Chinese Schools of Wisdom on Conflict Resolution and Their Relevance to Contemporary Public Governance: A Contingent Framework

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Vol. 12/2018

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The literature concerning conflict resolution in public governance largely ignores comparative cross-cultural settings. This study investigates Chinese schools of thought on conflict resolution and their relevance to contemporary public governance. Based on a review of the literature and a cross-cultural approach examining Chinese thought and experience, the study describes the different philosophies, methods, and principles of conflict resolution in China. It shows that eight major Chinese schools of thought comprise a continuum of methods (in terms of force vs. peace) and form a contingent framework for Chinese conflict resolution. The findings are of great relevance for contemporary public governance and provide new openings for improving conflict resolution methods.

Keywords: Conflict resolution; Chinese wisdom; Chinese thought; contingent framework; cross-cultural

Conflict resolution is an indispensable component of public governance practice (Amy 1987; Cairns 1992; Lan 1997; Magid 1967; Stephenson and Pops 1989). Since the 1970s, a number of articles have specifically addressed the issue in public governance. For example, some researchers describe conflict resolution in organizations from the perspective of educational administration (Derr 1972), others emphasize the public sector (White and Jeter 2002; Volpe 1989), some analyze conflict resolution in the policy process (Kelman 1992; Stephenson and Pops 1989; Stephenson 1995; Vizzard 1995), some address it in environmental management (O'Leary and Yandle 2000; Alexander 2006), and some describe various alternative methods (Ball 2005; Carnevale 1993; Manring 1993, 1994; Mareschal 2003). Furthermore, a number of books have been published on conflict resolution in public governance (Mills 1990, 1991; O'Leary and Bringham 2003; Pammer and Killian 2003; Sidaway 2005; Wondollect 1988). Lan (1997) even suggests developing a conflict resolution approach in public administration.

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However, the literature on conflict resolution in public governance is still sparse, as is the comparative literature regarding cross-cultural settings, even though many of our predecessors stressed the importance of the topic (Avruch et al. 1991; Chen and Starosta 1998; Chuang and Hale 2002; He et al. 2002; Rabbie, 1994; Rubinstein and Foster 1988). In the nineteenth century Wilson (1887) encouraged Americans to learn from the administrative systems in France and Germany; Eaton (1880) studied the effect of the British experience on civil service reform in the United States. Ostrom (1997, 264) argues: "I presume that a meeting of East and West is possible. But those efforts depend much more on … 'culture producers' than on heads of State." In particular, the rise of China and its rapid development has not only created astounding economic development but also produced many social problems, leading to various conflicts (Ho 2005; Yang et al. 2015). However, because of political sensitivities and language barriers, the problem of conflicts in China has not been systematically studied in the field of public governance (neither in Chinese- nor English-language research), although the associated problems in some developing countries have been sporadically studied since the 1980s (for example Berg 2007; Esman 1999; Gjoni et al. 2010; Oberst 1986). Thus, studying this problem in China can enrich the international study of the conflict and provide valuable points of reference for the development of other countries, as China is not only the largest developing country but also a country with a wealth of ideas and philosophies relating to conflict resolution and its practices.

Furthermore, because contemporary Chinese society remains in the midst of transition and places substantial weight on its traditions, conflict resolution in contemporary China is inevitably affected by traditional Chinese thought. Therefore, in order to understand conflict resolution in contemporary China, we need to understand the relevant historical Chinese thoughts and philosophies, which are not only the cultural basis of conflict management in contemporary China but also the theoretical source of its conflict management. Thus, this paper reviews the conflict resolution literature in China over a range of historical periods and searches for its relevance to contemporary public governance practices.

1. Eight Classical Schools of Conflict Resolution in China

During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (770–221 B.C.), there were several rival schools of thought, known as the "hundred schools." Of these, six strongly influenced Chinese thought concerning conflict resolution: the *Ru Jia* (the School of Scholars or Literati, or the Confucian School), the *Dao Jia* (the Taoist School), the Fa Jia (the Legalist School), the *Mo Jia* (the Mohist School), the *Bing Jia* (the School of the Military Strategists), and the *Zong-Heng Jia* (the School of Diplomatists or Political Strategists). In addition to these six schools, Buddhism also had a strong impact on Chinese thought concerning conflict resolution, and Mao's theory of Mao-Dun is also important. Buddhism has become a major influence, and people often see Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism as the three pillars of Chinese traditional culture. Mao's thought was the most important ideology in post-1949 China, and profoundly affects all aspects of contemporary life there. Buddhism, Mao, and the six schools listed above, can be regarded as the eight schools of conflict resolution in China.

1.1 Confucianism

Confucius was the founder of the Confucian school. His ideas about conflict resolution comprise three aspects – self-discipline, institutional arrangements, and education – intended to create a harmonious society. Confucius emphasized individual virtues obtained through self-discipline or self-restraint: *ren* (*"jen"* is its old translation before Chinese pinyin came into use) and *yi. Ren* means "compassion," "human-heartedness," or "loving others." When *Zhong Gong* (or *Chung Kung*) asked the meaning of ren, Confucius said, "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you" (Confucius 1994, The Analects, XII, 2). This proverb is often regarded as the Golden Rule of the practice of ren, which consists in consideration for others (Fung 1948, 48). Yi means "righteousness" or the "oughtness" of a situation, which is opposed to li (profit). Confucius said: "The gentleman is alert to what is right. The petty man is alert to what is profitable" (Confucius 2007, Book Four, 16). Confucius argued that a ruler should learn self-discipline and treat his subjects with love and concern rather than according to laws: "Guide them with government orders, regulate them with penalties, and the people will seek to evade the law

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and be without shame. Guide them with virtue, regulate them with ritual, and they will have a sense of shame and become upright" (Confucius 2007, Book Two, 3).

Confucius' analysis of institutional arrangements began with his ideas of *li* (rites/propriety). The Confucian classic Book of Rite (Liji 1991, 429) states: "One can never come to manage conflict in disputes without the rules of *li*." Yu (1998, 324) argues that "the translation of *li* ranges from 'rites' to 'propriety,' 'ceremony,' 'decorum,' and 'manners'." Roughly speaking, *li* operates at three levels: (1) individual decorum, manners, and propriety; (2) social norms; and (3) decrees, regulations, and institutions. To Confucius, *li* cannot be separated from *ren*, but the relationship between *li* and *ren* is controversial. To instrumentalists, the observance of *li* is an instrumental tool to practice the idea of *ren*. Thus, it is fundamentally impossible for *ren* to exist independently from *li* (Shun 1993, 461). As Confucius asked: "A man who is not *jen*, what has he to do with *li*?" (Shun 1993, 463). However, definitionalists argue that "to be a *jen* person is to be someone who generally observes those rules of *li* which, as a matter of fact, actually existed in the Chinese society of Confucius' time" (Shun 1993, 461). Shun's interpretation emphasizes two components: First, unlike the instrumentalists, Shun stresses "the role of *li* in shaping the ethical idea of *jen*," and, unlike the definitionalists, stresses "the possibility of departing from or revising an existing rule of *li* if there is good reason for doing so" (1993, 474). Second, he emphasizes "the conception of the relation between *yi* and *li*" (1993, 474). As to the institutional design, Confucius emphasizes the importance of *zheng ming* (the rectification of names). "That is, things in actual fact should be made to accord with the implication attached to them by names" (Fung 1948, 41). Confucius argues that the rectification of names is the first prerequisite for ruling a state (Confucius, 1994, *The Analects, XIII*, 3). When a local ruler asked him about the principle of government, Confucius replied: "Let the ruler be ruler, the minister minister, the father father, and the son son" (Fung 1948, 41).

As a great educator, Confucius knew that real understanding of a subject required long and careful study (SEP 2006). Confucius taught his students various branches of knowledge, such as morality, proper speech, government, and the refined arts, based upon the different classics, especially the "Six Arts"—ritual, music, archery, chariot-riding (charioteering), calligraphy, and computation (arithmetic). He deemed morality the most important subject. Confucius' educational goal was "to create gentlemen who carry themselves with grace, speak correctly, and demonstrate integrity in all things" (SEP 2006). He wished for his disciples "to be 'rounded men' who would be useful to state and society" (Fung 1948, 40).

Confucius argues, firstly, that to reduce or resolve conflicts, people should respect others, love others, help others, understand others, forgive others, and control themselves. If people can respect, love, help, understand, and forgive each other, conflict can be naturally resolved and controlled. Secondly, certain social norms should be obeyed and appropriate institutions should be arranged. Confucius focuses on how not only conflict can be technically resolved, but also on how good social norms and institutions can be accepted or developed to reduce or resolve conflicts. All people should first be themselves and care about their own boundaries. Thirdly, Confucius emphasizes the importance of education to achieve these two goals: people can—firstly—be educated to have good manners to avoid and resolve conflicts; secondly, the goodness of people's behaviour and social norms, rules, and institutions can be changed or improved through education; thirdly, strategies for conflict resolution can be taught. Finally, it is worth pointing out that due to his emphasis on informal social norms and rules, education, and self-restraint, Confucius also advocated the mediation method, which is often regarded as an important feature of Chinese conflict resolution (Wall and Blum 1991).

1.2 Taoism

Lao Zi (Lao Tzu) is the foremost representative of the Taoists. He argued that "reversing is the movement of the Tao" (*Dao De Jing*, ch. 40; Fung 1948, 47): when a thing reaches its extreme, it retreats. So Lao Zi developed the idea of contradiction. Two major methods have been developed for conflict resolution. The first is "*daofa ziran*", to act according to the ways of nature and natural laws without artificiality and arbitrariness, and in particular to avoid reaching extremes because everything has an inherent limit. If it reaches the extreme, then it will revert. Furthermore, people should understand and resolve

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problems from their opposites; this is known as "practicing en-lightenment" (*Xi Ming*). When you acquire something because of its goodness, you should also realize it also has its own bad-ness; when you want to acquire something, you should lose something first; if you want to achieve something, you should start with its opposite; and so on. The second is to do lesser activity or do less (*wu-wei*). Lao Zi taught that people should restrict their activities to what is necessary and natural, and that a person who follows De (*Shun De*) should lead as simple a life as possible, going beyond the distinctions of good and evil. People have lost their original De because they have too many desires and too much knowledge; thus, people should have little knowledge and avoid using wisdom to resolve con-flicts. In Chapter 80 of *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, Lao Zi states, "Let there be ten times and a hundred times as many utensils, but let them not be used" (Chan 1963, 238). Lao Zi agrees with the Confucians that the ideal state is one led by a sage; however, unlike Confucians, who believe that a sage should do many things for his people, Lao Zi believes that the sage's duty is to undo or not to do at all (Fung 1948, 101). Lao Zi thus diminishes the functions of the sage (or the state) in helping people to resolve their conflicts. Furthermore, the main ideas of Yang Zhu (Yang Chu, another representative of the Taoists) include "each for himself" (*wei wo*) and "the des-pising of things and valuing of life" (*qing wu zhong sheng*). His method for preserving life and avoiding injury is "to escape" (Fung 1948, 65). This approach is also a fundamental method for avoiding or resolving conflict. Finally, it is worth pointing out that conflict avoidance (including Yang Zhu's "escape" and the Buddhists' "conflict or confrontation avoidance" discussed be-low) can be seen as a method both to prevent the occurrence of conflict and to prevent conflict escalation (Pruitt and Kim 2004). Meanwhile, because conflict is always a continuous process, the prevention of its occurrence and escalation can also be seen as a conflict resolution method. Therefore, in this paper, I include conflict avoidance in conflict resolution, and I do think conflict avoidance is a very important method to solve conflict.

1.3 Legalists

Unlike Confucians, who argue that people should be gov-erned by *li* and morality, Legalists insist that the people should be governed by law and punishment and that there should be no class distinctions before the law. Han Feizi (Han Fei Tzu) is the most prominent representative of the Legalists. He argues that *fa* (the laws or regulations), *shu* (the method or art of con-ducting affairs and handling people), and *shi* (shih, meaning power or authority) are indispensable factors in politics and government. To Legalists, the first step to resolving conflicts is establishing laws: they insist that conflicts should be resolved using formal rules, rather than the informal rules proposed by the Confucians. If laws are promulgated, people will know what they should do and not do. Then, the ruler can use his power or authority to regulate people's conduct using rewards and punishments, which are "the two handles of the ruler" (*er bing*). To Han Feizi, the ruler does not require special abilities or great virtues to set a personal example of good conduct or even to rule through personal influence, as maintained by Con-fucians. He can use his power or authority and *shu*, especially the art of handling men to select the right subordinates to do everything for him. Thus, Legalists, like Taoists, argue that the ruler with great virtue should allow others to do everything for him and not do anything himself, that is, he should follow the course of non-action (Fung 1948, 162).

1.4 Moism

Mo Zi (Mo Tzu) is considered to be the first opponent of Con-fucius. Moists (Mohists) constituted a strictly disciplined or-ganization that was capable of military action. The most im-portant idea of Mo Zi is his "all-embracing love" (*jian ai*). To Mo Zi, *ren* (human-heartedness) and *yi* (righteousness) signify an all-embracing love. If we love everyone equally and without discrimination, how can conflict arise and not be resolved? Mo Zi also develops a notion of "non-offensive war" to support his idea of an "all-embracing love." To Mo Zi, "all-embracing love" is an important method to resolve conflict not only between individuals, but also between countries and other entities. To encourage people to practice the principle of an all-embracing love, Mo Zi also develops religious and political sanctions, which are two other methods to resolve conflicts. However, Mo

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Zi's belief in the existence of spirits does not mean that he has any interest in supernatural matters; his only purpose was to introduce a religious sanction for his doctrine of all-embracing love. To Mo Zi, the authority of a ruler originates from the will of the people and the will of God: the ruler's main task is to supervise the activities of the people by rewarding those who practice all-embracing love and punishing those who do not (Fung 1948, 58).

1.5. Military Strategists

The theories of military strategists address how to manage and win conflicts. The most important military strategist was Sun Zi (Sun Tzu). His book *The Art of War* has thirteen chapters, which can be considered thirteen problems of conflict resolution: (1) five key elements that define positions in conflicts and evaluation of competitive strength; (2) resources and the economic nature of conflicts, including limiting the cost of competition and conflict; (3) the competitive strategies; (4) the importance of defending existing positions and recognizing opportunities; (5) the use of creativity and timing; (6) one's own weaknesses and strengths; (7) managing conflict and avoiding confrontation; (8) the need for flexibility and adaptability; (9) strategies for responding in different competitive arenas; (10) types of competitive positions and the causes of failure; (11) nine common competitive conditions and their offensive strategies; (12) the use of weapons generally and the use of the environment as a weapon; and (13) information-gathering. *The Art of War* has been widely applied to fields outside of the military – such as business, international relations, and sports – to teach people how to resolve conflict without actually being involved in serious conflicts. Other books by military strategists, such as Wu Zi, Liu Tao (*Six Principles of War*), Sun Bin Bing Fa (*Sun Bin Art of War*), and San Lue (*Three Tactics*), have been similarly influential. The thirty-six stratagems described in *The San Shi Liu Ji (The 36 Stratagems)* are also considered to be an ancient Chinese collection of strategies for resolving conflict (Chen and Starosta 1997–98; Chiao 1988, 1989; Chu 1991; Senger 1988).

1.6. Political Strategists

Two major political strategists were Su Qin and Zhang Yi; both were famous diplomats. Their primary strategies for addressing political conflict include forming or destroying allies and lobbying and negotiating using wisdom and intelligence. Political strategists also contribute to the flexibility of tactics. These ideas can be found in two classical books: *Gui Gu Zi* and *Zhan Guo Ce.* The latter (*Stratagems of the Warring States* or *Book of Warring State*, among others) vividly records the speeches and deeds of adherents of various political strategists. These strategies are now widely used in conflict resolution in the fields of business, international relations, and so on.

1.7. Buddhism

Buddhism was introduced to China during the East Han Dynasty (25–220AD), and has strongly influenced Chinese civilization. For example, Buddhism's concept of *Yuan* has been an important influence on Chinese conflict resolution (Chang 2002). More than ideas about the Universal Mind or the development of Chanism (Ch'anism, the philosophy of salience), the most important method developed by Chinese Buddhism for conflict resolution is "conflict avoidance" or "avoiding confrontation." Conflict avoidance is often explained using the Confucian notion of harmony (Chen and Chung 1994; Chen and Pan 1993). Leung et al. (2002), however, argue that to Confucians harmony embodies disagreement and open debate, and harmony as conflict avoidance is therefore not a prominent feature of classical Confucianism. Leung et al. (2002) believe that conflict avoidance is associated with cultural collectivism and primarily driven by the instrumental motive. While this assertion may be true, cultural collectivism itself is also strongly influenced by Chinese Buddhism; for this reason, Buddhism was often favored by many Chinese rulers. In particular, Buddhism provides philosophical ideas supporting the practice of "forbearance" and "endurance": to avoid conflict, people should learn to control and suppress their emotions, desires, and psychological impulses, relinquishing their own interests and personal goals.

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1.8. Mao Zedong

Mao Zedong's beliefs concerning conflict are revealed in his ideas of *mao-dun*. The term *mao-dun* is a combination of two Chinese weapons: *mao* (spear) and *dun* (shield). The original meaning of *mao-dun* is "mutually opposed" or "logically incompatible," and its literal meaning is similar to the English term "contradiction" (Yu 1997–98). To Mao, "there is nothing that does not contain *mao-dun*; without *mao-dun* nothing could exist. To deny *mao-dun* is to deny everything" (1960, 316). Thus, *mao-dun* is not necessarily negative; it can be both destructive and constructive (Yu 1997–98). In his famous philosophical work *On Mao-dun* (*On Contradiction*) (1960), Mao uses the term *mao-dun* in three different but related contexts (Yu 1997–98). Firstly, in a natural context, Mao argues that "*mao-dun* is present in all processes of objectively existing things" (1960, 345). Although "*mao-dun* exist everywhere," "they differ in accordance with the different nature of different things" (Mao 1968, 91). Secondly, and most importantly, in a social context *mao-dun* refers to "a dynamic relationship between different groups or classes that are opposed to one another as well as a dynamic relationship between different groups or classes that are not opposed to one another, or non-antagonistic," meaning that problems exist (Yu 1997–98). Thirdly, in a personal or cognitive context, *mao-dun* "does happen when the original ideas, theories, plans, programs fail to correspond with reality either in whole or in part and are wholly or partially incorrect" (Mao 1960, 335). That is, mao-dun takes place in thought or knowledge (Yu 1997–98).

How can this conflict be resolved? In *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People* (1957), Mao divided social contradictions into two types: those between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people. The *mao-dun* between ourselves and the enemy is antagonistic; the *mao-dun* among the people is non-antagonistic within the ranks of the people and has a non-antagonistic, as well as an antagonistic, aspect between the exploited and the exploiting classes. The *mao-dun* between ourselves and the enemy should be resolved using methods of dictatorship and struggle; however, the *mao-dun* among the people should be resolved using the democratic method, that is, the method of persuasion and education, which can be epitomized in the formula "unity-criticism-unity." In summary, the methods that Mao endorses to resolve *mao-dun* are struggle, dictatorship, persuasion, and education (the democratic method). To Mao, however, the resolution of the conflict does not mean that there was no conflict at all; rather, the end of the old conflict only means the beginning of the new conflict.

2. A Contingent Framework of Chinese Conflict Resolution and Some Fundamental Principles
2.1. A Contingent Framework

The above analysis shows that various Chinese schools have proposed methods of conflict resolution. According to the criteria concerning the degree of violence versus peace involved in conflict resolution, the level of self-concern versus other-concern or even non-concern, and the intention to resolve the conflict versus avoiding the conflict, I found that the eight schools of conflict resolution can be roughly arranged in a spectrum from the highest degree to the lowest degree as follows: Military Strategists, Mao Zedong, Legalists, Political Strategists, Confucians, Moists, Taoists, and Buddhists (Figure 1).

These methods are not always used simultaneously, indistinctively, or equally, however. Every method has its own conditional context. A systematical review of the literature over a period of some forty years (from the 1970s to the 2010s) using the IAD (institutional analysis and development) framework by Ostrom (2005) found that the factors that appear to be significant in selecting a specific conflict resolution method include the following: (1) the environmental resources or capital (including physical, human, financial, knowledge or information, social, and organizational or institutional) (Coleman 1990, Prescott and Visscher 1980; Tomer 1987; Yang 2007) involved in the conflict; (2) the formal and informal rules to resolve the conflict (Lan 1997); (3) the nature of the conflict (subjective conflict; objective conflict, including pure cooperation, pure competition, and mixed types; conflict between the enemies and ourselves; and conflict between people) (Lan 1997, 29–30; Mao 1957; Yu 2002); (4) the type of conflict

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Figure 1: A spectrum of conflict resolution methods of eight schools

[1] Military Strategists:

War and struggle   Using war strategies

[2] Mao Zedong:

Struggle   Dictatorship   Persuasion and education (the democratic method)

[3] Legalists:

Power or authority   By law and punishment   Art of conducing affairs and handling men

[4] Political Strategists:

Forming or destroying allies   Lobbying and Negotiation

[5] Confucians:

Institutional design and arrangements   Mediation   Education   Self-restraint and respect others

[6] Moists:

Religious and political sanctions   All-embracing love

[7] Taoists:

Daofa ziran   Wu-wei   Escape

[8] Buddhists

Conflict or confrontation avoidance   Forbearance and endurance

Violence _____ Peace
Self-concern _____ Other-concern _____ Non-concern
Resolve the conflict _____ Avoid the conflict

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(unstructured, partially structured, fully structured, and revolutionary) (Lan 1997, 30–31); (5) the level of conflict (intensity or severity) (Yu 2002); (6) the scale of the conflict (number of actors and amount of resources involved, scale of divergence of interests; the classification of intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, interorganizational, revolutionary conflicts also describes different levels of conflict) (Derr 1972); (7) the time required to resolve the conflict (including occasions, timelines, opportunities, effectiveness for a given period of time) (Pierson 2011; Pruitt and Kim 2004); (8) the types of actors (for example observers, active parties, and resolvers) (Lan 1997, 31–33); (9) the distribution of resources/capital among the actors

(Yu 2002); (10) the preferences and motivation of the actors (for example, willingness to use different methods, such as the third-party method) (Stephenson and Pops 1989; Yu 2002); (11) the amount of information and knowledge (Yang et al. 2015; Ostrom 2005); and (12) the calculation of costs and benefits (Yang et al. 2015; Ostrom 2005). Factors (1) and (2) can be deemed exogenous (Ostrom 2005), factors (3) through (7) are objective, and factors (8) through (12) are subjective. These factors can be examined in a simple framework (Figure 2), in which a set of independent or "structural" variables shape the choice of conflict resolution method.

Figure 2. A framework of understanding and selecting special conflict resolution methods for specific types of conflicts
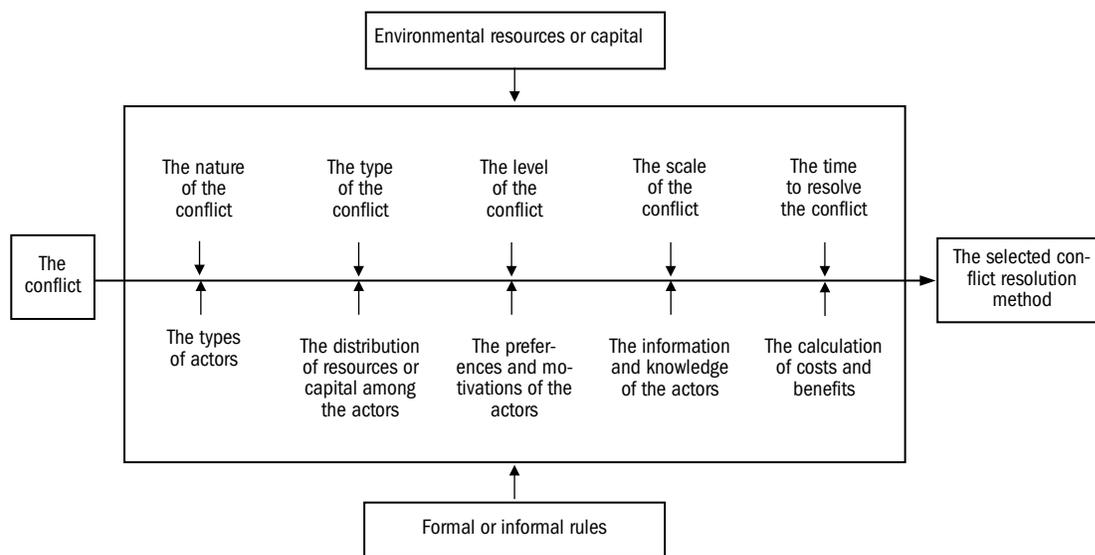
To the Chinese, the resolution methods set forth by the eight schools form a set of possible strategies. According to Mao and Chinese philosophy, one should always concretely analyze concrete problems. For a concrete conflict, a concrete and specific resolution method should be selected (Mao 1957). This approach grants the Chinese a contingent framework within which to select the conflict resolution method and can be called a contingent framework of the Chinese conflict resolution paradigm (Figure 3).

2.2. Some Fundamental Principles for Using the Twelve Factors to Select CS Methods

Because there are twelve factors that simultaneously determine which methods are selected, it is difficult to map out all the possible conditions or contexts for every possible method in this short paper. Some fundamental principles, however, can be described as follows:

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(1) If environmental resources or capital are unequally affected, the actors are more likely to adopt the extreme strategies shown in Figure 1. They are more likely to select methods involving more violence, greater self-interest, and a higher likelihood of resolving the conflict; or, they may tend to the other extreme, selecting the methods involving more peace, less self-interest, and a higher likelihood of avoiding the conflict. However, if resources or capital are equally affected, the actors are more likely to choose the methods at the middle of the continuum, especially those in which they pay more attention to the other actors' interests. For example, some studies (Chung 1996; Ma 1992; Ting-Toomey et al. 1991) found that people tend to be more non-confrontational and indirect in conflicts in a high-context culture, while they tend to be more confrontational and more direct in a low-context culture.

(2) If there are more formal and informal rules, the actors are more likely to choose the formal methods depicted in the middle of Figure 1 (such as institutional design and arrangements, law and punishment, and religious and political sanctions) to resolve the conflict. However, if there are fewer formal and informal rules, the actors are more likely to choose the extreme methods depicted on the left and right sides of Figure 1 (Lan 1997, 30–31). (3) If the nature of the conflict is more objective or is more likely to be a conflict between the enemy and ourselves, the actors are more likely to choose the extreme methods (at the left or the right side of the spectrum) shown in Figure 1. In, contrast if the conflict is more subjective or is more likely to be a conflict between people, the actors are more likely to choose the intermediate methods depicted in Figure 1 (Lan 1997, 29–30; Mao 1957).

(4) If the conflict is a revolutionary conflict, the actors are more likely to pursue the methods depicted on the left side of Figure 1. If it is a fully unstructured conflict, the actors are more likely to select the extreme methods on either the left or right side of Figure 1. If it is a partially structured conflict, the actors

tend to avoid selecting the extreme and fully structured methods (such as law, institutional arrangements, political sanctions, and so on), instead selecting other methods between the left extreme and the fully structured methods or between the fully structured methods and the right extreme. If it is a fully structured conflict, the actors are more likely to select the fully structured methods, as described above (Lan 1997, 30–31).

(5) If the conflict level is high, the actors are more likely to choose the left-side methods in Figure 1. If the conflict level is low, they are more likely to choose the right-side methods (Pruitt and Kim 2004).

(6) If the scale of the conflict is large, the actors are more likely to choose the left-side methods in Figure 1. However, if it is small, they are more likely to choose the right-side methods (for example, an old Chinese saying says, "If this can be borne, what cannot be borne?" This proverb means that people cannot bear conflict and tend to fight. However, another old Chinese saying is, "If you cannot bear small suffering, this will harm your big plans." This proverb means that to realize a larger goal, you should pursue avoidance, forbearance, or endurance strategies to endure some small things). (7) If the conflict is resolved later and the time to resolve the conflict is limited, the actors are more likely to choose the extreme methods, either on the left or the right, in Figure 1. However, if the conflict is resolved earlier and time is plentiful, the actors are more likely to choose the intermediate methods depicted in Figure 1 (Pruitt and Kim 2004).

(8) There are different ways to categorize the types of actors. As described above, if parties are involved in an intense conflict, they are more likely to pursue the left-side methods depicted in Figure 1. If they are resolvers, they are more likely to choose the intermediate methods. If they are observers, they are more likely to choose the right-side methods (Lan 1997, 31–33).

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Figure 3. A contingent framework of the Chinese conflict resolution paradigm
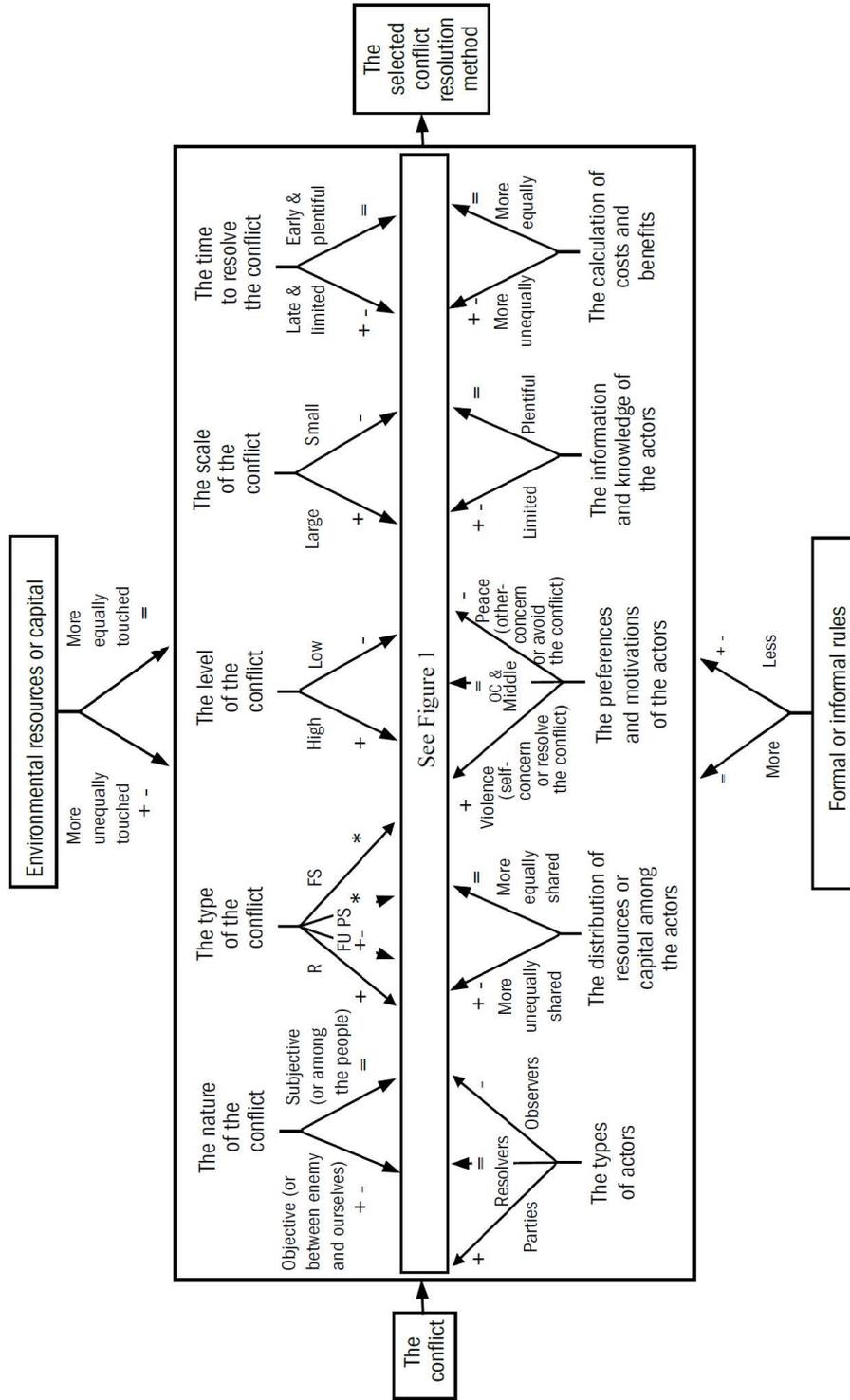
Note: (1) If, under the influence of one factor, the actors are more likely to choose the methods that involve more violence, greater concern for their own interests, and a higher likelihood to resolve the conflict, that is, if they are more likely to choose the methods depicted on the left side of Figure 1, the influence of this factor is denoted by "+"; if vice versa (here, the opposite extreme of self-concern is non-concern), that is, they are more likely to choose the methods depicted on the right side of Figure 1, the influence of this factor yields both potentials, the influence is denoted by "+ -". If the factor's influence makes the actors more likely to pursue the methods in the middle of the spectrum, that is, if these methods involve more concern about the other actors' interests, then the influence of this factor is denoted by "=". If the factor's influence affects the concrete methods (as described above), it is denoted by "*".

(2) R = revolutionary conflict; FU = fully unstructured conflict; PS = partially structured conflict; FS = fully structured conflict; OC = other-concerns.

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(9) If resources or capital are unequally distributed, the actors are more likely to take the extreme (left-side or right-side) methods; if they are shared more equally, the actors are more likely to take the intermediate methods. For example, one study (Chen, Ryan, and Chen 2000) found that the Chinese tend to use a dominating style to resolve conflict when they are empowered.

(10) The actors' preferences and motivations are very complex. According to the criteria of "violence," "concern," and "resolve or avoid the conflict," if the actors prefer violent methods, are more self-concerned, and are more likely to resolve the conflict, they are more likely to pursue the left-side methods in Figure 1. If the actors prefer peace, are less self-concerned, and prefer to avoid the conflict, they are more likely to choose the right-side methods. If the actors emphasize other concerns and have an intermediate degree of "violence" and "resolve or avoid the conflict," they are more likely to select the intermediate methods. For example, some studies (Gudykunst et al. 1988; Hsu 1981; Huang 2000; Okabe 1983) found that people are more likely to adopt a confrontational method in conflict in a culture in which direct communication is preferred, while people are more likely to employ the avoidance method in cultures where an indirect communication style is preferred. Some studies (Peng, He, and Zhu 2000; Liu and Chen 2000) argue that amidst conflict, Chinese employees in international companies in China are more likely to adopt an avoiding, obliging, and integrating method and are less likely to adopt dominating styles.

(11) If information and knowledge are plentiful, the actors are more likely to choose the intermediate methods; if they are limited, the actors are more likely to choose the extreme (left-side or right-side) methods (Stephenson and Pops 1989). For example, socio-emotional communication in Chinese organizations prevents frustration, dissatisfaction, and conflict (Chen and Chung 1997).

(12) If the cost and the benefit are unequally shared, the actors are more likely to adopt the extreme (left-side or right-side) methods depicted in Figure 1; however, if they are more equally shared, the actors are more likely to select the intermediate methods (Stephenson and Pops 1989). For example,

some studies argue that Chinese harmonious exchange behaviors in conflict are based on the principle of reciprocity (Jin 1988). Thus, if being shamed by an out-group member causes an actor to feel that his/her cost has risen, it will provoke a strong negative emotion and public conflict (Chen 2002, 12).

3. Implications and Relevance to Contemporary Public Governance Practices

3.1. Chinese Methods and Some Useful Rationales or Principles of Conflict Resolution

The framework shows that unlike methods such as litigation, punitive sanctions, arbitration, and conflict containment often emphasized by the existing literature (Lan 1997; O'Leary and Bingham 2003; Sidaway 2005; Stephenson and Pops 1989) as well as some alternative methods such as mediation, negotiation, consensus-building, joint problem-solving, informal arbitration, nonbinding minitrials, partnering, and outlets for emotions (Lan 1997), Chinese people demonstrate different methods to manage contemporary conflict (Chen 2002, 12). The methods and ideas include (1) the education method and the method of respecting others, as emphasized by Confucians and Mao Zedong; (2) Taoist methods of "*daofa ziran*" and "*wuwei*", ideas of acting through doing less (*wuwei er youwei*) and understanding or resolving problems from their opposites, and Mao Zedong's important development of *mao-dun*; (3) the religious method and the method of all-embracing love proposed by Moists; (4) Taoist and Buddhist methods of conflict or confrontation avoidance and forbearance and endurance, which are helpful in avoiding conflict escalation or enlargement (Pruitt and Kim 2004); (5) the strategies, tactics, and art of conflict resolution emphasized by Legalists, military strategists, and political strategists; (6) the importance of power, authority, and sanctions emphasized by Legalists; and (7) the importance of institutional design and arrangements, especially the rules of *li* (Xiao 2002), emphasized by Confucians.

Furthermore, according to the framework, some useful rationales or principles of conflict resolution can also be summarized as follows. (1) Government is one of the parties—but not the only party—that can be used to resolve a conflict; various actors, such as scholars, religious groups, elders, and so on, may be available. (2) The multiple methods available for

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conflict resolution imply the multiple roles of public administrators and their various conflict resolution methods. (3) Because the selection of conflict resolution methods is influenced by numerous variables, and because public administrators have different roles and methods, public administrators should always select particular methods for particular conflicts and only take part in the conflicts that require their involvement. (4) To resolve a conflict, it is important to make a concrete analysis of a concrete conflict (Mao 1957, 1960, 1968). (5) There is a continuous spectrum of conflict resolution methods, and the most appropriate method should be selected. According to Chinese concepts of harmony, the intermediate methods shown in Figure 1 should be considered first; the extreme methods should only be utilized if the intermediate methods do not work. In China, this principle is also called *xian li hou bin* (courtesy before coercion) (Chen 2002, 12). China's conflict management approach to the nuclear standoff on the Korean Peninsula (Kim 2006) and the conflict in the South China Sea are good examples of this principle. (6) The collaborative conflict resolution method is important, as many actors and many methods may be involved in one conflict (Liu and Chen 2002). Based on Confucius' idea that morally superior people are able to maintain harmonious relationships even if they have different views[1], along with the concept of harmony that is foundational to all schools of Chinese thought, including Confucianism, Moism, and Taoism (Chen 2002, 5), different-methods of conflict resolution may not be necessarily substitutive or opposite: they can be collaborative in different contexts. Jia (2002) also found that, in contrast to its Western counterpart, Chinese mediation is also a synthesis of prevention, negotiation, litigation, arbitration, and education. (7) The literature on conflict resolution methods has at least three levels: the philosophy, the strategies, and the tactics and art. The different schools provide important philosophical foundations for Chinese conflict resolution methods; the methods shown in Figure 1 are important strategies; and there are numerous methods that can be referred to as tactics or art. For example,

the method of self-restraint and respecting others entails various concrete tactics, such as indirect communication, caring about the other's pride in a perfunctory manner, obeying publicly and defying privately, giving face (*mian-zi*), and fighting overtly and struggling covertly (Chen and Ma 2002; Chen and Starosta 1997–98; Hwang 1997–98). The third party in a mediation method can be the government, elders, scholars, religious groups, businessmen, and so on (Yang 2007). (8) Modern scholars and practitioners should be encouraged to learn from history and identify the wisdom of ancient philosophers (Heisey 2002; Huang 2002; Kluver 2002).

3.2. The Relevance to Contemporary Chinese Public Governance Practices

In order to empirically study the relevance of Chinese wisdom in contemporary China, a survey was conducted from June 11 to 19 of 2016 through Questionnaire Star, a professional questionnaire survey system, through which any people who visited the system and were interested in this survey could fill in the questionnaire. To improve the sample size, I also used a snowball sampling method to invite people to visit the survey system and to fill in the questionnaire. I first sent messages to ten people with different occupations through emails and the mobile phone short message service to invite them to visit the survey system and encourage them to recommend this survey to others. But I did not know whether these people really visited the system and filled in the questionnaire and who and how many of respondents were involved in the survey through the snowball methods. Finally, the number of final visits to the questionnaire was 1081, while the number of valid responses was 651 from approximately thirty provinces in China, for a response rate of 60.41 percent (Table 1a). Among the valid responses, male and female respondents accounted for about half of the total (Table 1b), and their ages ranged from under 18 to over 60 (Table 1c). Furthermore, the respondents very diverse, covering fifteen categories of occupation, such as administration, students, teachers and professors, public relations, and human resources (Table 1d).

[1] The master (Confucius) said, "The gentleman agrees with others without being an echo. The small man echoes without being in agreement" (Lau 1983).

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Table 1: Survey distribution (2016)

Distributions	Numbers		Percentages (%)
a. Geographical distribution	Number of visits	Number of valid responses	Reponses rate
Beijing	343	233	67.93
Guangdong	157	84	53.50
Jiangxi	135	76	56.30
Jiangsu	119	56	47.06
Inner Mongolia	8	20	250.00
Shanxi	42	20	47.62
Shanghai	65	17	26.15
Hebei	13	15	115.38
Sichuan	22	14	63.64
Zhejiang	17	14	82.35
Jiangxi	91	11	22.22
Shaanxi	11	10	90.91
Shandong	19	10	52.63
Fujian	17	7	41.18
Hunan	11	7	63.64
Tianjin	6	6	100.00
Hubei	10	5	50.00
Henan	17	5	29.41
Heilongjiang	9	4	44.44
Xinjiang	1	4	400.00
Chongqing	13	4	30.77
Guizhou	0	3	0.00
Gansu	2	2	100.00
Hainan	4	2	50.00
Jilin	3	2	66.67
Liaoning	2	2	100.00
Qinghai	0	2	0.00
Yunnan	4	1	25.00
Ningxia	2	1	50.00
Anhui	4	1	25.00
Taiwan	1	0	0.00
Other countries	61	10	66.67
Unknown	9	5	55.56
Total	1081	653	60.41
b. Gender distribution			
Male		330	50.54
Female		323	49.46
c. Age distribution			
Under 18		32	4.90
18–25		227	34.76
26–30		179	27.41
31–40		138	21.13
41–50		45	6.89
51–60		21	3.22
Over 60		11	1.68

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d. Occupation distribution

Students	185	28.33
Production	24	3.68
Marketing	43	6.58
Public relations	17	2.6
Customer service	8	1.23
Logistics	62	9.49
Human resources	23	3.52
Financial audit	35	5.36
Clerical service	18	2.76
Technology research and development	28	4.29
Administration and Management	55	8.42
Teachers and professors	63	9.65
Consulting service	9	1.38
Professionals*	14	2.14
Others	69	10.57

* Such as accountants, lawyers, architects, doctors and nurses, and journalists.

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Table 2: Conflict resolution methods in public governance in contemporary China as rated by survey respondents (2016)

Conflict methods and their schools		"Agree" and "strongly agree" (%)	Different CR methods		The eight schools	
			Score	Ranking	Score	Ranking
1. Military strategists	1. War and struggle	17.00	2.03	21	2.4	8
	2. Using war strategies	28.49	2.67	14		
2. Mao Zedong	3. Struggle	20.67	2.34	18	2.7	5
	4. Dictatorship	19.29	2.22	19		
	5. Persuasion and education (the democratic method)	62.64	3.76	6		
3. Legalists	6. Power or authority	35.37	2.98	11	3.5	2
	7. By law and punishment	64.32	3.79	5		
	8. Art of conducting affairs and handling men	59.11	3.62	8		
4. Political strategists	9. Forming or destroying allies	35.53	2.96	12	3.3	3
	10. Lobbying and negotiation	63.09	3.71	7		
5. Confucians	11. Institutional design and arrangements	63.40	3.80	4	3.9	1
	12. Mediation	69.53	3.90	2		
	13. Education	67.38	3.86	3		
	14. Self-restraint and respect others	72.28	4.02	1		
6. Moists	15. Religious and political sanctions	24.66	2.67	14	3.1	4
	16. All-embracing love	51.30	3.51	9		
7. Taoists	17. Daofa ziran	45.94	3.36	10	2.7	7
	18. Wu-wei	21.74	2.51	16		
	19. Escape	16.08	2.10	20		
8 Buddhists	20. Conflict or confrontation avoidance	22.66	2.48	17	2.7	6
	21. Forbearance and endurance	27.41	2.85	13		
Average		42.28	3.10		3.1	

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Table 3: Factors influencing the selection of conflict resolution methods in public governance in contemporary China as rated by survey respondents (2016).

	Factors	Percentages of "agree" and "strongly agree" (%)	Score	Ranking
1	Environmental resources or capital	52.06	3.49	5
2	Formal or informal rules	48.70	3.46	7
3	The nature of the conflict	49.16	3.40	9
4	The type of the conflict	44.72	3.34	11
5	The level of the conflict	44.87	3.32	12
6	The scale of the conflict	47.62	3.40	9
7	The time to resolve the conflict	50.23	3.42	8
8	The types of actors	50.84	3.47	6
9	The distribution of resources or capital among the actors	55.13	3.57	1
10	The preferences and motivations of the actors	53.14	3.50	4
11	The information and knowledge of the actors	54.67	3.57	2
12	The calculation of the costs and benefits	54.21	3.57	3
	Average	50.45	3.46	

Two major research questions were designed to evaluate agreement with conflict resolution methods and factors influencing the use and selection of different conflict resolution methods, based on a five-point scale (range: "strongly disagree, moderately disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree"). When calculating the final evaluation scores, the values of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" were assigned 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

More than 40 percent of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with using the listed twenty-one methods to resolve conflict. The methods of Confucianism received the highest score, followed by the methods of Legalists, political strategists, and Moists, while Taoists and military strategists were the last two (Table 2), even though I listed only the twenty-one methods and did not give any hints about their relationship with the eight schools in the survey. More than 50 percent of respondents on average "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the importance of the influence of the twelve listed factors, and the gaps between these factors are very small (Table 3).

These findings suggest that all the methods proposed by the eight schools are still used in contemporary China; and interestingly, the most commonly used methods are the methods proposed by Confucianism. This indicates that, although the ideas and ideologies of contemporary China are quite diverse, Confucianism still plays the most important role in Chinese society. Furthermore, the importance of Legalism as second to Confucianism also indicates that, even in contemporary China, Confucianism and legalism are still the most important thoughts of Chinese governance. This is consistent with ancient China, where governance was often summarized as Yang Confucianism and Yin Legalism (yangru yinfa): both Confucianism and Legalism had their place. Meanwhile, the lowest scores for the methods of "escape" and "war and struggle" indicate that, even when facing conflict, Chinese people prefer to find methods to resolve it rather than to escape conflict; they choose the

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"war and struggle" method only when they see no alternative. Furthermore, the high percentages and scores for factors influencing the selection of conflict resolution methods indicate that the respondents agree strongly about the importance of all these twelve factors, not only the nature of the conflict, the type, and the actors (Lan 1997), and the contingent framework of the Chinese conflict resolution paradigm shown in Figure 3 has been empirically proved. Certainly, these should be further tested with larger and more comprehensive datasets based on more random surveys in the future, and many other related problems, such as directions of their influence and paths, should be further studied.

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