

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ASPECT

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the problem under study is as follows: The Confucius Institute became one of the key projects that contribute to the China's outside exit, promotion of Chinese culture and language abroad, accumulation of governmental soft power. This article is aimed at a detailed analysis of domestic and foreign historiography on the activities of the Confucius Institutes worldwide. The descriptive method; analytical method; comparative benchmarking and comparative-historical method became a leading approach to the study of this issue; they allowed to fully disclose and analyze both external and internal factors of Chinese centers' operation. The study resulted in scrutinizing and analyzing scientific material on the relevant issue, some of which were first introduced into scientific circulation. The article materials can be useful to specialists involved in the study of international relations, history and politics of Russia and China, researchers and higher education institution teachers of humanitarian disciplines.

Keywords: *Confucius Institute, Chinese language, Chinese culture, cultural diplomacy, soft power, educational integration*

1. INTRODUCTION

The first Confucius Institutes (hereinafter referred to as the "CI") have been opened relatively recently [Hanban, 2006], but, despite this, interest in their activities is growing every day. An important factor is the active foreign policy pursued by the leadership of the PRC [York, 2005]. The set tasks of an "outside exit", building a harmonious world, promotion of the Chinese culture and language, traditional Confucian ideals and ideologies push China to more open and active actions in the humanitarian field [Chey, 2007]. For a long time this sphere has not been a priority for the national foreign policy, and it has become a central following a relative reorganization [Lin, 2011]. In connection with this, interest of the China's scientific community increased to the activities of the Confucius Institute. In the last few years, a number of articles and monographs [Alikberova, 2013] associated with the CI operation both in Russia and other countries were published.

2. METHODOLOGICAL BASIS.

The methodological basis of the presented work are the principles of historicism and scientific objectivity, systematization, description and analysis of specific situations, international projects, their explanation, comparison and generalization. Analyzing the relationship among domestic and foreign policy, economic and social factors that influence the CI activities and further operation, allows to present

an objective scientific picture of development of the network of Chinese cultural and educational centers around the world.

3. RESULTS.

3.1.Chinese historiography. Below are the works to be highlighted. One of the most noteworthy monographs is the work of the Shanghai scientist Dai Zhun (戴蓉) Confucius Institute: Chinese Language and Cultural Diplomacy (孔子学院与中国语言文化外交) [Dai, 2013]. In the first part of his work, the author gives theoretical justification for his study and appeals such concepts as cultural and linguistic diplomacy. The second part of the work is practical and the most informative. In addition to the history of CI creation and establishment in global educational institutions, it includes the CI advantages over other similar network institutions, and having analyzed a considerable amount of material (according to the bibliographic list), it indicates some drawbacks and sometimes threats in the CI operation.

Professor of Shanghai University of Foreign Languages Wu Ying (吴瑛) conducted an interesting study. In his monograph Confucius Institute and Spread of Chinese Language Abroad (孔子学院与中国文化的国际传播), the author presents results of a survey among 565 respondents, the Confucius Institutes' students in different countries: USA, Russia, Japan, Thailand. The survey was conducted from 2008 to 2011 at 16 Confucius Institutes [Wu, 2013]. The survey questions cover such aspects as the quality of teaching and knowledge of the Chinese culture as a result of training at the CI. The study results are given both in whole and separately for each country. The survey data allow the authors to suggest that, despite the great material and personnel investments in the Confucius Institutes' development, the performance is not high, and a large integration of CI in educational structures overseas and a better understanding of the foreign country's mentality and culture are needed.

The monograph of Professor Liang Daxiang (连大祥) Economic Efficiency of Confucius Institutes (孔子学院的经贸效果) is especially noteworthy [Liang, 2015]. This work is rather related to the economy, but it is interesting to us to better understand the Confucius Institutes' financing. Using complex economic calculations and mathematical formulas, the author considers, in his study, the economic effect of CI activities in different spheres: for the country's GDP, tourism industry, export and import. In general, the author gives a positive assessment to the CI activities proving that in spite of high investments in establishing and developing the CI network, finally the Chinese economy gets more from other areas. The Confucius Institutes' opening and operation influences the spread of the Chinese language and culture, thereby increasing the sales volume of Chinese goods and tourist flows.

Moreover, statistics mentioning the Confucius Institute in the PRC scientific database Zhongguo Zhidao (中国知道, cnki.com) [CNKI, 2015] is also indicative. So, since 2007, 100, 143 theses have been defended; in the period from 2007 to 2009, more than 6,000 works have been published on the website each year; in 2010 – 9,715, in 2011 – 11,852, in 2013-2014, more than 12,000 works each year, and only in 2015 – 4,994. Statistics in the periodic scientific journals should be also considered as an example. Between 2007 and 2016, 191,860 articles with the key word combination Confucius Institute were published; 12,000 to 16,000 articles each year. During the first few months of 2016, 3,268 articles have appeared in the scientific database. For 10 years, 10,804 articles or notes with a reference to the CI have been published in periodic newspapers and magazines. In the early years of the CI activities, 700-800, and in the period from 2010 to 2015, 1,000 publications were issued annually. In addition, the International and All-China conferences were held. They discussed the issue of the Confucius Institutes' operation throughout the world, for the period 2007-2016, there are 721 references, in total, to such an event.

In a number of works examining the public diplomacy, policy of enhancing the "soft power", bilateral relations in the field of culture and education, the issues of the international activity and performance of the Confucius Institutes were also addressed.

3.2. English-language historiography. The Confucius Institutes' subject is also reflected overseas, the works can be divided into three types: the first part of the works is those aimed to describe and show the CI activities as a whole, having examined the CI history, goals and objectives [Hartig, 2011]. The second part of the works is focused on studying the public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and soft power of the Chinese People's Republic; it is these works that are a valuable theoretical source for the study of the CI activities [Hsiao, 2008; Yangzhong, 2006]. The third group of research is analytical information about the educational aspect. The issues of the CI integration in educational institutions, curricula and study programs, internal and external education strategy as a whole are reviewed [Starr, 2009]. This group of works supplies valuable practical material for further study of the CI activities overseas.

3.3. Russian historiography. In Russia, a number of specialists also deal with this issue; some publications are available. Several of them are to be highlighted. In her article China's Language and Culture as Effective Instruments of "Soft Power" in the Implementation of the PRC Foreign Policy [Boyarkina, 2014], teacher of the Far Eastern Federal University Boyarkina A.V. gives a description of the PRC policy in relation to the spread of Chinese language, both within the country and abroad. The author believes that the country's attractive image, the PRC leadership pays special attention to the spread of Chinese language in the world, which is an essential element of the implementation of the "soft power" concept in the PRC's foreign policy at the present stage.

When analyzing the main approaches, mechanisms, tools, objectives and results of the "soft power" application, another representative of the Far Eastern scientific community A.M. Bobylo clearly indicates in his work National Strategies of "Soft Power" in the Foreign Policy of the USA, China and Russian Federation: Main Trends and Characteristics of the Regional Development [Bobylo, 2015] that the Confucius Institute project is one of the key in the China's foreign policy; despite the existing weaknesses in the "soft power" strategy, China purposefully moves to implement a different strategy named The XXI Century - the Greater China's Century.

The National Research University Higher School of Economics also conducted studies on the CI role in the China's foreign policy, so, for example, the article The Role of Education in Improving the "Soft Power" Resource as Exemplified by the PRC [Mikhnevich, 2015] examines the key aspects in the PRC's educational policy in the context of the soft power spread. Peculiarities of foreigners' training in the PRC and the PRC's educational activities overseas are considered as exemplified by the Confucius Institutes. The work by S.V. Mikhnevich Panda in the Dragon's Service: The Main Directions and Mechanisms of China's Soft Power Policy [Mikhnevich, 2014] deserves particular attention, as it is a comprehensive study of the "soft power" accumulation in seven directions. The main mechanisms and tools to implement them, operation features, performance indicators and existing regulations are considered. The current achievements and difficulties in their application are specified. A key tool for spreading the Chinese language is creation of a network of specialized institutions – the Confucius Institutes.

In their joint article From Soft Power to the Cultural Power in the Russia in Global Affairs journal, the famous Russian scientists of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences O.N. Borokh and A.V. Lomanov [Borokh & Lomanov, 2012] also explore the policy of increasing the influence of the Chinese language and culture in the world and announcement of the PRC as a new soft power center. The authors believe that the most successful soft power strategy has been the spread of the Confucius Institutes overseas despite the fact that many see it as a political interference instrument.

A.L. Arefyev, Deputy Director of the Center for Sociological Research, represented another serious analytical work Chinese in Russian Higher Education: History and Modernity [Arefyev, 2011]. The article extensively discusses the history of learning and teaching the Chinese language in the Soviet and Russian higher education institutions. The study provides specific numbers on the number of high school students and listeners of the Confucius Institute learning Chinese as the first and second foreign language. Doctoral candidate of the Heilongjiang University, fellow of the Amurskiy Humanitarian-Pedagogical State University, A.N. Zavyalova wrote a work similar in its topic Confucius Institutes: Integration or Expansion? [Zavyalova, 2010]. The author considers a form of the humanitarian cooperation being new for the Russian and Chinese relations, namely, operation of the Confucius Institutes. The article presents an attempt to analyze their basic mission, goals and to solve the CI's main problem: are activities in the Russian Federation the integration into the global educational space or anything more? The article by A.S. Belchenko, teacher of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, named Confucius Institutes Activity in the Russian Federation [Belchenko, 2010] should be also noted. In her work, the scientist analyzes the specifics of teaching the Chinese language and culture in Russia as exemplified by the Confucius Institute's operation.

Director of the Strategic Development Center A. Maslov [Maslov, 2009] made a great contribution to the study of CI activities abroad and in Russia. In his works and interviews with various print and electronic media, the scientist analyzes and gives a comparative description of the PRC and Russian Federation's national policy in the field of education. His studies show the difference in higher education of two neighboring states and prove that we need further reformation of oriental studies, strengthening the teaching staff and improving the sinological education system in general.

Moreover, in recent years due to the increased interest in China "towering" on the world stage and to its foreign policy, a number of thesis research analyzing the PRC's international policy and foreign policy strategy has appeared in Russia. Addressing these topics, the authors had to mention about the CI activities as well, since the network institutions are one of the key indicators of the outside exit policy, policy of openness and enhancing the state's "soft power". As an example, the work by O.I. Bodrova, postgraduate degree seeker at the Nizhniy Novgorod State University - Humanitarian Expansion of the Chinese People's Republic [Bodrova, 2013], as well as the candidate's thesis by A.R. Alikberova Russian-Chinese Relations in the Field of Culture and Education (1990s-2000s) [Alikberova, 2014] defended within the walls of the Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University are stated.

4. DISCUSSIONS.

Having become a major player on the world stage, the Peoples Republic of China conducts the large-scale deliberate policy to promote its language and culture abroad. In order to achieve its strategic objectives, China uses all new tools and mechanisms, which are not traditional for its foreign policy. When borrowing the Western concepts and technologies, such as public diplomacy, aggregate state power, soft power, China skillfully integrates them into its traditional Confucian reality. The obtained mixture of advanced Western-Chinese ideas becomes a strong platform for implementation of the "Chinese dream", "outside exit" policy, "reforms and openness". So, the most successful and vivid example of the policy planned by the government of China is opening a network of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms across the world. Evidence of this is a growing number of publications and studies on the subject throughout the world.

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