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# *The Confucian Revival in the Propaganda Narratives of the Chinese Government*

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**Cover Photo:**

Chinese sentries stand watch in front of a statue of Confucius at the edge of Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Source: Associated Press photo, provided in "Confucius Statue Shows Up in China's Tiananmen Square," *Huffington Post*, posting dated Jan. 14, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/14/confucius-statue-tiananmen-square_n_809038.html.

## ***Executive Summary***

In recent years, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has undertaken an official rehabilitation of imperial China's preeminent social philosopher Kong Zi, better known in the West as "Confucius." Once a target of official condemnation in Mao-era China as a relic of the country's feudal past and as an obstacle to the Party's vision of social transformation, Confucius has been revived in official propaganda as a national icon of China's traditional culture, as well as a symbol of the Party's concern for public welfare.

The CCP has turned to Confucian ideals – or at least, to the promotion of a selective interpretation of the Confucian tradition – for several reasons. In the face of widespread public cynicism regarding traditional Communist ideology, the Party has undertaken a search for an alternative philosophical tradition that could appeal to the public without contradicting the Party's continuing use of official Marxist theories on politics and social development. The CCP is also facing widespread social unrest sparked by disparate factors such as income inequality, environmental pollution, and official corruption. Alarmed by the potential threat this unrest could pose to the Party's ruling status, the Chinese authorities have repeatedly invoked the need for "social stability." They have also promoted broad propaganda campaigns, both domestically and abroad, asserting China's desire for a "Harmonious Society" and for "Peaceful Development."

In this environment, Confucianism presents itself to the authorities as a natural choice. The emphasis within Confucian philosophy on ethical behavior, self-discipline and cultivation, and simple living dovetails well with the efforts of senior government leaders to portray themselves as dedicated corruption fighters concerned with the welfare of the common man. Through the Confucian emphasis on public service via loyalty to the existing social order, the selective promotion of Confucian teachings also provides a pillar of support for authoritarian and paternalistic politics. Furthermore, hearkening back to Confucianism offers an indigenous tradition of social philosophy that satisfies nationalist impulses, while simultaneously presenting a gentler humanist face to audiences both at home and abroad.

To this end, in recent years Confucian iconography has been employed extensively by the Chinese state propaganda apparatus: in the opening ceremonies for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games; in an historical epic film about Confucius produced by a state-owned film company in 2009; and in a large statue of Confucius erected on the edge of Beijing's Tiananmen Square in early 2011. Confucian themes of virtuous public service have also surrounded the depictions of senior Party leaders in the state press, accompanied by very Confucian-esque exhortations to lower-level CCP cadres to avoid the temptations of corruption.

Due to its high suitability to the public relations needs of the Party, "CCP Confucianism" is likely to remain a staple of Chinese Government-sponsored propaganda in the years ahead. It remains to be seen, however, how much influence this emerging state-sponsored philosophy will actually have – either in terms of reassuring foreign audiences, or of convincing China's own citizens of the government's commitment to public welfare and social justice.

## ***Introduction / The Theme of "Harmony" in Contemporary CCP Propaganda***

Once attacked in official Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda as the embodiment of all that was backward in China, Confucianism's focus on order, hierarchy, and familial/social obligations was condemned by the CCP as a feudal relic, and an obstacle to the Party's own utopian visions of social transformation. This propaganda theme was demonstrated most directly following the 1971 alleged failed *coup d'etat* and mysterious death of PLA Marshall Lin Biao. Lin was subsequently lumped together with the ancient philosopher in a 1973-1974 nationwide mass campaign to "Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius."[1] In the esoteric ideological formulations of the time, the line of attack directed against this incongruous pairing was that

> *Lin was a reactionary parallel to Confucius, in that Lin had opposed Mao just as Confucius had stood against the politically centralizing and economically progressive policies of the emerging feudal and anti-aristocratic states of the fifth century B.C. By a similar historical leap, Mao Zedong could be compared to the third-century B.C. Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi, who had done so much to unify China.*[2]

Image top left: A propaganda poster exhorts readers that "Thoroughly Criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius is a Great Matter for the Entire Party, Army, and Country."
Source: *http://okie-east.blogspot.com/2010/11/21st-century-dazibao.html*.

Image top right: At a Cultural Revolution-era public meeting in Qufu, Shandong Province (the home town of Confucius), residents take part in ritual denunciations of Lin Biao and Confucius.
Source: "Decline and Fall of Lin Biao," Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (reprinted from *China Now*, No. 30, March 1973). *http://www.sacu.org/linbiao.html*.

[1] Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006), pp. 366-373.
[2] Jonathan Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: the Chinese and their Revolution, 1895-1980* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 400.

However, in recent years Confucius – just like many Chinese who suffered during the Cultural Revolution – has been granted a political rehabilitation by the Party. Although a youthful Hu Jintao cut his teeth as a Tsinghua University political instructor in the mid-1960s[3] – and may have dutifully taken part in the "Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius" mass campaigns – as CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao has dusted off the great philosopher and put him to work for the Party.

Fearful of unrest that could threaten its ruling status, the CCP continuously asserts the primacy of "social stability" (社会稳定 / *shehui wending*) and "maintaining social order"（社会治安/ *shehui zhi'an*) in propaganda[4] messaging directed at the public, as well as treating these factors as a primary criteria for evaluating the performance of CCP cadres.[5] *(For a more detailed discussion of social unrest in China and the government's response, see the transcript for the Commission's February 25, 2011 hearing, "China's Internal Dilemmas," available at www.uscc.gov.)* The CCP has therefore come to view China's Confucian cultural heritage as a potential asset, and Confucian values of social stability, hierarchy, and respect for authority are in official favor once again. Since Hu's ascension to power these messages have been actively promoted by the government's propaganda apparatus, and Confucius is now regularly praised in the state media.[6]

## Confucian Philosophy and its Role in Chinese History

Confucian philosophy has been a fundamental element in the development of Chinese civilization. The spread of Chinese influence to countries around China's periphery has also made Confucianism a formative factor in the cultural and historical development of countries such as Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. Confucius himself (in Chinese *Kong Zi*, or "Master Kong") was a social philosopher who lived in the 5th century BCE, hailing from the town of Qufu in modern-day Shandong Province. He was both a teacher and a civil official, serving as Minister for Public Works and Minister for Justice in the northeast Chinese state of Lu. Due to court politics he also spent time in exile, wandering and teaching in other kingdoms. His best known work is the *Lun Yu* ("Analects"), a collection of his aphorisms on morality, social relationships, and the responsibilities of both family and public life.[7]

At an individual level, the teachings of Confucius emphasized the importance of education, self-cultivation, and self-discipline; observing public rituals; and maintaining hierarchical and properly ordered family and social relationships. In the political sphere, Confucius emphasized that political

[3] Willy Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), p.5; see also *China Vitae*, "Hu Jintao 胡锦涛" (biographical entry), *http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Hu_Jintao/career.*

[4] It is worth noting that in Chinese, the common term for "propaganda" ( 宣传 / *xuanchuan*) does not necessarily carry the pejorative connotations of falsehood contained within its English equivalent. It is in the more neutral Chinese sense of the term -- i.e., that of informational messages that publicize and promote a particular political point of view -- that the word "propaganda" will be employed in this paper.

[5] Beatriz Carrillo, "County Governance and the Promotion of Social Development in a Mixed Economy," *Provincial China*, Vol. 2, No. 1, September 2010; and Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Yongnian Zheng (eds.), *The Chinese Communist Party in Reform* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 134-135.

[6] As one such example, see: "Confucianism, Age-Old Philosophy But Still Relevant," *Xinhua News Service* (in English), September 7, 2010. *http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2010-09/07/c_13482303_2.htm*.

[7] This summary material in this section on Confucian philosophy is drawn from Jeffrey Riegel, "Confucius", entry contained within *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.). *http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/confucius*.

subordinates owed loyalty and service to their rulers, but that rulers bore responsibility for behaving virtuously and with benevolent concern for the welfare of those beneath them. During the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), Confucianism was adopted as the official state ideology, and an imperial academy was founded for the cultivation of Confucian scholars. During the Sui Dynasty (581—618 CE), this official patronage evolved into an examination system for public office that was grounded upon study of the Confucian classics. This nationwide civil service examination system endured until 1905, nearly through to the end of China's last imperial dynasty.[8]

***Building a "Harmonious Society"***

The newfound praise for Confucius is tied closely to the Party's official narrative of a "Harmonious Society" (和谐社会/ *Hexie Shehui*). This propaganda theme emphasizes: the Party's benevolent concern for the welfare of the common man; an (at least nominal) effort to balance growth more evenly between China's haves and have-nots; and, above all, the clearly implied responsibility of China's citizens not to challenge CCP rule. In this political environment, the Confucian emphasis on ethical behavior and loyalty to the existing political order has made the Chinese government a belated convert to Confucian philosophy – or at least, it would very much like for its citizens to internalize selected aspects of Confucian philosophy. As stated by Dr. Cheng Li, a scholar of Chinese politics at the Brookings Institution,"[Confucianism is] such a big basket you can select whatever you want. They will ask people to behave appropriately, not too aggressive, not use violence and don't pursue revolution."[9]

The articulation of a new CCP Confucianism[10] by the Chinese authorities may also be motivated in part by the desire to fill a psychological vacuum left by the widespread loss of faith in Marxism, and the go-go materialism that followed in its wake. As stated again by Dr. Li, China's leaders "certainly realize the absence of a value system… [there is] a desperate search for ideology, for a new value system."[11] Alongside the dramatic economic transformation of Chinese society over the past three decades, the leaders of the CCP have long fretted that foreign ideas might come in to fill this values gap – and, as purportedly said by Deng Xiaoping, sought to "open the windows, breathe the fresh air, and at the same time fight the flies and insects" that enter the house.[12]

Throughout the post-Mao reform era, the authorities have made intermittent efforts to strike back against these Western "flies and insects." These efforts have ranged from the "Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign" of 1983,[13] to more recent efforts in the wake of Middle Eastern "color revolutions" to assert

[8] Ichisada Miyazaki (trans. by Conrad Schirokauer), *China's Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examinations of Imperial China* (Princeton, NJ: Yale Univ. Press, 1976).
[9] "Confucius Statue Shows Up in China's Tiananmen Square," *Huffington Post*, posting dated Jan. 14, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/14/confucius-statue-tiananmen-square_n_809038.html.
[10] The term "Neo-Confucianism" is traditionally employed by scholars to describe a syncretic school of Confucianism that developed in the 12th century, and which ultimately emerged as the orthodox school of Confucian thought in later Imperial China. The term "New Confucianism" has been used to refer to an intellectual movement that emerged in the Republican Period in 20th Century China. To avoid confusion, this paper will refer to the new incarnation of Confucianism as interpreted by the Communist Party as "CCP Confucianism."
[11] "Confucius Statue Shows Up in China's Tiananmen Square," *Huffington Post*, posting dated Jan. 14, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/14/confucius-statue-tiananmen-square_n_809038.html.
[12] Orville Schell, *Mandate of Heaven: The Legacy of Tiananmen and the Next Generation of China's Leaders* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 357.
[13] Pico Iyer and David Aikman, "China: Battling Spiritual Pollution," *Time*, November 28, 1983.

the unsuitability to developing countries of the "Western democratic model."[14] The ruling authorities of the CCP have consistently sought both to discredit concepts of electoral democracy as alien imports linked to foreign subversion and Western hegemonism,[15] as well as to assert the Party's own role as indispensible to China's future security and prosperity.[16] In searching for an alternative to political concepts that threaten the Party's grip on power, China's indigenous tradition of Confucian social philosophy presents the authorities with an attractive alternative ideological construct.

**The Communist Party's Message on Building a "Socialist Harmonious Society"**

The CCP has announced a very ambitious (if also vague) set of goals as part of its plan to construct a "Socialist Harmonious Society" (社会主义和谐社会 / *Shehui Zhuyi Hexie Shehui*) by the year 2020. A summary of these goals as publicized by the CCP Central Committee in 2006 is as follows:

*To the year 2020, the goals and central tasks of building a Socialist Harmonious Society are:*

- *To further perfect the legal institutions of socialist democracy, to achieve comprehensive fulfillment of the fundamental plan to administer the country by rule of law;*
- *To achieve practical respect and protection for the rights of the people;*
- *To gradually reduce the development gap between urban and rural regions, to establish income distribution patterns in an equitable and orderly fashion, and to increase household wealth, to let the people experience a more prosperous life;*
- *To provide for fuller employment, and build a basic social safety net for rural residents;*
- *Further improve basic public services, government management, and service standards;*
- *Foster clear improvements in the quality of ideological morality, scientific culture, and health throughout the entire country, and make progress in positive moral customs and harmonious interpersonal relationships;*
- *Strengthen vitality in our entire society, and create new patterns of national construction;*
- *Further perfect the social management system, and improve social order;*
- *Make notable improvements to efficiency in the use of natural resources, and to the condition of the natural environment;*

[14] Willy Lam, "Beijing Wary of 'Color Revolutions' Sweeping Middle East/North Africa," *China Brief,* Vol. 11 Issue 3, February 10, 2011.

[15] For an overview of official CCP thinking on Western "hegemonism" – and on U.S. hegemonism in particular – see: Yong Deng, "Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 3, 2001.

[16] For a broader consideration of the factors motivating the control of information by the Chinese authorities, see: Ian Buruma, "Battling the Information Barbarians," *Wall Street Journal,* January 29, 2010; and U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2008 Annual Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: November 2008), pp. 293-295.

- *Achieve the goal of extending a comparatively high standard of living to a population of over a billion people, working hard to create for all the People harmonious relations and a situation of "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."*[17]

These emphases on the benevolent concern that the authorities feel for the common man, and on harmonious relations within a properly ordered society, mesh quite readily with traditional Confucian concepts of social order. The government's newfound embrace of Confucian themes and iconography is set against the backdrop of this broader narrative on constructing a "Socialist Harmonious Society."

## ***Confucius in the 2008 Olympics Opening Ceremonies***

The CCP's newfound admiration for Confucius, woven together with the "harmonious society" theme, featured prominently in the official themes surrounding the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. This started with the worldwide running of the Olympic Torch in spring 2008, which the Chinese government dubbed the "Journey of Harmony"[18] – a title made ironic by scuffles between human rights protestors and pro-PRC counter-protestors in torch relay locations such as London, Paris, and Seoul, as well as by the PRC's furious reaction to these protests.[19]

The Confucian themes were even more prominent in the opening ceremonies for the Games, where the CCP Confucian themes of order and social harmony were played out in tremendous spectacle. One of the many acts of the ceremonies featured the march into the arena of a massive choir dressed as disciples of Confucius, waving bamboo slips of text and chanting quotations from *The Analects (image on following page)*. The visual pageantry was supplemented by commentary from a narrator on the wise advice that Confucius had provided on how to achieve order and harmony in society.[20]

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[17] This text is drawn from "Communique from the 6th Plenary Meeting of the Chinese Communist Party 16th Central Committee" (中国共产党第十六届中央委员会第六次全体会议公报 / *Zhongguo Gongchandang di Shiliu Jie Zhongyang Weiyuanhui di Liu ci Quanti Huiyi Gongbao*), *Xinhua News Service,* October 11, 2006. *http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2006-10/11/content_5190605.htm* (accessed April 12, 2011). Translation by the author, original text as follows: "到二0二0年，构建社会主义和谐社会的目标和主要任务是：社会主义民主法制更加完善，依法治国基本方略得到全面落实，人民的权益得到切实尊重和保障；城乡、区域发展差距扩大的趋势逐步扭转，合理有序的收入分配格局基本形成，家庭财产普遍增加，人民过上更加富足的生活；社会就业比较充分，覆盖城乡居民的社会保 障体系基本建立；基本公共服务体系更加完备，政府管理和服务水平有较大提高；全民族的思想道德素质、科学文化素质和健康素质明显提高，良好道德风尚、和谐 人际关系进一步形成；全社会创造活力显著增强，创新型国家基本建成；社会管理体系更加完善，社会秩序良好；资源利用效率显著提高，生态环境明显好转；实现 全面建设惠及十几亿人口的更高水平的小康社会的目标，努力形成全体人民各尽其能、各得其所而又和谐相处的局面。"

[18] "Former Gymnast Li Ning Lights Olympic Cauldron," *Official Website of the Beijing 2008 Torch Relay* (in English), posting dated August 9, 2008. *http://torchrelay.beijing2008.cn/en/journey/beijing/news/n214518885.shtml*.

[19] For examples of the unrest and sometime violence that surrounded the Olympic torch relay, see: "Scuffle at South Korea Torch Leg," *BBC News Online*, April 27, 2008, *http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7369471.stm*; and *Associated Press*, "Paris Protests Force Cancellation of Torch Relay," May 6, 2008. For a discussion of indications that Chinese government officials were involved in organizing counter-demonstrators at the torch relays, see: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2009 Annual Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: November 2009), pp. 164-165.

[20] Author's notes, taken from a full recording of the 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremonies as broadcast on the National Broadcasting Corporation, August 8, 2008. Unless otherwise noted, all discussion of the ceremonies is drawn from this source.

Image: In the opening ceremonies for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, performers dressed as Confucian scholars enter the arena, chanting quotations from *The Analects (Lun Yu)* of Confucius.
Source: Official Website of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.
*http://en.beijing2008.cn/ceremonies/photos/openingceremony/performances/n214518906.shtml*.

The themes of order and harmony were reinforced when the disciples of Confucius were followed by a panorama of rising and falling blocks, intended to represent the blocks of a giant, animated printing press. Commenting at one point on the undulating blocks of the printing press, the narration noted the similarity of these movements with that of wind blowing across a field, and that Chinese viewers would appreciate the linkage to an aphorism of Confucius: "The virtuous leader can pass across his subjects with the ease of the wind." The blocks then worked collectively to produce a giant version of the character 和 [*he*], or "harmony" – a central character of the slogan "Harmonious Society" *(image below)*. To further underscore this theme, the narration counseled that "[t]he belief in harmony… is really the only hope for sustainable development in China."

Image: In the opening ceremonies for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, performers moving blocks representing the characters of a printing press use them to form the character for "harmony" (和 / *he*).
Source: *http://olympics.about.com/od/thedayinpictures/ig/Image-Gallery---August-8--2008/Have-a-Look-Inside.htm*.

## ***Confucius in the Cineplex***

The Chinese government further promoted Confucius as a national icon in the 2009 film *Confucius (Kong Zi).* A big-budget extravaganza produced by the state-owned China Film Group Corporation (CFGC), the historical epic starred veteran Hong Kong film star Chow Yun-Fat in the title role. The film generated international attention at the time of its release in January 2010, when Chinese officials – to include CFGC, which also exercises regulatory authority over some aspects of the film industry – ordered the highly popular American film *Avatar* to be pulled from many theaters to make room on more screens for *Confucius*.[21]

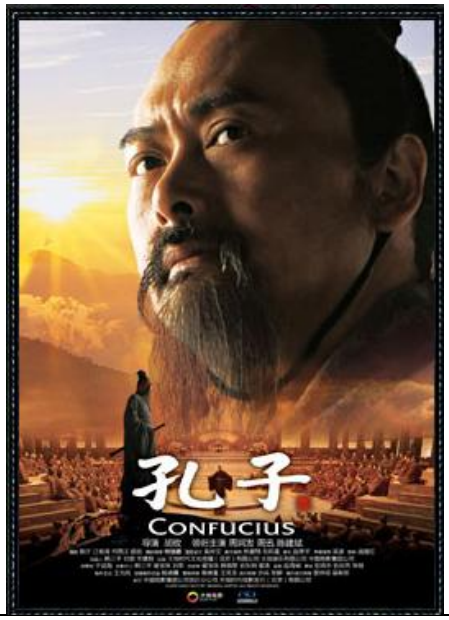


Image: A promotional poster for the 2009 Chinese state-produced film *Confucius (Kong Zi).*
Source: Official *Confucius* film website (in Chinese). *http://kongzi.sina.com.cn/jian/index.html*.

The reasons for this step were not made clear, but may reflect a mixture of political and financial motives on the part of the authorities. Propaganda officials certainly wished to promote the film as part of their broader campaign to advance CCP Confucianism, and CFGC may also have wished to push aside a foreign rival for box office revenue. By some accounts, CCP propaganda officials also became alarmed that some of the themes in *Avatar* – in which aliens fight back against human invaders intent on seizing their world – might remind viewers of land seizures within China, and thereby inspire social unrest.[22] However, by late January 2010 weak ticket sales for *Confucius* relative to the heavy demand for showings of *Avatar* convinced the authorities to relent, and the aliens of planet Pandora returned to many of the screens from which the ancient Chinese philosopher had earlier ejected them.[23]

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[21] Sharon LaFraniere, "China Curtails Run of 'Avatar' as It Fills Theaters," *New York Times,* January 19, 2010. *http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/20/world/asia/20china.html*.

[22] Andrew Hough, "Avatar Banned by Chinese Sensors Because Plot 'Could Cause Civil Unrest'," *The Independent* (Ireland), January 19, 2010. *http://www.independent.ie/entertainment/film-cinema/avatar-banned-by-chinese-sensors-because-plot-could-cause-civil-unrest-2021043.html*.

[23] Sharon LaFraniere, "China's Zeal for 'Avatar' Crowds Out 'Confucius'," *New York Times,* January 29, 2010. *http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/30/business/global/30avatar.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss*.

## Confucian Values as an Antidote to Corruption?

Along with its informational campaign to promote Confucius as a cultural icon, the CCP in recent years has tried to wrap itself in the mantle of the Confucian virtues. The Party is fully aware of the impact on its public image caused by deep and systemic corruption within the party/state. [24] In an October 2009 article directed at CCP officials titled "Communist Party Cadres Must Be Upright, Just, and Incorruptible," CCP Organization Department Director Li Yuanchao stated that

*In recent years, some cadres -- especially a group of leading cadres -- successively displayed the problem of corruption, creating a very bad impression amongst the masses. Experience reminds us again and again that maintaining the upright, just, and incorruptible nature of our cadres is a challenge to our party of an historic nature.*[25]

In response, the CCP has undertaken sustained propaganda efforts to depict its officials, and particularly the top leadership, as aggressive corruption fighters who adhere to the Confucian values of propriety, ethical behavior, self-discipline and cultivation, and dedicated public service. The central leadership and the CCP propaganda authorities have tried a number of campaigns to inculcate these values in both the general public and the Party ranks. One such effort was the short-lived "Eight Honors and Eight Disgraces" [八个为荣 , 八个为耻 / *Ba Ge Wei Rong, Ba Ge Wei Chi*] Campaign of 2006, which was touted in state media as a "new moral yardstick to measure the work, conduct and attitude of Communist Party officials."[26]

The Confucian-esque "Eight Honors and Eight Disgraces" of the 2006 campaign were:

1. *It is an honor to love the motherland; it is a disgrace to harm the motherland.*
2. *It is an honor to serve the people; it is a disgrace to deviate from the people.*
3. *It is an honor to uphold science; it is a disgrace to be ignorant.*
4. *It is an honor to be industrious; it is a disgrace to be indolent.*
5. *It is an honor to work together for mutual benefit; it is a disgrace to benefit at others' expense.*
6. *It is an honor to be honest and trustworthy; it is a disgrace to abandon integrity when tempted.*
7. *It is an honor to be disciplined and law-abiding; it is a disgrace to be chaotic and lawless.*
8. *It is an honor to work and struggle diligently; it is a disgrace to wallow in luxuries and pleasures.*[27]

[24] For illustrative discussions of the structural nature of corruption in contemporary China, see: Andrew Wedeman, "Anticorruption Campaigns and the Intensification of Corruption in China", *The Journal of Contemporary China,* Vol. 14, No. 42, February 2005; Ting Gong, "New Trends in China's Corruption", contained within Lowell Ditmer and Guoli Liu (eds.), *China's Deep Reform* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), pp. 451-470; and Minxin Pei, *China's Trapped Transition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press), 2006.

[25] Li Yuanchao, "Communist Party Cadres Must Be Upright, Just, and Incorruptible" (共产党的干部必须清正廉洁 /*Gongchandang de Ganbu Bixu QingzhengLianjie*), *Study Times* (学习时报 / *Xuexi Ribao*) (newspaper of the CCP Central Party School), Oct. 22, 2009. Reprinted at *http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2009-10-22/141118885536.shtml*. Translation by the author.

[26] "New Moral Yardstick: '8 Honors, 8 Disgraces'," *Official Web Portal of the People's Republic of China*, April 5, 2006. *http://www.gov.cn/english/2006-04/05/content_245361.htm*.

[27] Translation by the author, adapted from: "New Moral Yardstick: '8 Honors, 8 Disgraces'," *Official Web Portal of the People's Republic of China* (in English), April 5, 2006. *http://www.gov.cn/english/2006-*

Image: A promotional graphic for the “Eight Honors and Eight Disgraces.” The caption indicates leadership interest at the highest levels, stating that CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao unveiled the concept in a speech at the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.
Source: *Xinhua News Service*. *http://news.xinhuanet.com/forum/200603/21/content_4322424.htm*.

The CCP Organization Department – which handles senior-level appointments throughout the party, government, media, academia, and state-owned industry[28] – has similarly issued regular and highly public exhortations to CCP officials to “ensure an incorrupt atmosphere and healthy work style by upholding justice, fairness, and principles… the key to selecting the virtuous and employing the able lies in being fair and upright [while also having] the courage to fight various unhealthy tendencies and start with being strict with themselves.”[29] Li Yuanchao has also warned officials against the temptations of “vulgar places” and keeping mistresses,[30] both of these being frequent and colorful elements of corruption cases in China.

It is doubtful that such exhortations have much impact: corruption within the party/state is deep and systemic, and slogans and mandatory Party study sessions do not put much of a dent in the practical incentives for corrupt and rent-seeking behavior.[31] It does, however, demonstrate how deeply the concept of the mass campaign is rooted in the institutional culture of the CCP, as well as the imperative of the CCP leadership to project an image of being serious about dealing with corruption and improving the quality of public services for China’s common citizens.

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*04/05/content_245361.htm*; and Li Zhongjie (deputy director of the CCP Central Committee Party History Research Office), "The Scientific Inner Meaning of the Eight Honors and Eight Disgraces" (八荣八耻的科学内涵 / *Ba Rong Ba Chi de Kexue Neihan*), *Chinese Communist Party News Online* (in Chinese), April 11, 2006. *http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/40555/4288278.html* (accessed April 15, 2011).

[28] Richard Macgregor, “The Party Organiser,” *Financial Times,* September 30, 2009.

[29] “Summary: Li Yuanchao Calls For Doing Good Job in Reelection of Party Committees,” *Xinhua News Service* (in Chinese), March 1, 2011. Open Source Center document CPP20110301074014. *www.opensource.gov*.

[30] “Li Yuanchao (李源潮): Party Cadres Not Allowed to Enter Vulgar Places,” *China Digital Times*, October 22, 2009. *http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2009/10/li-yuanchao-%E6%9D%8E%E6%BA%90%E6%BD%AE-party-cadres-not-allowed-to-enter-vulgar-places*.

[31] For illustrative discussions of the structural nature of corruption in contemporary China, see: Andrew Wedeman, “Anticorruption Campaigns and the Intensification of Corruption in China”, *The Journal of Contemporary China,* Vol. 14, No. 42, February 2005; Ting Gong, “New Trends in China’s Corruption”, contained within Lowell Ditmer and Guoli Liu (eds.), *China’s Deep Reform* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), pp. 451-470; and Minxin Pei, *China’s Trapped Transition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press), 2006.

## ***Confucius on Tiananmen Square***

The official favor bestowed upon Confucius was further asserted in early January 2011, when a 9.5 meter (31 foot) statue of the philosopher was unveiled by the north gate of the Chinese National Museum in Beijing *(image below)*. The statue faced upon the mausoleum of Mao Zedong in the center of the square, and the portrait of Mao on the Forbidden City at the opposite side of the square. As described by the sculptor, "In our social transformation period, we needed a cultural monument to pass down our traditional culture, which was represented by Confucius."[32]

Crowds stroll past a newly-erected statue of Confucius at the north gate of the Chinese National Museum on Chang'An Avenue in Beijing. Source: Associated Press photo, provided in "Confucius Statue Shows Up in China's Tiananmen Square," *Huffington Post*, posting dated Jan. 14, 2011. *http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/14/confucius-statue-tiananmen-square_n_809038.html*.

The National Museum itself reopened in the spring of 2011 following an extensive three-year renovation intended, at least in part, to make it the largest museum in the world. During the renovation period, the contents of the museum's planned exhibits drew close attention from officials of the CCP Central Propaganda Department, resulting in displays that closely follow the Party's official narratives, such as stressing the glories of ancient Chinese civilization, showing that "all of the 56 ethnic groups in today's China have always worked together harmoniously," and glossing over the Mao-era catastrophes of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.[33]

The statue of Confucius was suddenly moved during the evening of April 20, 2011, from its prominent position overlooking Tiananmen Square to a much less visible location in a sculpture garden on the west side of the National Museum. Despite an official ceremony in January to mark the unveiling of the statue, following the removal of the statue museum officials stated that the sculpture garden had always been its intended ultimate location, and that the positioning of the statue overlooking

[32] Bai Xu, Wang Haiying and Chuai Xiaoyu, "Statue of Confucius Erected Near Tian'anmen Square," *Xinhua News Service* (in English), January 12, 2011. *http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-01/12/c_13687988.htm*.
[33] Ian Johnson, "At China's New Museum, History Toes Party Line," *New York Times,* April 3, 2011. *http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/04/world/asia/04museum.html?pagewanted=1&_r=3*.

Tiananmen Square had been a temporary arrangement.[34] This explanation drew skepticism from many Chinese online commentators.[35] The sudden removal of the statue – at night, with no prior announcement – does suggest a behind-the-scenes political decision. One plausible explanation is that some Party leaders may have disliked the potentially perceived symbolism of Confucius presenting a direct challenge to the legacy of Mao Zedong, his former Cultural Revolution-era persecutor facing him across the opposite end of the square.[36] However, this is speculative, and the exact reasons for the abrupt relocation of the statue are unknown.

**The Selection of Virtuous Confucian Scholar-Officials**

In recent years the CCP has also conducted managed experiments with selecting and promoting officials either through tightly limited internal elections, or even from beyond the ranks of the CCP party-state bureaucracy. These efforts have been publicized as part of a larger effort to enhance the "governing capacity" of the Party, and to build "inner-party democracy."[37] Some of these efforts fit in well with the evolving themes of CCP Confucianism: traditional state Confucian ideology was never democratic, but it did emphasize the selection of officials based on probity, talent, and education, no matter their original station in life.

In early January, authorities in China's southeastern Fujian Province announced the appointment of 17 officials to postings in the province, to include university presidents and senior positions in state-owned enterprises and government ministries. Conducted outside of the traditionally opaque CCP appointment process, this system has been described as

*"…allow[ing] open competition by a greater number of qualified candidates, public input and final selection based on merit rather than personal connections… Supervised by senior provincial leaders, the process attracted 1,863 applicants from China's 31 provinces as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan. Job requirements and qualifications were published in various media outlets, applications were screened and candidates were selected for interviewing and testing… Six of the selected officials are from outside Fujian and 15 hold masters or doctorate degrees. Their average age is 40.1 — far younger than the average age of provincial officials."*[38]

Reportedly, more than one-third of Chinese provincial and municipal governments used a variant of this process in 2010 to choose talented officials for mid-level postings in party or state organizations, with 400 individuals being thus selected.[39] For a public disenchanted by revelations of public corruption and malfeasance, such a process of appointments based on talent rather than connections makes for excellent government publicity.

[34] "Status of Confucius Moved to Less Prominent Location," *Economic Observer Online*, April 21, 2011. http://www.eeo.com.cn/ens/homepage/haedlinescanner/2011/04/21/199530.shtml.
[35] "Confucius Statue Move Prompts Online Stir in China,"*Agence France-Presse,* April 21, 2011. http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20110421/wl_asia_afp/chinaculturepoliticsconfuciusstatue.
[36] Andrew Jacobs, "Confucius Statue Vanished Near Tiananmen Square,"*New York Times,* April 22, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/23/world/asia/23confucius.html.
[37] Cheng Li, "From Selection to Election?: Experiments in the Recruitment of Chinese Political Elites," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 26, Fall 2008.
[38] "A Paradigm Shift in Chinese Leadership Selection," Strategic Forecasting (STRATFOR), January 16, 2011.
[39] "A Paradigm Shift in Chinese Leadership Selection," Strategic Forecasting (STRATFOR), January 16, 2011.

However, it remains to be seen how influential the program will prove to be in the long run. It remains a trial program (albeit one being tried in many locations), and like many of its cousins its long-term prospects are still uncertain: For example, limited village elections were instituted in China as early as the late 1980s, but have not transformed the political landscape.[40] Furthermore, questions remain about the details of the vetting process (i.e., Is Party membership a de facto prerequisite? Is the process still liable to backroom decision-making? etc.). There remains good reason to be skeptical as to whether the CCP would truly let go of its traditional *nomenklatura* system[41] whereby the CCP Organization Department maintains tight control over influential appointments in the party-state-SOE hierarchy.[42]

The positions opened up in this process, while substantive, have reportedly been mostly "deputy posts — corresponding chief posts are still being filled mainly by appointees, as are lower-level posts responsible for important government functions such as taxing, propaganda and personnel."[43] Furthermore, these appointments are still subject to selection by CCP cadres, who will be looking to guard their own personal and institutional interests – and who may also feel the very strong gravitational pulls of familial, factional, and patronage linkages as they make decisions on personnel appointments. Even for the most sincere and high-minded public servants, all of this creates a real risk of bureaucratic capture, and/or of such appointments being made more for show than for substance.

However, the process may yet prove to have some genuine benefit for increasing governing capacity in certain areas of public service. Although the CCP revival of Confucianism is a propaganda theme intended to buttress the position of the ruling party, it would be a mistake to discount the desire of the CCP leadership to improve the Party's "governing capacity," if for no other reason than self-preservation. Time will tell whether or not the Party is truly able to raise up a more talented group of Confucian scholar-official servants of the state, or if this program will prove itself to be a public relations exercise lacking in real substance.

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[40] For a discussion of the limited impact of village elections on PRC politics, see: Minxin Pei, *China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 72-80.

[41] The term *nomenklatura* (in Russian, "list of names") is used by political scientists to refer to the senior positions in the party/state bureaucracy of a Communist state, over which the Communist Party maintains direct control. The term as actually used in Chinese is (职务名称表 / *zhiwu mingcheng biao*). For discussion of the functioning of the *nomenklatura* system in China, see: John P. Burns, "China's Nomenklatura System," *Problems of Communism,* Sept.-Oct. 1987; Sebastien Heilmann, "The Chinese Nomenklatura in Transition," *China Analysis*, No. 1, June 2000, *http://www.chinapolitik.de/studien/china_analysis/analysis1.pdf*; and Hon S. Chan, "Cadre Personnel Management in China: The Nomenklatura System, 1990-1998," *The China Quarterly*, No. 179, 2004.

[42] The author is also indebted to Daniel Hartnett for his comments in regards to the nomenklatura system and personnel appointments. As stated by Cheng Li, "Chinese leaders continue to claim, explicitly rather than implicitly, that the CCP is entitled to decide on major personnel appointments within the government. The defining feature of the Chinese political system has been, and continues to be, its Leninist structure, in which the state operates as the executor of decisions made by the Party. Although from time to time some top Chinese leaders have called for greater separation between the Party and the state and for more political participation from the public and social groups, the main objective of Chinese authorities has been, and is, the consolidation and revitalization of the Party leadership rather than the revision of the Leninist party-state system." See: Cheng Li, "From Selection to Election?: Experiments in the Recruitment of Chinese Political Elites," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 26, Fall 2008. For a discussion of the roles and functions of the CCP Organization Department, see: Richard Macgregor, "The Party Organiser," *Financial Times,* September 30, 2009; and Richard MacGregor, *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2010), chap. 3, "The Keeper of the Files: The Party and Personnel," pp. 70-103.

[43] "A Paradigm Shift in Chinese Leadership Selection," Strategic Forecasting (STRATFOR), January 16, 2011.

## ***Confucius Abroad***

The name and iconography of Confucius have also been widely invoked by the Chinese government in the messages that it promotes to foreign audiences. As talk of socialism and Marxism have nearly vanished from China's foreign-oriented public diplomacy (if not from its domestic discourse), Confucius is increasingly held up to foreign audiences as an exemplary representative of China's traditional culture. By far the most visible symbol of this is the rapid spread of "Confucius Institutes" throughout the world as centers for teaching Mandarin language and Chinese culture courses.[44] By the end of 2010, there were a total of 322 "Confucius Institutes" (affiliated with universities) and 369 "Confucius Classrooms" (affiliated with primary schools) in 96 different countries. In the United States, there are currently 73 Confucius Institutes and 51 Confucius Classrooms, the most of any country. [45] In 2009, over 260,000 registered students attended these institutes (a twofold increase from the previous year),[46] and over 17,000 Chinese teachers and volunteers have reportedly been sent to Confucius Institutes between 2005 and early 2011.[47]

### ***The "Confucius Peace Prize"***

However, while the rapid growth of the Confucius Institutes program has been impressive, the official use of ancient China's preeminent philosopher as a cultural symbol goes much further than just the use of his name in the Confucius Institutes program. In contrast to the success of the Confucius Institutes, not all of these public diplomacy efforts have been so successful.

The government of the PRC reacted to the awarding of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to imprisoned dissident intellectual Liu Xiaobo with histrionic outrage and paranoia, to the extent of depicting it as part of an international conspiracy directed against the country. The PRC state press stated that "many Chinese feel the [Nobel] peace prize is loaded with Western ideology," and that there is "reason to question whether the Nobel Peace Prize has been degraded to a political tool that serves an anti-China purpose. Instead of peace and unity in China, the Nobel committee would like to see the country split by an ideological rift, or better yet, collapse like the Soviet Union."[48]

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[44] The author is grateful to USCC research intern Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga for his earlier research work on Confucius Institutes, which is adapted for use in this paragraph.

[45] Hanban (a/k/a the Confucius Institute Headquarters – a subordinate body of the PRC Ministry of Education, which administers the Confucius Institutes program) website, "About Confucius Institute/Classroom." *http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm*.

[46] Hanban website, "About Confucius Institute/Classroom**."** *http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm***.**

[47] Xinhua, "More Chinese Volunteers Should Go Abroad: Advisor," April 10, 2011.

[48] "2010 Nobel Peace Prize a Disgrace," *Global Times*, October 9, 2010. *http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/editorial/2010-10/580091.html*. The awarding of the Nobel Prize to Liu Xiaobo may have so alarmed the CCP leadership that, by at least one uncorroborated but plausible account, a Politburo-level "leading small group" *(lingdao xiaozu)* was formed in response. Headed by security czar Zhou Yongkang and propaganda czar Li Changchun, the "special anti-Liu working group" was reportedly formed to coordinate the PRC's worldwide policy response. See: "China Sets Up 'Anti-Liu Working Group' in Wake of Nobel Award Ceremony," *Intelligence Online* (of France, in English – a subscription publication on the world of intelligence), December 16, 2010. For a discussion of the role of "leading small groups" in CCP policymaking, see: Alice Miller, "The CCP Central Committee's Leading Small Groups," *China Leadership Monitor,* No. 26 Fall 2008. *http://www.hoover.org/publications/china-leadership-monitor/article/5689*.

As part of the public relations campaign to express its indignation, the PRC created its own "Confucius Peace Prize" in December 2010. The identity of the nominally private Chinese organization that awarded the prize was never made clear in media accounts, and it remains an opaque institution. However, the group's chairman reportedly acknowledged that the group had a close relationship with the PRC Ministry of Culture,[49] and invitations to the award ceremony were issued by a division of the Ministry of Culture[50] – which is itself under the effective control of the CCP Central Propaganda Department.[51] In explaining the impetus for the prize, the chairman of the awards committee was quoted as saying that "China is a great nation that has been influenced by the Confucian concept of peace for a long time… We want to promote world peace from an Eastern perspective."[52]

The first recipient of the award was former Taiwan Vice-President (also former Kuomintang Party Chairman) Lien Chan, for his work "[building] a bridge of peace between the mainland and Taiwan."[53] Lien himself was not present at the ceremony, and statements issued by his office disassociated him from the award. On the day that the award was announced, a Kuomintang Party spokesman in Taiwan responded to media inquiries by issuing a statement that "[t]he KMT is not aware of the news and it would be more appropriate to comment on the matter after we make sure there's such an award and learn the details." [54] With Lien Chan not present at the award ceremony on December 8th, a rather nervous and uncomfortable-looking six year-old girl was chosen by the organizers to receive the award on Lien's behalf *(image below)*.

The awards ceremony for the "Confucius Peace Prize," Dec. 8, 2010. A young girl was selected by the organizers to stand in for the winner: former Kuomintang Party Chairman and Taiwan Vice-President Lien Chan, who was not present at the ceremony and disassociated himself from the award. Source: AFP photo, provided in Peter Foster, "Confucius Peace Prize: Never Heard of It, Says Winner," *The Telegraph* (UK), Dec. 9, 2010. *http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/8191835/Nobel-Peace-Prize-Confucius-prize-Never-heard-of-it-says-the-winner.html*.

[49] Tini Tran, "Confucius Peace Prize: China to Award Nobel Rival," *Huffington Post*, December 8, 2010. *http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/08/confucius-peace-prize-china_n_793610.html* .
[50] Liu Linlin, "NGO Creates 'Peace Prize'," *Global Times*, December 9, 2011. *http://china.globaltimes.cn/society/2010-12/600306.html*.
[51] Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Control Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), pp. 16-17.
[52] Stephen Jiang, "China to Hand Out Its Own Peace Prize," *CNN.com*, December 8, 2010. *http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/12/08/china.confucius.prize*.
[53] Tini Tran, "Confucius Peace Prize: China to Award Nobel Rival," *Huffington Post*, December 8, 2010. *http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/08/confucius-peace-prize-china_n_793610.html* .
[54] Mo Yan-Chih, "Lien Office Denies Hearing of Award," *Taipei Times* (of Taiwan, in English), December 9, 2010. *http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2010/12/09/2003490461*.

It is unclear whether the Confucius Prize was initiated to satisfy domestic political constituencies, or if CCP officials actually hoped that this could become an effective example of the "soft power" influence that they eagerly wish to develop for China.[55] Although clearly intended as a counter to the Nobel Peace Prize, the PRC's ham-handed unveiling of this new award prompted far more derision than admiration in the international media.[56] A transparently political effort in which the PRC government poorly disguised its role – and that was undertaken in the course of a reactive and nearly hysterical public relations campaign – the maiden flight of the Confucius Peace Prize landed with a thud.[57]

It remains to be seen whether the prize will be offered again in December 2011, or if the CCP leadership will decide to quietly retire this embarrassing episode, and allow the Confucius Peace Prize to take its place alongside historical curiosities such the Stalin Peace Prize of the former Soviet Union.[58] But either way, the whole matter does help to illustrate the extent to which the legacy of Confucius has become a reflexive symbol seized upon by the CCP when searching for an appealing image of Chinese culture to present to audiences both at home and abroad.

5 OPINION & COMMENTARY CHINAWATCH MARCH 25, 2011

CHEN XIANGYANG

# Harmonious diplomacy

The next five years will be a "period of important strategic opportunities," although the situation in 2011, the starting year of the country's 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015), remains extremely complicated, Premier Wen Jiabao said in his Government Work Report delivered to the Fourth Session of the 11th National People's Congress ended on March 14.

As Wen's report highlights, the decades-old international order is expected to undergo some profound adjustments in the post-crisis era, which will cause both opportunities and challenges for the peaceful rise of China.

"We will continue to hold high the banner of peace, development and cooperation," Wen said, stressing that China would seek to "create a more favorable external environment and more beneficial external conditions for China's modernization." He also said that China will continue to embrace an open strategy of mutual benefit and persist in its efforts to build a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity.

China should firmly grasp these emerging strategic opportunities and steadily push forward its peaceful development strategy in a bid to create a more favorable external environment for the smooth implementation of its 12th Five-Year Plan for national economic and social development.

Image: China personified as a friendly panda expresses its desire for a harmonious international order in this "advertorial" insert (provided by the PRC state-owned newspaper *China Daily*) printed in the *Washington Post*, March 25, 2011.
Source: *Washington Post.*

[55] For discussions of the growing official Chinese interest in building "soft power," see: David Shambaugh, "China Flexes Its Soft Power," *New York Times,* June 7, 2010; and Joseph S. Nye Jr., "China's Repression Undoes Its Charm Offensive," *Washington Post*, March 25, 2011.

[56] As one such example, see: Joshua Keating, "China's Confucius Prize Debacle,"*ForeignPolicy.com Passport Blog*, December 9, 2010. *http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/12/09/chinas_confucius_prize_debacle*.

[57] It is possible, however, that the creation of the prize may have borne some limited propaganda fruit for the CCP before the more nationalistic elements of their domestic audience. As one example of this line of thinking, see: Liu Zhiqin, "Confucius Prize Could be Weapon in Battle of Ideas," *Global Times*, November 17, 2010. *http://en.huanqiu.com/opinion/commentary/2010-11/592778.html*.

[58] The Stalin Peace Prize – later renamed the Lenin Peace Prize – was an award bestowed by the Soviet Union on Communists and supportive fellow travelers who were not Soviet citizens, but who participated in pro-Soviet propaganda efforts or participated in Communist-dominated "peace" front organizations. As an illustrative example from an American recipient, see: Paul Robeson, "Here's My Story (Thoughts on Winning the Stalin Peace Prize)," January 1953. *http://www.mltranslations.org/Miscellaneous/RobesonSPP.htm*.

***CCP Confucianism and Nationalism: Zheng He and the Narrative of China's "Peaceful Rise"***

Confucian themes have also appeared in recent Chinese propaganda initiatives where the figure of Confucius himself was not a factor. One of the clearest examples of this may be found in the ways that the PRC has attempted to make use of Zheng He, an early 15th century Ming Dynasty naval commander and explorer who conducted voyages in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean as far as the east coast of Africa. In recent years, Zheng He has been adopted by the Chinese government as a favored symbol to represent China's peaceful and benevolent role in world affairs. Although the truth surrounding Zheng He's expeditions is much more complex, the simplistic propaganda narrative surrounding the Zheng He story has been distorted by the CCP into virtual hagiography.

References to Zheng He usually stress three themes: the greatness of Chinese Civilization; China's history of peaceful relations with other (and perhaps by implication, less civilized) countries; and that China has a proud maritime tradition. As written in the *People's Daily* in 2005,

> *the "peaceful voyage" of Zheng He, as the forefather of world navigation… will be enshrined in people's minds. China's commemoration of the hero today is significant because people should carry on his spirit of patriotism to undertake the country's reform and to convey the idea of peaceful development to the world, as well as to establish friendly ties with other countries… Pioneering the first express sea-route through the western Pacific and Indian Ocean, Zheng He's voyages were 87 year earlier than the voyage made by Columbus, 92 years earlier than Vasco Da Gama and 114 years earlier than Magellan. Historical records show that Zheng, commanding a fleet with 28 ships and 27,800 people, did not colonize any newly discovered areas or set up any military fortresses. On the contrary, he provided local inhabitants with silk, chinaware, calendars and agricultural tools, [and] his seven voyages are considered early demonstrations of China's peaceful diplomacy.*[59]

The emergence of Zheng He as a figure in PRC public diplomacy commenced in 2005, on the 600th anniversary of the first of the voyages. This was also a period in which the narrative theme of China's "Peaceful Rise" [和平崛起 / *Heping Jueqi*] was being popularized to foreign audiences.[60] The Zheng He narrative figured prominently in the government white paper *China's Peaceful Development Road*, released by the PRC State Council Information Office in December of that year. In the document, Zheng He is held up as an exemplar of China's peaceful diplomacy and benevolence to less advanced peoples:

> *The spirit of the Chinese people has always featured their longing for peace and pursuit of harmony. Six hundred years ago, Zheng He (1371-1435), the famous navigator of the Ming Dynasty, led the then largest fleet in the world and made seven voyages to the "Western Seas," reaching more than 30 countries and regions in Asia and Africa. What he took to the places he visited were tea, chinaware, silk and technology, but did not occupy an inch of any other's land. What he brought to the outside world was peace and civilization, which fully reflects the good*

[59] "*People's Daily* Calls for Peaceful Development in Spirit of Ancient Navigator," *People's Daily Online* (in English), July 12, 2005. *http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200507/12/eng20050712_195546.html*.

[60] As the clearest example of the promotion of this theme to the Western foreign policy community, see: Zheng Bijian, "China's Peaceful Rise to Great Power Status," *Foreign Affairs,* Sep./Oct. 2005.

*faith of the ancient Chinese people in strengthening exchanges with relevant countries and their peoples."*[61]

As another component of the effort to play up the Zheng He voyages as a reassuring metaphor for China's emergence in the world, the PRC has sponsored extensive Zheng He museum exhibits, both at home and abroad. The original exhibit opened at the Chinese National Museum in 2005, in a display described by a *New York Times* article as "polemical, rather than analytical, designed to make certain points about Zheng He and his voyages — and, by implication, about China's place in the world today."[62] A traveling Zheng He exhibition went on to appear in several other countries, to include Singapore, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Malta, and the United States.

Zheng He iconography also figured prominently in the 2008 Olympic Games opening ceremonies. In the ceremonies, a massive troupe of dancers wielding oars combined them together to create a mosaic image of Zheng He's ships, sailing the seas to demonstrate China's desire for peaceful exchange with other lands *(image below)*.

Image: In the opening ceremonies for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, performers handling simulated ships' oars place them together to form images of the ships in Zheng He's 15th-century fleet.
Source: http://en.beijing2008.cn/ceremonies/photos/openingceremony/performances/n214517368.shtml.

However, in contrast to the cheerful feel of Zheng He narratives directed abroad, Zheng He propaganda intended solely for a domestic audience can have a more nationalist edge to it, emphasizing the superiority of Chinese civilization and the Confucian benevolence displayed by Zheng He's expeditions towards the inferior peoples they encountered. These messages may also emphasize the moral superiority of China's conduct of international relations, as compared to the bullying and hegemonic ways of Western societies.

[61] People's Republic of China State Council Information Office, *China's Peaceful Development Road* (government white paper on China's development goals), December 22, 2005. n*http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200512/22/eng20051222_230059.html*.
[62] Sheila Melvin, "'Greatest Sailor' on Exhibit in China," *New York Times,* August 18, 2005.

One such example is found in the passage below, excerpted from an article posted on the website of the *People's Daily*. In the article, journalists interview a professor of history from the Chinese People's University regarding the relevance of Zheng He to contemporary China, who comments that:

> *[T]he historical mission of Zheng He's voyages was established on the basis of Confucian concepts. They believed in an ideal order of things in the world. What was this order of the world? We can see this from the imperial letter "Various Kings and Chieftains of the Four Directions" which Emperor Yongle gave to Zheng He to present to the various overseas chieftains.*
>
> *The imperial letter said: "We, bearing the Mandate of Heaven, Monarch of All the World, Our heart bears benevolence and virtue. Throughout Heaven and Earth, wherever the sun and moon shine, wherever the frost and dew fall, for the people old and young, all who desire to find success in their occupations. This Zheng He whom We have dispatched communicates Our message: all of you who follow the heavenly laws, who hear Our words, abide by the rituals and do not seek to rise above their natural status, who do not commit violations, who do not cheat widows, who do not bully the weak, these virtuous ones shall share together the blessings of peace and tranquility. Those wishing to come and pay tribute at court shall be welcome. This edict will make you aware of this."*
>
> *What does all of this mean? This was the Emperor acting as the leader of the entire world, showing concern for the lives of people in all places, letting them lead good lives. This would not allow the strong to bully the weak, the many to bully the few. The goal was to allow all of the world to share together the blessings of peace and tranquility.*
>
> *As you read these words, can you not feel the greatness of Chinese Civilization? As we currently face the Age of Globalization, we need to encourage this sort of cultural spirit amongst the Chinese People, we must build a harmonious and different world, achieving worldwide peace and development.*
>
> *By contrast, when in the same age Western explorers carried out the so-called "discovery" of America, "advancing world progress," the price to be paid was the slaughter of other cultures, and the slaughter of ethnic minorities. At every instance of the Western so-called "discovery" and "exploration," they were always accompanied by the massacre and destruction of other cultures and other peoples.*[63]

The story of Zheng He, as presented in the narrative of the CCP, is intended both to send a reassuring message to an international audience about China's rise as a great power, while also sending a strong message of patriotic pride to China's own citizens. In this latter version of the propaganda narrative, CCP Confucianism acquires a starkly nationalistic character. As stated by Dr. Gilbert Rozman in testimony before the Commission in March 2011, Confucianism has recently emerged in PRC discourse "as the

[63] "Peaceful Journey, Sowing Civilization: Commemorating the 600th Anniversary of the Voyages of Zheng He" (和平之旅，播撒文明——纪念郑和下西洋 600 周年 / *Heping zhi Lu, Bosan Wenming – Jinian Zheng He Xia Xiang 600 Zhounian*), *People's Daily Online* (in Chinese), June 29, 2005. Translation by the author. *http://www.people.com.cn/GB/32306/32313/32330/3506449.html* (accessed April 11, 2011).

centerpiece in an ideologically tinged narrative about what has made China superior to other civilizations over thousands of years and will enable it to prevail again in the future."[64]

## ***Conclusions***

The elevation of a selectively interpreted form of Confucianism to the status of a semi-official state ideology is a natural choice for the Chinese Communist Party. While Marxist ideological formulations are still required within internal Party discourse, the collapse of public belief in Communism leaves a void to be filled. The CCP has sought, with some success, to fill this void with the bread of economic development and the circuses of Chinese nationalism. However, while nationalism has been actively fostered by the CCP as a pillar of support for the regime,[65] it is only a partial solution: nationalism does not soothe domestic dissatisfactions resulting from income inequality and social injustice, and could potentially become a force directed against the Party itself. Furthermore, the uglier outbursts of Chinese nationalism directed abroad have alarmed China's neighbors and pushed some of them into closer alliance with the United States[66] – a country perceived by the CCP to be the menacing "hegemon" of the international system, and one of its principal national security threats.[67]

It is in these regards that the reworked interpretations of CCP Confucianism are most beneficial to the state: hearkening back to Confucianism offers an indigenous tradition of social philosophy that satisfies nationalist impulses and supports authoritarian politics, while presenting a gentler face to audiences both at home and abroad. It is also a philosophical tradition that is non-theistic – thereby avoiding the CCP's anxieties regarding religion as a potential source of subversion – as well as one which, with a bit of ideological retooling, can be made compatible with official interpretations of Marxism.[68]

The CCP finds Confucianism attractive for the same reasons that Chinese imperial dynasties found it attractive: It provides an ideological pillar of support for the ruling political order, while simultaneously allowing the regime opportunities to dress itself in the themes of benevolence and humanitarianism. It remains to be seen whether or not this evolving ideology will have a significant impact on Chinese society – but whether it does or not, the themes of CCP Confucianism are likely to remain an important element of the Chinese Government's propaganda efforts for many years to come.

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[64] U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Hearing on China's Narratives Regarding National Security Policy,* written testimony of Dr. Gilbert Rozman, March 10, 2011.

[65] For a detailed discussion of the origins and effects of contemporary Chinese nationalism, see: Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2004).

[66] Emma Chanlett-Avery, "The U.S.-Japan Alliance," Congressional Research Service, January 18, 2011.

[67] Yong Deng, "Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 3, 2001.

[68] For discussion of the CCP's efforts to merge Confucian elements with Marxist theory, see Heike Holbig, "Remaking the CCP's Ideology: Determinants, Progress, and Limits Under Hu Jintao," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, No. 38 (Issue 3, 2009).