

Ronald van Velzen  
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Dr Ingrid d'Hooghe  
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## **Confucius Institutes Under Scrutiny:**

The Functioning of Confucius Institutes in China's Public Diplomacy in Northwest-Europe,  
2013-2019

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding references, table of contents, abbreviations, list of figures and tables, acknowledgments and bibliography.



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## Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDA	Christian Democratic Appeal
CPHRC	Conservative Party Human Rights Commission
EACS	European Association of Chinese Studies
ESCP	École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDP	Free Democratic Party
Hanban	Office of Chinese Language Council International
HCFAC	House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee
IRIS	Institut de Relations Internationales et Strategiques
LAC	Leiden Asia Centre
LSE	London School of Economics
NAS	National Association of Scholars
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SDP	Social Democratic Party
UK	United Kingdom
ULB	Université Libre de Bruxelles
VUB	Vrije Universiteit Brussel

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## Introduction

“Confucius Institutes belong to China, and they also belong to the world. Chinese government and people will consistently support the growth of Confucius Institutes. Let’s try our best to push forward the advancement of human civilizations and people’s heart-to-heart exchange, to jointly create a more beautiful tomorrow.”<sup>2</sup>

- Xi Jinping

This encouragement of China’s president Xi Jinping honoured the 10th anniversary of the Confucius Institute project in 2014. After a successful pilot programme in Uzbekistan, the first institute was established in Seoul, South Korea in 2004.<sup>3</sup> The Confucius Institute programme has developed quickly ever since, reaching more than 2,6 million students in 2018.<sup>4</sup> Confucius Institutes provide Mandarin language courses and cultural events to students abroad and are involved in academic cooperation. Due to their rapid development in the past fifteen years, these institutes have been seen as an important part of China’s soft power and public diplomacy.<sup>5</sup>

The development of Confucius Institutes took place in a larger context of China’s increasing involvement in global language learning and academics. China was the biggest source of international students by 2016 and this number of students has continued to increase.<sup>6</sup> This increase is also visible in the number of international students visiting China, which was nearly 500,000 in 2018.<sup>7</sup> Through these student exchanges, personal contact with Chinese teachers, visitor programmes, scholarships and Confucius Institutes, the Chinese government aims to create a deeper understanding of the Chinese language and culture among foreign audiences by using dialogue and collaboration.<sup>8</sup>

The idea of ‘going out’ (on a cultural level) emerged in the early twentieth-first century and has been further enhanced under the leadership of Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping.<sup>9</sup> This period, in which China became increasingly involved in global politics and economics, was also the period in which Confucius Institutes were developing quickly. However, China’s increasing presence in the world has sometimes led to economic and political conflicts in certain regions or with other countries. Due to

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<sup>2</sup> Xi Jinping, Congratulatory Letter to the Hanban, September 25, 2014, in Hanban, *Annual Development Report 2014*, <http://www.hanban.org/report/2014.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> “China, ROK deepen all-round cooperative partnership,” *China Daily*, November 15, 2005; Don Starr, “Chinese Language Education in Europe: the Confucius Institutes,” *European Journal of Education* 44, No. 1 (2009): 65.

<sup>4</sup> Hanban, *Annual Development Report 2018*, accessed on April 30, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> These concepts will be discussed in the next chapter; Falk Hartig, “Communicating China to the World: Confucius Institutes and China’s Strategic Narratives,” *Politics* 35 (3-4) (2015): 245-258.

<sup>6</sup> “Is China both a source and hub for international students?,” CSIS, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-international-students/>; “Number of students from China going abroad for study from 2008 to 2018,” Statista, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/227240/number-of-chinese-students-that-study-abroad/>.

<sup>7</sup> “Number of foreign students studying in China 2018, by country of origin,” Statista, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/430717/china-foreign-students-by-country-of-origin/>.

<sup>8</sup> Ingrid d’Hooghe, *China’s Public Diplomacy* (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2015), 173-175.

<sup>9</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, “China’s Charm: Implications of Chinese Soft Power,” *Policy Brief* 47 (2006): 4.

its growing presence on the world stage, news media, state-actors and foreign publics have paid increasing attention to the country's foreign and domestic policies. As will become clear from this research, this global context is strongly connected to the increasing criticism on Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe (and the US).

The increasing concerns about Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe continue to attract attention on a political level and in news media. Therefore, this research hopes to provide a relevant contribution to the current understanding of the developments surrounding Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe. Moreover, it hopes to highlight the numerous disparities between different countries in terms of the development, functioning and reception of Confucius Institutes. This research aims to analyse the functioning of Confucius Institutes in China's public diplomacy. It does so by researching the sending and the reception side of public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe.

Chapter 1 will provide an overview of the academic debate about Confucius Institutes and will explain the frequently-used concepts of 'soft power' and 'public diplomacy' in this debate. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the theoretical framework, method and sources used in this research. It will also introduce the research question and sub-questions. Chapter 3 will provide a detailed analysis of the sending side of China's public diplomacy, namely the activities of Confucius Institutes between 2013 and 2019. Chapter 4 discusses the first actor on the recipient side: higher education institutes. This chapter also elaborates on criticism and closures of Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe. Chapter 5 will provide an overview of how state-actors in the five case countries perceive Confucius Institutes and how this perception has shifted over time. Chapter 6 will provide a similar overview for news media in Northwest-Europe. Moreover, it distinguishes between local and national news media reports and discusses the role of foreign news media in China's public diplomacy.



## Chapter 1. Literature Review

In recent years, scholars have written extensively about Confucius Institutes. The academic debate covers multiple aspects and theoretical frameworks to understand and explain Confucius Institutes. First, this chapter will provide a brief overview of the two main theoretical frameworks – soft power and public diplomacy – that are used in academic research regarding Confucius Institutes. Second, a brief overview of the academic debate about Confucius Institutes will be provided. The academic debate about criticism on Confucius Institutes is discussed in Chapter 4.

### 1.1. Soft Power

‘Soft power’ is a frequently-used concept in research about Confucius Institutes. The term was coined by Joseph Nye in the 1990s and refers to “the ability to shape the preference of others.”<sup>10</sup> According to Nye, a country’s culture, political values and foreign policies are the main resources that are used to attract, pursue or move the other by argument. This is different from ‘hard’ power, which consists of applying military or economic might to realise a certain goal.<sup>11</sup> Since Nye’s concept of soft power is already more than two decades old, it has often been adjusted and criticised by other scholars. This paragraph will briefly discuss this criticism.

First of all, some scholars argue that resources of soft power do not only consist of culture, political values and foreign policies, as Nye argues.<sup>12</sup> Instead, countries or people can also be attracted by another country’s economic or military power.<sup>13</sup> Even though people might not be particularly interested in a specific culture, they might be interested in the economic opportunities a country has to offer. In this sense, economic power is a soft power resource. Certainly, when economic power is used to impose economic sanctions, it is a hard power resource.<sup>14</sup> Besides economic power, Chinese academics have discussed other resources of soft power like the ‘China Model,’ mass-media, and credibility of the Chinese government, moving far beyond Nye’s original definition of the concept.<sup>15</sup>

Second, there is criticism on the American-centric perspective from which Nye’s definition of soft power is constructed. In contrast to US policy during the cold war, which was aimed at having other countries to adopt the US political system (i.e. democracy), some authors argue that China’s soft power is not aimed to change other countries’ behaviour or forcing them to adopt China’s

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means To Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), ix, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 6-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Hongyi Lai and Yiyi Lu, eds. *China’s Soft Power and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph S. Nye, “Think Again: Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, February 23, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Mingjiang Li, ed., *Soft Power: China’s Emerging Strategy in International Politics* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009), 26-29.

political system.<sup>16</sup> Instead, China's soft power is aimed at creating understanding for the country's values and own way of doing things, emphasising the peaceful intentions of China. This understanding of China's soft power is aimed at countering the so-called 'China threat' theory.<sup>17</sup> This theory composes the idea that China will threaten peace and security around the world and is not likely to incorporate itself in the existing world order.<sup>18</sup>

Then how is this soft power concept linked to Confucius Institutes? Some argue that China's soft power is lagging behind the country's economic development, which improved rapidly in the last decades. By improving its soft power, China can facilitate a more favourable environment through which it can further increase its economic development.<sup>19</sup> This can be done through the setup of Confucius Institutes. Multiple scholars note that Confucius Institutes can enhance China's cultural attractiveness, which is one of the most important components of soft power.<sup>20</sup> Cultural attractiveness can improve a country's image which causes other countries to pursue cooperation instead of conflict.<sup>21</sup> As stated by Paradise, through the means of soft power, Confucius Institutes have the potential to "win hearts and minds for political purposes."<sup>22</sup> However, some scholars argue that Confucius Institutes have clear political and economic connotations which can cause China's soft power strategy to become ineffective.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.2. Public Diplomacy

Confucius Institutes are viewed as the prime example of China's 'public diplomacy', a concept that is embedded in soft power.<sup>24</sup> As discussed by Cull, public diplomacy is a "mechanism to deploy soft

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<sup>16</sup> Timo Kivimäki, "Soft Power and Global Governance with Chinese Characteristics," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* (2014): 422, 435.

<sup>17</sup> Li, *Soft Power*, 97; Xin Liu, "So Similar, So Different, So Chinese: Analytical Comparisons of the Confucius Institute with its Western Counterparts," *Asian Studies Review* 43, No.2 (2019): 259; Jeffrey Gil, *Soft Power and the Worldwide Promotion of Chinese Language Learning: The Confucius Institute Project* (Bristol: Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, 2017), 29.

<sup>18</sup> Emma V. Broomfield, "Perceptions of Danger: The China threat theory," *Journal of Contemporary China* 12:35 (2003): 266.

<sup>19</sup> Kurlantzick, "China's Charm," 4; Yanjun Zhao, "Toward International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in China's Soft Power Effort," *China Media Research* 10, No. 1 (2014): 22-29.

<sup>20</sup> Shen Ding and Robert A. Saunders, "Talking Up China: An Analysis of China's Rising Cultural Power and Global Promotion of the Chinese Language," *East Asia* 23, No. 2 (Summer, 2006): 19; Jae Park, "Cultural Artefact, Ideology Export or Soft Power? Confucius Institute in Peru," *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 23, No. 1 (2013): 11-13; Xin Li and Verner Worm, "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16 (2011): 75-77; Chi-Cheung Leung and Hilary du Cros, "Confucius Institutes: Multiple Reactions and Interactions," *China: An International Journal* 12, No. 2 (August 2014): 67-69.

<sup>21</sup> Ding and Saunders, "Talking Up China," 9.

<sup>22</sup> James F. Paradise, "China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing's Soft Power," *Asian Survey* 49, No. 4 (2009): 648, 649.

<sup>23</sup> Joe Tin-yau Lo and Suyan Pan, "Confucius Institutes and China's Soft Power: Practices and Paradoxes," *A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 46, No. 4 (2016): 518-520.

<sup>24</sup> Jan Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 4, 5; Tao Xie and Benjamin I. Page, "What Affects China's National Image? A cross-national study of public opinion," *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, No. 83 (2013): 856.

power.”<sup>25</sup> Although there is agreement on public diplomacy being about the targeting of foreign publics, there is no consensus about one clear definition of public diplomacy.<sup>26</sup> A useful definition for this research is provided by Paul Sharp who states that public diplomacy is “the process by which direct relation with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented.”<sup>27</sup> However, due to the numerous contributions of scholars from different disciplines, the concept remains ambiguous.<sup>28</sup>

During an extensive part of the twentieth century, public diplomacy was about governments attempting to reach global publics “in support for national objectives and foreign policies.”<sup>29</sup> This government was represented by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose task was to reach global publics through the use of strategic and mass communication.<sup>30</sup> This type of public diplomacy is named as traditional public diplomacy. However, during the beginning of the twentieth first-century, this traditional concept has changed in different ways, which resulted in the usage of the term ‘new public diplomacy’. One difference between traditional and new public diplomacy is the shift from government-to-people exchanges to people-to-people exchanges. Instead of governments conducting public diplomacy, private individuals or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are engaging with foreign publics and thereby (in)directly influencing the perceptions of these publics.<sup>31</sup> Another difference is the shift from using mass communication to user-friendly communication in which the general public can share opinions about foreign policies, thereby reaching foreign publics.<sup>32</sup> By doing so, new public diplomacy aims to build a long-term relationship and create dialogue between two foreign publics.<sup>33</sup>

Although new public diplomacy is a useful concept for understanding the functioning and practices of public diplomacy in the twentieth-first century, it remains rather theoretical. In practice, governments still regard public diplomacy as a concept that is exercised by the state.<sup>34</sup> As argued by d’Hooghe, this is understandable since “it would be problematic for a government to rely mainly on citizens and their networks to act as ambassadors for their country.”<sup>35</sup> After all, individual citizens

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<sup>25</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy*, 5; d’Hooghe, *China’s Public Diplomacy*, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Sharp, “Revolutionary States, Outlaw Regimes and the Techniques of Public Diplomacy,” in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 106.

<sup>28</sup> Ethan Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, No. 1 (March 2008): 73-75; Falk Hartig, “How China Understands Public Diplomacy: The Importance of National Image for National Interests,” *International Studies Review* 18 (2016): 656.

<sup>29</sup> Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 6.

<sup>30</sup> d’Hooghe, *China’s Public Diplomacy*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy*, 12, 13; Snow and Taylor, *Routledge Handbook*, 5-7.

<sup>32</sup> Snow and Taylor, *Routledge Handbook*, 6, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Cull, *Public Diplomacy*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> d’Hooghe, *China’s Public Diplomacy*, 20, 21; Hartig, “How China Understands Public Diplomacy,” 656, 657.

<sup>35</sup> d’Hooghe, *China’s Public Diplomacy*, 18.

might not be interested in supporting their countries' foreign policies. Moreover, NGOs have their own agendas which do not necessarily align with the foreign policies of their country.<sup>36</sup>

The concept of (new) public diplomacy must not be confused with propaganda. As discussed by Cull, public diplomacy does not use propaganda but borrows concepts from marketing and network communication theory like 'nation branding'.<sup>37</sup> The use of networks, dialogues and exchanges of ideas is immanent to a two-way flow of information. This is contradictory to propaganda which does not create interactions.<sup>38</sup> However, propaganda and the traditional public diplomacy have some overlap in the sense that both concepts aim to influence the targeted audience while favouring the position of the actor that transmits the message.<sup>39</sup>

For this research, it is important to understand how the concept of (new) public diplomacy is understood by Chinese scholars. China's understanding of public diplomacy is somewhat different from how 'Western' scholars understand the concept. The most important difference relates to the understanding of the role of the state in public diplomacy. Chinese academics also view public diplomacy as a tool that enhances exchanges between non-governmental actors, like private individuals, companies and NGOs. However, these actors always act under the authority of the central government, which is the most important actor in coordinating public diplomacy strategies.<sup>40</sup>

Additionally, there is no clear consensus among Chinese scholars about the purposes of public diplomacy. Some regard public diplomacy as a tool to counter the 'China threat' theory or to create an appealing alternative to American soft power. Others have discarded the concept of public diplomacy entirely by arguing that it is incapable of solving issues of conflicting national interests.<sup>41</sup> Despite this lack of consensus, it is possible to distinguish the most important goals of China's public diplomacy. According to d'Hooghe, the Chinese government aims to create an image of China as a harmonious country, a stable and responsible economic partner, a reliable member of the international community and it aims to gain acknowledgement for its ancient culture and historical richness.<sup>42</sup>

### 1.3. Confucius Institutes

Although soft power and public diplomacy are inherently connected to research about Confucius Institutes, some scholars have approached Confucius Institutes from different angles. First of all,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>37</sup> Cull, *Public Diplomacy*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>39</sup> d'Hooghe, *China's Public Diplomacy*, 27, 28.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 101-103; d'Hooghe frequently refers to Fangming Han 韩方明, *Gongong waijiao gailun* 公共外交概论 [Introduction to Public Diplomacy] (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe 北京: 北京大学出版社, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> Falk Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy: The Rise of the Confucius Institute* (New York: Routledge (New Diplomacy Studies), 2016), 57, 58.

<sup>42</sup> Ingrid d'Hooghe, "Into High Gear: China's Public Diplomacy," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 3 (2008): 43, 44.

there has been done extensive research into the educational practices of Confucius Institutes. Some argue that Confucius Institutes have contributed significantly to the teaching of Mandarin Chinese and have also provided cultural understandings of China.<sup>43</sup> However, there are also numerous problems concerning Confucius Institutes' organisation and teaching methods, which are also acknowledged and debated by Chinese scholars.<sup>44</sup> This debate on the educational quality of Confucius Institutes will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Second, Confucius Institutes have been analysed from an economic perspective. According to Lien, the setup of Confucius Institutes is not only caused by the active role of the Chinese government in promoting these institutes, but also by an interest of non-Mandarin speakers to learn Chinese. In other words, there is no use in setting up a Mandarin Chinese language institute when there is no active demand for learning Mandarin Chinese.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Lien notes that Confucius Institutes positively affect foreign direct investment, trade and international travelling to China and the host country.<sup>46</sup>

A third approach focuses on analysing media portrayals of Confucius Institutes by Chinese and US media. Not surprisingly, Chinese media cover Confucius Institutes is found to be more positive than 'Western' media. Some argue that this is caused by a systematic, historically rooted bias in Western media towards China.<sup>47</sup> Others have analysed China's domestic perception of Confucius Institutes, which is not always positive. Some Chinese citizens blame the government for paying too much attention to foreign students instead of improving domestic education.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Gil, *Soft Power and the Worldwide Promotion*, 67; Weiming Yao, "The New Middle Kingdom: The Symbolic Power of the Confucius Institute's Pedagogical Approach," *China Media Research* 10, No. 1 (2014): 4-12; Jennifer Hubbert, *China in the World: An Anthropology of Confucius Institutes, Soft Power, and Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019).

<sup>44</sup> Chuanbo Ji and Fangfang Liu 汲传波, 刘芳芳, "Ouzhou Kongzi Xueyuan Hanyu guoji chuanbo xianzhuang yu sikao" 欧洲孔子学院汉语国际传播现状与思考 [Current Situation and Reflections of Chinese Language Promotion at Confucius Institutes in Europe], *Lilun yuekan* 理论月刊 2 (2017): 173-178; Juan Wang 王娟, "Kongzi Xueyuan kechixu xing fazhan de zhanlüe yu duice" 孔子学院可持续性发展的战略与对策 [Strategies and Resolution for Sustainable Development of Confucius Institute], *Weifang jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao* 潍坊教育学院学报 24, No. 6 (2011): 31-33; Xiaopeng Yan 严晓鹏, "Kongzi Xueyuan yu woguo gaoxiao guojihua jincheng: yingxiang tujing yu xingdong celüe – jiyu ziyuan yilai de shijiao" 孔子学院与我国高校国际化进程: 影响途径与行动策略 – 基于资源依赖的视角 [The Confucius Institute and the Internationalization of the Chinese Universities: Routes and Strategies], *Guojia jiaoyu xingzheng xueyuan xuebao* 国家教育行政学院学报 3 (2014): 36-41.

<sup>45</sup> Donald Lien and Chang Hoon Oh, "Determinants of the Confucius Institute Establishment," *The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance* 54 (2014): 437.

<sup>46</sup> Donald Lien, Chang Hoon Oh, W. Travis Selmier, "Confucius institute effects on China's trade and FDI: Isn't it delightful when folks afar study Hanyu?," *International Review of Economics and Finance* 21 (2012): 147-155; Donald Lien, Feng Yao and Fan Zhang, "Confucius Institute's effects on international travel to China: do cultural difference or institutional quality matter?," *Applied Economics* 49, No. 36 (2017): 3669-3683.

<sup>47</sup> Zhao, "Toward International Harmony," 23, 24; Therese L. Lueck, Val S. Pippas and Yang Lin, "China's Soft Power: A New York Times Introduction of the Confucius Institute," *Howard Journal of Communications* 25, No. 3 (2014): 344, 345.

<sup>48</sup> Tracey Fallon, "Chinese Fever and Cool Heads: Confucius Institutes and China's National Identities," *China Media Research* 10, No. 1 (2014): 35-46.

## Chapter 2. Research Design and Method

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework used in this research. It will also outline the main research question and sub-questions. Furthermore, this chapter contains an explanation of the different methods and sources used in this research. A brief discussion of the limitations of this research concludes.

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework: Public Diplomacy

As discussed in the previous chapter, public diplomacy does not have a straightforward definition. Moreover, the concept is somewhat problematic to measure since a large part of public diplomacy is about spontaneous interactions, unofficial meeting and impressions that can affect foreign audiences. Nevertheless, some indicators can provide insight into the functioning of public diplomacy, which will be discussed further on in this chapter. To further specify public diplomacy and its relation with Confucius Institutes, this research uses different subsets of (new) public diplomacy: citizen diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and nation-branding.

Citizen diplomacy, in its broadest way, can be defined as the way private individuals engage in diplomatic activities through people-to-people contact.<sup>49</sup> This people-to-people contact has always been an important aspect of China's (public) diplomacy. In the highest levels of the Chinese government, this concept has been viewed as a way to ease tensions with other countries by bringing citizens of these countries together.<sup>50</sup> Through this personal contact, interaction and experience, a certain individual can positively or negatively impact a country's national image. Moreover, the role of the state in citizen diplomacy is rather small since the concept does not always involve officials or pre-arranged meetings. There are numerous ways in which this type of diplomacy can be exercised: from tourism to sports and from business meetings to academic exchange programmes.<sup>51</sup> A special aspect of citizen diplomacy is 'Track-II diplomacy' which is exercised by, among others, academics who exchange ideas about topics that are on the official agendas of their states. In the case of Confucius Institutes, Chinese academics exchange these topics and ideas in lectures or conferences that are organised by Confucius Institutes.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, Confucius Institutes provide a base for citizen diplomacy by organising visiting programmes and by having Chinese citizens to teach language classes abroad.

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<sup>49</sup> Costas M. Constantinou, Pauline Kerr and Paul Sharp, "Citizen Diplomacy," in *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*, eds. Melissa Conley Tyler and Craig Beyerinck, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2016), 521-529.

<sup>50</sup> d'Hooghe, *China's Public Diplomacy*, 93, 155; for a recent example of China's use of people diplomacy, see Zhiqun Zhu, "People-to-people Diplomacy in China-Japan Relations," *The Diplomat*, March 17, 2015.

<sup>51</sup> d'Hooghe, *China's Public Diplomacy*, 28; Constantinou, Kerr and Sharp, "Citizen Diplomacy," 524-526.

<sup>52</sup> d'Hooghe, *China's Public Diplomacy*, 28, 156, 157.

Cultural diplomacy concerns the promotion of different aspects of a country's culture to find commonalities, create mutual understanding and draw people closer together.<sup>53</sup> People-to-people contact is also an important aspect of cultural diplomacy. Through personal contact, people can provide or gain insight into why certain cultural practices are conducted in a particular country.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, this insight can help 'humanize' official policies put forward by a certain government and can provide understanding for these policies.<sup>55</sup> In the case of China, cultural diplomacy is aimed at promoting the 'uniqueness' of the Chinese culture. More specifically, Chinese scholars have argued that China should aim at promoting its traditional culture of harmony, which can serve as a counterweight to the 'China threat theory'.<sup>56</sup> Cultural diplomacy can be conducted through the promotion of language, cultural exhibitions, sports and movies, to name a few examples.<sup>57</sup> In the case of Confucius Institutes, cultural diplomacy is conducted through the promotion of cultural events, art exhibitions and the Chinese language.

The third subset of public diplomacy that this research touches upon is nation-branding. Nation-branding is a concept which is closely related to international marketing. It is aimed at promoting the image of the nation and make it appealing to foreign audiences.<sup>58</sup> A possible reason for the Chinese government to name its language institutes after Confucius could have to do with the fact that this is a good 'brand' name. The philosopher is known worldwide and is often associated with teaching quality and educational importance.<sup>59</sup> This makes the Confucius 'brand' recognisable, appealing and a prime example of nation-branding. By promoting one brand name, foreign institutes are stimulated to use this brand to be eligible for receiving funding from the Chinese government.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Confucius ideology represents harmony and peace which is in line with the image that the Chinese government wants to promote. A message of peace and harmony can serve as a counterweight to the China threat theory.<sup>61</sup>

Intrinsically connected to these subsets of public diplomacy is the role of China's central government. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Chinese understanding of public diplomacy presumes strong guidance of the Chinese government in providing the basic strategies and activities of public diplomacy. This is reflected in Confucius Institutes since these are (in)directly guided by

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<sup>53</sup> d'Hooghe, *China's Public Diplomacy*, 28, 29; Patricia M. Goff, "Cultural Diplomacy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, eds. Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine and Ramesh Thakur (Oxford University Press, 2013), 419-420.

<sup>54</sup> Goff, "Cultural Diplomacy," 422, 423.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 419-420.

<sup>56</sup> Lai and Lu, eds. *China's Soft Power*, 85.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-91.

<sup>58</sup> Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy*, 19-20.

<sup>59</sup> Starr, "Chinese Language Education in Europe," 68, 69; Falk Hartig, "Confucius Institutes and the Rise of China," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 17 (2012): 58, 59.

<sup>60</sup> Timothy B. Weston and Lionel M. Jensen, eds., *China In and Beyond the Headlines* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 280, 281; Starr, "Chinese Language Education in Europe," 68, 69.

<sup>61</sup> Ying Zhou and Sabrina Luk, "Establishing Confucius Institutes: a tool for promoting China's soft power?," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, No. 100 (2016): 635, 636.

China's Ministry of Education.<sup>62</sup> However, the explicit guidance of the Chinese government can also lead to obstacles for China's public diplomacy and Confucius Institutes in particular.<sup>63</sup> An authoritarian political system can deter foreign publics through its political system, lack of human rights or lack of transparency.<sup>64</sup> This ties into the notion of Nye who argues that states can undermine their soft power (or public diplomacy) activities through certain domestic or foreign policies.<sup>65</sup> Due to China's increasing role in world politics and economics, foreign audiences do not only construct their image of China through the activities of Confucius Institutes. Instead, China's domestic and foreign policies are also important factors in constructing this image. Negative perceptions of China's domestic or foreign policies can also have consequences for the image of Confucius Institutes since these serve as an extension of the Chinese government.

## 2.2. Research Question and Sub-questions

Although existing research about Confucius Institutes is extensive, it still contains some important lacunas. First of all, most scholars tend to view Confucius Institutes as a single project which attempts to fulfil a similar goal. However, the reality is far more complex: Confucius Institutes have to deal with a great variety of local audiences, the reason why an institute is set up depends on the local context and the institutes have to comply to different financial regulations depending on a country's national law.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Confucius Institutes have different goals, depending on the country in which it is located.<sup>67</sup> This research aims to take this point further by highlighting the differences in the recipient of Confucius Institutes between countries that are located in the same region.

Second, existing academic literature overwhelmingly focuses on Confucius Institutes in North-America and Australia. Although this is understandable due to the large numbers of institutes in these areas, other regions in which Confucius Institutes operate also deserve academic attention.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> "About Us," Hanban, accessed February 26, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/node\\_7719.htm](http://english.hanban.org/node_7719.htm).

<sup>63</sup> Hailan Wang and Jiming Ning 王海兰, 宁继鸣, "Shidu ganyu Kongzi Xueyuan fazhanzhong de zhengfu xingwei xuanze" 适度干预: 孔子学院发展中的政府行为选择 [Moderate intervention: Selection of the government's behaviours during the development of the Confucius Institute], *Yunnan Shifan Daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 云南师范大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) 48, No. 1 (2016): 54-61.

<sup>64</sup> d'Hooghe, *China's Public Diplomacy*, 40, 41.

<sup>65</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 14.

<sup>66</sup> Randolph Kluver, "Introduction: The Confucius Institute as a Communicative Phenomenon," *China Media Research* 10, No. 1 (2014): 2; Yu discussed the differences between European and Asian countries in their willingness to set up Confucius Institutes, see Miao Yu 于淼, "Cong Kongzi Xueyuan kan Han yuyan wenhua tuigang de moshi yu xiaoguo" 从孔子学院看汉语言文化推广的模式与效果 [The Promotion of the Chinese Language and Culture through the Confucius Institute: Modes and Effects], *Wuhan Daxue Xuebao (Zhaxue Shehui Kexue Ban)* 63, No. 6 (November 2010): 954-955.

<sup>67</sup> Zhou and Luk, "Establishing Confucius Institutes," 638.

<sup>68</sup> Some other regions have received academic attention, see Anita Wheeler, "Cultural Diplomacy, Language Planning, and the Case of the University of Nairobi Confucius Institute," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 49, No. 1 (2014): 49-63; Amy Stambach and Aikande Kwayu, "Confucius Institutes in Africa, or How the Educational Spirit in Africa is Re-Rationalised Towards the East," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43, No. 2 (2017): 411-424; Rika Theo and Maggi W.H. Leung, "China's Confucius Institute in Indonesia: Mobility, Frictions and Local Surprises," *Sustainability* 10, No. 530 (2018): 1-15; see also



Not only because there are differences between the perception of Confucius Institutes among foreign publics, but also among different governments and individual state-actors. It is not a given that the functioning and recipient of Confucius Institutes in North-America is similar to that in Northwest-Europe.

As becomes clear from the above-mentioned points, some important aspects have not been covered by existing research. However, these aspects are valuable for understanding the functioning of Confucius Institutes in China's public diplomacy. This research aims to contribute to the existing literature by analysing how Confucius Institutes function in China's public diplomacy in Northwest-Europe. Since public diplomacy entails a two-way flow of information and communication, this research analyses the sending and the recipient side of China's public diplomacy exercised through Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe. Hence, this research makes use of the following research question (RQ) and sub-questions (SQ):

RQ: *How do Confucius Institutes function in China's public diplomacy in Northwest-Europe, 2013-2019?*

SQ 1. How do Confucius Institutes exercise China's public diplomacy?

SQ 2. How do higher education institutes in Northwest-Europe perceive Confucius Institutes?

SQ 3. How do state-actors in Northwest-Europe perceive Confucius Institutes?

SQ 4. How do news media in Northwest-Europe perceive Confucius Institutes?

### **2.3. Method**

This research uses a case-study approach, which has rarely been used in existing (Western) academic literature about Confucius Institutes.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, it can serve as a valuable contribution to the existing literature. This research focuses on Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe and uses five countries as a case study: the UK, Germany, France, The Netherlands and Belgium. As will become clear in Chapter 3, the UK, France and Germany have the most Confucius Institutes in Europe (when excluding Russia). Belgium and The Netherlands have fewer institutes but these countries are located centrally in Northwest-Europe. Together, these five countries are a representative cross-section of

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the special issue on Confucius Institutes in Southeast-Asia, Michael Hsin-Huang Hsiao and Alan Hao Yang, "Introduction to the Special Issue – Contending Confucius Institutes in Southeast Asia," *Issues and Studies* 50, No. 4 (2014): 1-10.

<sup>69</sup> Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy*, 112; There are some Chinese scholars who used a comparative analysis in research about Confucius Institutes, see Donghui Zhang and Ting Gu 张东辉, 谷婷婷, "Kongzi Xueyuan fazhan moshi tan xi – dui si suo Kongzi Xueyuan de bijiao yanjiu" 孔子学院发展模式探析 – 对四所孔子学院的比较研究 [A Comparative Study on the Development Models of Confucius Institute: Four Cases], *Fudan jiaoyu luntan* 复旦教育论坛 13, No. 1 (2015): 50-55.

this region. Moreover, sources from these five countries can be read and understood by the author. This is not the case for Scandinavian-language sources which are therefore excluded from this research.

As the sub-questions already indicate, this research focuses upon the sending and recipient side of the public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes. The sending side contains Confucius Institutes and the Hanban which are actively promoting China's public diplomacy (SQ 1). Although it is difficult to 'measure' the complex aspects of public diplomacy, there are some indicators which can be used to indicate public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes in practice. These indicators include the scope, cultural events and academic involvement of Confucius Institutes.

The first indicator is important because reaching foreign publics is an intrinsic part of citizen diplomacy and people-to-people contact. Specific data on the number of people attending the courses and events of Confucius Institutes in these five case countries is absent. However, the number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in these five countries can indicate the extent to which people come into contact with Confucius Institutes.

The second indicator concerns the type of cultural events offered by Confucius Institutes. What do these events entail? And how do these events contribute to China's cultural diplomacy goals? This indicator also adds to the notion that these cultural courses and events offered by Confucius Institutes differ between countries and within countries.

The third indicator focuses on Confucius Institutes' activities in academic research and academic education at the host institution. Some Confucius Institutes cooperate with existing Asian Studies or language departments of universities. This indicator compares different types of involvements of universities that cooperate with a Confucius Institute. This provides insight into how Confucius Institutes function in higher education in the host country and how citizen diplomacy or Track-II diplomacy is pursued through this academic involvement.

Besides the sending side, this research also analyses how the public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes are perceived by higher education institutes, state-actors and media in Northwest-Europe. These three 'actors' represent the recipient side of the public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes. For the higher education institutes, this research will analyse multiple closures of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries which highlight certain obstacles in the relationship between Confucius Institutes and their host institution (SQ 2). State-actors entail governments, individual politicians and think-tanks affiliated with government institutions (SQ 3). These actors can indicate how Confucius Institutes are perceived on a political level. Media portrayals of Confucius Institutes can indicate the success rate of Confucius Institutes' functioning in China's public diplomacy (SQ 4). Positive or negative media attention can indicate the public perception of

Confucius Institutes in a certain country. In particular, it indicates the perception of people that did not experience courses or activities of Confucius Institutes themselves.<sup>70</sup>

To analyse recent developments of Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe, this research encompasses the period 2013-2019. In 2013, the Lyon Confucius Institute in France closed its doors. This closure will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Although criticism on Confucius Institutes was already present prior to 2013, the Lyon closure was a break with the hitherto seamlessly increase of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries. Therefore, this research takes 2013 as a starting point of the changing perception and functioning of Confucius Institutes in the five countries.

## 2.4. Sources

The lion's share of primary sources used in this research consist of website sources of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries (Appendix A). These websites contain information about the institute's courses, activities, the number of Confucius Classrooms connected to the institute and which academic activities the institute is involved in. These websites also provide information about the different institutions involved in cooperation with Confucius Institutes (Appendix B). This research also analyses the website of the Hanban, the overseeing organisation of Confucius Institutes. This website provides information about the laws that apply to Confucius Institutes, annual reports of Confucius Institutes worldwide and information about the number of institutes and classrooms in a specific country.<sup>71</sup>

Other primary sources used in this research include press releases of individual Ministries of Education and policy documents of the British, German and Dutch parliaments. These sources can provide insight into the debate about Confucius Institutes on a political level. In addition, this research makes use of different policy papers published by think-tanks and academic associations in the five case countries and the US. The statements put forward by US think-tanks and associations can serve as an interesting comparison with political actors in the five case countries that are on the same side of the political spectrum.

Besides primary sources, this research makes extensive use of media sources. Different articles of Inside Higher Ed are used to gain information about specific closures of Confucius Institutes and ongoing investigations in the US. Additionally, this research analyses national news media coverage in the five case countries (Table 1). These sources were compiled by searching on the websites of each media source for 'Confucius Institute' for English-language sources, '*Institut*

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<sup>70</sup> David Croteau and William Hoynes, *Media/Society: Technology, Industries, Content, Users* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2019, sixth edition), 464, 465; Dennis Chong and Hames N. Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 10 (2007): 103-126.

<sup>71</sup> Information about Confucius Classrooms will be provided in the next chapter.

*Confucius*’ for French-language sources, *‘confucius instituut*’ for Dutch-language sources and *‘Konfuzius-Institut*’ for German-language sources. In some searches, the word ‘institute’ was omitted since this narrowed the search results. Since this research covers the period 2013-2019, news reports dating from before 2013 are only touched upon briefly when they contain important information.

**Table 1. National media sources used in this research, per case country.**

Case Country	National Media
United Kingdom	BBC News, The Guardian, Financial Times, The Independent
Germany	Der Spiegel, Die Welt, Frankfurter Allgemeine, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Der Tagesspiegel
France*	Le Monde, Le Figaro, Les Echos, Ouest France, 20 Minutes
The Netherlands**	NRC Handelsblad, De Volkskrant, Trouw
Belgium	De Morgen, De Standaard, Het Nieuwsblad

*Source:* See Bibliography for all specific media sources used in this research.

\*The website of the French newspaper Le Parisien did not have a search function. A search of ‘Institut Confucius / Confucius’ on the website of the French newspaper Libération resulted in 0 hits.

\*\*The national newspaper *Het Parool* is not included since it only published one article in which Confucius Institutes are mentioned once.

## 2.5. Limitations

This research has multiple limitations. First of all, the five case countries used in this research only provide a sample of Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe but do not represent this entire geographical area. Moreover, which countries are understood as part of ‘Northwest-Europe’? Although this question is open to debate, I believe the case countries used in this research are valuable samples for analysing public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe.

Second, the website sources used in this research have not always been useful in gaining insight into the activities or academic involvement of Confucius Institutes. In some cases, information about cultural events or academic involvement was missing or rather outdated. This is true for websites of Confucius Institutes that have been closed, but also for newly opened Confucius Institutes or institutes that have an outdated website.

Third, the media sources used in this research are based upon the circulation and the quality of news reporting. All the newspapers used are known for quality journalism and have been read by a broad audience. However, tabloids have been excluded from this research, which is rather

arbitrary. Including more national news media (including tabloids) could alter the statistical outcomes presented in this research. Moreover, since problematic aspects of Confucius Institutes are more newsworthy, news media might highlight these aspects more than positive aspects of Confucius Institutes. Nevertheless, the extensive number of news sources used in this research has reached a large audience. Therefore, these sources are a valuable indication of the extent to which news reports about Confucius Institutes are brought to the attention of the public in the five case countries.

Fourth and last, the current situation concerning the coronavirus, has left universities and Confucius Institutes in The Netherlands and abroad occupied with managing online classes and implementing new measures to protect students and employees against the virus. This made it rather difficult for the author to conduct interviews with Confucius Institutes, Classrooms or universities. E-mails sent to two French universities were not answered, possibly due to the current situation. Although this is a case of force majeure, it has certainly limited this research.

## Chapter 3. Confucius Institutes and China's Public Diplomacy

This chapter provides an overview of how Confucius Institutes exercise China's public diplomacy. This will be done by providing a brief overview of the activities of the Hanban, the overseeing body of Confucius Institutes. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss the different indicators – scope, cultural events and academic involvement – which can be used to indicate public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries.

### 3.1. The Hanban

Confucius Institutes are set up through a triangular cooperation model consisting of: a host institution, a Chinese institution and the Office of Chinese Language Council International, better known by its pinyin abbreviation 'Hanban.'<sup>72</sup> The two former parties mostly consist of a foreign university and Chinese university. In some instances, private language centres or municipal governments function as a host institution.<sup>73</sup> The latter party involved, the Hanban, facilitates the setups of Confucius Institutes and is affiliated with China's Ministry of Education.<sup>74</sup>

The Hanban coordinates the cooperation setup and provides contracts in which the terms and conditions of the cooperation between the host institution and the two Chinese parties are stated. These terms and conditions are based on the so-called 'Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes.'<sup>75</sup> These by-laws apply to any Confucius Institute in the world and consist of general agreements about the cooperation between Confucius Institutes and host institutions. In these by-laws, the goals of Confucius Institutes are described as:

Confucius Institutes devote themselves to satisfying the demands of people from different countries and regions in the world who learn the Chinese language, to enhancing understanding of the Chinese language and culture by these peoples, to strengthening educational and cultural exchange and cooperation between China and other countries, to deepening friendly relationships with other nations, to promoting the development of multi-culturalism, and to construct a harmonious world.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Starr, "Chinese Language Education in Europe," 69-71.

<sup>73</sup> This is, for example, the case for the Confucius Institute in Brussels, see: "Confucius Institute in Brussels," Belgium-China Association, accessed February 26, 2020, <http://www.belchin.be/confucius-institute-in-brussels/>; "About us," Belgium-China Association, accessed February 27, 2020, <http://www.belchin.be/about/>.

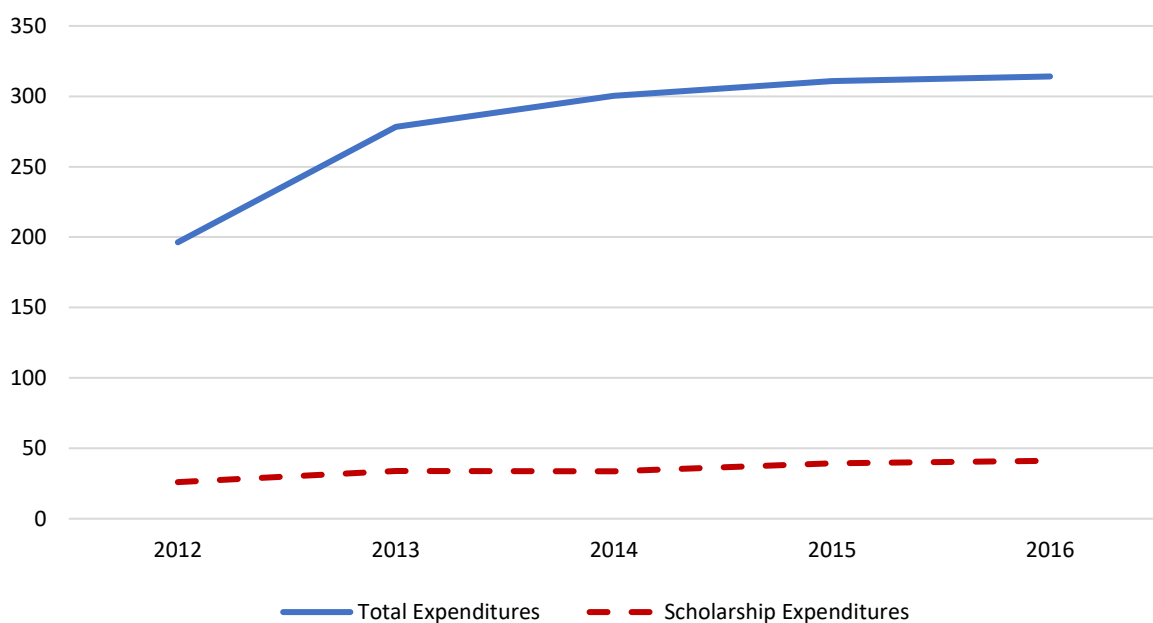
<sup>74</sup> "About Us," Hanban.

<sup>75</sup> "Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes," Hanban, accessed February 27, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/node\\_7880.htm](http://english.hanban.org/node_7880.htm).

<sup>76</sup> "Constitution and By-Laws," Hanban, Chapter 1, Article 1.

Besides Confucius Institutes, the Hanban oversees other projects that are closely related to these language institutes. First of all, there are the Confucius Classrooms which operate independently or cooperate with a certain Confucius Institute. These classrooms provide language courses and cultural courses in primary and secondary schools and are funded by the Hanban.<sup>77</sup> Second, Confucius Institutes offer different types of scholarships. These scholarships are issued by the Hanban and are aimed at different types of students and researchers. These scholarships consist of research funds, summer camps and language contests.<sup>78</sup> The most comprehensive scholarships are issued through the ‘China Studies Program’, which consists of six subprogrammes, that each has a specific focus on academic research in Social Sciences and Humanities. These subprogrammes are eligible for professors, researchers, PhD-candidates and degree students. Depending on the type of scholarships, the Hanban covers accommodation, travel fees and provides annual stipends up to 80,000 RMB.<sup>79</sup> The funding by the Hanban for Confucius Institutes and related programmes exceed the expenditures of any other language institution in the world.<sup>80</sup> Figure 1 provides an overview of the increase in these expenditures in the last four years.

**Figure 1. Expenditures of the Hanban on Confucius Institutes, 2012-2016 (x1000 US dollars).**



Source: Based on information from the Annual Reports Hanban, 2012-2016, see Bibliography. In 2017 and 2018, the Hanban did not reveal an overview of expenditures. The scholarship expenditures also includes expenditures for the China Studies Program.

<sup>77</sup> “Acquire Resources,” Hanban, accessed February 27, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/node\\_7878.htm#no3](http://english.hanban.org/node_7878.htm#no3); An example of a Confucius Classroom: “Confucius Classrooms,” Manchester Confucius Institute, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.confuciusinstitute.manchester.ac.uk/connect/schools/confucius-classrooms/>.

<sup>78</sup> An overview of these scholarships is available on: “Funding Projects,” Groningen Confucius Institute, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.confuciusgroningen.nl/nl/f/chinese-bridge>.

<sup>79</sup> “China Studies Program,” Hanban, accessed March 7, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/node\\_43075.htm](http://english.hanban.org/node_43075.htm).

<sup>80</sup> Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy*, 106.

### 3.2. Indicators of Public Diplomacy in Northwest-Europe

Although it is hard to ‘measure’ public diplomacy, there are some indicators which can be used to indicate public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes. As described in Chapter 2, these indicators are the scope, cultural events and academic involvement of Confucius Institutes. This chapter provides insight into the development of these indicators between 2013 and 2019.

#### **Scope**

The scope is an important indicator of public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes and connects to the concepts of citizen diplomacy and people-to-people contact. It can indicate the number of individuals involved in the Confucius Institute project and the extent to which people come into contact with one another. Table 2 and Table 3 provide a schematic overview of the number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in 2019, globally and in the five case countries respectively.

**Table 2. The number of Confucius Institutes per continent, 2019.**

Country	Confucius Institutes	Confucius Classrooms*
Asia	135	38
America	138	14
Europe	187	33
Africa	61	13
Oceania	20	6

*Source:* “About Confucius Institute/Classroom,” Hanban, accessed February 27, 2020.

\*These are independently operating Confucius Classrooms (excluding Confucius Classrooms connected to a Confucius Institute).

**Table 3. The number of Confucius Institutes per case country, 2019.**

Country	Confucius Institutes	Confucius Classrooms*
Belgium	6	0
The Netherlands**	2	11
Germany	19	5
France***	16	0
United Kingdom	30	132

*Source:* Combined statistics of the Hanban website and individual websites of Confucius Institutes. See Appendix A and “About Confucius Institute/Classroom,” Hanban, accessed February 27, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/node\\_10971.htm](http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm).

\*Independent Confucius Classrooms as well as Confucius Classrooms connected to a Confucius Institute.

\*\*Excluding the Leiden Confucius Institute which closed on February 19, 2019.

\*\*\*Excluding the Confucius Institute at University of French Polynesia and the Confucius Institute of Reunion Island.



Besides analysing the number of Confucius Institutes, it is also important to gain insight into how Confucius Institutes reach elementary and secondary school students. One way is through setting up Confucius Classrooms. These classrooms provide language courses and cultural courses in primary and secondary schools and can operate independently or in cooperation with a certain Confucius Institute. A second way is by providing courses for elementary or secondary school students at the institute itself.<sup>81</sup> A third way to reach these students is by actively cooperating with schools in primary and secondary education, without establishing an official Confucius Classroom.<sup>82</sup> This cooperation involves, among others, the provision of teaching materials like posters, stories and textbooks.<sup>83</sup>

The number of Confucius Institutes between 2005 and 2020 in the five case countries is shown in Figure 2. The UK hosts most Confucius Institutes of the five case countries. Between 2010 and 2013, the UK experienced a rapid increase in the number of Confucius Institutes (Figure 2). This is mainly due to the political support for Confucius Institutes in the British Ministry of Education between the period of 2010 and 2015. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Besides having the most institutes, the UK also has an extraordinary number of Confucius Classrooms compared to the other case countries (Table 3). Ninety-three of these Classrooms are affiliated with only two Confucius Institutes: the Confucius Institute at the University College London Institute of Education and the Confucius Institute for Scotland Schools.<sup>84</sup> The former is involved in teacher training programmes which aim to support future teachers who are interested in promoting the Chinese language in their schools.<sup>85</sup> The latter is located in Glasgow and is part of Scotland's National Centre for Languages, a government-supported centre that aims to improve language skills among Scottish people.<sup>86</sup>

Another remarkable aspect of the UK case is the fact that some Confucius Institute's classes are specifically targeted at British people of Chinese descent and overseas Chinese in the UK.<sup>87</sup> Diasporas and overseas Chinese are important actors in China's public diplomacy strategy. They can

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<sup>81</sup> "Angebote für Kinder," Konfuzius Institut an der Universität Hamburg, accessed February 28, 2020, <https://www.ki-hh.de/kinder/>; "Cours de Chinois pour enfants," Institut Confucius d'Alsace, accessed February 28, 2020, <https://www.confuciusalsace.org/cours-de-chinois-pour-enfants.html>.

<sup>82</sup> "Chinesisch an Schulen," Konfuzius Institut Frankfurt am Main, accessed February 28, 2020, <https://www.konfuzius-institut-frankfurt.de/chinesisch-an-schulen/>.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example: "Resources for Schools," London Confucius Institute for Traditional Chinese Medicine, accessed February 28, 2020, <https://lsbu-confucius.london/school-engagement/resources-for-schools/>.

<sup>84</sup> "IOE Confucius Classrooms," UCL IOE Confucius Institute, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://ci.ioe.ac.uk/about-us/confucius-classroom/>; "Confucius Classroom Hubs," Confucius Institute for Scotland Schools, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/confuciusinstituteforscotlandsschools/confuciusclassroomhubs/>.

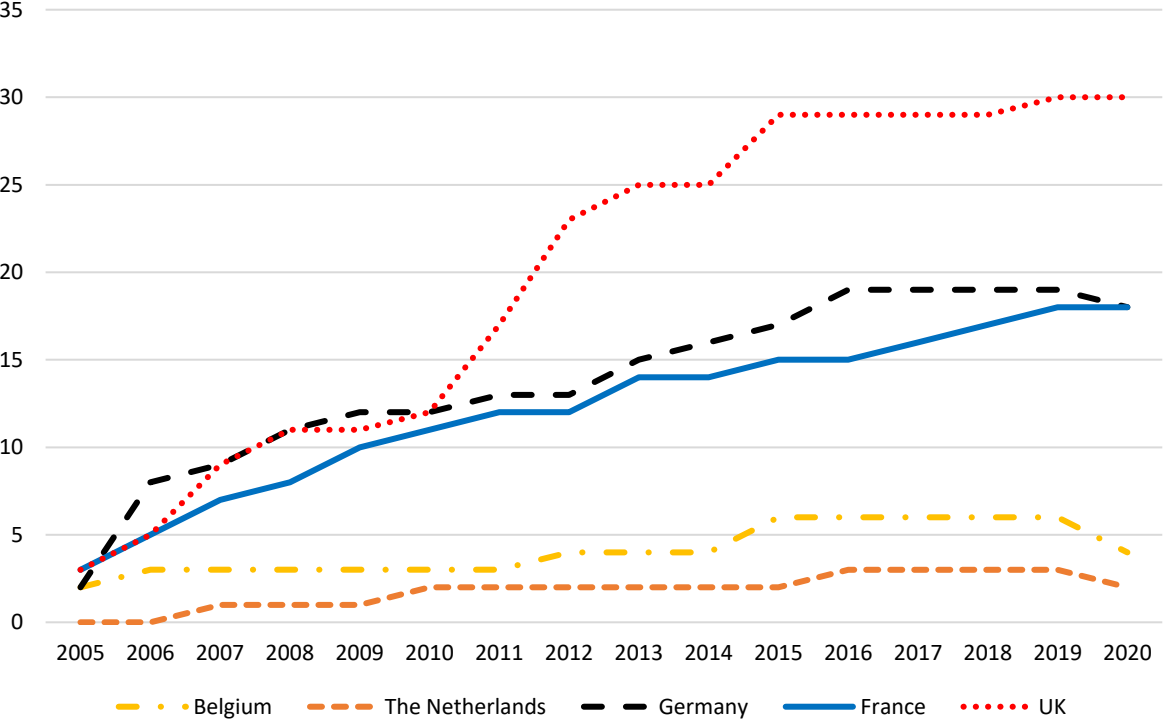
<sup>85</sup> "Upskilling in Mandarin Course," UCL IOE Confucius Institute, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://ci.ioe.ac.uk/free-upskilling-in-mandarin-course-for-qts-secondary-and-primary-teachers-in-england/>; "About the IOE," UCL IOE Confucius Institute, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/about-ioe>.

<sup>86</sup> "About Us," Scotland's National Centre for Languages, accessed February 28, 2020, <https://scilt.org.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=1301>.

<sup>87</sup> "Chinese Sunday school in Swansea welcomes pupils," *BBC News*, November 20, 2016.

promote China’s public diplomacy and influence the perception of a foreign audience towards China.<sup>88</sup> However, these actors can also be a target of China’s public diplomacy since the Chinese government wishes to keep these people on their side.<sup>89</sup> The latter seems to apply to the UK case.

**Figure 2. The number of Confucius Institutes in each case country between 2005 and 2020.**



Source: Data gathered by author. See Appendices A and B.

Although less impressive than the increase of Confucius Institutes in the UK, the number of institutes in France and Germany increased steadily between the period of 2005-2016 (Figure 2). Germany is somewhat comparable to the UK when it comes to the reason why the number of Confucius Institutes increased in this period. As will be further discussed in Chapter 5, political support for Chinese language learning can stimulate new setups of Confucius Institutes. Although French Confucius Institutes did not receive significant political support, they are cooperating extensively with local municipalities and city governments, more than any other case country.<sup>90</sup> The

<sup>88</sup> Peter van Ham, *Social Power in International Politics* (London: Routledge, 2010), 134; Cull, *Public Diplomacy*, 52.  
<sup>89</sup> d’Hooghe, *China’s Public Diplomacy*, 160-162.  
<sup>90</sup> This is true for the Confucius Institutes in the following French cities: Rennes, La Rochelle, Strasbourg, Clermont-Ferrand, Angers, Rouen, Nice and Pau. See appendix B for the full list of Confucius Institutes in France and the cooperation partner.

attitude towards Confucius Institutes in France on a city and regional level is rather positive; they are seen as an enhancement for local entertainment activities and the local economy.<sup>91</sup>

The number of Confucius Institutes in Belgium and The Netherlands have remained stable over time (Figure 2). Nevertheless, there is a remarkable difference between the two countries. The Netherlands has only two Confucius Institutes as of 2019 (Table 3). However, it has eleven Confucius Classrooms. All of these Classrooms have been set up by the Groningen Confucius Institute. This institute cooperates with secondary education institutes across the country and has also opened three teaching points and a teaching centre in Amsterdam.<sup>92</sup> This indicates that despite a small number of institutes, Confucius Institutes can still reach numerous people through the setup of teaching points or Confucius Classrooms. This is less the case in Belgium, where only the Confucius Institute in Brussels reaches primary and elementary students, albeit without the cooperation of primary or elementary schools.<sup>93</sup>

From 2016 onwards, the number of institutes stagnated in almost every case country (Figure 2). In Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands this number will likely decrease in 2020 since multiple institutes have announced to close, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The stagnation from 2016 onwards in Belgium and The Netherlands can also be related to the smaller population and landmass in these countries: the demand for Mandarin language teaching could become saturated over time, especially when multiple Confucius Classrooms and learning centres are available across the country. Without sufficient demand, it is pointless to establish a new Confucius Institute.<sup>94</sup> Another reason could be that the Hanban might be less interested in expanding in smaller countries that are politically and economically less significant.

### **Cultural Events**

Besides offering language courses, Confucius Institutes also organise cultural events and workshops about different aspects of China's culture. These activities are a prime example of China's cultural diplomacy strategy since they can serve as a bridge between foreign publics and China's culture. Through these activities, Confucius Institutes can create acknowledgement and understanding of China's traditional culture, which is one of China's public diplomacy goals.<sup>95</sup> The most well-known

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<sup>91</sup> See, for example: "L'UNS se dote d'un Institut Confucius pour la promotion de la langue et la culture chinoises," Université Nice Sophia Antipolis, accessed March 19, 2020, <http://unice.fr/fil/service-communication/actualites/luns-se-dote-dun-institut-confucius>; "L'Institut Confucius accueillera le public demain," *La Montagne*, February 24, 2015.

<sup>92</sup> "Confucius Classrooms and Teaching Points," Groningen Confucius Institute, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.confuciusgroningen.nl/en/education/secondary-education/confucius-classrooms>; "About GCI Amsterdam," Groningen Confucius Institute, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.confuciusgroningen.nl/en/gci-amsterdam/gci-amsterdam>.

<sup>93</sup> "About us," Belgium-China Association.

<sup>94</sup> Lien and Oh, "Determinants of the Confucius Institute Establishment."

<sup>95</sup> d'Hooghe, "Into Higher Gear," 43, 44.

cultural activities of Confucius Institutes include tea ceremonies, calligraphy workshops, Tai Chi classes, and Chinese New Year festivities, which are held at nearly every institute. Besides these 'standard' workshops and events, some Confucius Institutes offer cultural events that promote topics like Chinese business culture, film productions or artworks. Some institutes also have a library or serve as a publisher of Mandarin textbooks.<sup>96</sup>

One important aspect to highlight is the difference between organised events and advertised events of Confucius Institutes. In general, the 'standard' events of Confucius Institutes operate under a similar framework that is in line with China's public diplomacy strategy. This strategy is aimed at promoting the different aspects of China's (peaceful) traditional culture. Examples of such events are music performances, calligraphy workshops, tea ceremonies, movie nights, exhibitions or festivities. The organisation and funding of these events are controlled by the Confucius Institutes' directory and the Hanban.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, it is rather straightforward that these events aim to serve China's public diplomacy goals.

However, besides these organised events, Confucius Institutes also advertise events on their website. These advertised events are not restricted to the guidelines of the Hanban or the Confucius Institutes' directory. Therefore, these events are not always in line with China's domestic policies or public diplomacy goals.<sup>98</sup> An example of this can be found at the Confucius Institute for Scotland Schools in Glasgow. In 2018, the institute advertised a lecture about 'smog art' in China. Although this sounds like a regular cultural event, the synopsis of the event on the Confucius Institute's website states that:

This presentation is based on documentary data and approximately 20 interviews conducted with artists and curators in Beijing, chosen due to its poor air quality and high concentration of artists. It explores why artists produce smog art, how they navigate China's authoritarian political environment, and the meanings they attach to their work—including the extent to which they view smog art as a form of resistance.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> See, for example, "Bibliothek," Confucius Institute at the Free University of Berlin, accessed April 29, 2020, <http://www.konfuziusinstitut-berlin.de/bibliothek/>; "About the Confucius Institute," Oxford Brookes University, accessed on April 29, 2020, <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/school-of-arts/the-confucius-institute/>.

<sup>97</sup> Qian-yuan Zhang 张乾元, "Kongzi Xueyuan yu Zhongguo yishu zai Meiguo de chuanbo" 孔子学院与中国艺术在美国的传播 [Spreading of Confucius Institute and Chinese Art in the US], *yishu baijia* 艺术百家 4 (2017): 30, 31.

<sup>98</sup> Zhou and Luk, "Establishing Confucius Institutes," 638; for concrete examples, see "Will the (disciplinary) Twain Ever Meet? Thinking Sex East and West," Confucius Institute Heidelberg, accessed March 22, 2020, <https://konfuzius-institut-heidelberg.de/will-the-disciplinary-twain-ever-meet-thinking-sex-east-and-west/>; This contradicts China's strict domestic policies on pornography and explicit content, see Bin Liang and Hong Lu, "Fighting the obscene, pornographic, and unhealthy – an analysis of the nature, extent, and regulation of China's online pornography within a global context." *Crime Law & Social Change* 58 (2012): 111-130; Another event was organised to promote 'Taiwanese' cinema, see "Taiwan's Lost Commercial Cinema: Weekly on Thurs 6pm," Confucius Institute for Scotland, accessed March 21, 2020, <http://www.confuciusinstitute.ac.uk/announcements/taiwans-lost-commercial-cinemathurs-screenings-octnov-18-10/>.

<sup>99</sup> "50 Shades of Grey: 'Smog Art' in China Tues 30 Jan 6pm," Confucius Institute for Scotland, accessed March 21, 2020, <http://www.confuciusinstitute.ac.uk/announcements/50-shades-of-grey-smog-art-in-china/>.

Stating that Beijing has ‘poor air quality’, China has an ‘authoritarian political environment’ and that the art is ‘a form of resistance’ does not seem in line with China’s public diplomacy goals. Although it was only an advertised event, people that are interested in events of this Confucius Institute are likely to check out advertised events and might attend this lecture which contradicts events that are organised by Confucius Institutes.

Another remarkable aspect of the cultural activities of Confucius Institutes concerns business-orientated Confucius Institutes. These institutes offer exclusive courses in Chinese business etiquette and doing business in China. In this type of Confucius Institute, the people-to-people contact and cross-cultural exchanges are mainly focused on strengthening economic ties with people attending the courses of these institutes. In some cases, these institutes are set up in cooperation with private companies. An example of this is the Confucius Institute for Business in London, the first business institute in the world, which was set up in cooperation with BP, HSBC, Deloitte, Swire and Standard Chartered.<sup>100</sup>

Besides these specially established ‘business institutes’, regular Confucius Institutes also offer language courses and workshops about business-related vocabulary and etiquette in China.<sup>101</sup> These activities can not only create cultural understanding but can also improve the image of China as a reliable trading partner. Table 4 provides an overview of the number of Confucius Institutes in each case country that have a specific focus on business or provide language courses related to business culture in China. Figure 3 shows the development over time of the business-orientated Confucius Institutes in each case country. Most notable is the increase in the number of business Confucius Institutes in the UK between 2010 and 2015. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, this can be ascribed to the broad government support for Mandarin language learning and Confucius Institutes in the UK, which was aimed at increasing economic cooperation with China.

### ***Academic Involvement***

In recent years, multiple Confucius Institutes have been actively cooperating with host institutions – universities or colleges – in the field of academics. Since most Confucius Institutes are formed by cooperation between Chinese and foreign universities, Confucius Institutes can enhance the exchange of knowledge and cross-cultural communication between these two universities.<sup>102</sup> This is a prime example of citizen diplomacy: lectures, seminars and discussions about different aspects of

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<sup>100</sup> “About us,” Confucius Institute for Business London, accessed March 2, 2020, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/cibl/about-us>; Yu, “Cong Kongzi Xueyuan,” 954.

<sup>101</sup> For example “Zaken doen in China,” Confucius Institute Maastricht, accessed March 21, 2020, <https://www.confuciusmaastricht.nl/voor-organisaties/>.

<sup>102</sup> Rui Yang, “Soft power and higher education: an examination of China’s Confucius Institutes,” *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 8, No. 2 (2010): 243-244; Yan, “Kongzi Xueyuan yu woguo gaoxiao guojihua Jincheng,” 36-41.

**Table 4. The number of business-focused Confucius Institutes in each case country, 2019.**

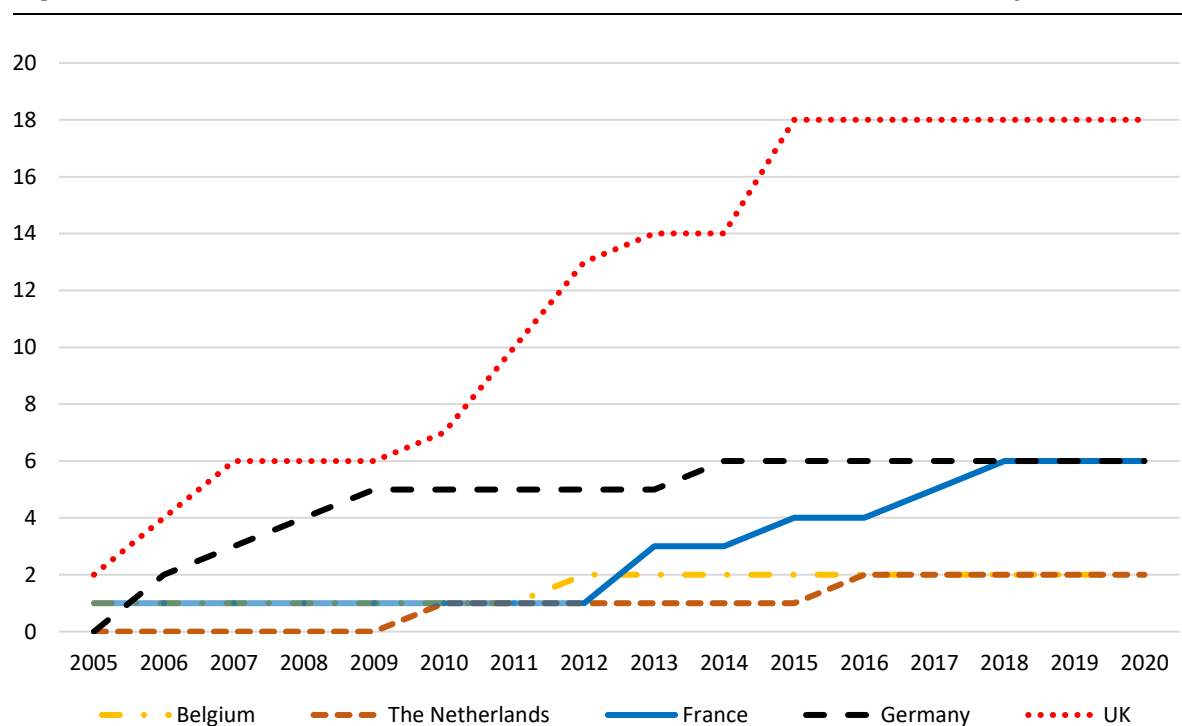
Country	Confucius Institutes	Business-focused institutes**
Belgium	6	2
The Netherlands*	2	2
Germany	19	6
France	16	6
United Kingdom	30	18

Source: derived from websites of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries, see Appendix A.

\*Excluding the Leiden Confucius Institute which closed on February 19, 2019.

\*\*This includes institutes that offer courses on business etiquette or business vocabulary and institutes that carry the name of 'business Confucius Institute, exclusively focusing on business.

**Figure 3. The number of business-focused Confucius Institutes in each case country, 2005-2019.**



Source: derived from websites of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries, see Appendix A.

China's society and politics offered by Confucius Institutes can connect different (Chinese) scholars and students who can exchange ideas on policies regarding Chinese foreign affairs.<sup>103</sup> In some instances, these lectures also discuss Chinese arts and culture. Therefore, academic involvement of Confucius Institutes can also support China's cultural diplomacy. The involvement of Confucius

<sup>103</sup> Quansheng Zhao, "Epistemic Community, Intellectuals, and Chinese Foreign Policy," *Policy and Society* 25, No. 1 (2006): 52.

Institutes in academics creates opportunities for these institutes to provide a certain image of China which is in line with the aims of China's public diplomacy. Namely, the aim to be regarded as a responsible economic partner and a reliable member of the international community.<sup>104</sup>

There are different types of academic cooperation between Confucius Institutes and host institutions. Where some institutes are actively involved in university courses, others provide only lectures about a variety of topics related to China's economy, culture and history. To provide a clear overview of the differences in academic involvement of Confucius Institutes, two categories can be distinguished: strong involvement and mild involvement in academic research. Table 5 provides a schematic overview of these two types of involvement in the five case countries. Confucius Institutes that have a strong involvement in academic research are cooperating very closely with existing departments of China-related studies. These Confucius Institutes are involved in designing and facilitating credited courses at the host institution. These kinds of institutes are present in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands.

The UK has four institutes that are closely involved in academic research at their host-institutions. Three institutes clearly describe how they are involved in academic cooperation. The Confucius Institute at London South Bank University is focused on traditional Chinese medicine. It offers a BSc Honours course in acupuncture has an own clinic, specialised in the use of Chinese medicine.<sup>105</sup> The Scottish Confucius Institute for Business offers different degree programmes including an undergraduate degree programme in International Business Management and Chinese Language.<sup>106</sup> The other institute, the Confucius Institute for Dance and Performance at the Goldsmiths University of London offers four credited courses that are related to Chinese arts and culture. The Confucius Institute is also involved in two undergraduate honours degree programmes.<sup>107</sup> However, the specific activities of the Confucius Institute at the Queen Mary University in London are unclear. The institute only states that it engages in academic collaboration and joint research, without further explaining what this entails.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> d'Hooghe, "Into Higher Gear," 43, 44.

<sup>105</sup> Zhang and Gu, "Kongzi Xueyuan fazhan moshi tan xi," 53.

<sup>106</sup> "The Vision," Scottish Confucius Institute for Business and Communication, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.confuciusinstitute.hw.ac.uk/the-institute/the-vision>.

<sup>107</sup> "Study with us," Goldsmiths University of London, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.gold.ac.uk/confucius-institute/study-with-us/#d.en.482648>.

<sup>108</sup> "Courses," London Confucius Institute for Traditional Chinese Medicine, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://lsbu-confucius.london/courses/>; "About Us," Confucius Institute at Queen Mary University of London, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/sllf/language-centre/confucius-institute/about-us/>.

**Table 5. Confucius Institutes involved in academics per type of involvement in each case country, 2019.**

Country	Number of CI's involved in Academics	Strong Involvement (host-institution)	Mild Involvement (host-institution)
Belgium	2	-	Vrije Universiteit Brussel Université Libre de Bruxelles
The Netherlands	1	Groningen University / Hanze University of Applied Sciences	-
Germany	10	Free University of Berlin Göttingen University	Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt University of Paderborn University of Trier University of Duisburg-Essen Bremen University of Applied Sciences Leipzig University Leibniz University of Hannover Heidelberg University
France	2	-	Paris Diderot University University of Lorraine
United Kingdom	11	Goldsmiths University Queen Mary University London South Bank University Harriot Watt University	University of Edinburgh Lancaster University University of Sheffield University of Wales Trinity Saint David University of Glasgow Bangor University Coventry University

*Source:* derived from websites of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries, see Appendix A.

In Germany, the Confucius Institute at the Free University of Berlin and the Academic Confucius Institute of Göttingen University are both closely involved in academics. The former is closely cooperating with the existing department of Sinology and provides lectures, workshops and publishes research about China's history and society.<sup>109</sup> The latter is a Confucius Institute which is exclusively focused on academic research and cooperates closely with existing departments at Göttingen University.<sup>110</sup> In contrast to other institutes, the Göttingen Confucius Institute is not

<sup>109</sup> "Das Konfuzius-Institut an der Freien Universität Berlin stellt sich vor," Confucius Institute at the Free University of Berlin, accessed March 2, 2020, <http://www.konfuziusinstitut-berlin.de/ueber-uns/>.

<sup>110</sup> "About us," Academic Confucius Institute at University of Göttingen, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.aki-goettingen.de/en/about-us/>.



interested in promoting Chinese culture through cultural events. Instead, the institute solely focuses upon providing lectures and seminars about a variety of topics related to China, organised in cooperation with other departments of the university.<sup>111</sup>

In the Netherlands, the Groningen Confucius Institute is the only institute that is involved in academic research at its host-institution. It is involved in an honours programme, organised in collaboration with the business school of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences.<sup>112</sup> The Confucius Institute also offers credited Mandarin language courses at the Hanze University and Groningen University.<sup>113</sup> At this university, the institute also contributed to the establishment of a Chair in Chinese Culture and Language.<sup>114</sup> The Hanban is responsible for fifty per cent of the funding of this chair.<sup>115</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 5, this has caused concerns among Dutch politicians.

Confucius Institutes that are mildly involved in academic research offer (independent) seminars and workshops about different topics related to China's economy, society and culture. The link with existing departments is weaker compared to strongly involved institutes since mildly involved institutes are not involved in facilitating credit courses at the host institution. Instead, these institutes organise seminars about different topics concerning China's society or foreign activities, which are sometimes lectured by China scholars working at the host-institution.<sup>116</sup>

Germany and the UK have eight and seven Confucius Institutes respectively that are mildly involved in academics and which provide lectures about different topics related to China. Both countries have also institutes that cooperate with an affiliated research centre. In Germany, the Audi Ingolstadt Confucius Institute cooperates with the AKII Microlab, a research initiative which was set up together with the Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt and the Huawei research centre in Munich.<sup>117</sup> This AKII Microlab is aimed to enhance the economic ties between Ingolstadt and China by researching virtual reality and artificial intelligence technologies.<sup>118</sup> In the UK, the China-UK Business

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<sup>111</sup> "Past Activities," Academic Confucius Institute at University of Göttingen, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.aki-goettingen.de/en/activities/past-activities/>.

<sup>112</sup> "Tasting the China-Europe Business Talent Honours Program and Celebrating the Chinese Lunar New Year," Groningen Confucius Institute, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.confuciusgroningen.nl/en/news/tasting-the-china-europe-business-talent-honours-program-and-celebrating-the-chinese-lunar-new-year>.

<sup>113</sup> "University Projects," Groningen Confucius Institute, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.confuciusgroningen.nl/en/education/university-projects>; "Chinese," Hanze University of Applied Sciences, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.hanze.nl/eng/services/international-services/hanze-language-centre/programmes/Language-electives/chinees>.

<sup>114</sup> "First Chair in Chinese at University of Groningen for Oliver Moore," University of Groningen, September 1, 2016, <https://www.rug.nl/about-ug/latest-news/news/archief2016/nieuwsberichten/eerste-leerstoel-chinees-voor-oliver-moore-bij-rijksuniversiteit-groningen>.

<sup>115</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, *Aanhangsel van de Handelingen 2160*, April 4, 2019, The Hague.

<sup>116</sup> See, for example: "Vermittler zwischen China und Deutschland geehrt," Konfuzius-Institut Metropole Ruhr, accessed March 2, 2020, [https://www.uni-due.de/konfuzius-institut/prof\\_heberer\\_auszeichnung\\_2018.php](https://www.uni-due.de/konfuzius-institut/prof_heberer_auszeichnung_2018.php).

<sup>117</sup> "AKII Microlab is now open," Audi Konfuzius-Institut Ingolstadt, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://audi-konfuzius-institut-ingolstadt.de/en/23293/akii-microlab-is-now-open.html>.

<sup>118</sup> "AKII Microlab is now open.," Johann Osel, "Unsere Zukunft liegt ganz stark im Osten.," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 16, 2018.

Research Association has been set up by the Confucius Institute at the University of Sheffield. This association is mainly focused on business research and connecting business researchers of the UK and China.<sup>119</sup>

France only has two Confucius Institutes that are mildly involved in academic research. The Confucius Institute at the Paris Diderot University offers lectures about different topics related to China's society, with a strong focus on Chinese arts and culture.<sup>120</sup> This is similar to the lectures provided by the Confucius Institute at the University of Lorraine. This Confucius Institute organises events about a variety of topics concerning China's history, Chinese contemporary society, Chinese philosophy and traditional Chinese medicine.<sup>121</sup> This shows that even when Confucius Institutes in France are academically involved, the main focus is still on promoting China's culture.

It is difficult to analyse the development of academic involvement of Confucius Institutes over time. As shown in Figure 4, most institutes involved in academic activities have been set up prior to 2014. Although this indicates that these type of institutes have been around for a relatively long time, it is not clear when exactly these institutes became involved in academic activities at the host institutions. However, there are indications that Hanban's policies concerning academic involvement have sharpened in recent years. Staff members of different host institutions in the case countries have expressed concerns about the increasing pressure from the Hanban to further integrate the Confucius Institute in academic activities at the host institution.<sup>122</sup> This increasing pressure has also led to some closures of Confucius Institutes, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Another indicator of the increased interest of the Hanban in closer academic involvement is mirrored in the annual Confucius Institute Conferences. Here, the Hanban discusses the latest developments of the Confucius Institute project and issues the Confucius Institute of the Year Award. In recent years, these conferences have increasingly focused on academic cooperation. The annual conferences' themes and discussions before 2018, mainly focused on practical issues surrounding Confucius Institutes like teaching materials or teacher certificates.<sup>123</sup> However, in 2017, China's Vice

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<sup>119</sup> "China-UK Business Research Association," University of Sheffield, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/confucius/association>.

<sup>120</sup> "Conférences et Rencontres," Institut Confucius Université Paris Diderot, accessed March 2, 2020, <http://confucius.univ-paris7.fr/activites-culturelles/conferences-et-rencontres/>.

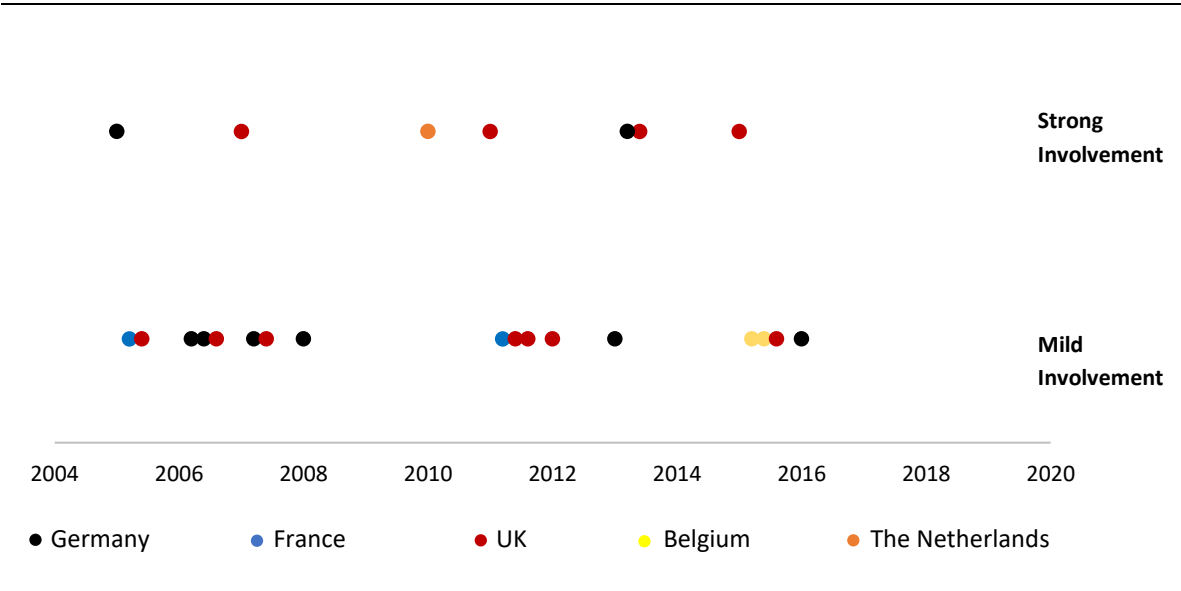
<sup>121</sup> "Conférences et Séminaires," Université de Lorraine, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.univ-lorraine.fr/content/conf%C3%A9rences-et-s%C3%A9minaires>.

<sup>122</sup> See for example Garrie van Pinxteren, "Confucius Instituten voelen geen druk van Chinese zijde" *NRC*, August 31, 2018; Jonathan Holslag, "Jonathan Holslag over het China-dossier: 'Slechts tipje van de ijsberg,'" *De Morgen*, October 20, 2019; Gregory Lee, "Closure of the Lyon Confucius Institute," September 25, 2013, website Gregory Lee, <https://gregorybarrylee.weebly.com/lyon-confucius-institute-closure.html>.

<sup>123</sup> Gil, *Soft Power and the Worldwide Promotion*, 95; The 7th Conference is an exception, see "The 7th Confucius Institute Conference to be Held in Beijing," Hanban, accessed on April 29, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/article/2012-12/15/content\\_476993.htm](http://english.hanban.org/article/2012-12/15/content_476993.htm); For information on the other conferences see "Fifth Confucius Institute Conference Opens in Beijing With Sustainability as Theme," The Open University of China, accessed on April 29, 2020; "ECNU Delegation Attend 8th Global Confucius Institute Conference," Hanban, accessed on April 29, 2020, [http://english.ecnu.edu.cn/\\_t89/5b/9a/c1703a23450/page.htm](http://english.ecnu.edu.cn/_t89/5b/9a/c1703a23450/page.htm); "The 9th Confucius Institute Conference to be held in

Minister of Education attended the conference and stated in his concluding remarks that China aims to increase its people-to-people relations with other countries by further supporting scholarly cooperation and student exchanges.<sup>124</sup> A year later, on the 13th Global Confucius Institute Conference, a special forum was set up which was named “Improving Academic Level of Confucius Institute.”<sup>125</sup> This shift from improving the teaching quality of Confucius Institutes to increasing academic exchanges and cooperation indicates the Hanban’s interest in increasing academic involvement. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, this has encountered criticism as well.

**Figure 4. Timeline of the setups of Confucius Institutes involved in academics in each case country between 2005 and 2020, per type of involvement.**



Source: Information about the time of establishment can be found on the website of the Hanban, see “About Confucius Institute/Classroom,” Hanban, accessed February 27, 2020. And on the websites of the individual Confucius Institutes, see Appendix A.

This chapter has provided insight into the functioning of Confucius Institutes as an instrument of China’s public diplomacy. Despite the differences in the number and activities of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries, there are also some commonalities concerning the public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes. In all cases, the scope of Confucius Institutes is rather extensive. Some countries have large numbers of institutes and classrooms, like the UK. Other (smaller)

Xiamen, Fujian Province, China,” Hanban, accessed on April 29, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/article/2014-12/04/content\\_564877.htm](http://english.hanban.org/article/2014-12/04/content_564877.htm); “The 10th Confucius Institute Conference to be held in Shanghai,” *China Daily*, December 4, 2015.

<sup>124</sup> “12th Confucius Institute Conference Concludes Successfully,” Hanban, accessed April 29, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/article/2017-12/18/content\\_711654.htm](http://english.hanban.org/article/2017-12/18/content_711654.htm).

<sup>125</sup> “13th Confucius Institute Conference Concludes in Chengdu,” Hanban, accessed April 29, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/article/2018-12/07/content\\_755082.htm](http://english.hanban.org/article/2018-12/07/content_755082.htm).

countries, like The Netherlands, have only a few institutes. However, these institutes can be very active and reach people across the country by cooperating with secondary education and setting up teaching points. Cultural events organised by Confucius Institutes also contain commonalities since they operate in a similar framework. This framework is in line with China's cultural diplomacy strategy of promoting China's traditional culture. In terms of advertising events, institutes can operate more independently. Concerning academic involvement of Confucius Institutes, France is an outlier due to its very few academically-involved institutes. In other case countries, institutes reach numerous students through credit courses, lectures and research centres. In recent years, the Hanban has encouraged and stimulated this academic involvement. All of these commonalities show that there is a base for triggering spontaneous people-to-people interactions, exchanges of ideas and cultural understanding through the activities of Confucius Institutes. The next chapters discuss the recipience of these activities.

## Chapter 4. Higher Education and Confucius Institutes

This chapter analyses the perception of higher education institutes towards Confucius Institutes. It does so by analysing different closures of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries. Although most of the Confucius Institutes are still operating, these closures can indicate possible obstacles for the public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes. To provide context to these closures, this chapter will first discuss general criticism on Confucius Institutes worldwide. Second, it will analyse why several higher education institutes in the five case countries decided to end the cooperation with the Hanban.

### 4.1. Criticism on Confucius Institutes

To understand why some institutes have closed, it is important to have a profound understanding of what Confucius Institutes – in general – are criticised for. When analysing this criticism on a global scale, it is possible to distinguish three main aspects of Confucius Institutes that have attracted criticism: the organisation model, the educational quality and alleged practices of propaganda and censorship.

The organisation model of Confucius Institutes is mainly criticised for the involvement of the Chinese government. The overseeing organisation of the Confucius Institutes, the Hanban, is part of China's Ministry of Education and thereby indirectly part of the Chinese government.<sup>126</sup> Even though other language institutes like the British Council, Alliance Française and the Goethe Institute have also connotations with their respective government, these institutes are not (in)directly overseen by a government organisation or located at university campuses.<sup>127</sup>

Another part of the organisation model that has received criticism concerns the regulations and laws of Confucius Institutes. First, all of the activities of Confucius Institutes should be reported to the Hanban according to the 'Guide for Directors of Confucius Institutes'.<sup>128</sup> This guide requires every Confucius Institute to prepare an annual report in which, among others, records of students and all media coverage of the Confucius Institute must be included.<sup>129</sup> Second, the cooperation between the Hanban and the host institution is based upon the Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes.<sup>130</sup> According to some critics, some laws that are formulated in this constitution are worrisome. An example is a law formulated in Chapter 1, Article 6 which states that Confucius

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<sup>126</sup> "About Us," Hanban.

<sup>127</sup> Weston and Jensen, *China In and Beyond*, 283; Gil, *Soft Power and the Worldwide Promotion*, 81.

<sup>128</sup> "Guide for Confucius Institute Deans," Hanban, accessed March 7, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/node\\_7877.htm](http://english.hanban.org/node_7877.htm).

<sup>129</sup> Weston and Jensen, *China In and Beyond*, 282.

<sup>130</sup> "Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes," Hanban.

Institutes “shall not contravene (..) the laws and regulations of China.”<sup>131</sup> This law raises questions about the extent to which it is allowed to discuss sensitive topics, to hire personnel who are affiliated with a certain group or to use teaching materials that are not distributed by the Hanban.<sup>132</sup> The head of the Hanban, Xu Lin, has emphasised that Confucius Institute personnel does not evade sensitive topics. However, she also emphasised that domestic issues do not ask for attention from other countries, which is somewhat contradicting.<sup>133</sup>

Besides the organisation model, the educational quality of Confucius Institutes has also received criticism. One aspect of this educational quality encompasses multiple problems that are related to Chinese teachers of Confucius Institutes. In terms of finance, overseas teachers receive financial support from the Chinese host institution and the Hanban, making them restricted and dependent on the Hanban in terms of training and payment.<sup>134</sup> More importantly, these teachers are paid less compared to their colleagues in China. This leaves inexperienced teachers to be the only willing candidates to work at Confucius Institutes.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, the supply of Chinese teachers has difficulties catching up with the rapid development of Confucius Institutes. All of these aspects have caused a general shortage of Chinese teachers.<sup>136</sup> Besides, there are multiple problems concerning the competence of these teachers. Before they are sent abroad, teachers have often received insufficient amounts of training. Moreover, some teachers are not able to speak the language of the host country. This has led to concerns – also among Chinese scholars – about the lack of teachers’ cultural understanding of the host country and their abilities to meet students’ need.<sup>137</sup>

Besides the criticism on the teachers of Confucius Institutes, some critics have also expressed concerns about the exclusive provision of simplified Mandarin Chinese language courses at Confucius Institutes.<sup>138</sup> Teaching only simplified Mandarin Chinese is troublesome since it ‘restricts’ foreign students to read and understand literature which is approved or altered by the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>139</sup> Ding and Saunders state that by only teaching simplified Mandarin Chinese to foreigners, the Chinese government aims to further “marginalise Taiwan in the battle for global influence.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> “Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes,” Hanban, Chapter 1, Article 6.

<sup>132</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, “Confucius Institutes and the university: distinguishing the political mission from the cultural,” *Issues and Studies* 50, No. 4 (2014): 58; “Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes,” Hanban, Chapter 3, Article 16, section e; Paradise, “China and International Harmony,” 660, 661.

<sup>133</sup> John Sudworth, “Confucius Institute: The hard side of China’s soft power,” *BBC*, December 22, 2014.

<sup>134</sup> Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy*, 106; Starr, “Chinese Language Education in Europe,” 78; Gil, *Soft Power and the Worldwide Promotion*, 91.

<sup>135</sup> Starr, “Chinese Language Education in Europe,” 78.

<sup>136</sup> Wang, “Kongzi Xueyuan kechixu xing fazhan de zhanlüe yu duice,” 33.

<sup>137</sup> Jing Wang 王景, “Ouzhou Kongzi Xueyuan yu Han yuyan wenhua de guoji tuiguang” 欧洲孔子学院与汉语言文化的国际推广 [Confucius Institutes in Europe and International Popularization of Chinese Language and Culture], *Xueshu tansuo* 学术探索 4 (2016): 125; Rachele Peterson, *Outsourcing To China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education* (New York, NY: National Association of Scholars, April 2017), 67, 68; Ji and Liu, “Ouzhou Kongzi Xueyuan Hanyu,” 177.

<sup>138</sup> Paradise, “China and International Harmony,” 659, 660.

<sup>139</sup> Sahlins, *Academic Malware* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2015), 27, 28.

<sup>140</sup> Ding and Saunders, “Talking Up China,” 21.

The third aspect of Confucius Institutes that has received criticism concerns the alleged propaganda and censorship practices of the institutes. Multiple critics have described the Confucius Institutes project as a mere tool of propaganda. They argue that Confucius Institutes operate under control of the Chinese government and are used by the government to propagate China's image abroad.<sup>141</sup> Among others, these propaganda allegations have been based on the linkage between China's propaganda department and Confucius Institutes. As argued by Shambaugh, the funding of Confucius Institutes does not originate from the Ministry of Education but the Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Department. The latter would be responsible for laundering money through the Ministry of Education to Confucius Institutes.<sup>142</sup>

Criticism regarding censorship practices at Confucius Institutes can be divided into two categories. One is the large amount of funding issued by the Hanban – far exceeding the expenditures of other countries' language institutes – that has certain implications for academic freedom.<sup>143</sup> An example is a 4 million dollar grant issued by the Hanban to support a teaching programme at Stanford University.<sup>144</sup> In exchange, professors that were hired with the financial support of this grant were urged not to talk about the issue of Tibet.<sup>145</sup> The other category of censorship relates to the staff members of Confucius Institutes. A report of the National Association of Scholars (NAS)<sup>146</sup> showed that Confucius Institutes staff does not appreciate to discuss politically sensitive topics because they simply do not possess knowledge about these topics or are not willing to discuss these topics for political reasons.<sup>147</sup> As argued by Human Rights Watch, the intrinsic involvement of the Chinese government encourages the censoring of sensitive topics in course materials and requires personnel to be (politically) loyal to the Hanban.<sup>148</sup>

Critics have seen all of their concerns about censorship being confirmed in 2014 at the 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of the European Association of Chinese Studies (EACS) in Braga, Portugal.<sup>149</sup> This

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<sup>141</sup> Anne-Marie Brady, "Authoritarianism Goes Global (II): China's Foreign Propaganda Machine," *Journal of Democracy* 26, No. 4 (October 2015): 56; Fernando Romeo, "The Hard Side of CCP's Soft Power: Confucius Institute," *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal* 5, No. 2 (2019): 794; American Association of University Professors, *On Partnerships with Foreign Governments: The Case of Confucius Institutes*, June 2014; See also Brady's comments in: Elizabeth Redden, "Confucius Says ...," *Inside Higher Ed*, January 4, 2012.

<sup>142</sup> David Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy," *The China Journal* 57 (January 2007): 49, 50.

<sup>143</sup> Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy*, 106.

<sup>144</sup> Weston and Jensen, *China In and Beyond*, 287.

<sup>145</sup> Scott Jaschnik, "Strings Attached to Funds From China," *Inside Higher Ed*, November 2, 2011.

<sup>146</sup> The National Association of Scholars is a conservative non-profit organisation interested in education. See: "About us," National Association of Scholars, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://www.nas.org/about-us>.

<sup>147</sup> Peterson, *Outsourcing To China*, 95-100; Hubbert, *China in the World*, 114-116.

<sup>148</sup> "China: Government Threats to Academic Freedom Abroad," *Human Rights Watch*, March 21, 2019; Human Rights Watch, *Resisting Chinese Government Efforts to Undermine Academic Freedom Abroad: A Code of Conduct for Colleges, Universities, and Academic Institutions Worldwide*, March 21, 2019.

<sup>149</sup> The EACS is an association which aims to "promote and foster, by every possible means, all scholarly activities related to Chinese studies in Europe," and represents China scholars in Europe. See "About," European Association for Chinese Studies, accessed March 7, 2020, <http://chinesestudies.eu/>.

conference was sponsored by the International Conference Grant of the Hanban that supports institutes, universities and scholars to attend or organise academic conferences related to China studies or sinology.<sup>150</sup> However, the EACS conference also received sponsorship from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, a Taiwanese foundation. This led to resistance among the Hanban delegation led by Xu Lin. Eventually, the Hanban delegation removed advertisement for this Taiwanese foundation from the EACS programme. According to Xu, this was contravening China's laws and regulations.<sup>151</sup> This incident is known as the 'Braga incident' and received a lot of attention in media and the academic community, with some media labelling the incident a 'China's soft power fail.'<sup>152</sup>

#### 4.2. Closures of Confucius Institutes

In four case countries, universities have terminated their cooperation with the Hanban, resulting in the closure of several Confucius Institutes (Figure 5). In Germany, two Confucius Institutes have closed their doors. In 2015, the Confucius Institute in Stuttgart announced to close before it was even opened. The institute was set up by the Hanban and the Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication in cooperation with Hohenheim University and Hochschule der Medien, both located in Stuttgart.<sup>153</sup> However, in June 2015 – in the final phase of the setup – the cooperation ended. In an interview with a local newspaper, the director of the Hochschule der Medien stated that there were too many risks attached to the funding of the Hanban. This funding would not be sustainable in the long-term which led to the withdrawal of the Hochschule from the cooperation agreement.<sup>154</sup> In addition, a German Free Tibet organisation had issued letters which were sent to senior university officials, aiming to convince the university not to open a Confucius Institute.<sup>155</sup> Whether this action significantly influenced the decision to abandon the opening of the Confucius Institute is unknown.

The second Confucius Institute in Germany which is bound to close is the Confucius Institute of Düsseldorf. In 2016, the directory of the Heinrich-Heine University of Düsseldorf decided not to extend the agreement with the Hanban, which meant that the Confucius Institute would close in 2020.<sup>156</sup> The University of Düsseldorf explained that interference of the Confucius Institute in academic activities could not be completely ruled out. This decision was supported by the Minister of Education of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen. She was mainly sceptic about the link

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<sup>150</sup> "China Studies Program," Hanban.

<sup>151</sup> Elizabeth Redden, "Censorship at China Studies Meeting," *Inside Higher Ed*, August 6, 2014.

<sup>152</sup> Adam Minter, "China's Soft-Power Fail," *Bloomberg*, October 8, 2014.

<sup>153</sup> "Ein Konfuzius-Institut Für Stuttgart," Hochschule der Medien, accessed April 23, 2020, [https://www.hdm-stuttgart.de/view\\_news?ident=news20141014120424](https://www.hdm-stuttgart.de/view_news?ident=news20141014120424).

<sup>154</sup> Inge Jacobs, "Absage für chinesisches Kulturinstitut," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, June 3, 2015.

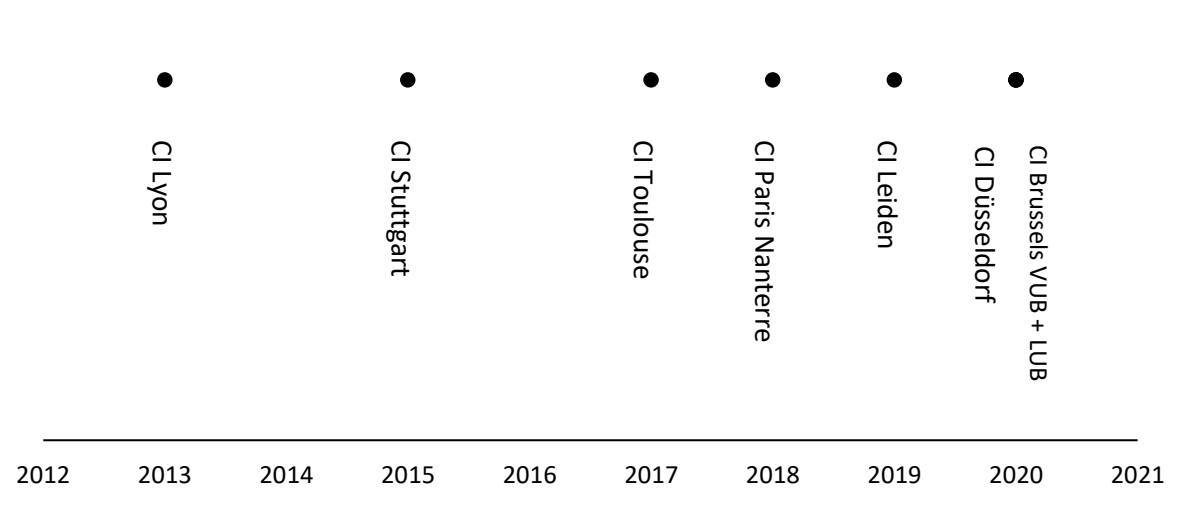
<sup>155</sup> Elizabeth Redden, "German University Abandons Plans for Confucius Institute," *Inside Higher Ed*, June 8, 2015.

<sup>156</sup> Kirsten Bialdiga, "Diskussion über Chinesisch-Unterricht in NRW," *General Anzeiger*, January 15, 2020.



between Confucius Institutes and the Chinese government. The other cooperation party, the city of Düsseldorf, is still discussing possible options to keep the Confucius Institute open.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, the Confucius Institute could continue operating in the future, albeit without the cooperation of the University of Düsseldorf.

**Figure 5. Closures of Confucius Institutes in each case country, 2012-2020.**



Source: Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, *China’s Confucius Institutes: An Inquiry by the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission*, February, 2019; Redden, “German University Abandons Plans for Confucius Institute”; “Leiden University to end agreement with Confucius Institute,” Leiden University, February 19, 2019; The VUB will not continue its cooperation with the Confucius Institute,” Vrije Universiteit Brussels, December 10, 2019; “Na VUB zet ook ULB samenwerking met Confucius Instituut stop,” *Het Nieuwsblad*, December 17, 2019.

In France, the Lyon Confucius Institute closed in 2013, which was the first closure in the five case countries. Information about the former activities of this institute is scarce since websites of closed Confucius Institutes are shut down and the Hanban does not provide detailed accounts about closures. However, right after the closure, the former chair of the board of the Lyon Confucius Institute, Gregory Lee, released a statement in which he describes why the institute closed.<sup>158</sup> Lee states that Lyon University 2 and 3 – the two partner universities – wished to remain independent and did not want to cooperate more extensively with the Confucius Institute in academic research. Since the setup of the institute, the Hanban tolerated this wish. However, since 2012, a new director of the Confucius Institute continued pushing for further integration of the institute in the university and also requested to have influence in the academic programme. Despite pressure from the Hanban and Xu herself, the Lyon University decided not to grant this request which ultimately resulted in the closure of the institute.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>158</sup> Lee, “Closure of the Lyon Confucius Institute.”  
<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

In 2017 and 2018, two other Confucius Institutes in France closed their doors: the Confucius Institute in Toulouse and the Confucius Institute of the West Paris Nanterre La Defense University.<sup>160</sup> Similar to the closure in Lyon, there is little information available about why these two institutes closed. The Confucius Institute in Toulouse was opened in 2009 and was mainly focused on promoting China's culture through expositions, calligraphy, cooking and exhibiting Chinese movies.<sup>161</sup> As far as is known, there was no close academic collaboration between the Confucius Institute and its partner university in Toulouse. The specific activities of the Confucius Institute of the West Paris Nanterre La Defense University are unknown. Moreover, official statements about why the two Confucius Institutes have closed are lacking. Both universities did not respond to questions about why the cooperation with the Confucius Institute was terminated.<sup>162</sup>

In Belgium, two Confucius Institutes in Brussels announced to close in 2019. In contrast to the closures in France, there is a clear reason why the host institutions have terminated the cooperation with the Hanban. On October 29, 2019, the Belgian newspaper *De Morgen* revealed that the director of the Confucius Institute at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Xinning Song, was put on a blacklist of Belgian intelligence services and was prohibited from entering the country for eight years.<sup>163</sup> This story was picked up quickly by other Belgian and international media.<sup>164</sup> Song is accused of misusing his network and prestigious position as director of the Confucius Institute by setting up an intelligence network and recruiting Chinese students and people of Belgian businesses to work for Chinese intelligence services.<sup>165</sup>

After the incident, the VUB did not extend its cooperation agreement. The university stated that cooperating with the Confucius Institute "is not in line with its principles of free research."<sup>166</sup> The espionage scandal seems to have been the last straw for the university to reach this decision. The VUB emphasises that it is willing to cooperate with China on an academic level, albeit on conditions that are in line with the norms and values of the university.<sup>167</sup> A week after the statement of the VUB, the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) released a statement in which it announced to

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<sup>160</sup> Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, *China's Confucius Institutes: An Inquiry by the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission*, February, 2019, 16.

<sup>161</sup> "Toulouse. Inauguration. Confucius à la fac Capitole," *La Depeche*, December 2, 2009.

<sup>162</sup> Both universities did not comment on questions posed by the author which were sent by mail.

<sup>163</sup> Bruno Struys, "Waarom de Chinese directeur van het Confuciusinstituut aan de VUB ons land niet meer binnen mag," *De Morgen*, October 29, 2019.

<sup>164</sup> Werner Rommers, "Is directeur van VUB-instituut een Chinese spion? Prof mag acht jaar ons land niet meer in," *Het Nieuwsblad*, October 30, 2019; Giselle Nath, "Directeur Confucius-instituut VUB was spion," *De Standaard*, October 30, 2019; Stuart Lau, "Belgian University Closes Its Chinese State-funded Confucius Institute After Spying Claims," *South China Morning Post*, December 11, 2019.

<sup>165</sup> Struys, "Waarom de Chinese directeur."

<sup>166</sup> "The VUB will not continue its cooperation with the Confucius Institute," Vrije Universiteit Brussels, December 10, 2019, <https://press.vub.ac.be/the-vub-will-not-continue-its-cooperation-with-the-confucius-institute#> (accessed March 17, 2020).

<sup>167</sup> "The VUB will not continue"; Caroline Pauwels, "We steunen buitenlandse studenten, niet hun leiders," *De Standaard*, December 12, 2019.

close as well. The university states that the quality of the cooperation with the Confucius Institute did not live up to the standards of the university and the cooperation lacked transparency.<sup>168</sup> Currently, Brussels has only one Confucius Institute left.

In the Netherlands, the Leiden Confucius Institute closed its doors in 2019. The institute mainly focused on research and promoting Chinese art.<sup>169</sup> The institute cooperated closely with the existing language department at Leiden University. However, as described in a Dutch newspaper article dating from 2018, the Hanban and the Chinese embassy in the Netherlands put pressure on the director of the Leiden Confucius Institute to implement certain policies which would further integrate the Confucius Institute in the university.<sup>170</sup> In the same year, the Leiden Asia Centre (LAC),<sup>171</sup> published a report about the collaboration between China and Europe in higher education and academic research.<sup>172</sup> The LAC report emphasises that cooperation with Confucius Institutes is not without risks. Although cooperation with China is not undesirable, universities should be wary about possible political interference of Confucius Institutes.<sup>173</sup> These two aspects – the pressure from the Hanban and Chinese embassy and the somewhat critical report of the LAC – might have added to the university's decision to terminate its cooperation with the Confucius Institute. However, the university does not provide a clear explanation of why the cooperation was terminated. It only states that the "Confucius Institute's activities no longer align with the University's China strategy and the direction it has taken in recent years."<sup>174</sup>

When comparing the statements put out by the universities in the case countries that terminated cooperation with the Hanban, it becomes clear that these statements are often mild and do not provide detailed information about the reasons why a university terminates the cooperation. Leiden University emphasises in its statement that it wishes to continue academic cooperation with their partner universities in China, in this case Shandong University.<sup>175</sup> This also accounts for the VUB. After the espionage scandal, the rector of the VUB stated her willingness to continue academic

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<sup>168</sup> "Na VUB zet ook ULB samenwerking met Confucius Instituut stop," *Het Nieuwsblad*, December 17, 2019.

<sup>169</sup> This is described in: "Dutch Sinologist and Translator Mark Leenhouts Have Dialogue with Renowned Chinese Contemporary Writer Yu Hua," Hanban, accessed March 16, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/article/2017-09/29/content\\_703111.htm](http://english.hanban.org/article/2017-09/29/content_703111.htm); "When Chinese Shadow Puppetry Meets European Films, Traditional Chinese Art is as Dazzling," Hanban, accessed March 16, 2020, [http://english.hanban.org/article/2018-04/09/content\\_726882.htm](http://english.hanban.org/article/2018-04/09/content_726882.htm).

<sup>170</sup> Pinxteren, "Confucius Instituten voelen geen druk."

<sup>171</sup> As stated on its website: "The goal of the Foundation LeidenAsiaCentre is to generate academic-level knowledge on modern East Asia that can be applied within Dutch society." The centre is sponsored by, among others, the Dutch government and different Dutch universities. See: "Diverse Social Partners," Leiden Asia Centre, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://leidenasiacentre.nl/en/maatschappelijke-partners/>.

<sup>172</sup> Ingrid d'Hooghe et al., *Assessing Europe-China Collaboration in Higher Education and Research*, Leiden Asia Centre, 2018.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>174</sup> "Leiden University to end agreement with Confucius Institute," Leiden University, accessed March 16, 2020, <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2019/02/confucius-instituut-en>.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

cooperation with Chinese universities, albeit on the terms of the universities.<sup>176</sup> This willingness to continue academic cooperation with Chinese universities can explain the lack of transparency surrounding the reasons why certain universities have decided to terminate their cooperation with Confucius Institutes. By revealing conflicts or accusing the Hanban of unethical practices, the broader academic cooperation with China would be damaged. This is something that universities would like to prevent from happening.

This chapter has provided an overview of criticism on Confucius Institutes and has analysed the reception of Confucius Institutes on an academic level in the five case countries. These two aspects are connected since all aspects of Confucius Institutes that have received criticism also play a role in the closures of institutes in the five case countries. However, all of this criticism and the reasons why host institutions have ended their cooperation with the Hanban can often be ascribed to concerns about the intrinsic role of the Chinese government in the Hanban. Examples of this are concerns about the sustainability of funds, academic interference or censorship and the pressure of the Hanban (and the Chinese government) to further integrate the Confucius Institute in the university. Although host institutions still attempt to maintain collaboration with Chinese partner universities, problematic cooperation with Confucius Institutes can still damage the basis for spontaneous interactions and exchanges of ideas between academics and foreign publics. Although the Hanban recently has its sights set on strengthening academic involvement of Confucius Institutes, the relatively large amount of closures in 2019 and 2020 indicate that this can turn out negatively.

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<sup>176</sup> "The VUB will not continue"; Pauwels, "We steunen buitenlandse studenten."

## Chapter 5. State-actors and Confucius Institutes.

Besides the recipient of academic institutions described in the previous chapter, another important part of the recipient side involves the perception of state-actors. These actors include governments, individual politicians and think-tanks affiliated with governments or political parties. The perception of foreign governments regarding China's public diplomacy is important since they have the power to impose legal constraints onto Confucius Institutes, as shown by the US government.<sup>177</sup> This chapter discusses the perceptions of state-actors in the five case countries in Northwest-Europe concerning the public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes. As becomes clear, the three aspects of criticism described in the previous chapter are often reflected in the concerns of these state-actors.

### 5.1. The United Kingdom

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the number of Confucius Institutes between 2010 and 2015 increased rapidly in the UK. The institutes that focus on business and are involved in academics were for a large part set up in this period (Figure 3 and Figure 4). This increase is a reflection of the broad political support for Confucius Institutes among the British coalition government – led by David Cameron – in that same period. Cameron frequently expressed the importance of doing business with China and the additional need for increasing Mandarin language learning in the UK.<sup>178</sup> This perception was shared by both Schools Minister Nick Gibb and Minister of Education Elizabeth Truss, who stressed the importance of setting up Mandarin language courses in primary and secondary education.<sup>179</sup> In a press release of 2014, Truss states that British students should start learning Mandarin from the youngest age possible since these students could become a “huge asset” in UK-Chinese business.<sup>180</sup> To achieve the desired increase in Mandarin language students, the government set up training programmes for secondary school teachers to combat the shortage of Mandarin teachers.<sup>181</sup>

However, the increase in the number of Confucius Institutes in the UK has stagnated after 2016 (Figure 2). In recent years, state-actors in the UK have had more negative perceptions of Confucius Institutes. In February 2019, the Conservative Party published a report which critically

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<sup>177</sup> See Elizabeth Redden, “Defense Bill Restricts Funds for Colleges With Confucius Institutes,” *Inside Higher Ed*, August 2, 2018; U.S. Congress, John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, HR 5515, 115th Cong., introduced in House April 13, 2018, Sec. 1091; this also accounts for individual politicians, see Marco Rubio, “Rubio Warns of Beijing's Growing Influence, Urges Florida Schools to Terminate Confucius Institute Agreements,” Marco Rubio press release, February 5, 2018.

<sup>178</sup> “Prime Minister: ‘We want a strong relationship with China’,” UK Department of Education, November 10, 2010; Kiran Stacey and Helen Warrel, “David Cameron urges UK schools to teach Mandarin,” *Financial Times*, December 5, 2013.

<sup>179</sup> “Schools Minister takes a lesson in Mandarin,” UK Department of Education, March 15, 2011; “Elizabeth Truss on increasing the number of pupils studying Mandarin,” UK Department of Education, June 6, 2014.

<sup>180</sup> “Elizabeth Truss on increasing the number of pupils studying Mandarin.”

<sup>181</sup> “Young people to be offered lessons in Mandarin,” UK Department of Education, November 10, 2010.

evaluated the extent to which Confucius Institutes are threatening academic freedom in the UK. The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission (CPHRC)<sup>182</sup> stated that Confucius Institutes are embedded in universities and are part of the soft power and propaganda of the Chinese government. Moreover, it argues that within these institutes there is limited freedom of expression or academic freedom.<sup>183</sup> The CPHRC frequently refers to the earlier-mentioned report of NAS in which Confucius Institutes are criticised for similar reasons. This is not surprising since both the NAS and the CPHRC are positioned on the conservative side of the political spectrum.

Simultaneously with the CPHRC, the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), published a critical report about Confucius Institutes in which it warns for accepting funds from the Hanban.<sup>184</sup> Some universities in the UK are highly dependent on the financial support of Confucius Institutes which could lead to self-censorship among researchers and the suppression of academic freedom.<sup>185</sup> RUSI holds a more nuanced perception towards Confucius Institutes than the CPHRC. RUSI is wary of academic interference by the Chinese government but also argues that students who are studying Chinese do not have to become pro-China per se. Moreover, it argues that Confucius Institutes are only a part of China's interference in academia which is a wider problem that should be tackled more aggressively by the British government and universities itself.<sup>186</sup>

In November 2019, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (HCFAC)<sup>187</sup> published a report in which it evaluated the influence of autocratic governments in academia. The report mentions Confucius Institutes twice, referring to 'Braga incident' and the shadiness around Confucius Institutes' sources of funding. More broadly, the report states that the Chinese embassy puts pressure on academics to avoid politically sensitive topics and is actively monitoring Chinese nationals who are politically active.<sup>188</sup> It also refers to the earlier mentioned Human Rights Watch report and expresses concern about multiple aspects that are indirectly related to Confucius Institutes. The HCFAC concludes that it is of uttermost importance for British government bodies to act on the threatened academic freedom in the UK caused by autocratic regimes (i.e. China).<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> As described in the report: "The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission is a body established to highlight international human rights concerns, and thereby inform, advise and enhance the party's foreign policy." See: Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, *China's Confucius Institutes*, 3.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>184</sup> As stated in its report: "The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) is the world's oldest and the UK's leading defence and security think tank. Its mission is to inform, influence and enhance public debate on a safer and more stable world." See: Charles Parton, *China-UK Relations: Where to Draw the Border Between Influence and Interference?* (London: Royal United Services Institute, February 2019).

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 33.

<sup>187</sup> As stated in the report: "The Foreign Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its associated public bodies." See: House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *A cautious embrace: defending democracy in an age of autocracies* (House of Commons, November 4, 2019).

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 9

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-10.

## 5.2. Germany

In Germany, Confucius Institutes have also received political support prior to 2019, albeit less extensive compared to the UK. In 2016, Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed content when opening a new institute in Stralsund, saying that the broader China-Germany relation is one that enhances peace, stability and development worldwide.<sup>190</sup> However, similar to the UK case, the perception towards Confucius Institutes on a political level in Germany changed in 2019. In November that year, Jens Brandenburg, a politician of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), asked questions about the institutes in the German parliament.<sup>191</sup> The questions were aimed at all kinds of aspects of Confucius Institutes: funding, censorship, academic interference and selection of the Confucius Institute personnel.<sup>192</sup> Brandenburg also expressed his concern to German news media by stating that a propaganda system of an authoritarian regime is hiding behind the seemingly innocent cultural activities of Confucius Institutes.<sup>193</sup>

Despite the critical questions posed by Brandenburg, the German government responded rather reserved. It stated that it was aware of the influence of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in activities and funds of Confucius Institutes and takes Chinese influence very seriously.<sup>194</sup> Additionally, the government stated that it was already cooperating with the German academic community to control Chinese influences. However, it did not take immediate legal actions. This indicates that the German government has not drastically changed its perception of Confucius Institutes ever since 2016.

## 5.3. France

Despite having a similar number of Confucius Institutes compared to Germany, there has rarely been any political attention for Confucius Institutes in France. Despite the closure of the Lyon Confucius Institute, the French parliament or government has not (publicly) discussed Confucius Institutes. Only in 2019, the Institut de Relations Internationales et Strategiques (IRIS), a French think-tank concerned with geopolitics, published a report about China's soft power initiatives.<sup>195</sup> In this report, Confucius Institutes are also briefly touched upon. However, in contrast to think-tank reports in

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<sup>190</sup> "Brücke nach China schlagen," *Die Welt*, August 30, 2016.

<sup>191</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, *Kleine Anfrage: Aktivitäten chinesischer Konfuzius-Institute and deutschen Hochschulen*, Drucksache 19/15009, November 11, 2019; Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf Aktivitäten chinesischer Konfuzius-Institute and deutschen Hochschulen*, Drucksache 19/15560, November 27, 2019.

<sup>192</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, *Kleine Anfrage*.

<sup>193</sup> Heike Klovert, "Kultur aus Peking – unter Aufsicht der Partei," *Der Spiegel*, November 30, 2019; "FDP warnt vor chinesischem Einfluss an deutschen Unis," *Zeit Online*, November 29, 2019.

<sup>194</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung*, 4.

<sup>195</sup> The Institut de Relations Internationales et Strategiques (IRIS) is a private and independent French think tank who works on geopolitics and strategies from an international perspective. See: "L'IRIS," Institut de Relations Internationales et Strategiques, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://www.iris-france.org/liris/>.

other case countries, the perception of IRIS regarding Confucius Institutes is rather positive. As stated in the IRIS report, the Chinese diaspora in France is the biggest in Europe, there are a lot of Chinese university students in the country and France is one of the most popular tourist destinations for Chinese tourists. Therefore, China's wish to create cultural understanding (through Confucius Institutes) is not more than an 'offset.'<sup>196</sup>

A possible explanation for the little political attention for Confucius Institutes could have to do with the fact that Confucius Institutes in France are less focused on academic cooperation compared to Germany and the UK (Table 5). In the two latter countries, academic involvement of Confucius Institutes is one of the most important reasons for concern among state-actors. Moreover, Confucius Institutes in France are cooperating extensively with local municipalities and city governments, more than in any other case country.<sup>197</sup> The attitude towards Confucius Institutes on a local political level in France seems to be rather positive. Confucius Institutes, besides providing language courses, are seen as an enhancement for local entertainment activities and the local economy.<sup>198</sup>

#### **5.4. Belgium**

Although Belgium has experienced two closures of Confucius Institutes due to the espionage scandal which attracted a lot of attention, political attention for Confucius Institutes in Belgium is rather absent. Only in 2016, Karel de Gucht, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vice Premier and European Commissioner for Trade, criticised Confucius Institutes. He states that Chinese funding is always politically motivated. Hence, financial support of the Chinese government for academic research can badly affect the independence of universities in Belgium.<sup>199</sup> Despite this comment of de Gucht, other (local) Belgian politicians did not publicly speak out explicitly against (or in favour of) Confucius Institutes. Since the closures of the Confucius Institutes in Brussels are relatively recent, the Belgian parliament may discuss the developments surrounding Confucius Institutes in Belgium in the near future.

#### **5.5. The Netherlands**

In The Netherlands, there has been extensive political attention for Confucius Institutes. In January 2019, criticism regarding Confucius Institutes reached the Dutch public when the Dutch television

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<sup>196</sup> Emmanuel Lincot, *China, a New Cultural Strength? Soft Power and Sharp Power*, trans. Marion Majourau (Paris: Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques, April 2019), 7, 8.

<sup>197</sup> See appendix B for the full list of Confucius Institutes in France and the cooperation partner.

<sup>198</sup> See, for example: "L'UNS se dote d'un Institut Confucius,"; "L'Institut Confucius accueillera le public demain."

<sup>199</sup> Bart Sturtewagen, "Tijd voor naïviteit is voorbij," *De Standaard*, December 27, 2019.



programme Medialogica critically discussed the role of Confucius Institutes in Dutch education.<sup>200</sup> The programme expressed concerns about freedom of speech and the financial dependency of Dutch high schools on the Hanban to provide language resources for Confucius Classrooms.<sup>201</sup> After the programme was broadcasted, Harry van der Molen, a politician of the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), posed parliamentary questions about the Groningen Confucius Institutes to the Dutch Minister of Education, Ingrid van Engelshoven.<sup>202</sup> The answer of van Engelshoven was somewhat reserved. She expressed that the actions of the Confucius Institute comply with Dutch law and emphasises the responsibility of Dutch educational institutes to safeguard the academic freedom of researchers and students.<sup>203</sup> This answer is somewhat comparable to that of the German government.<sup>204</sup>

In May 2019, the Dutch government released its new 'China-strategy' which contained recommendations and considerations concerning the changing economic, political and cultural relationship with China. In the report, the government also expresses concerns about the increased involvement of the Chinese government in academic cooperation. The report also touches upon Confucius Institutes. It acknowledges that these institutes can create financial and educational benefits, but can also cause a 'one-sided knowledge transfer' and 'unwanted interference.'<sup>205</sup>

After the espionage scandal in Belgium, van der Molen once again posed questions to van Engelshoven, who replied that there is a reason for cautiousness when cooperating with Chinese institutions on an academic level. This cautiousness mainly applies to Chinese law, which obligates Chinese nationals to cooperate with Chinese intelligence services when asked. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that Confucius Institutes are passing through sensitive information to the Chinese government.<sup>206</sup>

This chapter has analysed the reception of Confucius Institutes on a state-level in the five case countries. In the UK, Germany and The Netherlands, the year 2019 seems to be a turning point in the perception of state-actors. The strong support for Confucius Institutes in the UK has made place for critical investigations of the CPHRC and the HCFAC. In Germany and The Netherlands, opposition parties have raised questions about Confucius Institutes. Despite the somewhat reserved response of the German and Dutch government, awareness of the possible risks that are attached to cooperating

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<sup>200</sup> "Xi, Xi wat jij niet ziet," *Medialogica*, Aflevering 6. Directed by Jacco Versluis, Human, January 6, 2019.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ingrid K. van Engelshoven, *Antwoord op vragen van het lid Van der Molen over de uitzending 'Xi, Xi wat jij niet ziet' en het bericht 'Confucius Instituten voelen geen druk van Chinese zijde'*, document no. 2019D22744, The Hague, June 11, 2019.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung*, 4.

<sup>205</sup> Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Nederland-China: een nieuwe balans*, May 15, 2019.

<sup>206</sup> Ingrid van Engelshoven, *Antwoord op vragen van de leden Van der Molen en Van Helvert over het bericht 'België houdt grens dicht voor directeur Confucius-instituut'*, document no. 2019Z20962, The Hague, December 17, 2019.

with Confucius Institutes is increasing. This is in contrast with Belgian and French state-level perceptions of Confucius Institutes. In France, these perceptions seem to be rather positive. This is reflected in the large number of regional and city governments that successfully cooperate with Confucius Institutes. Belgium is a more remarkable case, where – despite the espionage scandal – state-actors have not yet raised questions or expressed concerns about the out against Confucius Institutes. Although state-actors in the UK, Germany and The Netherlands did not yet take concrete action against Confucius Institutes, the overall perception towards these institutes has become more negative in 2019. In the future, this can have implications for the public diplomacy activities of Confucius Institutes.

## Chapter 6. News Media and Confucius Institutes

This chapter analyses the third actor on the recipient side of China's public diplomacy in the five case countries: news media. First, this chapter will discuss the importance of news media in relationship with public diplomacy and highlight the differences between local and national media coverage of Confucius Institutes. Second, the content and overall development of news media coverages in each case country between 2013 and 2019 will be discussed in detail.

### 6.1. News Media and Public Diplomacy

News media coverage can indicate the extent to which Confucius Institutes are successful in reaching foreign audiences. These media reports indicate what the public perception of Confucius Institutes is in a certain country. As shown by Lueck et al., media portrayals of Confucius Institutes can be framed in a way that it supports a national government's political agenda and portray China in a rather negative way.<sup>207</sup> Media reports especially influence people that did not attend or experience courses and activities of Confucius Institutes. By reading news about Confucius Institutes, people form an opinion about the practices of these institutes and China's public diplomacy.<sup>208</sup>

This research distinguished between local and national news media. It is important to make this categorisation since there are differences between local and national news media coverage of Confucius Institutes. One has to do with content. National newspapers have discussed Confucius institutes in the context of China's economic rise, soft power, or have discussed criticism on Confucius Institutes worldwide. Different professors in sinology have been interviewed in these reports, most notably Christopher Hughes in the UK and Jonathan Holslag in Belgium.<sup>209</sup> These two aspects – providing context and interviewing China experts – makes these news articles analytical, discussing the pros and cons of Confucius Institutes for the entire country. In contrast, local news media are interested in local activities and events of Confucius Institutes. These news articles are more factual. Instead of providing a debate or analysis of Confucius Institutes or China's economic rise, local news media are interested in stories that have a local impact. In some cases, the opening, activities, or events of Confucius Institutes are highlighted on the cultural agenda of the region.<sup>210</sup> In

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<sup>207</sup> Lueck, "China's Soft Power," 324-349.

<sup>208</sup> Zhao, "Toward International Harmony," 23; Croteau and Hoynes, *Media/Society*, 464, 465; Chong and Druckman, "Framing Theory," 103-126.

<sup>209</sup> Tania Branigan, "Chinese ambassador attacks 'cold war' fears over Confucius Institutes," *The Guardian*, June 15, 2012; Primrose Riordan, "London School of Economics academics outraged by proposed China programme," *Financial Times*, October 27, 2019; Jonathan Holslag, "China versterkt greep op de wereld via universiteiten," *De Morgen*, March 7, 2012; Holslag, "Jonathan Holslag over China-dossier."

<sup>210</sup> See for example "Outdoor-Traum: Chinesische Filmfestival in Erlangen," *Nordbayern*, November 27, 2018; "Nieuwe opleiding Howest dompelt je onder in Chinese cultuur," *De krant van West-Vlaanderen*, April 20, 2012; "LEUVEN: Jaar van het Paard in galop ingezet bij Groep T," *Leuven Actueel*, date unknown, accessed March 21, 2020.

other instances, a specific person from the region has been involved in a contest or project of a Confucius Institute which has drawn attention from local media.<sup>211</sup> However, there are some exceptions. Some local news reports have covered Confucius Institutes rather analytically.<sup>212</sup>

Another difference between national and local news media concerns the amount of criticism that is expressed towards Confucius Institutes. Since national news media are more interested in analysing the broader context of China's increasing presence in the world – instead of local events or activities – it does not come as a surprise that national news media are more sceptical about Confucius Institutes. However, even when describing similar events related to Confucius Institutes, local and national news media coverages differ.<sup>213</sup> Again, there are some exceptions. Some local news reports express similar criticism as national news reports.<sup>214</sup>

The Hanban regards media attention as an important indicator of its success. As discussed in Chapter 4, the 'Guide for Directors of Confucius Institutes' requires every Confucius Institute to prepare an annual report in which, among others, records of all media coverage of the Confucius Institute must be included.<sup>215</sup> The Hanban's awareness of the importance of media portrayals ties into the public diplomacy concept of 'listening' as proposed by Cull. This entails the collecting of data about public opinions – in this case of Confucius Institutes – which can be used to redirect the public diplomacy strategy for it to be more effective.<sup>216</sup> In the UK, the Hanban also received support from the Chinese ambassador, Liu Xiaoming. Liu spoke out in different media to counter (mainly US) criticism on Confucius Institutes and to emphasise the peaceful intentions of Confucius Institutes in the UK.<sup>217</sup> The Hanban itself has also responded to increasing criticism, mainly in the form of interviews with Xu Lin, the head of the Hanban.<sup>218</sup>

## 6.2. Media Coverages of Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe

As shown in Table 6, the number of (critical) news reports has increased rapidly in 2019 in almost every case country. Although there are similar reasons for the media attention to increase in the

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<sup>211</sup> See for example "Jennifer's panda art takes her to China," *Edinburgh Evening News*, March 5, 2012; "Sprache, Kultur und tolles Essen," *Nordbayern*, August 16, 2018; "L1NWS: Instituut om Chinese taal en cultuur te bevorderen," *L1mburg*, July 7, 2017.

<sup>212</sup> Maaïke Borst and Frank von Hebel, "Propagandamachine van China of plek voor taal en cultuur? Confucius Instituut Groningen onder de loep," *Dagblad van het Noorden*, February 26, 2019.

<sup>213</sup> An example is the difference between local and national news coverage about the opening of the Academic Confucius Institute in Göttingen. See "Konfuzius-Institut unter Verdacht," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, July 3, 2014; Christiane Böhm, "Akademisches Konfuzius-Institut an der Universität Göttingen eröffnet," *Göttinger Tageblatt*, July 2, 2014.

<sup>214</sup> David Leask, "Glasgow accused of nodding through deal to put Chinese 'propaganda' in city classrooms," *Glasgow Times*, March 10, 2015.

<sup>215</sup> Weston and Jensen, *China In and Beyond*, 282.

<sup>216</sup> Cull, *Public Diplomacy*, 18.

<sup>217</sup> Branigan, "Chinese ambassador attacks 'cold war' fears"; Xiaoming Liu, "China wants to build deeper educational links with Britain," *Financial Times*, November 25, 2019.

<sup>218</sup> See for example Sudworth, "Confucius Institute."

different case countries, there are also domestic events in each country that have caused news media to report extensively on Confucius Institutes. This section will discuss the different developments of news coverages regarding Confucius Institutes in each case country.

### ***United Kingdom***

In the UK, national news media already picked up concerns about Confucius Institutes in 2007 which indicates that criticism or concerns about Confucius Institutes are not a new phenomenon.<sup>219</sup>

However, in 2019 the amount of news coverage increased extensively (Table 6). The Financial Times picked up a story concerning the London School of Economics (LSE), which also cooperates with a Confucius Institute. The LSE was offered large sums of money by Eric Li, a well-known businessman who is known for his positive stance on China's foreign policies. Li offered to set up a China programme which would fund research and support different courses on Chinese economics, politics and society. The program would be supervised by an advisory group of "distinguished individuals from China," who were likely to have a positive attitude towards the policies of the Chinese government.<sup>220</sup> In addition to this event at the LSE, British news media also reported on the publication of the earlier-mentioned report of the HCFAC, which contained critical notions regarding the influence of Confucius Institutes in British universities.<sup>221</sup>

Besides these two domestic events, an extensive part of British news coverage in 2019 is about protests against censorship and intimidation of Hong Kongese students at Confucius Institutes in Australia, following the Hong Kong protests in the summer of 2019.<sup>222</sup> This shows that negative media attention of Confucius Institutes abroad can also affect institutes in other countries since some events are picked up by domestic media. Moreover, it supports the notion that China's policies – in this case, its reaction to the Hong Kong protests – can affect the image of Confucius Institutes in other countries.

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<sup>219</sup> Jessica Shepherd, "'Not a Propaganda Tool'," *The Guardian*, November 6, 2007

<sup>220</sup> Riordan, "London School of Economics academics outraged."

<sup>221</sup> Patrick Wintour, "'Alarming' Chinese meddling at UK universities exposed in report," *The Guardian*, November 5, 2019; Geraint Davis, "China would be a fickle and dangerous ally for post-Brexit Britain," *The Independent*, January 17, 2019; Eleanor Busby, "Chinese government confiscating papers and getting events cancelled at British universities, MPs' report warns," *The Independent*, November 5, 2019.

<sup>222</sup> "Australia to tackle foreign interference at universities," *BBC News*, August 28, 2019; Paul Karp, "Government to assess regulation of Chinese influence at universities," *The Guardian*, July 25, 2019; Frances Mao, "Hong Kong protests: 'I'm in Australia but I feel censored by Chinese students'," *BBC News*, July 31, 2019; Jamie Smyth, "Australia: the campus fight over Beijing's influence," *Financial Times*, November 12, 2019; Naaman Zhou and Ben Smee, "'We cannot be seen': the fallout from the University of Queensland's Hong Kong protests," *The Guardian*, August 3, 2019.

**Table 6. The number of national news articles about Confucius Institutes per case country, 2013-2019.**

Year	UK	Germany	France*	Belgium	The Netherlands
2013	1	-	2	1	1
2014	3	4	-	1	1
2015	4	-	1	-	-
2016	1	1	1	4	-
2017	4	2	1	1	-
2018	2	3	-	-	2
2019	14	7	3	12	3

Source: The articles in this table devote at least a paragraph to Confucius Institutes. For a full list of the national news reports that are included in this table see Appendix C.

\*Since this table only includes national news coverage, the local news articles of Ouest France have been omitted from this table. The search for articles of Ouest France was conducted in the section *actualité en continue* (ongoing news), not including the number of local news reports, which is rather extensive.

### Germany

Similar to the UK, Confucius Institutes in Germany received criticism well before 2013.<sup>223</sup> In 2011, some German academics already expressed concerns about the strong ties between Confucius Institutes and the Chinese government which could create an environment of self-censorship within German universities.<sup>224</sup> These concerns were picked up by German media. An often-cited incident concerning Confucius Institutes in Germany occurred in Hamburg. In 2015, the Confucius Institute in Hamburg organised an event about the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Although the event itself was not censored, it did make the Chinese government order back the deputy director of the Confucius Institute.<sup>225</sup> This illustrated once more the influence of the government in Confucius Institutes.

There seems to be one clear reason why the number of news articles concerning Confucius Institutes in Germany increased in 2019 (Table 6). As discussed in the previous chapter, FDP-politician Brandenburg asked parliamentary questions about Confucius Institutes in Germany, which was broadly picked up by German news media.<sup>226</sup> There is also renewed attention to the planned

<sup>223</sup> Kai Strittmatter, "Das Schweigen der China-Kenner," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 10, 2010,

<sup>224</sup> Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy*, 141-144.

<sup>225</sup> Klovert, "Kultur aus Peking."

<sup>226</sup> "FDP warnt vor Konfuzius-Instituten an deutschen Unis," *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 11, 2019; Hinnerk Feldwisch- *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 22, 2019; "Konfuzius-Institute unter Einfluss von Chinas Staatspartei," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, November 29, 2019; "FDP warnt vor chinesischem Einfluss an deutschen Unis."

closure of the Confucius Institute in Düsseldorf and concerns about limitations of academic freedom at the Academic Confucius Institute in Göttingen.<sup>227</sup>

### **France**

Despite having a similar number of Confucius Institutes as Germany, there is less media attention for Confucius Institutes in France. Only in 2015, *Le Monde* published an article in which it describes concerns among academics regarding the practices and organisation model of Confucius Institutes. The article labels the Confucius Institute project as a Chinese soft power initiative which is aimed at improving the country's image. Moreover, the article expresses concerns about possible interference and influence of China in academic freedom, labelling Confucius Institutes as 'Trojan horses' (*Confucius en cheval de Troie*).<sup>228</sup>

Compared to the case countries discussed previously, French news media did not have increased attention for Confucius Institutes in 2019 (Table 6). However, French news reports in 2019 indicate that there is awareness among French academic institutes about possible downsides of cooperating with Confucius Institutes. The newspaper *Les Echos* interviewed several directors of Confucius Institutes and China Studies scholars about Confucius Institutes.<sup>229</sup> The director of the Business Confucius Institute at ESCP Europe is, unsurprisingly, positive about Confucius Institutes. He states that these institutes improving French-Chinese (business) relations and can prepare 'future leaders' to have a better grasp of Chinese culture and business.<sup>230</sup> However, the head of China Studies at the University of Strasbourg, states that the university does not cooperate closely with Confucius Institutes since these provide a censored image of sensitive subjects related to China.<sup>231</sup> Besides the more critical notions in this interview, French media have also picked up developments in the UK, reporting about the HCFAC report on Confucius Institutes in November 2019.<sup>232</sup>

### **Belgium**

As shown in Table 6, the number of news articles about Confucius Institutes in Belgium remained rather stable, except for the years 2016 and 2019. The increased attention in these two years can be ascribed to events surrounding the Confucius Institute at the VUB. In 2016, around the time of the institute's opening, two researchers of the VUB, Astrid Pepermans and Jonathan Holslag, expressed their concerns towards Belgian media about the increasing influence of the Chinese government in

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<sup>227</sup> Hinnerk Feldwisch-Drentrup, "Wie sich die FU an chinesische Gesetze bindet," *Der Tagesspiegel*, January 29, 2020.

<sup>228</sup> Brice Pedroletti, "Confucius en cheval de Troie," *Le Monde*, February 27, 2015.

<sup>229</sup> Nathalie Silbert, "Soft power à la chinoise," *Les Echos*, September 10, 2019.

<sup>230</sup> École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris (ESCP) is a French business school that has six campuses across Europe. See: "ESCP," ESCP, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://www.escpeurope.eu/>.

<sup>231</sup> Silbert, "Soft power à la chinoise."

<sup>232</sup> "Des députés britanniques s'inquiètent de l'ingérence chinoise dans les universités," *Le Figaro*, November 6, 2019.

Belgian higher education.<sup>233</sup> These concerns also relate to the role of the Chinese government in Confucius Institutes, which can endanger the academic independence of the university.<sup>234</sup>

In 2019, the espionage scandal at the same Confucius Institute triggered a media-firestorm (Table 6).<sup>235</sup> Moreover, the aftermath of the scandal was covered extensively by national news media: the ULB also terminated its cooperation with the Hanban and Xinning Song, the accused director, started a lawsuit against the Belgian intelligence services which he won.<sup>236</sup> News reports about Confucius Institutes after the espionage scandal have been mainly negative, warning Belgian higher educational institutes not to be naïve for Chinese interference in academic research.<sup>237</sup> Similar to British news reports, concerns of academic interference have also been put in the context of China's increasing role on the world stage.<sup>238</sup>

### **The Netherlands**

Although the number of news articles concerning Confucius Institutes in The Netherlands remained rather stable over the period 2013-2019 (Table 6), the content of the coverage changed in the last two years. In 2018, the Dutch newspaper NRC picked up increasing concerns regarding Confucius Institutes in the US, where the US Congress implemented laws that were aimed at limiting funds of Confucius Institutes.<sup>239</sup> In the article, there is also attention for the Confucius Institutes in Leiden and Groningen. It states that the Chinese embassy and the Chinese government frequently pressured the Chinese director of the Leiden institute to execute certain policies. The article also discusses the setup of the Chair in Chinese Culture and Language at the University of Groningen, which is sponsored by the Hanban.<sup>240</sup>

In 2019, Dutch media coverage of Confucius Institutes became more critical. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in January that year, the Dutch television programme Medialogica critically discussed the role of Confucius Institutes in Dutch education.<sup>241</sup> More remarkable is that days after

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<sup>233</sup> Annelien de Greef, "Een rode loper voor censuur," *De Standaard*, February 6, 2016; "Chinese invloed en censuur reikt tot in Brussel," *De Morgen*, February 6, 2016; Annelien de Greef, "Chinese censuur reikt tot in Brussel," *De Standaard*, February 6, 2016; Astrid Pepermans, "De Chinese Muur van censuur," *De Standaard*, August 22, 2017.

<sup>234</sup> Greef, "Chinese censuur reikt tot in Brussel."

<sup>235</sup> "VUB zet samenwerking met omstreden Chinese instelling stop," *De Standaard*, December 10, 2019; Nath, "Directeur Confucius-instituut VUB was spion"; Struys, "Waarom de Chinese directeur"; Rommers, "Is directeur van VUB-instituut een Chinese spion?"

<sup>236</sup> "Na VUB zet ook ULB samenwerking met Confucius Instituut stop"; Bruno Struys, "De wraak van Confucius: België in de fout bij inreisverbod van directeur Confuciusinstituut," *De Morgen*, April 16, 2020.

<sup>237</sup> Astrid Pepermans, "'Allround partner'? Daarvoor mist China transparantie, openheid en wederkerigheid," *De Tijd*, November 5, 2019; Sturtewagen, "Tijd voor naïviteit is voorbij,"

<sup>238</sup> Sturtewagen, "Tijd voor naïviteit is voorbij."

<sup>239</sup> Pinxteren, "Confucius Instituten voelen geen druk"; the Defense Authorization Act restricts funds from US government departments to universities that host a Confucius Institute, see U.S. Congress, John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, HR 5515, 115th Cong., introduced in House April 13, 2018, Sec. 1091.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> "Xi, Xi wat jij niet ziet."



the documentary was broadcasted, the Groningen Confucius Institute received a letter-bomb.<sup>242</sup> The reason why the letter was delivered remains unclear. Nevertheless, this incident attracted increased media attention since the timing of the letter bomb was remarkable, just days after the critical documentary.<sup>243</sup>

This chapter has analysed the reception of Confucius Institutes by news media in different case countries. The coverage of Confucius Institutes differs between local and national news media. As discussed in Chapter 3, Confucius Institutes put much effort into building up a relationship with local audiences. This seems to be successful since local media have portrayed Confucius Institutes rather positive, paying attention to events and individuals that benefit from these institutes. However, national news media have increasingly picked up concerns among scholars and politicians about the role of Confucius Institutes in academics. As discussed in Chapter 4, these increasing concerns can mainly be ascribed to the intrinsic role of the Chinese government in Confucius Institutes. Due to this intrinsic role, national media have linked issues like human rights violations, espionage and censorship practices of the Chinese government to Confucius Institutes. This indicates that the increasing attention for China's growing presence in the world has also consequences for Confucius Institutes.

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<sup>242</sup> "Poederbrief bezorgd in gebouw Rijksuniversiteit; EOD is ter plaatse (update)," *RTV Noord*, January 10, 2019.

<sup>243</sup> Lisa Dupuy, "Gebouw Rijksuniversiteit Groningen tijdelijk ontruimd om 'onschadelijke' poederbrief," *NRC*, January 10, 2019.

## Conclusion

This research has analysed how Confucius Institutes function in China's public diplomacy in Northwest-Europe between 2013 and 2019. As shown in Chapter 3, the public diplomacy goals of China are clearly represented in the activities of Confucius Institutes. The institutes reach numerous people in their respective case country and this creates a solid base for people-to-people exchanges and citizen diplomacy. Moreover, the cultural events organised by Confucius Institutes are very well in line with the cultural diplomacy strategy of the Chinese government, focusing on the promotion of traditional Chinese culture. This traditional culture promotion, together with the Confucius brand, are aimed at conveying a message of peace and harmony. However, in most of the case countries, the overall perceptions of host institutions, state-actors and news media toward Confucius Institutes have become increasingly critical in 2019, which badly affects the functioning of Confucius Institutes in China's public diplomacy.

The main reason why this criticism has increased is related to the intrinsic role of the Chinese government in the organisation and functioning of Confucius Institutes. This has been the most problematic aspect of the recipient of Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe. Because China's role in the world is becoming more important, the country has received increasing academic, media and political attention; China's domestic and foreign policies are under a magnifying glass. As described in Chapter 2, the intrinsic role of the Chinese government in Confucius Institutes can undermine its public diplomacy activities when its foreign policies are viewed negatively by foreign publics. Moreover, the negative perceptions toward the Chinese government concerning its censorship and espionage practices have been confirmed by the actions of individuals who are connected to Confucius Institutes. Examples are the 'Braga incident' and the espionage scandal at the VUB, in Belgium.

The intrinsic role of the Chinese government in Confucius Institutes also negatively affects academic cooperation between China and other countries. The Hanban has increasingly focused on further integrating Confucius Institutes in academics. However, this has resulted in increasing resistance among host institutions, which also affects broader people-to-people exchanges and citizen diplomacy on an academic level. The strong presence of the Hanban in academic cooperation is most problematic because people-to-people exchanges – as part of citizen diplomacy or Track-II diplomacy – should be spontaneous and unofficial, with minimal interference of a foreign government. This problematic aspect is also reflected in the closures of several Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe. These closures all relate to concerns about academic independence and the sustainability of funds that are issued by the Chinese government through the Hanban. Although the

lion's share of Confucius Institutes is still involved in academic cooperation, the recent closures and negative attention of Confucius Institutes can also affect existing relationships between Confucius Institutes and host institutions.

The role of the Chinese government can also undermine more successful aspects of its public diplomacy, namely its cultural diplomacy. In France, there is little criticism on Confucius Institutes because most institutes focus solely on promoting Chinese language and culture and are not involved in academics. The cultural events of Confucius Institutes in France (and elsewhere) are perceived positive by local media that pick up stories about local experiences with the institutes. This shows that the cultural diplomacy strategy of China – aiming at the promotion of its traditional culture – is rather successful. Although the framework in which cultural events are organised also serves China's public diplomacy goals, the role of the Chinese government in these cultural events is not so obvious as in the academic activities of Confucius Institutes. However, because of criticism on other aspects of Confucius Institutes – most notably academic involvement – these cultural events have also received increasing criticism. This is illustrated in the statement of the German FDP-politician Brandenburg, who states that a propaganda system of an authoritarian regime is hiding behind the seemingly innocent cultural activities.

In sum, the criticism on Confucius Institutes is closely connected to the increasing role of China in the world. The negative perceptions of China's policies have also affected perceptions of Confucius Institutes since they are seen as an extension of the Chinese government. Certainly, the increasing criticism on these institutes and the closures in recent years are only a part of the entire functioning of Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe. However, the number of new institutes has stagnated in every case country after 2016. Moreover, the perceptions in the case countries of every actor on the recipient side has become increasingly negative in 2019. France is both an exception and an explanatory case. Confucius Institutes that exclusively exercise cultural diplomacy through cultural events tend to be rather successful. However, academic involvement of these institutes has caused resistance among all of the recipient actors and can undermine China's public diplomacy strategy.

This research hopes to have contributed to the existing understanding of Confucius Institutes in China's public diplomacy in Northwest-Europe. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, this research also has its limitations. Additional comparative research in other regions could create a deeper understanding of the diversities in the functioning and recipience of Confucius Institutes between different countries. Additionally, other public diplomacy activities of China in Northwest-Europe could be analysed in greater detail. This could provide a broader understanding of China's entire public diplomacy activities and success in Northwest-Europe.

## Afterthoughts

In the process of writing this thesis, there have been developments surrounding Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe. In January 2020, it became known that the Free University of Berlin had signed a cooperation contract with the Hanban to set up a Chinese-teacher programme. This has sparked criticism since the contract states that the Hanban can reduce or terminate the funding if the programme in any way violates Chinese law.<sup>244</sup> As discussed in an article of the German newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, this agreement puts the university in a difficult position in which self-censorship is bound to occur.<sup>245</sup>

In February, Markus Rinderspacher, the party leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SDP) in the Landtag of Bavaria, halted the issuing of local government funds to the Confucius Institutes in Nurnberg and Munich.<sup>246</sup> These funds concern thousands of euros, supporting different projects and expenses of the two Confucius Institutes. According to Rinderspacher, the local government of Bavaria should not participate in funding the soft power initiatives of ‘Chinese dictators’.<sup>247</sup> This, once more, shows the implications of China’s political system and the role of the Chinese government in Confucius Institutes.

In Belgium, there have been new developments in the espionage scandal. In April 2020, it became clear that the director of the Confucius Institute at the VUB, Xinning Song, has won a lawsuit against the Belgian Immigration Office. After the revelations surrounding the director, the Immigration Office issued a travel ban against Song, which banned him from travelling to the Schengen zone. However, according to the Belgian court, this ban was unlawful because of a procedural mistake. Although Song claims that this has proven his ‘innocence’, the court did not rule over whether or not Song posed a danger for the national security of Belgium.<sup>248</sup>

Another development surrounding Confucius Institutes in Northwest-Europe occurred in April 2020, albeit not in a case country. In Sweden, all Confucius Institutes and Classrooms will be closed in 2020. In early 2015 Stockholm University already terminated its cooperation with its Confucius Institutes due to concerns about financial dependency from the Chinese government.<sup>249</sup> Now, in 2020, the final Confucius Classroom at a high school in Falkenberg has announced to close, leaving Sweden with no more Confucius Institutes or Classrooms.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> David Matthews, “Chinese Contract With German University Criticized,” *Inside Higher Ed*, February 7, 2020.

<sup>245</sup> Drentrup, “Erste deutsche Unis überdenken umstrittene Konfuzius-Institute.”

<sup>246</sup> “Rinderspacher verlangt Auskunft von Staatskanzlei,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 10, 2020; “Rinderspacher: Kein staatliches Geld für Konfuzius-Institute,” *Die Welt*, February 4, 2020.

<sup>247</sup> “Rinderspacher: Kein staatliches Geld.”

<sup>248</sup> Struys, “De wraak van Confucius.”

<sup>249</sup> Elizabeth Redden, “Stockholm University to Close Confucius Institute,” *Inside Higher Ed*, January 5, 2015.

<sup>250</sup> Oliver Moody, “Swedes axe China-backed Confucius school scheme as relations sour,” *The Sunday Times*, April 21, 2020.

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## Appendices

### A. Websites of Confucius Institutes in the five case countries, as of March 29, 2020.

Country	Confucius Institute	Homepage
Belgium	Confucius Institute in Brussels	<a href="http://www.belchin.be">http://www.belchin.be</a>
	Confucius Institute in Liege	<a href="http://www.confucius.uliege.be">http://www.confucius.uliege.be</a>
	Confucius Institute at University College West Flanders	<a href="https://www.confuciusinstituut.be">https://www.confuciusinstituut.be</a>
	Confucius Institute at Group T-International Engineering Academy-University of Leuven	<a href="https://www.leuvenkongyuan.com">https://www.leuvenkongyuan.com</a>
	Confucius Institute at ULB	<a href="http://institutconfucius.ulb.be">http://institutconfucius.ulb.be</a>
	Confucius Institute at VUB	<a href="http://www.vub.ac.be/en/confucius">www.vub.ac.be/en/confucius</a> (not available)
The Netherlands	Groningen Confucius Institute	<a href="https://www.confuciusgroningen.nl/en">https://www.confuciusgroningen.nl/en</a>
	Confucius Institute at ZUYD University of Applied Sciences	<a href="https://www.confuciusmaastricht.nl">https://www.confuciusmaastricht.nl</a>
	Leiden Confucius Institute	<a href="http://confuciusinstituut.nl">http://confuciusinstituut.nl</a> (not available)
Germany	Confucius Institute at the Free University of Berlin	<a href="http://www.konfuziusinstitut-berlin.de">http://www.konfuziusinstitut-berlin.de</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Düsseldorf	<a href="https://www.konfuzius-duesseldorf.de">https://www.konfuzius-duesseldorf.de</a>
	Confucius Institute in Nürnberg-Erlangen	<a href="https://www.konfuzius-institut.de">https://www.konfuzius-institut.de</a>
	Confucius Institute at Frankfurt University	<a href="https://www.konfuzius-institut-frankfurt.de">https://www.konfuzius-institut-frankfurt.de</a>
	Confucius Institute at Heidelberg University	<a href="https://konfuzius-institut-heidelberg.de">https://konfuzius-institut-heidelberg.de</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Hamburg	<a href="https://www.ki-hh.de">https://www.ki-hh.de</a>
	Leibniz-Confucius Institute Hannover	<a href="https://www.lkih.de">https://www.lkih.de</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Leipzig	<a href="https://www.konfuziusinstitut-leipzig.de">https://www.konfuziusinstitut-leipzig.de</a>
	Confucius Institute in Munich	<a href="https://www.konfuzius-muenchen.de">https://www.konfuzius-muenchen.de</a>
	Confucius Institute in Bremen	<a href="https://www.konfuzius-institut-bremen.de">https://www.konfuzius-institut-bremen.de</a>
	Confucius Institute Metropole Ruhr at the University of Duisburg-Essen	<a href="https://www.uni-due.de/konfuzius-institut">https://www.uni-due.de/konfuzius-institut</a>
	Confucius Institute at Erfurt University of Applied Sciences	<a href="http://konfuziusinstitut-erfurt.org/">http://konfuziusinstitut-erfurt.org/</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Freiburg	<a href="https://www.ki-freiburg.de">https://www.ki-freiburg.de</a>
	Confucius Institute at Trier University	<a href="https://www.uni-trier.de">https://www.uni-trier.de</a>
	Confucius Institute at University of Paderborn	<a href="http://konfuzius-paderborn.de">http://konfuzius-paderborn.de</a>
	Academic Confucius Institute at University of Göttingen	<a href="https://www.aki-goettingen.de">https://www.aki-goettingen.de</a>
	Confucius Institute at Fachhochschule Stralsund University of Applied Sciences	<a href="https://www.konfuzius-stralsund.de">https://www.konfuzius-stralsund.de</a>
	Audi Ingolstadt Confucius Institute	<a href="https://audi-konfuzius-institut-ingolstadt.de">https://audi-konfuzius-institut-ingolstadt.de</a>
	Confucius Institute Bonn	<a href="https://konfuzius-bonn.de/">https://konfuzius-bonn.de/</a>
France	Confucius Institute at the University of Poitiers	<a href="https://www.ic-up.org/ICUP">https://www.ic-up.org/ICUP</a>
	Confucius Institute at Paris Diderot University	<a href="http://confucius.univ-paris7.fr/">http://confucius.univ-paris7.fr/</a>
	Confucius Institute of the Chinese Cultural Center in Paris	<a href="http://www.cccparis.org/">http://www.cccparis.org/</a>
	Confucius Institute in Brittany	<a href="https://www.confucius-bretagne.org/">https://www.confucius-bretagne.org/</a>
	Confucius Institute in La Rochelle	<a href="https://institut-confucius.univ-larochelle.fr">https://institut-confucius.univ-larochelle.fr</a>
	Confucius Institute in Alsace	<a href="https://www.confuciusalsace.org">https://www.confuciusalsace.org</a>
	Confucius Institute in Clermont-Ferrand	<a href="https://www.confucius-clermont-auvergne.org/">https://www.confucius-clermont-auvergne.org/</a>
	Confucius Institute in Artois	<a href="http://www.univ-artois.fr/L-universite/Institut-Confucius">http://www.univ-artois.fr/L-universite/Institut-Confucius</a> (not available)
	Confucius Institute at Pays de la Loire	<a href="https://www.confucius-angers.eu">https://www.confucius-angers.eu</a>
	Confucius Institute at University of Lorraine	<a href="https://www.univ-lorraine.fr/content/linstitut">https://www.univ-lorraine.fr/content/linstitut</a>

	Confucius Institute at University of French Polynesia	<a href="http://www.upf.pf/fr/content/institut-confucius">http://www.upf.pf/fr/content/institut-confucius</a>
	Confucius Institute in Montpellier	<a href="https://institut-confucius-montpellier.org">https://institut-confucius-montpellier.org</a>
	Confucius Institute of Reunion Island	<a href="https://confucius.univ-reunion.fr">https://confucius.univ-reunion.fr</a>
	Neoma Confucius Institute for Business-Rouen	<a href="http://confucius.neoma-bs.fr">http://confucius.neoma-bs.fr</a>
	Confucius Institute Cote d 'Azur	<a href="http://confucius-cotedazur.fr">http://confucius-cotedazur.fr</a>
	Confucius Institute at ESCP Europe	<a href="http://ebci.eu/">http://ebci.eu/</a>
	Confucius Institute at University of Orleans	<a href="http://www.univ-orleans.fr">http://www.univ-orleans.fr</a>
	The Lyon Confucius Institute	No website available
	Confucius Institute at Pau	<a href="https://www.pau.fr/associations/4024/institut-confucius-de-pau-pyrenees">https://www.pau.fr/associations/4024/institut-confucius-de-pau-pyrenees</a>
United Kingdom	Confucius Institute at University of Liverpool	<a href="https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/confucius-institute/">https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/confucius-institute/</a>
	Confucius Institute for Scotland in the University of Edinburgh	<a href="http://www.confuciusinstitute.ac.uk">http://www.confuciusinstitute.ac.uk</a>
	London Confucius Institute	<a href="https://www.soas.ac.uk/lci">https://www.soas.ac.uk/lci</a>
	Confucius Institute at UCL Institute of Education	<a href="https://ci.ioe.ac.uk/">https://ci.ioe.ac.uk/</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Aberdeen	<a href="https://www.abdn.ac.uk/confucius/">https://www.abdn.ac.uk/confucius/</a>
	Confucius Institute at Edge Hill university	<a href="https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/confuciusinstitute/">https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/confuciusinstitute/</a>
	Confucius Institute at De Montfort University	<a href="https://www.dmu.ac.uk/community/confucius-institute.aspx">https://www.dmu.ac.uk/community/confucius-institute.aspx</a>
	Business Confucius Institute at the University of Leeds	<a href="https://confucius.leeds.ac.uk">https://confucius.leeds.ac.uk</a>
	Confucius Institute for Dance and Performance at Goldsmiths, University of London	<a href="https://www.gold.ac.uk/confucius-institute/">https://www.gold.ac.uk/confucius-institute/</a>
	Confucius Institute for Business, London	<a href="http://www.lse.ac.uk/cibl">http://www.lse.ac.uk/cibl</a>
	Confucius Institute at Lancaster University	<a href="https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/confucius-institute">https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/confucius-institute</a>
	Confucius Institute for Traditional Chinese Medicine, London	<a href="https://lsbu-confucius.london/">https://lsbu-confucius.london/</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Manchester	<a href="https://www.confuciusinstitute.manchester.ac.uk">https://www.confuciusinstitute.manchester.ac.uk</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Nottingham	<a href="https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/confucius/">https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/confucius/</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Sheffield	<a href="https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/confucius/">https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/confucius/</a>
	Confucius Institute at Cardiff University	<a href="https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/confucius-institute/">https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/confucius-institute/</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Central Lancashire	<a href="https://www.uclan.ac.uk/confucius/">https://www.uclan.ac.uk/confucius/</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David	<a href="https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/confucius-institute/">https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/confucius-institute/</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Glasgow	<a href="https://www.gla.ac.uk/explore/confucius/">https://www.gla.ac.uk/explore/confucius/</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Southampton	<a href="https://www.southampton.ac.uk/ci/">https://www.southampton.ac.uk/ci/</a>
	Confucius Institute at Ulster University	<a href="https://www.ulster.ac.uk/confucius/">https://www.ulster.ac.uk/confucius/</a>
	Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools	<a href="https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/confuciusinstituteforscotlandschools/">https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/confuciusinstituteforscotlandschools/</a>
	Scottish Confucius Institute for Business and Communication at Heriot-Watt University	<a href="https://www.confuciusinstitute.hw.ac.uk">https://www.confuciusinstitute.hw.ac.uk</a>
	Confucius Institute at Newcastle University	<a href="https://www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/confucius/">https://www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/confucius/</a>
	Confucius Institute at Bangor University	<a href="https://www.bangor.ac.uk/confucius-institute/">https://www.bangor.ac.uk/confucius-institute/</a>
	Confucius Institute at the University of Hull	<a href="http://confucius-institute.wordpress.hull.ac.uk/">http://confucius-institute.wordpress.hull.ac.uk/</a>
	Confucius Institute at Queen Mary University of London	<a href="https://www.qmul.ac.uk/slif/language-centre/confucius-institute/">https://www.qmul.ac.uk/slif/language-centre/confucius-institute/</a>
	Confucius Institute at Coventry University	<a href="https://www.coventry.ac.uk/international-students-hub/partnerships-and-places-to-study/confucius-institute/">https://www.coventry.ac.uk/international-students-hub/partnerships-and-places-to-study/confucius-institute/</a>
	Confucius Institute at Oxford Brooks University	<a href="https://www.brookes.ac.uk/school-of-arts/the-confucius-institute/">https://www.brookes.ac.uk/school-of-arts/the-confucius-institute/</a>
	Confucius Institute of Science and Technology Innovation at the University of Huddersfield	No official website

B. Overview of Confucius Institutes, Chinese partner institutions and host institutions in the five case countries:

Country	Name of Confucius Institute (Hanban)	Founding Year	Chinese Partner Institution	Host Institution
Belgium (6x)	Confucius Institute in Brussels	2005	Beijing Foreign Studies University	Belgium-China Association
	Confucius Institute in Liege	2005	Beijing Foreign Studies University	University of Liège
	Confucius Institute at University College West Flanders	2012	Zhejiang Gongshang University	Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen (Howest)
	Confucius Institute at Group T-International Engineering Academy-University of Leuven	2006	Beijing Jiao Tong University	Leuven Engineering College (Group T)
	Confucius Institute at ULB	2015	East China Normal University	l'Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)
	Confucius Institute at VUB	2015	Renmin University of China + Sichuan University	Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)
The Netherlands (3x)	Groningen Confucius Institute	2010	Communication University of China	Groningen Confucius Institute Foundation (Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen + University of Groningen + the city of Groningen)
	Confucius Institute at ZUYD University of Applied Sciences	2016	Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (DUFE)	Zuyd University of Applied Sciences Maastricht
	Leiden Confucius Institute	2007	Shandong University	Leiden University
Germany (19x)	Confucius Institute at the Free University of Berlin	2005	Peking University	Freie Universität Berlin
	Confucius Institute at the University of Düsseldorf	2006	Beijing Foreign Studies University	Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf
	Confucius Institute in Nürnberg-Erlangen	2005	Beijing Foreign Studies University	Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg / Firma Siemens / Stadt Nürnberg
	Confucius Institute at Frankfurt University	2006	Fudan University	Göthe Universität Frankfurt am Main
	Confucius Institute at Heidelberg University	2006	Shanghai Jiao Tong University	Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
	Confucius Institute at the University of Hamburg	2006	Fudan University	Universität Hamburg
	Leibniz-Confucius Institute Hannover	2006	Tongji University	Leibniz Universität Hannover
	Confucius Institute at the University of Leipzig	2006	Renmin University of China	Universität Leipzig
	Confucius Institute in Munich	2009	Beijing Foreign Studies University	Stiftung Ex-Oriente Munich
	Confucius Institute in Bremen	2013	Capital Normal University	Bremen University of Applied Sciences
	Confucius Institute Metropole Ruhr at the University of Duisburg-Essen	2007	Wuhan University	University of Duisburg-Essen
	Confucius Institute at Erfurt University of Applied Sciences	2011	Zhejiang University of Science & Technology	Erfurt University of Applied Sciences
	Confucius Institute at the University of Freiburg	2008	Nanjing University	Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg / Stadt Freiburg
	Confucius Institute at Trier University	2008	Xiamen University	Universität Trier
	Confucius Institute at University of Paderborn	2014	Xidian University	University of Paderborn
	Academic Confucius Institute at University of Göttingen	2013	Beijing Foreign Studies University + Nanjing University	Göttingen University
	Confucius Institute at Fachhochschule Stralsund University of Applied Sciences	2015	Hefei University	Stralsund University of Applied Sciences
	Audi Ingolstadt Confucius Institute	2016	South China University of Technology	Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt / Stadt Ingolstadt / AUDI AG
	Confucius Institute Bonn	2016	Beijing Language And Culture University	Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn
France	Confucius Institute at the University of Poitiers	2005	University of Nanchang + ZTE GROUP	University of Poitiers
	Confucius Institute at Paris Diderot University	2005	Wuhan University	Paris Diderot University

France (19x)	Confucius Institute of the Chinese Cultural Center in Paris	2005	Ministry of Culture of the PRC	Chinese Cultural Center in Paris
	Confucius Institute in Brittany	2006	Shandong University	Region of Brittany, City of Rennes
	Confucius Institute in La Rochelle	2006	Beijing Language And Culture University	University of La Rochelle, Government of La Rochelle City
	Confucius Institute in Alsace	2007	Jiangsu Provincial People's Government	Region of Alsace and 9 organizations
	Confucius Institute in Clermont-Ferrand	2007	Beijing International Studies University	City of Clermont-Ferrand
	Confucius Institute in Artois	2008	Nanjing University	Artois University
	Confucius Institute at Pays de la Loire	2009	Ludong University	Region of Pays de la Loire, City of Angers, University of Angers, l'Université Catholique de l'Ouest, la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Maine-et-Loire
	Confucius Institute at University of Lorraine	2011	Wuhan University of Technology	University of Lorraine
	Confucius Institute at University of French Polynesia	2013	China Foreign Affairs University	University of French Polynesia
	Confucius Institute in Montpellier	2013	University of Electronic Science and Technology of China	University of Montpellier 2
	Confucius Institute of Reunion Island	2010	South China Normal University	University of Reunion Island
	Neoma Confucius Institute for Business-Rouen	2013	Nankai University	Neoma Business School, Métropole Rouen Normandie
	Confucius Institute Cote d'Azur	2015	Tianjin University	University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, la Ville de Nice
	Confucius Institute at ESCP Europe	2017	Beijing Foreign Studies University	ESCP Europe Business School
	Confucius Institute at University of Orleans	2018	Central South University	University of Orleans
	The Lyon Confucius Institute	2009	Sun Yat-sen Univeristy Guangzhou	Lyon 2 and Lyon 3 University
	Confucius Institute at Pau	2019	Xi'an International Studies University	Agglomeration of Pau bearn and Pyrenees, University of Pau
United Kingdom (30x)	Confucius Institute at University of Liverpool	2008	Xi'an Jiao Tong University	University of Liverpool
	Confucius Institute for Scotland in the University of Edinburgh	2005	Fudan University	University of Edinburgh
	London Confucius Institute	2005	Beijing Foreign Studies University	SOAS, London University
	Confucius Institute at UCL Institute of Education	2012	Peking University	UCL Institute of Education
	Confucius Institute at the University of Aberdeen	2012	Wuhan University	University of Aberdeen
	Confucius Institute at Edge Hill university	2012	Chongqing Normal University	Edge Hill University
	Confucius Institute at De Montfort University	2013	University of Science and Technology Beijing	De Montfort University
	Business Confucius Institute at the University of Leeds	2012	University of International Business and Economics	University of Leeds
	Confucius Institute for Dance and Performance at Goldsmiths, University of London	2011	Beijing Dance Academy	Goldsmiths College, University of London
	Confucius Institute for Business, London	2006	Tsinghua University	London School of Economics and Political Science, British Petroleum Plc, Deloitte LLP, HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, John Swire and Sons Ltd.
	Confucius Institute at Lancaster University	2011	South China University of Technology	Lancaster University
	Confucius Institute for Traditional Chinese Medicine, London	2007	Heilongjiang University of Chinese Medicine, Harbin Normal University	London South Bank University
	Confucius Institute at the University of Manchester	2005	Beijing Normal University	University of Manchester
	Confucius Institute at the University of Nottingham	2007	Fudan University	University of Nottingham
	Confucius Institute at the University of Sheffield	2006	Beijing Language And Culture University, Nanjing University	University of Sheffield

Confucius Institute at Cardiff University	2007	Xiamen University	Cardiff University
Confucius Institute at the University of Central Lancashire	2008	Beijing International Studies University	University of Central Lancashire
Confucius Institute at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David	2007	Beijing Union University	University of Wales Trinity Saint David Chinese Institution
Confucius Institute at the University of Glasgow	2011	Nankai University	University of Glasgow
Confucius Institute at the University of Southampton	2011	Xiamen University	University of Southampton
Confucius Institute at Ulster University	2011	Hubei Normal University	University of Ulster
Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools	2010	Tianjin Municipal Education Commission	Based on University of Strathclyde, SCILT, Scotland's National Centre for Language Chinese Institution
Scottish Confucius Institute for Business and Communication at Heriot-Watt University	2013	Tianjin University of Finance and Economics	Heriot-Watt University
Confucius Institute at Newcastle University	2012	Xiamen University	Newcastle University
Confucius Institute at Bangor University	2012	China University of Political University and Law	Bangor University
Confucius Institute at the University of Hull	2015	Tianjin Normal University	University of Hull
Confucius Institute at Queen Mary University of London	2015	Shanghai University of Finance and Economics	Queen Mary University of London
Confucius Institute at Coventry University	2015	Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics	Coventry University
Confucius Institute at Oxford Brooks University	2015	Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press	Oxford Brooks University
Confucius Institute of Science and Technology Innovation at the University of Huddersfield	2019	East China University of Science and Technology	University of Huddersfield

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