

BEYOND THE “ECHO CHAMBERS” OF THE COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY WITNESSING OPENINGS TOWARDS CONFUCIANISM IN THE CHINESE LEADER XI JINPING’S VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract. The coming into being of the present study, a rather pondered one, was inspired by *Confucianism – A Variant of Political Perfectionism*, a profoundly original academic work under the authorship of the fellow of the Romanian Academy Institute for Political Studies and International Relations, Dr. Viorella Manolache¹.

Navigating the particular complexity of “the textual construction”, as explicitly emphasised by Dr. Viorella Manolache herself in relation to her respective article, we felt embolded to look for yet an additional and concrete landmark which could stronger anchor into the current reality the millenia old subtleties of a subject-matter defined by one word – Confucianism, a goal rather unequivocally translated by the above title put to our study.

On the other hand, it is incontestable that the practically infinite directions in which evaluated the subject-matter of Confucianism over the mentioned lap of time have resulted in a huge volume of data. Fortunately, going today through such an available documentation could be very much helped by a joint endeavor with “agents” of Artificial Intelligence, so that, in the end, to put on a solid foundation the understanding and the consequential image for “arc of human and chinese civilization” having at its two ends the qualified “terms” – Confucius and Xi Jinping. Practically, it is through evaluations by two of our partners of dialogue from the Artificial Intelligence realm that we could brought to light some of the openings towards Confucianism in the Chines leader’s verbal and non-verbal communication.

Keywords: *The Verbal Communication; The Non-Verbal Communication; Confucianism; Xi Jinping*

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¹ Viorella Manolache, “Confucianism – A Variant of Political Perfectionism”, *Romanian Review of Political Sciences and International Relations*, VOL. XXII, No. 2, 2025, pp. 3-7.

Chapter One: The Verbal Communication

“The nexus between Xi Jinping’s Verbal Communication and Confucianism – a foundational layer of Chinese civilization – stands at the heart of a significant intersection between political communication, civilizational heritage, and strategic leadership in contemporary China.

Confucianism as a Framework for Political Legitimacy and Rhetoric in Modern China

Confucianism, while historically sidelined during parts of the 20th century (especially during the Maoist period), has experienced a renaissance in China’s ideological landscape since the early 21st century. This revival is largely due to:

- Its utility in promoting social harmony and moral governance.
- Its deep roots in the collective historical consciousness of the Chinese people.
- Its compatibility with authoritarian governance, especially through ideas such as filial piety, order, respect for hierarchy, and meritocracy.

Within this context, Xi Jinping has strategically appropriated Confucian discourse, not necessarily as a spiritual or philosophical allegiance, but as a cultural and ideological resource to bolster his image and the legitimacy of the Communist Party.

Characteristics of Xi Jinping’s Verbal Communication Reflecting Confucian Elements

Xi’s communication style, especially in formal and ideological settings, does exhibit several traits that align with Confucian values:

a. Moral Leadership and Rectification of Conduct (修身齐家治国平天下)

This Confucian doctrine of cultivating personal virtue before governing effectively is echoed in Xi’s emphasis on:

- “Party self-discipline” and anti-corruption campaigns, framed as moral purifications.
- The expectation that cadres behave with moral integrity and set examples for society.
- Frequent references to “the Chinese Dream” (中国梦) as a collective aspiration rooted in moral and historical continuity.

b. Emphasis on Harmony and Order (和)

Xi’s rhetoric often invokes “harmony” – a core Confucian value – not only domestically (e.g., in “harmonious society” initiatives) but internationally through:

- The “Community of Shared Future for Mankind” (人类命运共同体) narrative, reflecting Confucian cosmopolitan ideals.
- Diplomatic language emphasizing win-win cooperation, stability, and non-interference – phrases often framed with Confucian undertones of balance and relational ethics.

c. Use of Classical References and Traditional Idioms

Xi's speeches and writings, especially in domestic settings, frequently include quotes from Confucian classics, such as:

- The Analects (论语)
- Mencius (孟子)
- Book of Rites (礼记)

These are used to legitimize policies, present the Party as a cultural custodian, and create ideological continuity between China's imperial past and present governance.

*The Strategic Function
of Confucianism in Xi's Communication*

It is important to note that the Confucian elements in Xi's communication are not purely philosophical – they are instrumental and political. They serve several purposes:

- Reinforcing social control through appeals to order, loyalty, and hierarchy.
- Building cultural soft power, particularly in Southeast Asia and the Global South, where Confucian heritage still resonates.
- Distinguishing China's model from Western liberalism, positioning Confucian-inflected governance as a civilizational alternative to the West.

Prospects for Greater Infusion of Confucianism in Xi's Future Communication

a. Likely Trajectory: Deepening Integration

Given current trends, it is likely that Xi will continue and deepen the incorporation of Confucian motifs in his verbal communication. This could include:

- Greater use of Confucian framing in foreign policy, especially in China's "civilizational diplomacy" narrative.
- More integration of Confucian values into education, governance ethics, and civil service training, which will further be reflected in the rhetoric of leadership.

b. Potential Limitations

However, this trajectory is not without its constraints:

- Confucianism's emphasis on benevolent rule and the moral obligations of rulers may conflict with authoritarian practices, potentially exposing ideological contradictions.
- Over-reliance on Confucian rhetoric risks alienating secular or Marxist hardliners within the Party who may see it as retrogressive or incompatible with dialectical materialism.

Conclusion: The Nexus Is Real, Strategic, and Likely to Expand

Xi Jinping's Verbal Communication is increasingly characterized by selective Confucian infusion, serving both symbolic and strategic functions. This reflects a civilizational assertion of Chinese governance identity, legitimized not only by economic success but also by moral-cultural continuity.

Going forward, it is reasonable to expect an even more calibrated integration of Confucian references, particularly as China seeks to define itself as a “civilizational state” distinct from the Western liberal tradition. This may further entrench Confucian values as a semi-official discourse in the verbal articulation of China’s domestic and international vision.

Here are concrete examples where Xi Jinping directly invokes Confucian principles – analyzing his Verbal Communication, and how it reflects Confucian thought in his leadership rhetoric:

1. “Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire”

- Source & context: In September 2014, during a Politburo address, Xi quoted this staple from *The Analects*, emphasizing ethical reciprocity and moral consistency.

- Interpretation: Aligns with Confucian moral framing, projecting China’s governance as principled and restraint-based – implicitly contrasting with arbitrary or oppressive foreign policies.

2. “The rule of virtue can be compared to the polestar...”

- Source & context: Also, in 2014, Xi addressed Party cadres: “The rule of virtue can be compared to the polestar which commands the homage of the multitude of stars without leaving its place”

- Interpretation: Echoes Confucian ideals of moral leadership: a virtuous ruler doesn’t coerce but naturally guides. Xi’s usage frames his leadership (and party leadership) as moral, stable, and authoritative.

3. “A man of true moral integrity...” (quoted at APEC 2024)

- Source & context: In November 2024, Xi, in a signed article before France visit and at an APEC meeting, cited Confucius from *The Doctrine of the Mean*: “A man of true moral integrity is one who is both friendly but independent, and who does not compromise his principles...”

- Interpretation: A diplomatic message underpinned by Confucian self-cultivation and autonomy – reinforcing the image of China as principled, respectful, yet unwavering in its sovereign stance.

4. “A man of virtue... works to help others” (APEC 2024)

- Source & context: At the same APEC Summit, Xi quoted Confucius again: “A man of virtue, while establishing himself and pursuing success, also works to help others establish themselves and succeed.”

- Interpretation: Signals a Confucian-inflected foreign policy posture – China’s rise is framed as altruistic, inclusive, and beneficial for all parties.

5. Call for “mutual learning between civilizations” (Beijing, 2014)

- Source & context: In Sept. 2014, Xi, speaking at the International Conference commemorating the 2565th anniversary of Confucius, stated: “Any kind of civilization ... is fluid and open. ... We should learn from various civilizations, ancient and modern, and absorb all beneficial elements.”

- Interpretation: A Confucian cosmopolitan perspective – valuing harmony, respectful exchange, synthesis, and openness, applied to China’s diplomacy and cultural policy.

Synthesis: Confucian Infusion in Xi's Speech Style

Confucian Element	Xi's Usage	Function
Moral Reciprocity / Ethical Rule	Direct Analects quotes	Emphasizes ethical governance
Moral Exemplarity	Pole-star metaphor	Legitimation of authority
Virtuous Leadership	Doctrine of the Mean quote	Sovereignty with moral posture
Benevolent Internationalism	Quote on helping others	Diplomatic messaging
Cultural Openness	Call for mutual learning	Placing China in global harmony

These examples reveal how Xi crafts communication that:

Legitimizes authority through moral metaphors grounded in classical Confucianism.

Projects moral and cultural confidence, both domestically and abroad.

Frames national rise as moral and mutually beneficial, using Confucian ethics as soft-power rationale.”

Future Prospects: Further Confucian Enmeshment

- Expect more frequent classical quotes in speeches, reinforcing the notion that China draws from a continuous civilizational well.
- A rise in ideological frameworks like “Global Civilization Initiative” – an explicit attempt to export a Confucian-informed global dialogue.
- Confucian ideals (e.g. harmony, moral cultivation, self-improvement) will likely permeate policy speeches: anti-corruption, education, foreign policy, etc.

(In) Conclusion

These concrete speech samples show that Xi has consistently and strategically referenced Confucian texts and values. Far from superficial, these references are woven into his rhetoric to reinforce legitimacy, moral authority, and China's rise as ethically grounded. Going forward, further visible Confucian integration in Xi's verbal communication seems not only possible but likely, as it serves to both bridge traditional legitimacy and forge a distinctive global identity.”²

The Nexus Between Xi Jinping's Verbal Communication and Confucianism

1. Confucianism: A Brief Context

Confucianism, rooted in the teachings of Confucius (551–479 BCE), emphasizes values such as harmony, hierarchy, respect for authority, moral rectitude, and the importance of family and social order. Historically, it has shaped Chinese political culture, administrative practices, and interpersonal relations for centuries.

2. Xi Jinping's Verbal Communication: Style and Substance

Xi Jinping's public communication is characterized by:

- Authoritative Tone: Projecting strength and unity.
- Stoicism: Emphasizing calm, measured responses.

² <https://chatgpt.com/>, 28 June 2025.

• Strategic Ambiguity: Often using layered messages that resonate with both domestic and international audiences.

• Ideological Consistency: Reinforcing the centrality of the Communist Party and the “Chinese Dream” of national rejuvenation.

3. Confucian Elements in Xi’s Communication

A. Hierarchy and Authority

Confucianism upholds a hierarchical social order, where the ruler is seen as a moral exemplar. Xi’s speeches often invoke the idea of the Party (and, by extension, himself) as the guiding force of Chinese society, echoing the Confucian ideal of the “junzi” (noble person) who leads by moral example.

B. Harmony and Social Stability

Xi frequently stresses “social harmony” (社会和谐), a core Confucian value. His rhetoric on issues such as poverty alleviation, anti-corruption, and the “community of shared future for mankind” reflects a desire to maintain internal stability and harmonious international relations.

C. Filial Piety and Collectivism

The emphasis on collective well-being over individualism in Xi’s communication mirrors Confucian values of filial piety (孝) and loyalty to the group (family, nation, Party).

D. Moral Rectitude and Self-Cultivation

Xi often frames Party discipline and anti-corruption campaigns as moral imperatives, reminiscent of Confucian calls for self-cultivation and ethical governance.

4. Instrumentalization of Confucianism

While Mao Zedong rejected Confucianism as feudal, Xi has selectively revived and instrumentalized Confucian themes to legitimize Party rule and foster a sense of cultural continuity. This is evident in:

References to Traditional Wisdom: Xi frequently quotes Confucian classics in speeches.

Promotion of “Core Socialist Values”: These are often couched in language that resonates with Confucian ethics (e.g., harmony, integrity, patriotism).

Prospects for Further Confucian Influence

Current Trends

• Cultural Confidence: Xi’s administration promotes “cultural self-confidence,” encouraging pride in China’s civilizational heritage, including Confucianism.

• Soft Power: Confucianism is leveraged in diplomacy (e.g., Confucius Institutes) to project a benign, harmonious image of China internationally.

Potential for Deeper Marking

• As the Party seeks to strengthen its legitimacy amid social and economic challenges, Confucian rhetoric may become even more pronounced as a unifying ideological tool.

• International Messaging: In a multipolar world, Confucian themes of harmony, mutual respect, and non-interference could be further emphasized in China’s global communications.

Limits and Balances

- Marxist-Leninist Core: The Party's ideological foundation remains Marxist-Leninist, so Confucianism will likely be used selectively, not supplanting but supplementing official doctrine.
- *Pragmatic Adaptation: Xi's communication style is ultimately pragmatic, adapting Confucian themes to serve contemporary political needs rather than adhering to them dogmatically.*

Conclusion

Xi Jinping's verbal communication is already significantly influenced by Confucian values, particularly in its emphasis on hierarchy, harmony, collective well-being, and moral governance. This influence is both substantive and instrumental, serving to reinforce his authority, legitimize Party rule, and project a culturally resonant image domestically and internationally. Given current trends, it is highly likely that Confucian elements will continue to mark Xi's communication, especially as China navigates complex internal and external challenges. However, this will remain a selective and adaptive process, balanced against the Party's core Marxist-Leninist ideology and the practical demands of governance.³

Chapter Two: The Non-Verbal Communication

In light of indisputable sophisticated and increasingly relevant intersection of political behavior, cultural heritage, and non-verbal semiotics, the body and facial expressions of a political leader like Xi Jinping are not simply personal mannerisms but calculated, culturally embedded, and ideologically loaded communicative instruments. Evaluating their relationship to Confucianism, as a foundational pillar of Chinese civilization, reveals a deep symbolic and functional connection.

1. Confucianism: A Brief Cultural Framework and the impact on a Leader's non-verbal communication

Confucianism emphasizes hierarchy, decorum (li, 礼), restraint, moral self-cultivation, and the projection of inner virtue (de, 德) through outward behavior. A leader, in this tradition, must display a demeanor that reflects self-control, respect for order, and moral authority, which are not only ethical imperatives but also performative requirements for legitimizing power.

2. Xi Jinping's Non-verbal Communication: A Confucian Semiotic Reading

A. Facial Expressions: Stoicism, Control, and Gravitas

Xi Jinping's facial expressions are often stoic, neutral, or subtly assertive, rarely showing overt emotion. This is aligned with the Confucian ideal of the junzi (君子) – the noble or exemplary man – who maintains composure and emotional balance. By avoiding excessive display of emotion, Xi conveys:

³ <https://www.perplexity.ai/search/given-the-extreme-complexity-o-DEwVEhJFRFi9lrISTvl3WA>, 28 June 2025.

- Moral discipline and inner strength, signaling that he is a leader of character rather than mere charisma.

- A sense of order and predictability, important in Confucian and bureaucratic state traditions, where emotional volatility is seen as a sign of instability or weakness.

B. Body Gestures: Deliberate, Restrained, Symbolic

His gestures are typically minimal, formal, and deliberate. He often maintains a rigid posture, a direct gaze, and a limited range of hand movements, projecting:

- Authority grounded in tradition, not performative populism.

- Respect for ritual (li) – as he often appears at state events with symbolic solemnity, adhering to strict protocol that echoes Confucian rites.

- A calculated effort to embody state dignity, not just individual personality – a key tenet of Confucian leadership philosophy, where the ruler represents a moral-political order, not merely a regime.

3. Leadership Projection and Confucian Moral Order

Xi's image is built not only on power projection but on moral exemplarity. In Confucian thought, the leader must lead by example, and his physical comportment becomes a visual affirmation of this moral role. Key examples:

- His deliberate silence or minimal verbal interjections in group settings project a Confucian leader's contemplative wisdom.

- His avoidance of excessive gestures or spontaneous interactions in public reinforces the image of a dignified and elevated figure, distanced from populism – more aligned with Confucian elitism and meritocratic rule.

4. The Modern State and Neo-Confucian Fusion

Xi's leadership has re-emphasized cultural continuity with China's civilizational roots. His non-verbal language participates in a modern revival of Confucian aesthetics of governance, even as the political system remains grounded in Communist Party orthodoxy. This fusion manifests in:

- Carefully staged diplomacy, where he exudes confidence and inscrutability, in line with both Confucian detachment and strategic assertiveness.

- Domestically, projecting a fatherly, mentoring figure (akin to the Confucian familial hierarchy), while internationally, exuding the gravitas of a sovereign from a civilizational state.

5. Limitations and Nuances

While Xi's body and face language resonates with Confucian codes, one should avoid romanticizing this alignment as purely traditional. His expressions are also:

- Carefully media-managed and strategically curated to serve both internal propaganda and diplomatic objectives.

- Filtered through the lens of authoritarian modernity, where Confucian symbolism is instrumentalized to enhance the legitimacy of the state.

Conclusion: A Consciously Confucian Performative Politics

Xi Jinping's body language and facial expressions are not simply personal traits but culturally embedded and politically instrumental. They are deeply

impregnated with Confucian ideals – projecting restraint, authority, and moral governance. In a world where political image is often flamboyant and emotionally performative, Xi's understated non-verbal style draws from a millennia-old Chinese tradition that values subtlety, harmony, and hierarchical dignity, making his presence not just authoritarian, but civilizational resonant.⁴

The Nexus Between Xi Jinping's Body and Face Language and Confucianism

Overview:

Xi Jinping's non-verbal communication – his body gestures and facial expressions – serves as a powerful extension of his leadership style and ideological commitments.

To understand the degree to which these elements are influenced by Confucianism, it is necessary to examine both the observable traits of Xi's demeanor and the core tenets of Confucian philosophy as revived and reinterpreted in contemporary Chinese governance.

Xi Jinping's Body and Face Language: Authority and Stoicism

- Xi's leadership style is characterized by a commanding presence, emotional control, and a deliberate, calculated approach to both domestic and international affairs. His non-verbal cues – often stoic facial expressions, measured gestures, and an unwavering posture – reinforce his image as a determined, unyielding leader.
- Psychologically, Xi's personality profile is marked by dominant, conscientious, and ambitious traits. Such leaders are described as authoritative, directive, and persuasive, often displaying emotional restraint and a preference for control in interpersonal interactions.
- These non-verbal behaviors communicate strength, discipline, and a sense of moral duty, which are instrumental in maintaining authority within China and projecting power internationally.

Confucianism: Core Values and Their Manifestation

- Confucianism emphasizes hierarchy, face-saving (preserving dignity and reputation), respect for social order, and the moral rectitude of the leader – a “sage-king” whose virtue commands respect and voluntary compliance from the populace.
- Five key Confucian values are often cited: hierarchy, group orientation, humility, face-saving, and reciprocity. Among these, hierarchy and face-saving are most strongly associated with positive organizational performance and leadership effectiveness in East Asian contexts.
- Confucius advocated for leaders to rule by moral example and virtue, not just by law or coercion. The ideal leader's authority is rooted in ethical conduct and self-discipline, inspiring loyalty and harmony through personal example rather than fear.

⁴ <https://chatgpt.com/>, 26 June 2025.

Xi Jinping's Leadership and Confucian Revival

- Under Xi, Confucianism has experienced a dramatic resurgence as a pillar of China's governance philosophy. Xi frequently references Confucian classics and has personally championed projects to compile and promote Confucian texts as part of China's cultural and ideological foundation.
 - Xi's public persona often draws from Confucian imagery: he has quoted Confucius in speeches, visited the philosopher's hometown, and positioned himself as a modern embodiment of the "sage-king" – a leader whose virtue and authority are meant to bring order and prosperity.
 - However, while invoking Confucian ideals, Xi's actual exercise of power is more centralized and authoritarian than the participatory, morally constrained rule envisioned by Confucius. Critics note that Xi's style is more "authoritarianism with Chinese characteristics" than true Confucian benevolence.

The Confucian Imprint on Xi's Non-Verbal Communication

Direct Influences:

- Hierarchy and Authority: Xi's authoritative posture and controlled demeanor reflect Confucian respect for hierarchy and social order. His body language communicates his position at the apex of the political structure, consistent with the Confucian ideal of a leader who commands deference through presence and virtue.
 - Face-Saving and Emotional Control: Xi's stoicism and avoidance of overt emotional display align with the Confucian value of face-saving – maintaining dignity and composure, especially in public settings. This emotional restraint is seen as a sign of self-mastery and respect for one's role.
 - Virtuous Example: By projecting calm, deliberation, and self-assurance, Xi attempts to embody the Confucian principle that a leader's conduct should inspire order and harmony among subordinates and the broader society.

Limitations and Contradictions:

- While Xi's non-verbal communication draws heavily from Confucian ideals of authority, self-control, and moral example, his centralized, often uncompromising exercise of power diverges from Confucian prescriptions for benevolent, consultative governance.
 - The Confucian influence is thus more symbolic and performative – used to legitimize authority and reinforce traditional values – than strictly doctrinal in the exercise of power.

Conclusion: Xi Jinping's body gestures and facial expressions are deeply intertwined with the Confucian revival he has championed. His authoritative, emotionally controlled demeanor reflects key Confucian values such as hierarchy and face-saving, serving both to project his legitimacy as a leader and to reinforce the ideological narrative of continuity with China's civilizational heritage. However, the substantive exercise of power under Xi is more autocratic than Confucian,

using the language and symbolism of Confucianism to justify a highly centralized, disciplined leadership style. Thus, Xi's non-verbal communication is indeed "impregnated" by Confucianism, but primarily as a tool for legitimization and image-building rather than as a strict behavioral code.⁵

Further nuancing and substantiating of the Evaluation

Xi Jinping's non-verbal cues do suggest a deliberate attempt to project both Confucian humility and authority, reflecting a strategic blend of traditional values and modern leadership imperatives.

Projection of Authority:

Xi's body language is marked by a commanding presence, emotional restraint, and directness, which are consistent with a dominant and authoritative leadership style¹. He is often described as powerful, directive, and persuasive in interpersonal conduct, reinforcing his role as the central authority in China's political system¹. Such traits align with Confucian ideals of hierarchical order, where the leader's authority is both respected and expected.

Projection of Humility:

At the same time, Xi's public persona and communication style incorporate elements of humility that are rooted in Confucian tradition. His speeches are noted for their conciseness, plainness, and relatability, often referencing classical Chinese texts and proverbs to connect with the populace and demonstrate cultural continuity. This rhetorical approach narrows the perceived distance between leader and people, embodying the Confucian virtue of *ren* (benevolence) and the ideal of a ruler who serves selflessly and prioritizes the well-being of others. His references to traditional culture and his efforts to present himself as a servant of the people further reinforce this image.

Deliberate Synthesis:

Xi's embrace of Confucian values is not accidental but part of a broader ideological strategy. By promoting a Neo-Confucian resurgence, Xi seeks to legitimize his rule and the Communist Party's authority through appeals to Chinese moral and cultural traditions, positioning himself as both a strong, authoritative leader and a moral exemplar in the Confucian mold. This duality enables him to claim both the right to rule and the moral high ground, distinguishing China's political model from Western paradigms.

In summary, Xi's non-verbal cues are carefully curated to project both Confucian humility and authority, serving to reinforce his legitimacy and connect his leadership to deep-rooted Chinese cultural values.⁶

⁵ <https://www.perplexity.ai/search/given-the-extreme-complexity-o-v1pPSO5cQgGgwCVzGKzWow, 27 June 2025.>

⁶ *Ibidem.*

A Triadic Takeaway

1. In the grand arc of history, bringing to light, through AI lens and academic publications – see in this regard the attached Selective Bibliography – of a particular nexus Confucius – Xi Jinping represents a well-motivated civilizational act, as much so given the defined area of its manifestation, namely that of the two parties' interrelationships in the verbal and non-verbal communication.

2. At the current level of the respective Nexus' research, President Xi Jinping's opening towards Confucianism appears evocative of a true diplomatic and geopolitical investment. Concretely, President Xi's openings towards Confucianism have been representing one of the ways leading, conceptually and operationally, to a strengthening of China's "soft power". With *The Confucius Institute*, founded in 2004, as one of the institutions instrumentalizing the respective trend.

3. Internally, particularly concerning President Xi Jinping's policies and practical decisions and actions, the impact of the respective Nexus can be considered, at best, implicitly positive. Only that, equally implicit, but less positive, there are the challenges Jinping has to confront these days, possibly signs of an erosion of power, in other words, "*the fading power of Xi Jinping*".⁷

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