

**Xi Jinping and Confucianism:
Legitimacy and a National Moral Identity**

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Introduction and Review of the Literature

Xi Jinping sits at a desk at the front of the auditorium of The Great Hall of the People; a bright red name plate with his name in tiny, modest black print sits to the left of the microphones—as though he is just another government official who needs a name tag to be properly identified. At his elbow is a white tea cup with a lid. He reads the speech comfortably from his desk, his words projected out to the audience. The audience sit at various levels of attention; some blinking hard to stay awake, others composed and seemingly attentive. The occasion is the 40th Anniversary of the Reforms and Opening-up. Xi’s ease as he delivers his hours long speech is misleading—there is no doubt that each word was chosen carefully, painstakingly, and with deliberate intent.¹ Most political speeches are—how many times did President John F. Kennedy and his speech writers go over and over the line, “ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country,” wondering if this would be the line which would stay rooted in the nation’s collective memory for decades?²

Presidents’ speeches are written and delivered for a purpose: to persuade and reach their people. Americans remember Kennedy’s inauguration speech to this day because it spoke to who we are as a country (or rather, who we perceived ourselves to be). It was a call to action, and it was answered. Xi Jinping, China’s most powerful president in decades, has perhaps more reason than most to carefully choose every word. The Chinese Communist Party experienced a massive upheaval of their governmental institutions when Xi altered years of precedent to facilitate a

¹ Please see Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propoganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*, 2008; Anne-Marie Brady, *China’s Thought Management* (New York City: Routledge, 2012). Brady’s research reveals the importance that the Chinese Communist Party places on their outward appearance, and the lengths that they will go to in order to portray the image/message they desire.

² ““Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You,”” UShistory.org, accessed November 4, 2019, <http://www.ushistory.org/documents/ask-not.htm>.

change to the national constitution which removed presidential term limits and enshrined his thought alongside Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping's.³ This sudden and dramatic change raises questions concerning the motivations behind the decision, the context in which it occurred, and the effects it will have on the People's Republic of China in the short and long-term. These are questions that no doubt rest upon the minds of the Chinese citizens listening to their president's speech at the 40th Anniversary of the Reform and Opening-up.

At first glance, Xi's move to consolidate power seems dangerous; after all, he is breaking with years of tradition. Deng—who was responsible for the reforms and opening-up that allowed China's economy to boom and eventually become the world's second largest economy—had put in place the constitutional amendment which limited a president to only two terms.⁴ Both presidents before Xi had relinquished power, though Jiang Zemin extended his tenure beyond the limit briefly.⁵ It is impossible to determine exactly why Xi made his decision to extend his presidency indefinitely, and what he hopes to achieve by doing so. But it lead me to consider the unique political and social landscape that exists in China today, and how the shift in power might indicate a shift in policy.

The following literature review will introduce the concept of national moral identity in China over the course of a century of conflict and fundamental social, political, and economic change, in order to provide context to my analysis of what Xi might have been trying to convey in his speech. As I stated before, speeches are meant to persuade—so what are the values that the Chinese people identify with, and how might Xi use these values to reach the Chinese people?

³ Chris Buckley and Keith Bradsher, "China Moves to Let Xi Stay in Power by Abolishing Term Limit," *The New York Times*, February 25, 2018.

⁴ Charlie Campbell, "'More Opposition in Mao's Time.' Why China's Xi Jinping May Have to Rule for Life," *Time Magazine*, March 2018, <http://time.com/5195211/china-xi-jinping-presidential-term-limits-npc/>.

⁵ Campbell.

As I pursued this question, I found that many scholars before me had followed a similar path of thought. Therefore, the second section of the literature review will focus on the re-emergence of Confucianism in Chinese political culture and society, and how this religion which has been woven into Chinese culture for thousands of years and was relentlessly demonized by the CCP could once again become a tool for presidents such as Xi to connect to the people.

Searching for a National Moral Identity

It is likely that if one dives into a scholarly article on the topic of Chinese society and culture, the author of said article will mention something about a loss of identity. This is a topic which forms the backbone of my analysis of Xi Jinping's speech—but what is it? I have chosen to use the term 'national moral identity' throughout my paper, as I believe it most accurately describes this state of Chinese society. By national moral identity, I mean this: the set of values which are collectively held by the Chinese people and form their identity as citizens of the People's Republic of China. For example, Americans as a collective generally believe in several values which we think identify us as American: courage, independence, leadership, and creativity (to name a few). What are the values that transcend regions, religions, and ethnicities to define what makes the citizens of the People's Republic of China who they are?

With this definition in mind, I will review the ways in which scholars who have written on this topic before me have understood and described the lack of national moral identity in China which followed an economically, politically, and socially tumultuous century. Diana Lary captures the breakdown of Chinese society during the second world war in *The Chinese People At War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945*.⁶ Lary describes the loss of

⁶ Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

national moral identity during this stage in China's history, making the intriguing suggestion that the "violence of the Cultural Revolution was an outcome of the eight years of upheaval of the Resistance War [WWII], which came to an end only two decades before the Cultural Revolution started".⁷ She provides several examples of fundamental changes to traditional Chinese culture which supports the idea that the war eroded national and cultural identity, leaving a gap that was to be filled later by Maoism during the Cultural Revolution: the separation/break-up of families, migration from ancestral homes to profoundly different cultural regions, and the collapse of social hierarchy (all Chinese people suffered the same consequences of war, poor or rich).⁸

Following the chaos of WWII and bitter fighting between the KMT (Kuomintang) and the Chinese Communist Party, the moral identity of every PRC citizen quickly centered around the ideals and values of socialist revolution. Propaganda, communist education, and laws and decrees handed down from the CCP government saw to this.⁹ Literature of the Red Guard Movement is extensive; the movement saw both the destruction of what remained of traditional culture (religions, philosophy, and social hierarchy) as well as mass violence perpetrated by those who considered Mao's values and ideology as sacred.¹⁰ As Dr. Anthony DeBlasi states in his analysis of Confucianism's reemergence in contemporary Chinese society, "the cataclysmic events of the 1960s and 1970s created a cynicism about Maoist culture as a source of legitimate values."¹¹

⁷ Lary, *The Chinese People at War*, 12-13.

⁸ Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945*, 30-40.

⁹ Anthony DeBlasi, "Selling Confucius: The Negotiated Return of Tradition in Post-Socialist China," in *The Sage Returns*, ed. Kenneth J Hammond and Jeffrey L Richey (Albany, 2015), 67-92.

¹⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the Maoist identity which took over an entire generation of Chinese people, please see Dr. Yang Guobin's book *The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China*.

¹¹ DeBlasi, "Selling Confucius", 71. Also see Jun Deng and Craig A. Smith, "The Rise of New Confucianism and the Return of Spirituality to Politics in Mainland China," *China Information* 32, no. 2 (2018): 294-314, <https://doi.org/10.117/0920203X18764041>.

Perhaps no other author pinpoints the loss of national moral identity at this juncture than Jonathan D. Spence in his landmark work, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution 1895-1980*. He creatively illustrates the slow dissolving of Chinese national moral identity by following the lives and works of three of China's intellectual giants: Kang Youwei, Lu Xun, and Ding Ling.¹² This narrative spans a century of history and details the convulsions in society caused by several wars and revolutions. Spence encapsulates perfectly the void in national moral identity which was left after the 20th century and particularly the mania caused by Mao's cult of personality, and his ruminations on this topic deserve to be quoted at length:

After so many years of intense study of foreign imperialism and the shortcomings of the feudal past, how was one meant to react to the elaborate trade arrangements being made with the United States and Japan... what was to happen to love, as the Party, confronted by a Chinese population moving inexorably toward the one-billion mark, began to plan for one-child households on a nationwide scale and inevitably intruded into the most private personal spheres, backing their prescriptions with economic and educational sanctions? Were art and poetry to move out of Party control, and if so, where? Back to abandoned Western domains of cubism, symbolism, romanticism, where a new generation of Xu Zhimos might feel at home? Had China's long revolution really settled their lives, or would they have to define its elusive messages anew, trying to create for themselves and their country something that had been promised for almost a century and yet so seldom grasped?¹³

Spence is describing the dissonance that came with the hypocritical actions of the CCP after Mao. After decades of jailing or torturing (or both) people who were not communist enough or anti-American enough, suddenly the CCP was embracing the Americans and developing an economy based on capitalism. The questions that Spence poses persisted throughout the economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s to the present day— the Tiananmen Square protests in

¹² Jonathan D. Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution 1895-1980* (New York City: Penguin Books Ltd, 1981), 19.

¹³ Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution 1895-1980*, 415.

1989 were a testament to the disillusionment and confusion felt by the Chinese people, who could not reconcile their national moral identity of the past forty years with the changes to society and government.¹⁴ China's economic prosperity has had the effect of instilling "a strong sense of national pride in the public at large," while also demanding for China "to play a larger cultural role in the globalized world."¹⁵

This brings the search for a national moral identity to a place of huge importance for President Xi, who has worked diligently to solidify China's presence on the world stage. What culture will China be presenting to the world? What values do they wish to claim and display? How can these values simultaneously represent the public and Xi himself, without being hypocritical in the face of Xi's recent political maneuvering? Most importantly to my analysis, what moral identity can Xi provide to the Chinese people that will legitimize himself and the CCP in the place of economic strength and national pride?

The Resurgence of Confucianism

Confucianism's return to Chinese society after Mao came at two levels: at the public/cultural level and governmental level. In the People's Republic of China, party and state are the same thing and often meld the two levels of society together. The public must adhere to the Party's ideological and cultural guidelines, but the Chinese Communist Party must also react to the natural social changes and movements which occur among the people. The interconnectedness of the re-emergence of Confucianism and the search for a national moral identity is clear; many of

¹⁴ Kenneth J Hammond and Jefferey L Richey, "Introduction: The Death and Resurrection of Confucianism," in *The Sage Returns*, ed. Kenneth J Hammond and Jefferey L Richey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 1–9, 4. Also see Shaohua Hu, "Confucianism and Contemporary Chinese Politics," *Politics & Policy* 35, no. 1 (2007): 136–53.

¹⁵ DeBlasi, "Selling Confucius: The Negotiated Return of Tradition in Post-Socialist China.", 73.

the authors cited in the section above will be cited here as well, as many of them wrote in the context of Confucianism's decline in China, as well as its' contemporary rise in prominence.

The Sage Returns provides the most over-arching discussion of the myriad of ways in which Confucianism has gained popularity in China today.¹⁶ The book is composed of multiple essays by scholars who study Confucianism and contemporary politics in Asia; Kenneth Hammond was an editor and wrote the introduction, as well as an essay within the book. In the introduction, Hammond attributes Confucianism's newfound popularity to Chinese people "beginning to look back into the country's traditional culture to seek bases for moral values and for ways of understanding the world around them."¹⁷ The rest of the book expands on the ways in which Confucianism is being consumed as a commodity and used in today's society: to market Confucian values for mass consumption; as a lens through which to debate political ideology; to confront Westernization through Internet debate; and finally, as a means of understanding the values of millennial youth.¹⁸ It is one thing for an ancient tradition such as Confucianism to make its way back into academic circles; it is quite another for it to be distributed and understood in the ways which Hammond outlined above by a population of nearly two billion people.

Changes in Chinese society are often accompanied by (or instigated by) policy shifts within the CCP. For example, scholars generally agree that on all levels of society, exposure to the rest of the world allowed Confucianism to step back into the public realm as the Chinese

¹⁶ Kenneth J Hammond, *The Sage Returns*, ed. Kenneth J Hammond and Jeffery L Richey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Hammond and Richey, "Introduction: The Death and Resurrection of Confucianism", 4.

¹⁸ Hammond and Richey, 5-7.

people and the Chinese Communist Party began to define who they were within it.¹⁹ This exposure happened as a result of Deng Xiaoping's opening up and reforms, and the policies that accompanied it. However, the CCP has also had a more direct hand in facilitating the return of Confucianism to Chinese society.

Anne-Marie Brady is a professor at the University of Canterbury and has written extensively on the topic of CCP propaganda and thought work. In an introduction to a book she wrote on this topic called *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*, Brady acknowledges the secretive nature of the CCP, and the subsequent difficulty in obtaining materials for her research.²⁰ She attributes the impressive amount of information provided in the book partly to “a couple of serendipitous finds of internal (*neibu*) publication on propaganda work,” and also to people within China who she did not name “for reasons of their own personal safety”.²¹ Therefore, Brady's book that was published in 2012 (two years after *Marketing Dictatorship*), was written with a considerable understanding of the CCP propaganda system. This book, entitled *China's Thought Management*, contains a chapter which investigates what she refers to as “State Confucianism”.²²

In this chapter, Brady claims that “a careful reading of pertinent Party policy documents from the 1980s to the present reveals that the current popular Confucian revival began with the imprimatur of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) support, and in recent years it has now been

¹⁹ Anne-Marie Brady, *China's Thought Management* (New York City: Routledge, 2012); Deng and Smith, “The Rise of New Confucianism and the Return of Spirituality to Politics in Mainland China”; Hu, “Confucianism and Contemporary Chinese Politics”, xiv.

²⁰ Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2008), <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucb/reader.action?docID=4455814&query=>.

²¹ Brady, xiii-xiv.

²² Brady, *China's Thought Management*, 57.

fully incorporated into official discourse.”²³ Confucian propaganda was disseminated through terms such as “Chineseness”, in the creation of tourist sites for visitors seeking an outlook on Chinese culture, and through academic discourse (facilitated closely by the CCP).²⁴ She touches upon Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao’s policies that encouraged traditional values and morals, as well as many other CCP initiatives that carried a distinct undertone of Confucian ideology. Brady leaves no doubt that the CCP had a heavy hand in bringing Confucianism back into the mainstream for their own purposes—a somewhat ominous take compared to the optimistic tone of *The Sage Returns*.

The re-integration of Confucianism into mainstream Chinese society is well-documented by many scholars. I have introduced only a few of them, as they provide a clear and diverse analysis of the ways in which Confucianism is represented in contemporary society. It is clear that the CCP recognized the need to reclaim its status as the moral and ideological leader of the Chinese people after the death of Mao, and in subsequent years intellectuals were able to study and write about Confucianism, allowing a dialogue into the political and social norms of the day and how they related to Confucian tradition.²⁵ This in turn spread to the general public, who were in search of their own sense of a national moral identity-- perhaps they found an answer in books, movies, political campaigns, and other mediums which integrated Confucian ideology.²⁶

²³ Brady, 57.

²⁴ Brady, 59-60.

²⁵ Deng and Smith, “The Rise of New Confucianism and the Return of Spirituality to Politics in Mainland China,” 299.

²⁶ Brady, *China’s Thought Management*; DeBlasi, “Selling Confucius: The Negotiated Return of Tradition in Post-Socialist China”; Nathan Gardels and Daniel Bell, “China Goes Its Own Way,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2010), <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.colorado.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1540-5842.2010.01151.x>; Shufang Wu, “Politicisation and De-Politicisation of Confucianism in Contemporary China: A Review of Intellectuals,” *Issues and Studies* 51, no. 3 (2015): 165–205.

The Chinese people's search for a national moral identity, the threat that this search poses to the CCP's legitimacy, the resurgence of Confucianism, and Xi Jinping's drastic move to consolidate power combine to form the impetus for Xi to use Confucian ideology in his own way in order to solidify his legitimacy to the people. I will make the case that Xi is using Confucian ideology in his rhetoric by analyzing a speech given at the 40th Anniversary of the Economic Reforms and Opening-up, building upon the literature which has been summarized here and adding a new perspective which focuses solely on Xi's rhetoric.

Confucianism and the Chinese Communist Party

Brief History of Confucianism in China

Confucianism is a Chinese philosophy, religion, and culture that extends back to the beginning of China's history. Its importance in Chinese culture then and now cannot be understated, and it is necessary to establish an understanding of Confucianism in and of itself to comprehend the significance of its re-emergence in contemporary society, and why Confucianism would provide an effective tool of persuasion for Xi Jinping. This section will provide a brief historical context of Confucianism within China up to the creation of the People's Republic of China, while the section following will examine the principles and ideas that make up Confucianism. Of course, China's history stretches back thousands of years—it seems ridiculous that I could provide any kind of helpful understanding of Confucianism in a couple of pages. However, the focus of this paper is not how Confucianism has developed over time, but how Xi might be using Confucian ideology now in order to persuade his constituents. Therefore, this section will illustrate *some* of the ways in which Confucianism has become an integral part of Chinese society.

Confucius, who is often referred to in Chinese as 孔子 (kongzi) or 孔夫子 (kongfuzi), was born during the Warring States period in 551 BCE.²⁷ What is today known as Confucianism is in fact based upon a philosophical school developed by many scholars of ‘the rites’, or *rujia* (儒家), though Confucius was no doubt the founder who raised this philosophy to the forefront of Chinese life and politics.²⁸ It is not clear whether Confucius himself wrote *The Analects* (*lun yu*, 论语), which codified his philosophies and teachings. It is likely that his particular understanding of the *rujia* was recorded by his students after his death, and his teachings did not begin to gain significant traction in Chinese society and political culture until well after. Followers of Confucius, such as Xunzi and Mengzi, further developed the ideas that Confucius taught and remain nearly as influential today as Confucius himself.²⁹

It was in the Han dynasty that Confucianism became the “the official state ideology”.³⁰ His teachings were used to educate potential government officials, who would then take the imperial examination test in order to become an official of the Han government.³¹ The imperial examination system continued into the 20th century, which demonstrates the way in which Confucian ideology has become so highly integrated into society and political culture. Until the imperial examination system was abandoned, all government officials had a deep understanding of Confucian ideology and operated with Confucian values and teachings in mind.³²

²⁷ D.C. Lao, *Confucius: The Analects (Lun Yu)*, ed. D.C. Lao (New York City: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1979), 9.

²⁸ Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucb/detail.action?docID=217851>, 18.

²⁹ Torbjorn Loden, *Rediscovering Confucianism* (Folkstone: Golbal Oriental LTD, 2006), 48-69.

³⁰ Torbjorn Loden, *Rediscovering Confucianism* (Folkstone: Golbal Oriental LTD, 2006), 69.

³¹ Loden, 69.

³² Benjamin A Elman, “Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 50, no. 1 (1991): 7–28.

The Han dynasty cemented Confucianism as a leading philosophy and religion in China, but it competed with Buddhism and Daoism, undergoing changes over the centuries to become Neo-Confucianism.³³ Since then, it has split into countless branches, classes, and schools of thought, and the influences of the ruling dynasties, scholars, and practitioners has created a complex network of scholarship that falls under the overarching umbrella of Confucianism.³⁴ What allowed Confucianism to maintain its position in Chinese society besides the imperial civil examination system were the fundamental virtues which informed daily life outside of the government; for example, “Confucian morality revolves around family relationships, especially around the relationships between parents and children, between elder and younger brothers, and between husband and wife.”³⁵ Confucianism was not just a philosophy studied by the elite; it defined values and rules which people integrated into the most intimate aspects of their lives.

Therefore, Confucianism became the center of a social contract in China. The way people treated each other and expected to be treated by others (including the government) were based off of Confucian principles outlined in the rites and expanded upon by Confucius. Hierarchies formed from this social contract, building Chinese society into a structure which was profoundly influenced by Confucian ideology; common people came to understand the function of government and society within Confucianism, as well as their relationships with other people like family and extended family.³⁶ This value system has formed the backbone of Chinese traditional culture and survives today.

³³ Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism.*, 98. For an understanding of the way in which Confucianism came to be considered a religion as well as a philosophy, see “Is Confucianism a Religion or a Philosophy?” in Loden, 3-7.

³⁴ Yao, 68.

³⁵ Yao, 32-33.

³⁶ Yao.

The nineteenth century brought seismic shocks to Chinese culture as a whole as foreign countries began to demand that China open its markets for trade. The Qing dynasty was unable to stop the onslaught of foreign imperialism, further exacerbating anti-Manchu sentiment in the Chinese population who was increasingly frustrated that China being “carved up like a melon” by foreign powers competing for ‘spheres of influence’ on Chinese soil”.³⁷ The pressures brought on by these changes prompted many young people in China to question traditional cultural norms; in particular, they developed a view of Confucianism as a “backwards” philosophy that was preventing China from modernizing.³⁸ Thus, the May Fourth Movement (1919) was the beginning of a shift in Chinese political culture away from tradition, towards an exploration of western political philosophy which would result in the Republican Era (1912 to roughly 1949) and finally the establishment of the People’s Republic of China under the Chinese Communist Party.

The dissolution of the Qing regime, the war between the KMT and CCP, and the subsequent War of Resistance against Japan threw China into chaos; as mentioned previously, the fabric of society was torn apart and widely-held Confucian values such as familial piety, hierarchy, and moral standards of conduct were forced to the background as the Chinese people simply tried to survive amidst the horrors brought by the invading Japanese army.³⁹ Following World War II was an extended war between the CCP and the Nationalist Party, which further eroded the people’s understanding of their place and identity within a destroyed and warring

³⁷ “China and the West: Imperialism, Opium, and Self-Strengthening (1800-1921),” Asia for Educators, Columbia University, n.d., http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/kpct/kp_imperialism.htm.

³⁸ 李, 建胜, “《论语》与现代中国” (陕西师范大学, 2012), file:///C:/Users/zogym/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/_论语_与现代中国_李健胜 (1).pdf.

³⁹ Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945*.

country. This was the beginning of the loss of traditional Chinese national moral identity, which later underwent even more radical change when the CCP came to power.

Defining Confucian Ideology

To claim that Confucianism can be easily defined or interpreted would be erroneous; Confucianism includes a large variety of schools of thought, leading figures, and interpretations. Confucians throughout China's history have debated various interpretations of the classic readings of Confucianism, and no one interpretation is correct or necessarily better or worse than the others. However, for the purpose of this work, I will define 'Confucian ideology' using a basic and somewhat ubiquitous understanding of some of Confucius's main assertions and ideas, found in Torbjorn Loden's book *Rediscovering Confucianism* and D.C. Lao's authoritative work, *Confucius, The Analects (Lun yu)*.⁴⁰

One of the most fundamental pieces of Confucianism is the concept of 'the rites' or *li* (礼). In Chen Laizhe's (陈来着) work entitled *The Ethics of Ancient Religion: The Roots of Confucianism* (古代宗教与伦理：儒家思想的根源), he explores the origins of Confucian thought, including the origins of the rites. Chen writes, "The culture of rites was brought about by the Western Zhou, which is expressed in the sentence, 'The way of life has the proper order'. Thus a code of conduct was developed that governs people's life to go deep into and attend to each and every aspect of a matter".⁴¹ As Chen points out, the rites developed before Confucius's

⁴⁰ Loden, *Rediscovering Confucianism*; Lao, *Confucius: The Analects (Lun Yu)*. *Rediscovering Confucianism* was published by Global Oriental LTD, whose advisory board boasts an impressive list of Asia scholars from universities around the UK, as well as the former British ambassador to Japan; "About Us," Global Oriental Publishers, n.d., <https://web.archive.org/web/20080517124651/http://www.globaloriental.co.uk/about.asp>.

⁴¹ 陈，来着，古代宗教与伦理：儒家思想的根源，ed. 1 (北京：北京大学出版社，2017)，12。“西周的礼乐文化创造的正是一种“有条理的生活方式”，由此衍生的行为规范对人的世俗生活的控制既深入又面面俱到。”

time and was the basis for the *rujia*; they were a “code of conduct” which people were expected to follow in their everyday lives: how to treat family, how to dress, how to speak, etc.⁴² This is an important piece of Confucianism, as it forms the framework for the value system which Confucius interpreted and philosophized on. Because of the interconnectedness of the rites and Confucianism, it is necessary to consider the influence of the Duke of Zhou as it informs the way that Confucius interpreted the rites as they relate to a ruler; Lao considered his influence to Chinese society and the Chinese political system to be substantial, and it merits some discussion here.

Confucius deeply admired the Duke of Zhou.⁴³ He references the Duke in dialogue often within *The Analects*, leading writer Li Ling (李零) to state cynically, “he only dreamed of the Duke of Zhou”.⁴⁴ Most significantly (at least as it pertains to my discussion of Xi Jinping), the Duke of Zhou fostered the idea of the Mandate of Heaven. The idea was that the Emperor “rules in virtue of the Decree of Heaven and remains Emperor only so long as he fulfills this purpose. As soon as he forgets his function and begins to rule for his own sake, Heaven will withdraw the Decree and bestow it on someone more worthy”.⁴⁵ The mandate was an interpretation of the rites, as it required the Emperor to follow the ethical guidelines outlined in the rites that would determine if their governance was ‘worthy’ of the mandate or not. While the Mandate of Heaven cannot be ascribed as being fundamental to Confucius’s teachings, it is an aspect which informs

⁴² 陈，来着，12.

⁴³ Lao, *Confucius: The Analects (Lun Yu)*, 17.

⁴⁴ 李零，*丧家狗-我读【论语】*（太原：山西人民出版社，2007）。现在读古书，有个坏毛病，就是束书不读，光问有什么用。孔子离我们很远，距今两千多年，他做梦都想不到（他只梦周公），我们会拿他干什么用。

⁴⁵ Lao, *Confucius: The Analects (Lun Yu)*, 28.

my analysis of Xi’s usage of Confucian ideology, which will be expanded upon later in this paper.

The term *ren* (仁) is perhaps the most basic of the Confucian teachings. Translated, it means benevolence, and is “the most important moral quality a man can possess”.⁴⁶ A person who is truly benevolent can be considered a *junzi* (君子), or “gentleman”.⁴⁷ A gentleman does his best to consider the interests and feelings of the people with whom he interacts, essentially adhering to the Golden Rule. Lao states that the “essential point about benevolence” is that a benevolent man (a gentleman) must not “impose on others what you yourself do not desire”.⁴⁸ Simply put, Confucius taught that a true gentleman (and a truly great ruler) has empathy and understanding for others, and in their dealings with people strive to serve with compassion.⁴⁹ Perhaps this pillar of Confucianism seems insignificant in its simplicity—treating others with kindness is central to many religions and cultures. But the unique way in which Chinese culture integrates philosophies and what Westerners term ‘religion’ means that the concept of *ren* is likely very much a part of the social contract among Chinese people.

The Chinese Communist Party’s Relationship with Confucianism

The Chinese Communist Party’s relationship with Confucianism in the recent past makes Xi’s use of Confucian ideology in his rhetoric particularly interesting. As was discussed previously, Confucianism came under scrutiny as early as the May Fourth Movement. The CCP picked up

⁴⁶ Lao, 14.

⁴⁷ Lao, 15.

⁴⁸ Lao, 15.

⁴⁹ My experiences in China convince me of the continued importance of this concept to Chinese people—I was almost always treated respectfully and generously (more so than if I had been a traveler in the United States). It seemed that nearly every interaction I had with a Chinese person was imbedded in an inherent generosity on their part, despite the cultural differences and (at times) language barrier.

on this anti-Confucian sentiment and aggressively campaigned against Confucianism, releasing propaganda that denigrated Confucius as a slave-owner and bourgeois agent whose teachings were meant to enforce a hierarchy that disenfranchised poor, working-class people.⁵⁰ During the Mao Era in particular, Confucianism was a target of the CCP. Mao “was bent on consigning it to the dustbin of history” and “launched the so-called ‘Anti-Lin Biao and Anti-Confucius Campaign’”.⁵¹

Following Mao’s death, the CCP’s antipathy towards Confucianism shifted to ambivalence. John Makeham, author of *Lost Soul: Confucianism in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse*, pointed out that there has been no official policy by the CCP to promote Confucianism in the PRC; however, Anne-Marie Brady (a notable scholar of PRC politics) asserts that the CCP has been supporting Confucianism’s revival since the mid-1980s.⁵² In fact, she states that “China is now seeking to forge its own distinctive path, one which incorporates Chinese tradition within modernity, rather than rejecting it outright”.⁵³ Brady cites the creation of the Academy of Chinese Culture, which was created to study Confucianism in particular.⁵⁴ These contending assertions by two scholars who are well-entrenched in the scholarship of Confucianism and CCP propaganda, respectively, somewhat illuminates the tendency of the CCP to timidly promote traditional culture while still maintaining the supremacy of socialist ideology.

⁵⁰ Please see for samples of the anti-Confucius propaganda that was circulated by the CCP in 1974; the series is titled “The Evil Life of Confucius”, though the author points out that the more accurate translation would be “the evil life of that Dickhead Confucius”

⁵¹ Hu, “Confucianism and Contemporary Chinese Politics.”

⁵² Anne-Marie Brady, *China’s Thought Management* (New York City: Routledge, 2012), 57; John Makeham, *Lost Soul: “Confucianism” in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2008).

⁵³ Brady, *China’s Thought Management*, 57.

⁵⁴ Brady, 60.

A study into the CCP's use of Confucianism by scholar Wu Shufang (who writes prolifically on the topic of Confucianism and the CCP) made use of the People's Daily, a newspaper which is the "authoritative official medium" of the CCP.⁵⁵ Wu analyzed 228 articles published between 2000 and 2009 in the People's Daily, and found a plethora of instances where Confucian terms were used or Confucianism itself was mentioned. Significantly, Wu finds that 'Confucian culture' is considered a "local culture" in the articles, as well as a culture which "provides significant meaning to the development of the Chinese nation in the future".⁵⁶ Wu also finds that Confucianism is often linked to a "harmonious society", or society with strong moral values.⁵⁷ The time period during which this study was conducted (2000 to 2009) pre-dates Xi Jinping's presidency, but sheds light on the narrative that the CCP has chosen to create; that Confucianism is a part of Chinese culture which enriches the nation's values. The time period which Wu studied, however, does encompass the two presidencies preceding Xi's: Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao.

Hu further expanded the CCP's Confucian narrative during the 2008 Summer Olympic Games held in Beijing, when a passage from *The Analects* was quoted during the opening ceremonies.⁵⁸ It seemed as if the CCP was embracing this part of Chinese culture which it had previously demonized—but again, only timidly. The story of a large statue of Confucius appearing in Tiananmen Square in 2011, only to disappear without warning weeks later, exposes

⁵⁵ Shufang Wu, "The Revival of Confucianism and the CCP's Struggle for Cultural Leadership: A Content Analysis of the *People's Daily*, 2000–2009," *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 89 (September 3, 2014): 971–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2014.882624>, 971.

⁵⁶ Wu, 976.

⁵⁷ Wu, 978.

⁵⁸ Gardels and Bell, "China Goes Its Own Way", 18.

the conflicting nature of the CCP's embracement of Confucianism.⁵⁹ In her article, Wu noted the delicate balance that exists in co-opting a traditional culture like Confucianism through ambiguous rhetoric: "Confucian morality is easily confused or sometimes even replaced by socialist morality or loyalty to the Party advocated by the CCP".⁶⁰

Though Hu's harmonious society is closely related to a term that Xi uses in the speech which I will be analyzing in the next section and which I discuss at great length, there is an inherent difference in the two leader's employment of Confucian ideology. Hu Jintao was not the leader that Xi Jinping has fashioned himself to be. Xi has amassed enormous power in the Party and taken steps to be a leader that China hasn't seen since Mao Zedong. I argue that Xi's use of Confucian ideology is not a passive nod to culture and history, but an offensive tact to legitimize his regime. As Wu pointed out, narratives can change quickly when incentives change: in the hands of Xi, can the Confucian narrative take on an entirely different meaning?

Rhetorical Analysis: Xi Jinping's 40th Anniversary of Reforms and Opening-up Speech

Introduction

The case study of this paper is a rhetorical analysis of the speech Xi Jinping gave on the 40th anniversary of the opening up and economic reforms (*gaige kaifang*, 改革开放). I will analyze and discuss Xi's rhetoric, which demonstrates his use of Confucian ideology as a method of legitimizing his leadership. The speech itself is significant because of the historical and contemporary events that surrounded it; Xi's recent actions to consolidate power contrasted

⁵⁹ Kenneth J Hammond and Jefferey L Richey, "Introduction: The Death and Resurrection of Confucianism," in *The Sage Returns*, ed. Kenneth J Hammond and Jefferey L Richey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 1–9, 1.

⁶⁰ Wu, "The Revival of Confucianism and the CCP's Struggle for Cultural Leadership: A Content Analysis of the *People's Daily*, 2000–2009", 991.

starkly with the reforms that Deng Xiaoping instituted in 1978, and the US-China trade war was still in full-swing as Xi took to the podium to honor the 40th anniversary of the opening up and reforms. These events shaped the context of the speech, and I believe fully illuminated Xi's need to use Confucian ideology in order to persuade the Chinese people and maintain his legitimacy.

The speech was Xi's opportunity to reaffirm his achievements and policies since becoming president and to establish a narrative which positively differentiates himself from Deng, whose reputation has continued to cast a long shadow over subsequent leaders trying to solidify their legacy in the annals of Chinese history. Deng is generally remembered as a reformer: though it was he who ordered the tanks into Beijing during the Tiananmen protests, it was also Deng who had loosened control after the cultural revolution to allow more discussion about democracy and human rights. He also codified the presidential term limits in the constitution, so that a repeat of Mao and the disaster of the cultural revolution would be avoided in the future.

These historical facts put Xi in the position of having to honor the reforms that Deng had installed, while also trying to temper the clear contradiction between his and Deng's actions and policies as leaders; particularly the actions taken by Xi months before to consolidate power and upend Deng's constitutional safeguards. Therefore, it was necessary for Xi to create a narrative which would be favorable to himself and erode the hulking memory of Deng's contributions to the success of the country. By inserting Confucian ideas and rhetoric, Xi could create an identity for himself which reflected the rulers of China's distant past, rather than compare himself to Deng's still-tangible memory.

The Xi-Deng comparison becomes important when considering the US-China trade war that was (and continues to be) partially responsible for the economic downturn that China is

experiencing. Deng is inextricably linked to the incredible rise of China's economy over the past forty years—certainly, the reforms and opening up catalyzed this event. Deng is lauded as leader under which the PRC “became rich”.⁶¹ The Chinese Communist Party has based their legitimacy around the fact that the Party was able to raise millions out of poverty, create a still-growing middle class, and form an economy to rival the United States' in less than half a century. If the decline of China's economic growth rate is truly unavoidable (a concept I will expand upon later), then the contrast between Xi and Deng takes on a whole new meaning. More stark than the contradiction between the two leaders' reformation policies is the difference between the strength of the economy during their respective tenures in office; will the Chinese people conflate Deng's more 'democratic' reforms with economic success, and Xi's power grab with economic instability?

The context of the US-China trade war and Deng's leadership bring to the forefront a problem which Xi and the CCP are being forced to face: what will legitimize Xi's regime when he can no longer rely on the strength of the economy? Giving a speech given on the anniversary of Deng's reforms naturally creates a stark contrast to the actions Xi took to consolidate his power only months before. Therefore, Xi has a personal investment in creating a positive, legitimate identity for himself. On the other hand, the CCP itself must struggle with their legitimacy under the growing economic pressure from the trade war. It is with this context in mind that I began analyzing Xi's speech for an understanding of how he plans to tackle the challenges outlined above.

⁶¹ Appendix; translation of Xi's speech.

First, I will discuss Xi's 'Chinese Dream'. It is in fleshing out the concept of his Chinese dream that Xi most directly employs Confucian ideology, using the phrase "Great Harmony under Heaven", or *Tianxia Datong* (天下大同), to describe it. This is a Confucian phrase, and one that is based on other fundamental concepts in Confucianism such as the 'mandate of heaven' and 'sage kings'. According to *The Analects* (*lun yu* 论语), Great Harmony is achieved when a wise ruler, based on the sage kings of three ancient dynasties, is morally just and follows the Way, or *Dao* (道).

Next, I focus on a paragraph in which Xi reaffirms the PRC's long-standing foreign policy to have a "clear cut stand against hegemony and power politics."⁶² His adherence to this principle in Chinese foreign policy is interesting given the current political climate in China with regards to the United States and China's increasing influence, and also because it contrasts with his statement that under Mao, China "stood up", under Deng China "got rich", and under Xi China "has become strong". His decision indicates that he has chosen not to pursue legitimacy based solely on a nationalistic, anti-American sentiment, choosing instead to base his legitimacy on Confucian ideology rooted in China's traditional culture. The question becomes, how can Xi make China 'strong' while opposing hegemony and power politics in the international system? And how does he address this dissonance to the Chinese people? As I will show, it is addressed by defining strength within a Confucian context.

Xi's Chinese Dream

⁶² Appendix; translation of Xi's speech.

Xi's use of the phrase "Chinese Dream" (*zhongguo meng*, 中国梦), has been a mainstay in his rhetoric since he became president. The word invokes some connection to western political rhetoric, the most obvious example being the "American Dream". The basics of Xi's Chinese dream are certainly similar to the American dream: prosperity, a high standard of living, and hard work to achieve those goals. But Xi is not trying to emulate Western political ideology. He frames his Chinese dream ideal around Confucian ideology; specifically, around the concept of *Datong* (大同), or "Great Harmony". Great Harmony is described in *The Book of Rites* as being the ideal utopia—what adds an intriguing layer to my analysis is an underlying but important piece of the Great Harmony concept, which is that this ideal world can only be attained when the ruler is morally just.⁶³

Dr. Lu Xiufen, a philosophy professor at Wichita State University, provides insight into the concept of Great Harmony and how it connects to the ideals expressed in *The Analects* in her article discussing former CCP member Li Dazhao's work in socialist political theory.⁶⁴ Lu quotes a section of the *Book of Rites* at length which describes the "ideal society". She does this to explain how Li's understanding of Confucianism informed his thoughts on how a socialist government should govern, while I am examining how and why Xi chose to reference this concept—they are eerily similar. First and perhaps most importantly to my analysis of Xi, "men of talents, virtue, and ability", whose "words were sincere" were chosen to be rulers of the society, and thus "cultivated" harmony.⁶⁵ These leaders provided for everyone in society equally and were selfless—this idealism existed in *Rujia* (儒家) before Confucius lived. But according to

⁶³ Xiufen Lu, "The Confucian Ideal of Great Harmony (Datong 大同), the Daoist Account of Change, and the Theory of Socialism in the Work of Li Dazhao," *Asian Philosophy* 21, no. 2 (2011): 171–92, 174.

⁶⁴ Lu.

⁶⁵ Lu, 173.

The Analects, to be an ideal person, one had to follow the rites and be a benevolent person.

Therefore, the ideas expressed in *The Book of Rites* are very much connected to those in *The Analects*.

Below is the full paragraph of Xi's speech which equates Great Harmony and the Chinese Dream:

The Chinese people possess a magnificent spirit to dream; Chinese people of all ethnicities are filled with transformation and an open spirit. Thousands of years ago, the Chinese nation's first peoples upheld the spirit, 'Though the Kingdom of Zhou is ancient, its mission is still innovative', creating the magnificent practice of Chinese civilization. Ever since ancient times, there were countless reforms and changes with the intent of creating a strong movement on the Chinese mainland. The open-minded manifesto, 'There is not one way to govern, one does not have to follow the ancient ways' remained. Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has firmly believed in but also carried out in interactions and cultural exchanges with other nationalities the broad-minded ideals of 'Great Harmony under Heaven' and 'bringing countries together'.⁶⁶

The curious juxtaposition of the ideas that he quotes simply serve to intensify his message: just because an ideology is ancient, does not make it bad, nor does it make it good. In this way, Xi can appease those in China (both civilians and CCP members) who are wary of tradition, while also conflating the "broad-minded ideals of Great Harmony under Heaven" to China's "magnificent spirit to dream". In short, this paragraph expresses the idea that while some traditional ideology should be left behind, Great Harmony is an innocent and heroic relic of a noble period in China's history. Except, it isn't really that innocent.

As discussed above, Great Harmony has another component which alters Xi's innocent tribute to traditional Chinese culture to something more bold: The Mandate of Heaven, or *tianming* (天命). If Great Harmony can only be achieved through cultivation of a virtuous leader

⁶⁶ Appendix; translation of Xi's speech.

as the rites maintain, then the Mandate of Heaven is inseparable from this concept. Indeed, in theory the Mandate of Heaven is bestowed on a leader or sage-king when that leader displays wisdom, courage, compassion, and selflessness in the care of their people.⁶⁷ When that leader is no longer worthy, that mandate is removed. It is important to note that the Mandate of Heaven does not preclude democratic ideals; Lu points out that to many Confucians, the “will of the people” directed the mandate.⁶⁸ However, the connection between Great Harmony and the Mandate of Heaven was certainly not missed by Xi; it was a pronounced decision to choose, from thousands of years of tradition, the phrase “Great Harmony under Heaven”.

Hegemony and Power Politics

There is no way to prevent international events from creeping into the domestic sphere, even in the People’s Republic of China. The US-China trade war influenced the PRC in several ways: according to the CCP, the economic growth rate has slowed to 6.4 percent, .4 percent lower than 2017. This kind of slowdown has not occurred since 1990.⁶⁹ The effect of the trade war on the economy would naturally have a ripple effect to the rest of society— after all, China is experiencing perhaps the most “substantial losses” due to the trade war.⁷⁰ For Chinese citizens, this economic slowdown and conflict with the U.S. could significantly impact the way that they view their government and place in the world. Domestically, the Chinese Communist Party has enjoyed wide support from the Chinese people since the reforms and opening up drastically

⁶⁷ Lao, *Confucius: The Analects (Lun Yu)*, 28.

⁶⁸ Lu, “The Confucian Ideal of Great Harmony (Datong 大同), the Daoist Account of Change, and the Theory of Socialism in the Work of Li Dazhao”, 178.

⁶⁹ Anna Fifield, “Chinese Economy Slows to Lowest Growth Rate in 28 Years,” *The Washington Post*, January 21, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/chinese-economy-slows-to-lowest-growth-rate-in-28-years/2019/01/21/c3fccbf0-1d66-11e9-bda9-d6efefc397e8_story.html?utm_term=.d79bf5323e2a.

⁷⁰ “Impact of a Global Trade War on the Economy,” IHS Markit, n.d., <https://ihsmarkit.com/solutions/us-china-trade-war-impacts.html>.

stimulated the economy. One survey done in China found that “88.9 percent of the 7,061 respondents agreed that they were proud of the international status that China was currently occupying”.⁷¹

Considering the pride that the Chinese people have for their country’s status as an economic power internationally, it is not a big leap to assume that the current state of events would have a negative impact on the approval rating of the CCP. Therefore, as I stated in the introduction to this section, it has become more important than ever for the CCP to formulate another way to legitimize their government. While this is certainly a problem for the Party, I would also argue that it offered an obvious solution as well: if the Chinese people are proud of their country’s status and the U.S. is jeopardizing it, why not stimulate anti-American, nationalist sentiment as a means of pushing the blame on the ‘unfair’ practices of the United States and legitimizing the CCP’s authority? Xi pointed out China’s position in the international order, himself when he said, “We are increasingly entering the center of the world stage, becoming recognized as builders in international society, contributors to global development, and maintainers of the international order!”⁷² This statement affirms that the PRC’s status and function in the world is becoming increasingly parallel to the United States’. So why not take this path as a means of legitimizing the CCP and himself?

However, a commonly repeated refrain for the last several decades in the PRC has been that they will not seek international hegemony is a refrain that has been repeated for decades under CCP rule.⁷³ This stems from China’s past interactions with foreign countries (mostly

⁷¹ Jae Ho Chung, “Decoding the Evolutionary Path of Chinese Foreign Policy, 1949-2009: Assessments and Inferences,” *East Asia* 28, no. 3 (2011): 175–90, 178.

⁷² Appendix; translation of Xi’s speech.

⁷³ Chung, “Decoding the Evolutionary Path of Chinese Foreign Policy, 1949-2009: Assessments and Inferences”, 177

during the 19th and 20th centuries) which were mostly negative; these negative interactions continue to deeply affect CCP members who do not want their sovereignty infringed upon again, which often comes as a result of a hegemonic system and power politics.⁷⁴ Xi reaffirmed this foreign policy in his speech: “We actively advance the construction of an open global economy, building a community of human destiny, and promoting a change of the global system of governance, having a clear cut stand in opposition to hegemony and power politics.”⁷⁵ Xi’s choice to continue with this policy signals that he has made the decision *not* to pursue the aforementioned method of legitimizing the CCP through nationalism and anti-American sentiment.

This decision in some ways seems counter-intuitive; perhaps this due to the influence of American political culture, where bilateral competition between countries like the Soviet Union, Iran, and China have stimulated support for the government for decades. Yet, the PRC is well-positioned to compete directly with the United States for hegemony; at the least, they are well positioned to *seem* as if they can pose a serious challenge to the U.S. After all, analysis in the United States is rife with concerns about China’s growing economic power. No doubt, the trade war is largely a result of fear within the United States’ government and people that America’s trade deficit with China is weakening our influence and power in the international sphere.⁷⁶

Of course, many citizens have pride in their country. Just because one study found that Chinese people are proud of China’s influence internationally, does not mean that they will

⁷⁴ Chung, 177-178.

⁷⁵ Appendix; translation of Xi’s speech.

⁷⁶ I can’t count how many times I’ve been told “you will be in a good position when China takes us over!” after revealing that I study Mandarin.

support competition for hegemony. An article written by Robert D. Weatherly and Ariane Rosen sheds some light on this—it discusses a debate that arose recently in China concerning the CCP’s use of the burning of the Summer Palace to increase nationalism among the Chinese people. It is incredibly difficult to get an accurate understanding of Chinese citizen’s political sentiments because of fear of the Party and censorship. But the study focuses specifically on the reactions of bloggers and “online critics”, which can be extrapolated to the larger population at least to the extent that some of the ideas that they expressed are ideas that would have occurred to other Chinese as well.

The most important take away from this article was that several Chinese bloggers asserted that foreign powers were still taking advantage of China, and that the CCP was still too conciliatory to Western powers.⁷⁷ The debate further exposes the importance of the choice Xi made in reaffirming the CCP’s anti-hegemonism. There is support in China for a more aggressive stance against the West, and it is likely that the current trade war is exacerbating those sentiments. Therefore, it is a possibility that Xi senses a weakness in this tactic; another perspective from the Chinese bloggers in the aforementioned debate was that the Summer Palace was a symbol of extravagance and inequality, as it was “an inordinately expensive complex of palaces and gardens inhabited by an imperial royal family, built on the back of slave labor and completely inaccessible to the impoverished general public”.⁷⁸ This piece of the debate indicates that even if the CCP decided to challenge the United States for hegemony, there is still a fundamental problem in the dissonance felt by the public between the corruption that they are identifying within the Party and pride in the CCP for China’s economic strength.

⁷⁷ Robert D; Weatherley and Ariane Rosen, “Fanning the Flames of Popular Nationalism: The Debate in China over the Burning of the Old Summer Palace,” *Asian Perspective* 37, no. 1 (2013): 53–76.

⁷⁸ Weatherley and Rosen, 66.

Clearly, the PRC stands to lose legitimacy from their declining economy and appearing weak in the trade war. It is also clear, I believe, that capitalizing on a Cold-war type of conflict with the United States could hold significant benefits to bolstering the Party's legitimacy. But by continuing to uphold the idea that China's role is to "uphold international fairness and justice" (维护国际公平正义), "peaceful foreign policy" (平外交政策), and "have a clear stand in opposition to hegemony and power politics" (旗帜鲜明反对霸权主义和强权政治), Xi is making a clear choice to pursue an ideological, cultural appeal that might address the dissonance felt by the Chinese people that was expressed in the Summer Palace debate.

The ideological, cultural appeal to which I am referring is of course Confucianism. D.C. Lao stated in his authoritative analysis of Confucianism that, "the ultimate purpose of the government is the welfare of the common people (*min*). This is the most basic principle in Confucianism and has remained unchanged throughout the ages".⁷⁹ Aggressively competing with the United States would likely put even more strain on the Chinese economy, and strain relationships with other countries around the globe. This is not in the interest of the Chinese people, and this fact would likely become apparent very quickly.

Furthermore, another central tenant of Confucianism is "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.' (XII.2)".⁸⁰ How could the CCP compete with the United States for hegemony, when they resent the "hegemony and power politics" of the United States?⁸¹ Maintaining a stance against hegemony has inherent Confucian characteristics: to pursue hegemony only for status, and not for the direct benefit of the country and the people, is certainly

⁷⁹ Lao, *Confucius: The Analects (Lun Yu)*, 32.

⁸⁰ Lao, 14.

⁸¹ Appendix; translation of Xi's speech.

a violation of Confucian ideology. So is the hypocrisy of doing to the United States what the United States has done to China. Thus, the Confucian rhetoric and ideology expressed throughout the speech provides a context for viewing this foreign policy decision in a way which provides justification for the policy, as well as a set of moral guidelines which places China in a superior moral position to the United States.

In this way, Xi is building a case for Confucian ideology as a guiding national moral identity for the Chinese people: the United States is pressuring the PRC and their economy, but the CCP is morally justified in their actions because they adhere to a morality that has been entwined with Chinese culture for thousands of years. This also allows for a comparison to the United States: the U.S. is guided by materialism and power politics, but China is looking back to traditional Chinese culture to counteract this immorality and set China down a path of development that will at the very least be morally superior. And if the economy does slow, there is a sense of national identity that the Chinese people feel to the CCP. As Xi stated in his speech, “the sense of cultural identity has increased and so has the will to build the Chinese dream together!”⁸² It is possible that Xi is betting on the idea that cultural connectivity provides more legitimacy than the Chinese economy, which cannot sustain its unusually high growth forever. This tactic appeals to Chinese nationalism, sets China against the United States in a cultural sense, and morally justifies the success and—more importantly—the failures of the CCP.

Conclusion

In this analysis, I pointed to several points in Xi Jinping’s speech given at the 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up where Confucian ideology was woven into his rhetoric: the concept of

⁸² Appendix; translation of Xi’s speech.

Great Harmony and the Mandate of Heaven which formed the basis of his “Chinese Dream”, as well as the embracement of peace and empathy in a foreign policy which refuses to conform to Western political culture. But none of this matters if the subtle undertone of Confucianism is missed by the Chinese people listening to the speech. Yet, there is ample reason to believe that the Chinese people were impacted at a deeper level due to the Confucian undertones.

Ian Johnson’s well-researched book into the spiritual and religious revival in China, *The Souls of China: The Return to Religion After Mao*, perfectly encapsulates why Confucianism is such a potent rhetorical weapon at this time in China’s history. In many cultures, people often identify themselves as being Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Muslim, Jewish, or whatever religion they choose to believe in and are a part of. But this was not—and for most Chinese is still not—the way that Chinese people understand the major philosophies and religions within China. Religion, *zongjiao* (宗教) is a borrowed term. Spiritual teachings like Buddhism, Daoism, or Confucianism “did not function as separate institutions with their own followers”.⁸³ There was no separation between the secular and non-secular, as often exists in Western cultures. Rather, Chinese ‘religion’ was “spread over every aspect of life like a fine membrane that held society together”.⁸⁴

This understanding of spirituality, religion, and philosophy still exists in China. More than that, it is innately connected to the Chinese people’s relationship with government. This is why it is significant that Xi used Confucian ideology, rather than Daoist or Buddhist ideology, to build his legitimacy. As Johnson states, “religion was more than a method for running China; it

⁸³ Ian Johnson, *The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao* (New York City: Pantheon Books, 2017), 19.

⁸⁴ Johnson, 19.

was the political system's lifeblood.”⁸⁵ Whether or not Chinese people consider the president in terms of having a mandate from heaven to rule or just as another head of government, Chinese tradition and culture naturally conflate spirituality and government. No wonder the May Fourth Movement and the CCP targeted Confucianism: it was too connected with governance to keep in a new, ‘modern’ political system.⁸⁶

Therefore, Xi's rhetoric will not only be understood by those who identify as Confucians. Even Chinese people who do not “regard themselves consciously as Confucians” can be “influenced, unconsciously, by Confucian values and modes of thinking”.⁸⁷ The Confucian rhetoric might not be consciously understood, but it is likely that by many Chinese, it is simply felt. It appeals to something that is not necessarily known, but to the many ways that Chinese people experience their lives and their society.

This is what makes Xi's use of Confucian ideology important: it unconsciously elicits feelings and connections to history and traditional culture, which can be easily manipulated. As Chinese author Li Ling (李零) points out darkly, *The Analects* are “a bunch of books that aren't read-- we only ask how to use them. Confucius left us long ago, more than 2,000 years ago-- he could not have dreamed... that we would take and use what he said.”⁸⁸ The search for a national moral identity has brought Confucianism back to Chinese society, culture, and governance; Xi now has the potential to be president for life and has the ability to establish a national moral

⁸⁵ Johnson, 21.

⁸⁶ Johnson, 22; 李, 建胜, “《论语》与现代中国” (陕西师范大学, 2012), file:///C:/Users/zogym/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/_论语_与现代中国_李健胜 (1).pdf.

⁸⁷ Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1984), 33.

⁸⁸ 李零, 丧家狗--我读【论语】.

identity that will legitimize his rule and guide the Chinese people for years to come. What will that identity be?

Counterargument

Confucianism or Maoism?

Since President Xi Jinping successfully removed presidential term limits from the Constitution, Western journalists and academics have been quick to claim that Xi is in fact returning to a ‘Maoist’ style of rule.⁸⁹ Many observers saw Xi’s move to consolidate power as an attempt to go back to the way things were in the Mao era: tight authoritarian control, a budding cult of personality, consolidation of power, and the renewed ‘mass-line’ policy being some of the examples that supposedly point to a ‘Maoist revival’.⁹⁰ While this idea certainly has merit, I believe that this understanding of Xi’s actions is exactly that: an analysis of his actions, rather than a wholistic interpretation of the current political climate, Chinese society, and Xi’s long-term and short-term goals. In the previous section, I rhetorically analyzed an important speech Xi gave at the 40th anniversary of the reforms and opening up. I made the argument that Xi was employing Confucian ideology as a means of legitimizing himself and the Chinese Communist Party. In this section, I will explain why it is less probable that Xi is directing a ‘Maoist revival’: first, because Mao is still unpopular in the People’s Republic; second, Xi seems to be placing much more emphasis on traditional Chinese culture, something that Mao would never have done;

⁸⁹ “Back to the Old Days: Xi Jinping Decides to Abolish Presidential Term Limits,” *The Economist* (Beijing, March 2018), <https://www.economist.com/china/2018/03/01/xi-jinping-decides-to-abolish-presidential-term-limits>; Suisheng Zhao, “Xi Jinping’s Maoist Revival,” *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 3 (2016): 83–97; Sharon Hom and Qinduo Xu, “China: Is President Xi Jinping the New Mao?” (Al Jazeera, 2018), <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/upfront/2018/04/china-president-xi-jinping-mao-180407095001970.html>; Tom Phillips, “Xi Jinping’s Power Play: From President to China’s New Dictator?,” *The Observer*, March 3, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/04/xi-jinping-from-president-to-china-new-dictator>.

⁹⁰ Zhao, “Xi Jinping’s Maoist Revival.”

third, Xi's power grab and authoritarian ways are simply a response to the growing concerns within the CCP for their legitimacy.

After the Cultural Revolution, the CCP was forced to reconcile Mao's identity to the Chinese people; while he was the founder of the CCP and PRC, he had also thrown the country into chaos with his policies before and during the Cultural Revolution. The trauma of the Cultural Revolution cannot be understated.⁹¹ People lived in constant terror that they would somehow be labeled as 'rightists' and either be arrested, publicly beaten, or sent to labor camps. No one was safe from persecution, including high-ranking members of the CCP. The Red Guards destroyed property at Mao's behest, burning temples and desecrating graves. The memory of this troubled time in China's history lingers, especially when compared with the results of the opening up and reforms, as Deng Xiaoping was one of the high-ranking CCP members who was ousted. To bring these two contradicting images of Mao together in a way that would protect his legacy while also protecting the legitimacy of the CCP, an official statement was released that split his legacy into a percentage: Mao was 70 percent right, and 30 percent wrong.⁹²

While it would likely be untrue to say that Mao is totally unpopular in China now-- though there is no good way to determine this for sure considering the fear that still comes from criticizing the CCP or Mao-- it is probably more accurate to characterize the sentiment in China as ambivalent or apathetic. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, director of the China Center in Tubingen, Germany, asserts that "there are many who hate the former leader, and hold him responsible for

⁹¹ Thomas Heberer, "The 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution': China's Modern Trauma," *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 3, no. 2 (December 10, 2009): 165–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17535650903345379>.

⁹² Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, "The Politics of Memory 70 per Cent Good, 30 per Cent Bad: China Has Found a Simple Formula to Assess Mao Zedong's Legacy," *International Politics and Society*, 2017, <https://www.ips-journal.eu/in-focus/the-politics-of-memory/article/show/70-per-cent-good-30-per-cent-bad-2216/>.

the misery and injustices they or relatives suffered in previous decades”.⁹³ So, when Xi broke with the precedence that began with Deng to limit the power that the leader of the nation has, he set himself up to an unflattering comparison to Mao. The question that I asked, and the question that I think some Western observers have failed to consider, is why would Xi want that comparison?

Xi took something of a gamble removing presidential term limits—Deng is popular in China, and many Chinese people are frustrated by the corruption they see in the CCP.⁹⁴ Would Xi’s action not validate their concerns? In an article published in *Time*, Charlie Campbell did address this question. Campbell pointed out that dissent among the Chinese people could have been considerable, as censorship around the topic was severe and targeted even vague references to Xi.⁹⁵ He also discussed the differences between Mao, Deng, and Xi, stating that “Mao’s authority owed much to reverence for his revolutionary exploits, and Deng’s leadership was rooted in fatherly admiration,” and “Xi ‘is much more, if you like, feared’”.⁹⁶ Mao was also feared, so perhaps it makes sense that Xi is reverting to a Maoist identity. But recent events, particularly the Arabic Spring, have indicated to many authoritarian regimes around the world that fear is not enough to build a strong base of support. The events in Tiananmen in 1979 are another example of fear being too weak a motivator to legitimize a regime. It simply doesn’t make long-term political sense for Xi to revert to Maoism—and we know that Xi likes to think strategically for the long term.

⁹³ Schmidt-Glintzer.

⁹⁴ Zhao, “Xi Jinping’s Maoist Revival.”

⁹⁵ Campbell, “‘More Opposition in Mao’s Time.’ Why China’s Xi Jinping May Have to Rule for Life.”

⁹⁶ Campbell.

The identity that Xi is fashioning for himself also has distinct and obvious differences from Mao. Mao wanted to leave traditional Chinese culture behind. He believed strongly in Marxism and Leninism, and he saw the revolutionary struggle as China's savior. These elements of Mao's thought are nearly opposite of Xi's. At many points in his speech (which I pointed out and analyzed in the previous section), Xi spoke to the importance of Chinese traditional culture and thought-- particularly Confucianism. If Xi's goal were to align with the leftist section of his party, and appeal to the Marxist/Leninist thought that had legitimized Mao and his policies, then surely he too would reject or play-down the importance of Confucianism and other pieces of Chinese tradition.⁹⁷ But he doesn't, and this indicates that the identity that Xi is creating is not one comparable to Mao, but to the sagely leaders of a more distant past.

In his article entitled "Xi Jinping's Maoist Revival", editor of the *Journal of Contemporary China*, Zhao Suisheng, makes an argument that Xi is in fact falling back onto Maoism to increase his legitimacy and that of the Party.⁹⁸ His main argument: Xi is tightening control over many aspects of society, increasing the authoritarian hold of the CCP and limiting the rights of Chinese citizens. While the facts that he offers as proof are no doubt true, are they really indicative of a return to Maoism? I would argue that they are not. The CCP is more than aware of the shock that is coming to the PRC's political culture and society: the economy will slow, and the legitimacy that it provides the Party will wane. It makes sense that the CCP is battening down the hatches. Limiting the flow of information (internet censorship), discouraging public dissent, and monitoring schools are all common-sense reactions to the potentially

⁹⁷ Zhao, "Xi Jinping's Maoist Revival", 86.

⁹⁸ Zhao.

dangerous changes they are expecting. This in and of itself does not indicate a concerted effort towards Maoism.

It comes down to the narrative which Xi and the CCP will be most benefited by. Is this harkening back to the times when China was the undisputed center of civilization, during the time of Confucius and rise of Confucianism? Or is it reaching back to the 1960s and 70s, and hoping the 70 percent that was ‘good’ will be what people remember, rather than the traumatic effects of the 30 percent that was ‘bad’? I think, and it is my belief that the CCP also thinks, that it is much easier to build an identity around an abstract idea of greatness than a tangible national memory fraught with trauma and anger.

Xi has found a somewhat safe identity around which to mold himself, one that is safe from recent memory and holds an unalterable connection to China’s people and past. While his actions might point to a Maoist revival, strategically and rhetorically he is indicating a new path for legitimacy. Confucianism is ingrained in Chinese society and is about a Chinese sense of morality rather than the Western sense of morality that Mao attempted to foist on the Chinese people. As the PRC becomes more powerful and influential internationally, the case for Chinese cultural superiority increases—China doesn’t need communism, it doesn’t need Marx or Lenin. Now it is China’s turn to show the world what it can offer, and it stems from deep in its history and cultural experience. At least, this is perhaps the argument that Xi is making as he creates a base for legitimacy that rests on a tradition which very much values its leaders and their wisdom: Confucianism.

Conclusion

The People's Republic of China has undergone many dramatic changes since its inception, the most recent being Xi Jinping's removal of presidential term limits. But the Chinese people have been navigating radical social, economic, and political change for over a century. The search for a national moral identity since the May Fourth Movement has not yet ended; while Mao Zedong provided a socialist identity for a brief period, the chaos and violence of the Cultural Revolution started the search again. Deng Xiaoping opened the country and the people to wealth and materialism, and for a while national pride and a sense of financial security (at least for some Chinese) was enough to continue believing that the Chinese Communist Party could lead them in the right direction.

Now, there is a pressing need to address the dissonance felt by the Chinese people in the face of the hypocrisy of their government; not only is the economy beginning to slow, but Xi blatantly disregarded a part of the constitution meant to prevent another Mao, another period of violence and discord. Confucianism has experienced a surge of popularity as the CCP encouraged a sense of traditional culture and identity beginning in the 1980s. Xi's use of Confucian ideology in his speech given at the 40th anniversary of the opening up and reforms shows a possible path which he could lead the nation down; a leadership and Party built and legitimized by traditional culture, specifically by Confucianism.

While I believe that my research and analysis adds to the previous research done on the 'moral identity crisis', the resurgence of Confucianism, and Xi's political rhetoric, there are several ways that this topic can be studied further. It would be interesting to analyze Xi's speeches on a larger scale by building a database of keywords which invoke Confucian ideology,

similar to Wu Shufang's *People's Daily Study*.⁹⁹ Furthermore, another layer of analysis that I missed was Xi's anti-corruption campaign; an analysis of the language used in the policy directives themselves and ways in which he addresses the anti-corruption campaign across several speeches would perhaps reveal rhetoric which does more to utilize Confucian ideology as a way of differentiating himself from the CCP.

My analysis shows that Xi's Chinese Dream and his anti-hegemonic foreign policy can be explained and understood through a Confucian lens, connecting to the Chinese people through thousands of years of culture. Perhaps it will be the national identity that the nation has been looking for; perhaps it will legitimize Xi and the CCP's regime. While the outcome is not certain, a pattern in Xi's rhetoric has been identified and can provide another perspective to his increasingly personalistic authority. Speeches have the power to change the way that people think, and the way that they perceive the world around them—Xi has the power to change the identity of his country, and what the people believe in. This is the significance of Confucianism, national moral identity, and Xi Jinping.

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⁹⁹ Wu, “The Revival of Confucianism and the CCP's Struggle for Cultural Leadership: A Content Analysis of the *People's Daily*, 2000–2009.”

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Appendix: Xi Jinping's 40th Anniversary of Reforms and Opening-up Speech

Translation of Xi Jinping's 40th Anniversary of the Reforms and Opening Speech

同志们、朋友们！

改革开放 40 年来，从开启新时期到跨入新世纪，从站上新起点到进入新时代，40 年

风雨同舟，40 年披荆斩棘，40 年砥砺前行，我们党引领人民绘就了一幅波澜壮阔、气势

恢宏的历史画卷，谱写了一曲感天动地、气壮山河的奋斗赞歌。

——40年来，我们始终坚持解放思想、实事求是、与时俱进、求真务实，坚持马克思主义指导地位不动摇，坚持科学社会主义基本原则不动摇，勇敢推进理论创新、实践创新、制度创新、文化创新以及各方面创新，不断赋予中国特色社会主义以鲜明的实践特色、理论特色、民族特色、时代特色，形成了中国特色社会主义道路、理论、制度、文化，以不可辩驳的事实彰显了科学社会主义的鲜活生命力，社会主义的伟大旗帜始终在中国大地上高高飘扬

It has been forty years since the reforms and opening up, from a new period of reforms to stepping into a new century, from standing up on our own two feet (从站上新起点), to entering a new age, for forty years standing together through thick and thin, forty years of overcoming all obstacles, forty years of grinding the whetstone to advance forward bravely, our Party has guided the people to paint a tapestry that is unfolding on a magnificent scale (我们党引领人民绘就了一幅波澜壮阔), the momentum of our noble tapestry of history (气势恢宏的历史画卷), composing a fight song of praise full of power and grandeur so touching that Heaven and Earth are moved.

Throughout the last forty years, we have persisted in freeing ourselves from old ideas, sought the truth from facts, kept on developing and advancing with time, looked for the truth and were practical, firmly and unwaveringly guided by Marxist ideology (坚持马克思主义指导地位不动摇), our steadfast adherence to the basic principles of scientific socialist ideology unwavering, bravely advancing innovative new ideas (勇敢推进理论创新), putting innovative ideas into practice, institutionalizing innovation, innovating culture as well as all aspects of innovation (文

化创新以及各方面创新), continuously entrusting socialism with Chinese characteristics to live up to this brilliant characteristic, the theory of this characteristic (理论特色), the characteristic of the people, the characteristic of the age, to form the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, theory, institution, culture, so as not to refute the conspicuous fact of socialism with Chinese characteristics' lively vitality, from the beginning to the end the magnificent banner of society's ideology has proudly waved in China's mainland.”

——40年来,我们始终坚持以经济建设为中心,不断解放和发展社会生产力,我国国内生产总值由3679亿元增长到2017年的82.7万亿元,年均实际增长9.5%,远高于同期世界经济2.9%左右的年均增速。我国国内生产总值占世界生产总值的比重由改革开放之初的1.8%上升到15.2%,多年来对世界经济增长贡献率超过30%。我国货物进出口总额从206亿美元增长到超过4万亿美元,累计使用外商直接投资超过2万亿美元,对外投资总额达到1.9万亿美元。我国主要农产品产量跃居世界前列,建立了全世界最完整的现代工业体系,科技创新和重大工程捷报频传。我国基础设施建设成就显著,信息畅通,公路成网,铁路密布,高坝矗立,西气东输,南水北调,高铁飞驰,巨轮远航,飞机翱翔,天堑变通途。现在,我国是世界第二大经济体、制造业第一大国、货物贸易第一大国、商品消费第二大国、外资流入第二大国,我国外汇储备连续多年位居世界第一,中国人民在富起来、强起来的征程上迈出了决定性的步伐!

“In the last forty years, we have always adhered to building the economy as the center, continuously liberating and developing society's productive forces. China's domestic GDP grew from 367.9 billion yuan in to 82.7 trillion yuan in 2017, with average annual real growth at 9.5 percent, growing 2.9 percent faster than the world economy over the same period. China's gross

internal product as a percentage of the world gross product has grown dramatically since the beginning of the economic reform and opening up, increasing from 1.8 percent to 15.2 percent. In the upcoming years, our contribution to the world economy will exceed 30 percent. China's total import and export of goods increased from 20.6 billion dollars to 4 trillion dollars. The cumulative use of foreign direct investment is more than 2 trillion dollars, as direct foreign investment reached 1.9 trillion dollars. China's major agricultural production jumped to the forefront of the world, establishing the new century's modern industry all over the world with innovating science and technology and major engineering projects. China has had remarkable achievements in infrastructure construction: unimpeded information, highway construction, a dense network of railroads, dams that stand tall, the West-to-East natural gas transportation project, the South-North water transportation project, high-speed rail, large ships sailing across seas, soaring airplanes, and flexible thoroughfares. Now, China is the world's second largest economy, has the largest manufacturing industry, largest commodity trade, is second in merchandise consumption, and has the second largest inflow of foreign capital; China's foreign exchange reserve has been ranked first for many years. Chinese people are becoming rich and have taken decisive steps on the journey to becoming powerful!"

——40年来，我们始终坚持中国特色社会主义政治发展道路，不断深化政治体制改革，发展社会主义民主政治，党和国家领导体制日益完善，全面依法治国深入推进，中国特色社会主义法律体系日益健全，人民当家作主的制度保障和法治保障更加有力，人权事业全面发展，爱国统一战线更加巩固，人民依法享有和行使民主权利的内容更加丰富、渠道更加便捷、形式更加多样，掌握着自己命运的中国人民焕发出前所未有的积极性、主动性、创造性，在改革开放和社会主义现代化建设中展现出气吞山河的强大力量！

“In the last forty years, we have always adhered to the development of government by following the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, continuously developing governmental reform, developing socialism with Chinese characteristics, increasingly perfecting the leadership of the Party and the country, and advancing further the Rule of Law. The legal system within socialism with Chinese characteristics is increasingly made perfect, the system of Chinese people being the masters guarantees that the rule of law is more powerful, in all aspects human rights are being developed, love for country and a united front consolidate strength, people who follow the law enjoy and exercise a rich abundance of Democratic rights, more convenient channels of communication, more diversity, take China’s and their own shining destiny into their own hands with unprecedented enthusiasm, are disposed to take the initiative, and are creative. With the opening up and reform period, socialism with Chinese characteristics, and a new era, the Chinese people are imbued with a powerful force that can conquer rivers and mountains!”

——40年来，我们始终坚持发展社会主义先进文化，加强社会主义精神文明建设，培育和践行社会主义核心价值观，传承和弘扬中华优秀传统文化，坚持以科学理论引路指向，以正确舆论凝心聚力，以先进文化塑造灵魂，以优秀作品鼓舞斗志，爱国主义、集体主义、社会主义精神广为弘扬，时代楷模、英雄模范不断涌现，文化艺术日益繁荣，网信事业快速发展，全民族理想信念和文化自信不断增强，国家文化软实力和中华文化影响力大幅提升。改革开放铸就的伟大改革开放精神，极大丰富了民族精神内涵，成为当代中国人民最鲜明的精神标识！

“In the last forty years, we have always adhered to developing the advancement of socialism with Chinese characteristics in our culture, adding spirit and vitality to the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics, cultivating and implementing socialism with Chinese

characteristics as a core value, importing and carrying forward excellent Chinese traditional culture, and adhering to allowing scientific theory to point and lead the way. By means of the proper combined forces of public opinion, shaping the soul with advanced culture, encouraging the will to fight with excellent work, patriotism, collectivism, and widely promoting the vitality of socialism with Chinese characteristics, this model of the new era, this heroic model, is continuously emerging. The cultural art of growing prosperity, the network of trust is quickly developing, and all Chinese peoples' confidence in national ideals, beliefs and culture is continuously increasing. China's soft power and the power of cultural influence have substantially elevated. The spirit of opening and reform were found and cast on opening up and reform, greatly enriching the Chinese people's spiritual self-possession, becoming contemporary Chinese people's distinct spiritual motto!"

——40年来，我们始终坚持在发展中保障和改善民生，全面推进幼有所育、学有所教、劳有所得、病有所医、老有所养、住有所居、弱有所扶，不断改善人民生活、增进人民福祉。全国居民人均可支配收入由171元增加到2.6万元，中等收入群体持续扩大。我国贫困人口累计减少7.4亿人，贫困发生率下降94.4个百分点，谱写了人类反贫困史上的辉煌篇章。教育事业全面发展，九年义务教育巩固率达93.8%。我国建成了包括养老、医疗、低保、住房在内的世界最大的社会保障体系，基本养老保险覆盖超过9亿人，医疗保险覆盖超过13亿人。常住人口城镇化率达到58.52%，上升40.6个百分点。居民预期寿命由1981年的67.8岁提高到2017年的76.7岁。我国社会大局保持长期稳定，成为世界上最有安全感的国家之一。粮票、布票、肉票、鱼票、油票、豆腐票、副食本、工业券等百姓生活曾经离不开的票证已经进入了历史博物馆，忍饥挨饿、缺吃少穿、生活困顿这几千年来困扰我国人民的问题总体上一去不复返了！

“In the last forty years, we have always adhered to safeguarding and improving people’s livelihoods, in all aspects promoting the rearing of children: students have something to learn, laborers have wages to earn, the sick have doctors, old people have support, people have a place to live, and the weak have help, continuously improving the Chinese people’s lives and advancing their happiness. China’s residents’ disposable income has increased from 171 RMB to 26,000 RMB, with the middle class continuing to expand. The population of China’s impoverished people has decreased to 740 million people, and the rate of poverty has declined by 94.4 percent, writing a glorious chapter in the history of eradicating human poverty. All aspects of education are being developed; nine years of compulsory education has brought the school retention rate to 93.8 percent. China’s construction includes old-age, medical, subsistence allowance. Domestic housing in China includes the world’s largest safeguard system. Basic old-age insurance covers more than 900 million people, and medical insurance covers more than 1.3 billion people. The urbanization rate of the resident population reached 58.53 percent, increasing by 40.6 percent. Residents’ life expectancy in 1981 was 67.8 years old, and in 2017 increased to 76.7 years old. China has maintained social long term stability, rising to become the number one safest country in the world. Food stamps, clothing tickets, meat tickets, fish tickets, oil tickets, bean tickets, ..., industrial vouchers, etc. that were once inseparable from peoples’ lives has now been entered into museums as history. Enduring the torments of hunger, being short of food and clothes; the problems that have plagued our people for thousands of years are now gone!”

——40年来，我们始终坚持党对军队的绝对领导，不断推进国防和军队现代化，推进人民军队实现革命性重塑，武器装备取得历史性突破，治军方式发生根本性转变，革命化现代化正规化水平显著提高，人民军队维护国家主权、安全、发展利益的能力显著增强，成为保卫人民幸福生活、保卫祖国和世界和平牢不可破的强大力量！

“In the past forty years, we have adhered to the Party’s absolute leadership over the military, continuously advancing defense and military modernization, advancing the People’s Army’s revolutionary remodeling, made historic breakthroughs in weaponry, fundamentally shifted the management and running of the military, revolutionizing and modernizing regulation levels. The People’s Army safeguards the homeland’s sovereignty, peace, significantly enhancing the capacity to develop benefits and to become the defenders of the people’s life and happiness. A powerful force to defend the motherland and protect the world!”

——40年来，我们始终坚持推进祖国和平统一大业，实施“一国两制”基本方针，相继恢复对香港、澳门行使主权，洗雪了中华民族百年屈辱。我们坚持一个中国原则和“九二共识”，加强两岸经济文化交流合作，推动两岸关系和平发展，坚决反对和遏制“台独”分裂势力，牢牢掌握两岸关系发展主导权和主动权。海内外全体中华儿女的民族认同感、文化认同感大大增强，同心共筑中国梦的意志更加坚强！

“In the past forty years, we have always adhered to advancing the motherland and Great Chinese Peaceful Unification, implementing the “One Country, Two Systems” as a foundational guiding principle. The successive recovery of Hong Kong and Macao exercise of sovereignty redresses China’s 100 years of humiliation. We adhere to the One China principle and the “1992 Consensus”, strengthening bilateral exchange and cooperation for our economies and cultures and advancing bilateral relationships and peaceful development, firmly opposing and keeping contained “Taiwan independence” separatist forces, firmly holding the leadership role and initiative in the development of our bilateral relationship. All Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad identify with this same feeling; the sense of cultural identity has increased and so has the will to build the Chinese dream together!”

——40年来，我们始终坚持独立自主的和平外交政策，始终不渝走和平发展道路、奉行互利共赢的开放战略，坚定维护国际关系基本准则，维护国际公平正义。我们

实现由封闭半封闭到全方位开放的历史转变，积极参与经济全球化进程，为推动人类共同发展作出了应有贡献。我们积极推动建设开放型世界经济、构建人类命运共同体，促进全球治理体系变革，旗帜鲜明反对霸权主义和强权政治，为世界和平与发展不断贡献中国智慧、中国方案、中国力量。我国日益走近世界舞台中央，成为国际社会公认的世界和平的建设者、全球发展的贡献者、国际秩序的维护者！

“In the past forty years, we have always adhered to maintaining independence and peaceful foreign policy, unswerving going down the path of peaceful development, pursuing a mutually beneficial open strategy, firmly upholding the basic guidelines of relationships, and upholding international fairness and justice. We realize the historic transformation from closed to semi-open, and are actively involved in the process of economic globalization. We have made our contribution by advancing common human development. We actively advance the construction of an open global economy, building a community of human destiny, and promoting a change of the global system of governance, having a clear cut stand in opposition to hegemony and power politics, by continuously contributing Chinese wisdom to world peace and development, China’s solutions, China’s strength. We are increasingly entering the center of the world stage, becoming recognized as builders in international society, contributors to global development, and maintainers of the international order!”

——40年来，我们始终坚持加强和改善党的领导，积极应对在长期执政和改革开放条件下党面临的各种风险考验，持续推进党的建设新的伟大工程，保持党的先进性和纯洁性，保持党同人民群众的血肉联系。我们积极探索共产党执政规律、社会主义建设规律、人类

社会发展规律，不断开辟马克思主义中国化新境界。我们坚持党要管党、从严治党，净化党内政治生态，持之以恒正风肃纪，大力整治形式主义、官僚主义、享乐主义和奢靡之风，以零容忍态度严厉惩治腐败，反腐败斗争取得压倒性胜利。我们党在革命性锻造中坚定走在时代前列，始终是中国人民和中华民族的主心骨！

“In the past forty years, we have always adhered to strengthening and improving Party leadership, actively dealing with long-term governance and the risks and threats faced by the Party under the conditions of opening up and reforms, continued advancing the magnificent project of Party construction, keeping the Party’s excellence and purity, keeping the flesh and blood connection of the Party and the people. We are actively exploring the ruling law of the Communist Party, the law of socialist construction, the law of human social development, continuously pioneering new Marxism in China. We insist that the Party wants to be controlled by the Party, strict governance of the Party, purify the Party’s inner governing ecology, to pursue unremittingly to rectify the practice, and with great strength repair Formalization, bureaucracy, hedonism and extravagant and wasteful practices, by means of a zero tolerance policy with a severe punishment for corruption, the fight against corruption was an overwhelming victory. The forging of our Party in the revolution was firmly at the forefront of the times, always the backbone of the Chinese people and Chinese nation!”

40年春风化雨、春华秋实，改革开放极大改变了中国的面貌、中华民族的面貌、中国人民的面貌、中国共产党的面貌。中华民族迎来了从站起来、富起来到强起来的伟大飞跃！中国特色社会主义迎来了从创立、发展到完善的伟大飞跃！中国人民迎来了从温饱不足到小康富裕的伟大飞跃！中华民族正以崭新姿态屹立于世界的东方！

“Forty years of life-giving spring rain and breezes, spring flowers and fall fruit, the opening up and reforms has dramatically changed China’s features, the Chinese nation’s features, the Chinese people’s features, and the Chinese Communist Party’s features. The Chinese nation has made a great leap from standing up, to getting rich, to becoming strong! Socialism with Chinese characteristics has made a great leap from its founding, to its development, to its perfection! The Chinese nation has made a great leap from not having enough to eat and dress warmly, to affluence! The Chinese Nation is taking a new position as a towering figure in the East of the world!”

40年来取得的成就不是天上掉下来的，更不是别人恩赐施舍的，而是全党全国各族人民用勤劳、智慧、勇气干出来的！我们用几十年时间走完了发达国家几百年走过的工业化历程。在中国人民手中，不可能成为了可能。我们为创造了人间奇迹的中国人民感到无比自豪、无比骄傲！

“The last forty years of achievements are not given to us from Heaven, and certainly not from charity bestowed by others, but from the hard work of the entire Party and all of the Chinese people; they came out of the wisdom and courage to undertake hard work! We have industrialized in decades when other developing countries took centuries. In the Chinese people’s hands, what could not be done has been done. We have an unparalleled sense of pride that we have created a man-made miracle!”

同志们、朋友们！

40年的实践充分证明，党的十一届三中全会以来我们党团结带领全国各族人民开辟的中国特色社会主义道路、理论、制度、文化是完全正确的，形成的党的基本理论、基本路线、基本方略是完全正确的。

“Comrades, friends!

The practices of the last forty years demonstrates, since the third plenum of the Party our Party unity leads the entire country’s people to open the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the theory, system, and culture is absolutely correct. The basic form of the Party, basic path, and basic strategy are absolutely correct.”

中国人民具有伟大梦想精神，中华民族充满变革和开放精神。几千年前，中华民族的先民们就秉持“周虽旧邦，其命维新”的精神，开启了缔造中华文明的伟大实践。自古以来，中国大地上发生了无数变法变革图强运动，留下了“治世不一道，便国不法古”等豪迈宣言。自古以来，中华民族就以“天下大同”、

“The Chinese people posses a magnificent spirit to dream; Chinese people of all ethnicities are filled with transformation and an open spirit. Thousands of years ago, the Chinese nation’s first peoples upheld the spirit, “Though the Kingdom of Zhou is ancient, its mission is still innovative”, creating the magnificent practice of Chinese civilization. Ever since ancient times, there were countless reforms and changes with the intent of making a strong movement on the Chinese mainland. The open-minded manifesto, “There is not one way to govern, one does not have to follow the ancient ways” remained. Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has firmly believed in but also carried out in interactions and cultural exchanges with other nationalities the broad-minded ideals of “Great Harmony under Heaven”.

