Research on the family is not indeed at the heart either of social research or of national attention. The purpose of this essay is to move the study of the family from the periphery of national attention toward its core and to show the position of the family within the framework of long-term national development strategy. This is because the nature of the family has strategic significance for the nation's competitiveness and security. We must elevate the importance of the family in the life of the nation.

Over the past century there have been three assaults on the Chinese family, affecting its structure, its emotional status, and its duties.

The First Assault: Criticism of the Family Structure in the Early 20th Century

Anthony Giddens says: "The family is a battlefield in the fight between tradition and modernity." In China we see it has been a fertile battlefield. In the early 20th century the Chinese family system came under an unprecedentedly fierce attack.

1. Cause of the Critique: The flesh-and-blood connection between the patriarchal system and feudal society.

In traditional China, the family was inextricably intertwined with the entire political, economic, social structure, and ethical life of the country. The feudal patriarchal structure was the basis for feudal rule. Therefore in the contemporary era feudal patriarchy became the object of fierce attack from enlightened thinking. Chen Lai says this "opposition to tradition," the ardent repudiation of the national cultural tradition by young intellectuals of that time came from a sense that the nation was faced with a life-or-death crisis which made the modernization of the nation a pressing necessity. To

put it simply, they placed all the blame for the country's backwardness on the traditional culture.

2. *The family system came under stern criticism.*

After the Revolution of 1911, the thinkers of the democratic revolution fiercely attacked the traditional lineage system and its ethical and religious expressions. There was a massive response to the call. The feudal lineage system was called the "root of all evil." The family system was one of the links in this chain and so became seen as an obstacle to revolution.

During this period there appeared all sorts of articles with titles like "The Revolution in the Three Relationships," "The Family Revolution," so forth. Among these the anarchists had the most radical opinions. They believed that the family was the source of all evil and so they wanted to extirpate the family system. For example, Ju Pu, in "Discourse on Destroying the Family," advocated rooting out the family, with no marriage between men and women. "There should be hotels or other meeting places where men and women could get together. When in love they should be together, and part when they began to annoy each other. There would then be no need to depend on marriage for happiness." In "On Destroying the Family" Han Yi said, "To raise the curtain on social revolution, it is necessary first to smash the family." Naturally the bourgeois revolutionaries of that time were not like the anarchists and did not advocate the dismemberment of the individual family, but they did oppose the feudal patriarchal system and advocated a family revolution and the establishment of a new form of family relationships.

In 1915 Chen Duxiu^[1] established *New Youth* as the standard-bearer for a new cultural movement, and the [1919] May Fourth movement actually carried out a revolutionary movement in the cultural sphere. People often put these together as the May Fourth New Culture Movement.^[2] This New Culture Movement was characterized by burning enthusiasm and sharp language, continuously criticizing traditional society and the inculcation of feudal manners. This movement had its main encampment in *New Youth*, and making slogans of the western concepts of democracy and science proclaimed bourgeois liberal democracy. At that time Wu Yu, Yan Sichun, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Hu Shi, Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, and others fiercely criticized the feudal ethics and morality represented by Confucianism, promoting new concepts of marriage and the family. Li Dazhao published an essay opposing the old system of ritual and the old morality. He pointed out: "We today have considered the benefits of the new life and the progressive nature of the new morality." "We are not afraid to be accused of lawlessness and of destroying the Sages." Wu Yu fiercely attacked the feudal lineage system, screaming: "Cannibalism is the transmission of the ethical code! The transmission of the ethical code is cannibalism!"

In its cultural aspect, the spearhead of struggle in the May Fourth Movement was concentrated against

Confucianism, whose basic content was to uphold the feudal system. Its famous slogan, “Down with the Confucius family shop,” expressed its absolute rejection of feudal culture. If the critique here is compared with that following the Revolution of 1911, its salient characteristic is the broadening of the scope of the new thought, from thinkers to the ordinary intellectuals and to educated youth in general. This is clearly seen in literary works produced since the May Fourth period, most notably in the writings of Ba Jin. [\[3\]](#)

3. This conflict opened the way for the secularization and marginalization of the family

This critique of the traditional feudal family system had two points of significance.

First, it meant the depoliticization and desacralization of the Chinese family system. It was the beginning of its secularization. Traditionally the family had political and sacred significance. In traditional China, “state and family form one house.” Mencius stressed that the family was the foundation of the peace and stability of the state. He said, “The basis of all under Heaven is the state; the basis of the state is the family; and the basis of the family is the person.” He clearly placed family relations as the cornerstone for state relations and made family ethics the foundation of social ethics. Thus, the family organization and its structure and ethics were politicized and sacralized. The attacks on the traditional family system in the early 20th century stripped it of its sacred outer garments, pronouncing it the source of everything filthy and evil, deconstructing its sacred and rational nature.

Secondly, it initiated the process whereby the family became marginal within the attention of the country. The historical Chinese family was the source of political morality the unit whereby society was managed. It was the unit for taxation and conscription, for law, and for welfare. Therefore, the family occupied the center of state attention. It was for this reason that in the wake of war and chaos the state encouraged child-bearing, even stipulating that by a certain age women must be married. The depoliticization of the Chinese family in the early 20th century meant the separation of the family and the political system. The family became peripheral in the attention of the state.

It must be pointed out that the criticism of that time had its effect primarily on the mass of educated youth. It did not spread to the broad popular masses and its influence was limited.

The Second Assault: The Political Movement Directed Against Family Sentiments, 1949-1976

In modern society secularization and rationalization amount to the upsurge of instrumental rationality and the retreat of value rationality. Instrumental rationality relates to things, value rationality relates to people. In modern society, instrumental rationality everywhere monopolizes the field, repressing and expelling manifestations of value rationality. The family is a social organization with human beings as its objectives; it is an organization filled with value rationality. The core of the values there are love, mutual concern, even sacrifice. Obviously, in modern society dominated by instrumental rationality, the retreat of family values seems inevitable.

1. Decline in the Importance of the Family in Social Life

1. The family is pushed to the margins of national attention.

It is a basic fact that the family is at the margins of national attention, no longer the object of direct management of society. There has been a decline of the importance of the family in social life. On the one side, in the thirty years before reform the main issues before the state were state security and industrialization. On the other side, the family was no longer the component unit of society, but was rather the urban work unit and the rural people's commune. The family was no longer the unit and objective of social control, nor was it the objective of taxation. The family was at the margins of national attention.

2. The replacement of the family by the unit ^[4] as a source of supply meant a decline in the importance of the family.

The unit came to replace the family as the source of supply, lessening the importance of the family.

Prior to reform and opening, the unit was the basic organization for the provision and distribution of goods. The unit had a monopoly over the distribution of goods to the individual and the tie between the individual and unit became extremely close. From cradle to grave, whether alive or dead the individual could not be separated from the unit. The unit represented the unlimited responsibility of the state for the individual's provision in old age, sickness, and death. The unit was a collective structure of patriarchal welfare. It took over many of the capacities of the family and became a substitute for the traditional capacities of the family.

2. The excessive politicization of society encroached upon the basic values of the family

Everyone recognizes that the family is a social organization involving great benefits and deep feelings. Basic family values include love, mutual support, altruism, even sacrifice. It is in the family that altruism can be most easily found. Feelings of kinship act as a guarantee of this. However, prior to 1976 the excessive politicization of social life often meant that the beautiful sphere of the family was trampled down and basic family values were encroached upon.

Excessive politicization penetrated all parts of society. At the level of the person there was increasing attention to class origins and family background. These were the basis of the distribution of social resources and so could not be ignored. The 27 years from 1949 to 1976 were marked by an endless series of political movements. We had to speak of class struggle every year, every month, every day [a paraphrase of a statement by Lin Biao]. The class origin of every single person was marked. One's political status affected whether one was happy or ill and how one interacted with others. According to a study by Hu Angang, during those 27 years there were 67 political movements, an average of 2.5 per year. The scope of each movement was different, but all were directed toward rectifying affairs and rectifying

[5]

people. In the end they damaged all categories of persons. Excessive politicization not only meant that large numbers of people were rectified [i.e., persecuted], but also that their families suffered deep psychological damage from politics.

1. Politicization of marriage: marriages were formed for political considerations and dissolved for political considerations.

The standards of choice are a reflection of a society's values. Generally speaking, choice theory analyzes people's choice behavior under the headings of "similarity," "exchange of resources," and "choice gradient." Prior to reform, the criterion of similarity gave too much stress to politics. It was the key factor in forming marriage and in dissolving marriage. Endless political movements formed the basis for elevating people's political status and the change in their political resources. This was also a direct cause of divorce.

This politicization of marriage resulted in a kind of alienation from marriage. The value of family sentiments fell precipitously. This shows alienation from the marriage pairing.

2. The labeling of family politics.

When extreme leftism prevailed, the class labels assigned to the family—landlord, capitalist—or the political labels—capitalist roader, renegade—were the basic determinants of the distribution of political and social resources. Family origin served as a label and had a large and solid impact on the status of the children. Obviously, with the limitless influence accorded to family labels, other factors were obscured or negated. Relationships became twisted, and in many families the members could no longer find emotional comfort or stability. If someone in the family became a target of a political movement, whether or not the family was broken up the entire family would be subject to insult, and the children would be subject to demands that they draw a clear line of demarcation with their families. This meant a breaking up of the spiritual and emotional relationships in the family. Family relationships were completely alienated.

3. The extreme politicization of the Cultural Revolution took the destruction of the value structure of the family to its extreme.

The ten years of the Cultural Revolution took the destruction of the value structure of the family to its extreme. The dependents of those who were rectified in the movement, including the children, were required to draw a clear line of demarcation. There were two standards of this clear line: to admit to the crime and to regard the one rectified as an enemy and to implicate others in the criticism. It was even better if one would break off all family relationships. The relationships between siblings and between husbands and wives were all tragic victims of this.

In his novelistic autobiography Lao Gui ["Old Devil"—pen name of Ma Bo?, a writer] frankly describes the circumstances of his own family during the Cultural Revolution, especially his rebellious behavior against his mother, the famous author Yang Mo. After Yang Mo became the object of criticism, Lao Gui writes:

(I) brought over a band of my schoolmates to scold you. I hated you. . .I resolved to break entirely with my parents and devote myself to world revolution. . . (I) tied up my two sisters with rope, just as if I were tying up an American devil, making them cry out in pain. The tears of my sisters did not soften my resolve. I stuffed stinking socks into their mouths to shut them up...Also, I used a brush to write all sorts of slogans on walls, doors, the floor, desks: 'Down with the stinking littérateur Yang Mo!. . . Fuck all filial feelings.' You had to be fierce, ferocious toward these petty bourgeois females. I forcefully kicked my big sister in the butt so she wouldn't make trouble. That bitch like to read Films of the Masses. Clearly she had filthy thoughts.

Later on in the story, the writer expressed his regrets:

I attacked my mother to show my own revolutionary feelings, to open for myself a road to success and glory, to express my own cruel feelings and desires. I don't know whether a wolf cub, following behind his mother, would then bite his mother in the back. But I used the opportunity of the Cultural Revolution wolfishly to turn on my mother and wound her.

In another work, *Mother Yang Mo*, Lao Gui discusses his mother's attitude in the Cultural Revolution.

The mutual exposure of Yang Mo and her husband Ma Jianmin was a vicious exposure, a cut-throat affair. First Ma Jianmin exposed Yang Mo as a "false member who had snuck into the Party." Yang Mo then returned a tooth for a tooth and on a wall poster exposed her husband's relationship with Deng Tuo^[6] and others. She also said that he "formerly had relations with the secret agent Yang Guangmei."^[7]

The examples above truly describe how political movements negated all beautiful feelings of family sentiment.

Even worse than this, there are reports of children desecrating the bodies of their parents. Please read the description below:

During the ten years of turmoil, sons openly rebelled against their dads, exposed them on the stage, beat them and cursed them, cruelly struggling against their parents. Sometimes, after the parents had been killed, the children took the opportunity to be the first to kick the corpses, showing how any sense of human morality had been totally destroyed. All traditional morality was abandoned. The consequences of this have been gravely evil.

This is disturbing indeed. To speak of the scope of this sort of thing, according to statistics more than 100 million persons were wrongfully killed or imprisoned, a population more than twice as large as England. These family tragedies and the damage done to family values are broad in scope, unprecedentedly painful and cruel. The theme of that time is something our nation must always keep in mind.

In the post-Cultural Revolution period people could not wait to rid themselves of this perversion of human

nature; but right at that moment the wave of marketization was about to wash over everything.

The Third Conflict: The Incursion in the Past 30 Tears of Economic Rationality on Core Family Values

1. Care and Responsibility: The Basic Logic of the Family

What is the basic logic of the family? It is the mutual care and duties of responsibility that the members of the family owe each other. In his introduction to the French scholarly yearbook, *History of the Family*, the famous anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss clearly indicated the role that duties and prohibitions have in the family: “(The family) is established on the basis of a biological demand (the birth and rearing of children), but is also subject to certain social rules and controls. The family is always a compromise between nature and culture.” He explained further, “The family is always at the interstices of the artificial net of duties and prohibitions, and that is why society permits the family to persist.” That is to say, the family is a social organization weaving together duties and prohibitions.

According to traditional Chinese family values, responsibilities and duties have the most important role. We may say that family members not only had responsibilities and duties toward each other, but that these duties were limitless. These were duties not only toward living family members but also toward ancestors and posterity. Fei Xiaotong ^[8] often says, “Chinese live in a society with ancestors above and descendants below. The life of the individual is a drop of water in the Yangtze.” According to our traditions, a person has the duty to venerate the ancestors and to care for posterity, whence the saying: “I must be able to face my ancestors above and my children below.”

1. Economic rationality infiltrates the family structure and comes into conflict with family responsibilities
 - a. The distortion of the social mechanism by the market mechanism

In his classic *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Times*, Karl Polanyi posits his famous theory of the “double movement in contemporary society.” He points out that contemporary society is accompanied by a double movement: the limitless expansion of the market and the movement to counter this. These countermovements are movements to protect society, setting certain limits on the expansion of the market. This is because the limitless expansion of the market damages certain social institutions. The preservation of society depends upon restricting the operation of the market. If the market becomes the complete master of society, that would mean the destruction of society. Polanyi points out, the market “promotes the principle of freedom of contract. This implies that relationships where there is no contract, such as among relatives, neighbors, co-workers, are all threatened with extinction. This is because such relationships require personal loyalty and commitment and restrict freedom of contract.” We are now beginning to see how the market mechanism works to

bring about such results.

b. The spread of self-centered individualism

Through the market mechanism economic rationality infiltrates the family. Looking at it from the human side, it is expressed as the spread of self-centered individualism within the household.

The market reform of the economy necessarily brings with it the development of individualism. The special trait of a market economy is dispersal of decision-making. Each individual does his own work and decisions emerge from these individual choices. This inevitably implies a strengthened concept of the self and the development of individualism.

c. How economic rationality exceeds its boundaries

The infiltration of self-centered individualism in the family is an expression of economic rationality exceeding its boundaries. Economic rationality is used according to the logic of the economic sphere. It seeks the maximization of satisfaction. But the logic of the sphere of human society is different, and one form of logic cannot arbitrarily be substituted for another. The family is the source of human warmth and sentiment. We want a market economy, but not the marketization of society or of the family. If economic rationality penetrates the sphere of society, especially the sphere of the family, the result will be the extinction of human nature: "great chaos under Heaven."

The penetration of economic rationality into the family system has consequences for both urban and rural families.

Consequences for urban families:

First, it is a major factor in the rise in the urban divorce rate. Marriage is a kind of contract. The family is an institution combining both rights and duties. The family as an organization requires a certain internal stability. The rise in the divorce rate today shows that this stability is threatened. To be honest, the rise in the divorce rate shows that the position of women has become higher and that their sense of personal autonomy has been strengthened. But this brings with it a great many side effects. With the rise in the divorce rate the sense of responsibility becomes weaker. The pursuit of individual happiness displaces duty to the family. The marriage arrangements of movie stars serves as a model for young people. Stars are objects of mass consumption. When they divorce or dissolve their marriages their behavior serves to weaken the structure of the family.

Increasing number of quarrels over maintenance and family property. The reasons for this are complicated, but the fertile ground provided by self-centered individualism is one of the causes. In one incident after another we can see the distortions of human nature brought about by this.

2. The infiltration of economic rationality into rural households and the crisis of care for the aged

The atomization of the rural family is linked both with the infiltration of economic rationality into the sphere of the family and to the fragmentation of rural society. The people's communes finished the job of destroying the traditional rural society and the past thirty years have finished the job of fragmenting rural society. It is under these conditions that economic rationality in the shape of self-centered individualism has made great strides in infiltrating the rural family.

First of all, the infiltration of economic rationality has destroyed the basic value of the family.

This process is now centered on the persons of rural youth. They bring economic rationality into the family. They have no sense of gratitude for the care given them by the older generation, nor do they think of making any kind of repayment. They think only of maximizing their individual gratification. This logic, appropriate for the market place, penetrates into the family, destroying the basic value of the family. It destroys the social contract between the generations and the balance of rights and duties. It creates difficulties for generational transition and for care for the aged. The traditional means of care for the aged have become something alien. One hears heartbreaking words such as: "This generation of young people should be ashamed to face us."

Yan Yunshan has undertaken some outstanding research on this topic. He has conducted anthropological work in a village in Heilongjiang. He points out that basic family values have undergone a process of secularization. The effects are seen most clearly in the division of the family property upon the marriage of the children. He points out that marketization has led to a kind of unbalanced individualism among the younger generation. Their values are all self-centered, with no notion of a balance between rights and duties. They strive to get as much of the family property as they can for themselves, with no acknowledgement of a duty to take care of the older generation. This has brought about a crisis in care for the rural aged. He conducted research this year in villages in northern Anhui. He concludes that the marriage of the oldest son has become the occasion for the other children to strive to seize the most family property for themselves, at the expense of their siblings and parents. The division of the family has become in actually a way to drive parents and siblings out the door. There have even been instances in which parents were forced to share quarters with the pigs. Obviously, this is a greater exploitation of the parents than that described by Yan Yunshan. As things go on, the situation becomes increasingly stark.

Secondly, there has been a decline in the status of the rural head of household and the difficulty of caring for the aged alerts us to the destruction of human sentiments. The rural family today is undergoing the tensions of transition, the weakening of filial sentiments, and the difficulties of caring for the old. These problems are sharper in rural areas than they are in cities. At the extreme, they give the impression that all human sentiments have been

destroyed. This is because in the rural areas there is no state provision for care for the aged. Most of the old people in the villages depend entirely on their sons and daughters for their livelihood. Traditionally this care relied on the moral order and the social contract in the countryside. But now the system upholding these has fallen apart. These phenomena expose the degree to which the traditional beautifies of the rural family have deteriorated. It is no exaggeration to say that the treatment of the aged in the countryside today is the first sign of the complete collapse of humanistic sentiments.

Thirdly, the moral sphere has become confused and ethics have been lost. On the one hand we have come through a century of the deconstruction of traditional morality and 30 years of market competition. On the other hand, no new moral system has developed. Chen Bofeng's description of the conditions in the villages of northern Anhui is a revelation: the old are mistreated and brothers will not allow parents to share in the income from the household contract fields. Funerals become occasions for musical shows and even strip-teases. Chen Bofeng calls this the collapse of the peasants' world of value. In fact, that parents are treated in this way reflects the confusion of the moral sphere. It is a strike at the roots of humanity's most sacred sense of morality and the destruction of all ethics.

Comparison of the Three Attacks

When we examine the century's three attacks on the family system, we see that each was more destructive than the previous one. In the first two attacks parts of the population lost a sense of the sacred nature of the family. The first attack brought about a loosening of the sense of the sacredness of the family, but it was felt only a small proportion of intellectuals. The second attack was a political assault on the sacred nature of the family and was felt by the entire population.

The third assault is different from the first two. It is amorphous and as slippery as mercury. Its scope extends to the cities and the villages and its scope presents the danger that the entire family system may collapse. Its scope greatly exceeds that of the first two. The nature of this attack is the infiltration of market rationality into the very core of China's society. Its contradictions strike directly at the core of family values. The family system, faced with assault after assault, has no way to stand against it; and society also lacks the means to resist the infiltration of the market system or to protect the self-conscious idea of the family.

Loss of Balance Between Pressures on the Family and the Capacity of the Family

1. Up until now the capacity of the family has been becoming weaker.

The scale of the family has become smaller and its power to resist outside forces has weakened.

From an overall perspective, our scope of the family for the population of our country has become smaller and

smaller. In 1982 the average number of people in a household was 4.41, declining to 3.17 by 2006. The declining size of the family implies a diminution of the resources available to the family that would allow it to adjust, a weakening of capacity, and a decline in the ability to resist outside forces.

The stability of the family has declined and the divorce rate has soared.

The rising divorce rate is a necessary consequence of modernization.

To speak of China, from the promulgation of the new marriage law in 1980 the divorce rate has continuously increased. According to statistics on divorce registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, our country's divorce rate was 0.35 percent in 1978. In 2005 it was 2.73 percent, a seven-fold increase.

The rising divorce rate reflects a decline in the stability of the family, weakening the family's resistance to outside forces.

The infiltration of market rationality tears apart the core of family values.

The family is a primary social organization. Unlike secondary social organizations it has human beings as its purpose. It is a refuge from the depredations of society. The three assaults on the family, especially the third, directly conflict with family responsibilities. They tear apart the core of family values and undermine the family's foundations.

Pressures on the family have increased.

One source of this is rapid economic change exposing the family to increased outside forces, those arising from employment, medical care, education. Another source is the dismantling of the social guarantees of the era of the planned economy.

According to an investigation by Xu Anqi in 2005-2006, Shanghai residents felt the major pressures on the resources of the family included: the burdens of education; layoffs or unemployment; difficulties in finding housing and mortgages; economic burdens; support for sick parents.

On the one hand pressures on the family have increased while on the other hand the capacity of the family has declined. There has been a loss of balance between the two.

Why Bring Up Again the Question of the Family

The reason for bring up this question once more is that in the face of globalization and the rise of China as a great power, we need to re-define the strategic position of the family.

1. Globalization and family capacity: the family is the basic organization for improving the quality of the citizenry.

With globalization, it is necessary for the nation-state to establish its own position in the global division of

labor in order to foster its own development. International experience shows us that raising the overall quality of the population is what it takes to put the country into a position where it cannot be defeated. Within this framework the role of the family system is extra obvious. The family is the base area for the reproduction of the population, the first school for the children, a major area for investment in human resources. That is to say, in a globalized background the family has a direct role in enhancing a country's competitiveness. The capacity of the family now has a new content and is once again entering the scope of national attention.

2. State security, social stability, and family capacity.

The value system of young people, their identification with the state and the nation, their political attitudes and beliefs, and whether or not they have a positive attitude toward society and their social responsibilities are part of the same system as state security and social stability.

There is ample international evidence of this. After September 11 the United States recognized the major significance of the patriotism and civic spirit of young people. The United States published major documents dealing with education, explicating the role of patriotic education as part of national security strategy.

On the matter young people's political and social identity, it is the family that plays the major role. According to political sociology, the family is the instrument of civic socialization and has an especially strong influence on political socialization. This means that the value of the family has a new content.

In sum, a stable, harmonious, capable, and conventional family is the root of social stability and the foundation stone for national power.

3. Developing renewed state attention to the family.

It is just because of this that in recent years the developed countries have once again stressed the importance of the family and have introduced a series of social policies designed to support the family. They believe that the capacity of the family not only affects the quality of labor power but can also serve to reduce future needs for social capital. Thus, investment in the family is investment in society.

As China rises to great power status, given the contributions of the family to the competitiveness and strength of the state, it is necessary to support the position of the family. We need to reflect upon those factors that weaken the capacity of the family, absorb foreign experiences that we can learn from, and rebuild our country's family system.

Get Moving to Support the Family

The family is a major social resource. We need to put an end to the century-long processes that are working to weaken the family. We must support the family not only by propaganda activities but also through policy. We

must select methods that are effective in supporting the family so that it is able to perform its positive role in setting the basis for the building of a healthy society.

1. We must renew our understanding of the family and of the function of the family in national development.

All of society must come to understand that the family is not only the basic seedbed of a healthy, prosperous, vital society but that it also contributes to national competitiveness and to the maintenance of social stability.

2. Protect the core values of the family

The core values of the family—loving concern, reciprocity, and sacrifice—need to be supported. This should be sacred ground for all of humanity, not to be trampled on. From another aspect, in the face of bloodthirsty capital such values can be very easily destroyed. We have a special need for a clear understanding: the sphere of the family rejects the logic of the marketplace. Today, when economic logic takes over everything, we need a specially systemized way to support family values.

2. Cherish the traditional resources of the family

To respect the family is a duty given down to us by the Chinese tradition. We must in all ways treat it as something precious. We are not able to follow the tortuous path taken by the western family, in which individual liberation destabilizes the family and breeds social problems. We need to take a new look at the problem of respecting the family.

4. The problem of the family needs to enter into the sphere of attention of the state: build and maintain a system of social policies that support the family

The problem of the family needs to enter into the sphere of attention of the state. The state must contribute constructive force to the family system. Formerly the family was able to satisfy the human needs of traditional society. Today we need forceful new policies toward the family to uphold the family in the midst of the challenges it faces from society. We need to build a Chinese policy system that supports family values. This policy system must also address the problem of investment in human resources and the nurturing of the country's international competitiveness.

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[1] Chen Duxiu (1879-1949) was a prominent cultural radical in the early 20th century and was one of the founders (and first formal leader) of the Communist Party of China in 1921. He later broke with the Party.

[2] The May Fourth movement proper was a set of student demonstrations that began on 4 May 1919, student protests against the warlord government's acquiescence in Japan's demands for concessions from China during the negotiations for the treaty of Paris. This patriotic upsurge was later combined in spirit with a whole cultural upheaval, based on the

idea that China's ancient traditions were what had kept China helpless and weak.

[3] Ba Jin, pen name of LI Yaotang (1904-2005) wrote an early set of novels expatiating on the inhumane and repressive nature of the traditional family system.

[4] See the commentary on the transformation-evolution of the work unit system, posted on May 23, 2008, above.

[5] The basic meaning is "making correct," but in this kind of context "rectifying" also implies punishing.

[6] Deng Tuo (1912-1966) was a Party intellectual and an early victim of the Cultural Revolution.

[7] Wang Guangmei (1921-2006) was the daughter of a big Tianjin capitalist and the wife of Liu Shaoqi. See the commentary on the "Maos and Lius," posted July 13, 2007, above.

[8] Fei Xiaotong, 1910-2005, 20th century China's best-known sociologist.