

Wielding a Double-Edged Sword:
U.S. Confucius Institutes, Soft Power, and the “China Threat”

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by

Emma Burleigh

Accepted for Honors in Modern Languages & Literatures

Michael Gibbs Hill

Director

Eric Han

Paul Vierthaler

Williamsburg, VA
May 4th, 2021

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Emma Burleigh
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List of Abbreviations

(In order of appearance)

The United States of America.....	U.S.
Chinese Communist Party.....	CCP
Confucius Institute.....	CI
The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.....	USSR
People’s Republic of China.....	PRC
Memoranda of Understandings	MOU
National Association of Scholars.....	NAS
Confucius Institute U.S. Center.....	CIUS
Ministry of Education.....	MOE
Chinese Communist Party’s Propaganda Department.....	CCPPD
The United Kingdom.....	U.K.
National Security Education Program	NSEP
Historically Black Colleges and Universities.....	HBCU
Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone.....	GDELT
Non-Governmental Organization.....	NGO
Federal Bureau of Investigation.....	FBI
Massachusetts Institute of Technology.....	MIT

Introduction

After years of collaboration with their partner institutions, Confucius Institutes have faced harsh backlash that has led to the closure of many programs. While Confucius Institutes are centers dedicated to disseminating Chinese language and culture, they've been put under scrutiny for a multitude of reasons. Funded and structured by Hanban through the Chinese Ministry of Education, tensions have flared over the use of Chinese government funding, censorship in academic materials, and choice of U.S. colleges for the programs. With closures on the rise and largely varied debate present in the scholarly community, the issue is becoming ever more complicated.

In the midst of accusations made against Confucius Institutes leading to their closures, it's vital to account for how current global sentiments on China affect these decisions. The modern day "China Threat" concept has brewed unfavorable discourse about China in the West, making its way into China's agendas outside politics and economics. This perception has undeniably influenced discussions about Confucius Institutes, which accounts for some of the backlash. Without the academic community's ability to separate Confucius Institutes from the CCP's previous/current transgressions, the China Threat concept naturally becomes interwoven in determining the fate of the institutes.

To properly assess the uproar of scrutiny and program terminations, it's essential to evaluate the claims made against CIs, if these criticisms are warranted, and how scholarship has approached this topic. An investigation into CI funding, censorship, and political agendas will assess these accusations. Although concrete political motivations are difficult to prove, CIs unquestionably embody China's soft power extensions abroad. The CCP has advertised its Confucius Institutes as Chinese language and cultural hubs, dedicated to fulfilling global interest

in Chinese studies. The institutes have attracted educational partners from all around the United States. These programs appeal to schools that need to bolster their Chinese departments, but also act as a tool abroad for shaping perceptions about China. While the thought of soft power in education raises speculation of corruption, it has become a commonplace practice for many foreign countries to promote their language, culture, and interests. Academically it poses questions about the educational impact a subtle agenda may have on its students. Politically, the mass closures following U.S. government backlash raise the question of whether this was a successful soft power move for China.

Based on the paper's in-depth analysis into Confucius Institutes and their criticisms, accountability will be directed to the two culpable actors in this program backlash: Confucius Institutes and American colleges. China has frequently been used as a scapegoat for the critiques on Confucius Institute partnerships, but little liability has been placed on U.S. academic institutions. As every CI program entails transparent and consensual agreements with the participant colleges, these U.S. schools should bear considerable culpability in engaging and promoting programs that others demonize. Predictions will also be made to what the future entails for Confucius Institutes and general Chinese studies in America. What effects these CI closures will generate remains up in the air; without adequate funding from Hanban or the U.S. government, teaching and learning of this modern language could be at risk.

The “China Threat” Concept

A popular modern concept many critics of China employ is the term the “China Threat”: the perception that China's rapid economic, political, and social growth poses a threat to foreign countries and their domestic security. While the term is most commonly applied in economic and

political contexts of China's advancements, those who oppose Confucius Institutes maintain that the threat applies to China's influence in academics abroad. Critics argue that Confucius Institutes are a political mechanism of the CCP, and that the program's strict adherence to the CCP's promoted traditional Chinese cultural values brainwashes students and poses a risk to U.S. academic integrity. Some skeptics believe CIs could be a political front to harbor and recruit pro-China spies. For these people the institutes' presence on college campuses is a direct threat to U.S. democracy and academic transparency.

This section will evaluate where anti-Chinese sentiments originated, and how they have evolved in the West. This will show a trend in how anxieties about China have manifested itself throughout time and led to the idea of the "China Threat". Understanding the concept's history will tie directly into scholarship examining the China Threat in the CI context and examine the primary "dangers" posed by such establishments: academic censorship, murky sources of funding, and hidden political objectives. This literature has played an essential role in the widespread disseminations of concerns about CIs, and potentially led to the dissolution of programs. This paper offers an analysis that ties preconceived notions of China to how Confucius Institutes have been seen and judged, emulating competitive Cold War sentiments similar to that of the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the 1980's. Based on the United State's anti-Chinese attitudes and background in alienating powerful nations, scrutiny towards Confucius Institutes must be met with skepticism.

Origins of Anti-Chinese Sentiments

The "China Threat" wasn't the first anti-Chinese term levied against China's world expansion. Derogatory foreign sentiments against China can be traced back historically to

terminology such as the “Yellow Peril”- a viewpoint created by Westerners in response to uncertainties about the Orient.¹ More recently this fear has been manifested as the “Red Peril”: the fear of democratic nations against China’s communism. A theme arises of Western powers “othering” a nation/idea outside their comfort, originating from a society that fears this unlikeness. These concepts pervade the Western consciousness of China beyond political, military, and economic reasoning; anti-Chinese sentiments creep their way into subconscious attitudes towards China, affecting social and academic dynamics.

These racialized fears against China play into the modern “China Threat”. The most important turning point in the making of this concept emerged after the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, where the PRC first emerged as a controversial force. This incident would incite decades-lasting anti-Chinese sentiments, shared by nations of differing political associations and economic standings. At the same point in time China’s economy expanded greatly in the late 1980’s/early 1990’s, rivaling top world economies and spurring global conversation. China’s later accession into the World Trade Organization only further solidified China’s importance as trade and outsourcing skyrocketed. It was Western nations alongside China’s rival peripheral neighbors that composed the term “China Threat” to highlight their anxieties surrounding China’s exponentially expanding global economy and authoritarian socialist political system.²

By this point in time Western nations had been attempting to politically reform the region for decades, as they viewed China’s political philosophy as a threat to their process of democratising the world. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 left China as the last powerful communist country standing- simultaneously, the third wave of democratization in East Asia

¹Heather Schmidt. "China's Confucius Institutes and the “Necessary White Body”." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 38, no. 4 (2013): 647-68.

²Yee, Herbert., and Ian. Storey. *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013.

began to reform countries such as Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia.³ China's resistance to liberal and democratic values sparked the Western usage of China Threat out of frustration with China circumventing the U.S.'s agenda. Yee and Storey give insight into an unyielding American ideology: "...democracy means peace and dictatorship means war. Thus, an undemocratic socialist state like China remained a threat to regional and world peace."⁴ Contrary to America's goals, it has been argued that shaming and alienating China in this way alternatively makes China less willing to democratize.⁵ What started as a Western concept had spread by the early 2000's into other territories as a product of countries uniting against a "corrupt" and "dangerous" China. Although China has attempted to gain favor in the international community to repair its negative reputation, the government's blatant human rights abuses have delayed progress.

These sentiments and the "China Threat" come as no surprise to most scholars, especially international relations experts such as John Mearsheimer. He contends that the global competition for dominance is inescapable- that leading countries will seek hegemonic power domestically and then internationally.⁶ The China Threat concept fits naturally in America's political agenda to democratize the world under its own authority- as China poses a threat to that consolidation of power. While China seeks to politically unite its country, it will expand its influence outwards just as the U.S. did after the Monroe Doctrine (which politically unified Americans). The "China Threat" persists as an othering of China in comparison to Western values, and furthermore as a tool to promote Westernization and democratization.

Scholarship on the "China Threat" and Confucius Institutes

³Yee & Storey, *China Threat*, 3.

⁴Yee & Storey, *China Threat*, 4.

⁵Yee & Storey, *China Threat*, 33.

⁶Mearsheimer, John J. *In The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 29. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014.

As more United States colleges and universities move to shut down their Confucius Institute programs, scholars have come to question the reasons behind doing so. The University of Chicago was the first U.S. college to disband its Confucius Institute in September of 2014, after faculty and students objected to its presence on campus. Pennsylvania State University followed by closing their program that same month for reasons of differing educational and research ambitions that Hanban wouldn't approve of.⁷ While these two universities had shut down their programs due to conflicting values or objectives, the greatest surge of closures would follow in the years of 2017-present.⁸ This massive shift of CIs is influenced by the publications criticizing the institutes, alongside groupthink and pressure amongst school societies, peer institutions, and the federal government.

One of the harshest critics of Confucius Institutes was the late Marshall Sahlins- one of the University of Chicago professors who advocated for its CI program to be disbanded. In his scathing pamphlet on Confucius Institutes, *Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware*, Sahlins argues CIs threaten “academic freedom and integrity in the U.S. and elsewhere.”⁹ Although he often inserts his own judgement on the matter, his pamphlet is overwhelmingly driven by cherry-picked quotes from CI directors and critics. These quotes support the main points Sahlins is trying to make: that Confucius Institutes are censored in alignment with the PRC's images/values, that the monetary funding of these institutions are likely shifty, and that CIs are a detriment to the academic integrity of partner colleges. Through quotes from other critics he also implies that Confucius Institutes are an extension of the “China Threat”- that American education is at stake with this Chinese academic soft power initiative¹⁰. While he maintains that

⁷Redden, Elizabeth. “Another Confucius Institute to Close.” Inside Higher Ed, October 1, 2014. <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2014/10/01/another-confucius-institute-close>.

⁸“How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States? .” National Association of Scholars, March 25, 2021. https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how_many_confucius_institutes_are_in_the_united_states.

⁹Sahlins, Marshall. *Confucius Institutes- Academic Malware*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2015.

¹⁰Sahlins, *Academic Malware*, 12.

his views have nothing to do with China's government policy or an anti-communism agenda, he overlooks that CIs are fundamentally a Chinese government mission. Most, if not all, of China's projects abroad are directly bound to the CCP. To dismiss the idea of his pamphlet as a critique of Hanban (and further, the CCP) was perhaps a technique to escape counter-criticism of "othering" China.

A more neutral assessment on the issue of Confucius Institutes by Edward McCord focuses less on "threats" and more on asking whether the threats are legitimate. In his article he concludes that critiques of Confucius Institutes are not based in fact, observation, or reason; instead, CI critiques are reflections of pre-existing concerns about China.¹¹ McCord describes this fault as an "echo-chamber" of worries against China; complaints and fears against Confucius Institutes are a result of negative portrayals of Chinese politics, economics, and society through mass media. This China Threat concept is oftentimes weaponized in the news and convinces Confucius Institute critics to view potential problems as real- without always needing proper evidence. Interestingly enough he emphasizes this through criticism of Sahlins: when Sahlins was attempting to collect evidence of fraud through the Confucius Institute at the University of Chicago, he found nothing suspect in the formal agreements.¹² Moreover, McCord argues that critiquing the statements put forth by Chinese officials on CIs are misinterpreted; scholars such as Sahlins who scrutinize Chinese officials' statements about CIs as "propoganda" don't understand the original intent of the word (as it was translated). Without understanding the proper connotation of the Chinese word, his analysis is faulty. McCord discredits the idea that the China Threat applies to Confucius Institutes is justified, and argues that many suspicions are derived from preexisting notions.

¹¹McCord, Edward A. "Where's the Beef? Confucius Institutes and Chinese Studies in American Universities." *Critical Asian Studies* 51, no. 3 (2019): 426-32.

¹²McCord, "Where's the Beef?", 429.

Schmidt takes an alternative approach to understanding the China Threat; she focuses on the origins of anti-Chinese sentiments in understanding how they manifest with Confucius Institutes. Terms such as “yellow peril”, “red peril”, and the modern-day “China Threat” originate from Western societies who frequently oscillate between the “Self” and “Other”.¹³ The “Self” aspect of his theory entails the desire for Western countries (especially America) to preserve their democracy and extend it to foreign nations. The “Other” aspect of her theory entails these Western nations alienating nations unlike their own, putting countries like China in this perpetual lens of representing the opposing set of values. With the “China Threat”, these Western societies see China as the Communist “Other” that is an imminent risk to the Democratic “Self”. Extending this to Confucius Institutes, the China Threat reveals an apprehension of western societies to learn and respect Chinese values/customs. Instead, critics of CIs see these institutions as a threat to their democracy and individualistic academic customs¹⁴.

With a diversity of opinions on the threat of Confucius Institutes partnered with American universities, how these threats manifest, and whether they are substantiated, scholarship surrounding the “China Threat” theory and Confucius Institutes is divided. While staunch critics such as Sahlins have generated conversation on CIs and likely have influenced colleges in shutting down their programs, other sources combat his analysis and conclusion. Intellectuals such as McCord and Schmidt focus less on directly attacking CIs, opting for an approach to understand why and if CIs should bear such disapproval. Building off these authors’ analyses, the next section will pinpoint the major allegations and present evidence against many of these unsubstantiated claims. Confucius Institute censorship, funding, and political agendas

¹³Schmidt, “Necessary White Body”.

¹⁴Sahlins, *Academic Malware*.

have been cited as promoting a deceptive partnership with U.S. schools. But without concrete proof, the image of CIs coercing innocent American colleges falls apart.

The Components of the “China Threat” with Confucius Institutes

In understanding if the proposed threats of Confucius Institutes are legitimate, one must first know what components of CIs are perceived as worrisome. Ardent critics like Sahlins focus on a few primary problems: Confucius Institutes censor discussion about China’s questionable moments in history and present-day interests, draw funding from the CCP’s propaganda department (and alternate sources), and depend on large U.S. colleges to promote their political agendas. For these reasons, many scholars have come to see these functioning cogs as a part of a larger mechanism for China to push for dominance abroad. Since several of these issues contradict western ideals of “independence” and “transparency”, they are deemed relevant to the China Threat as U.S. institutions are “coerced” by these threats.

Censorship

Research into Confucius Institutes has revealed a trend of censorship in its U.S. classrooms; taboo topics in China such as Tibet, the Dalai Lama, Tiananmen Square, Xinjiang’s Muslim “re-education” camps, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have frequently been barred or ignored in CI classes. For critics, this is seen as a disturbing dismissal of the truth-the U.S. has prided itself on complete academic openness so there is no hindrance to access and knowledge on any topic. With censorship on the line, the “academic integrity” of U.S. colleges is vulnerable to restricted CI class material. This appears logically as a fair conclusion: many people would agree

having unadulterated access to information is essential for having a thorough and valid understanding of the truth.

Scholars on Chinese relations have long detected censorship in Confucius Institutes; in 2007 Shambaugh published a piece China's propaganda systems, detailing how China has managed its influence abroad. He mentions Confucius Institutes briefly, and how their primary purpose was "intended to promote China's cultural image and 'soft power'."¹⁵ In his chapter he mentions censorship as a facet of China's self-promotion and consequently criticized CIs for misleading U.S. institutions. Critics of Confucius Institutes including Shambaugh see this censorship as deceitful- even though CI directors have fully acknowledged that their programs do censor specific material.

Evidence presented by Confucius Institute scholars, combined with numerous direct statements from Chinese officials, have made it clear that Confucius Institutes censor some subjects. Sahlin's pamphlet cites several of these general statements and puts them in the context of Confucius Institutes- even though the programs were never directly referenced. In 2010 Liu Yunshan, China's Minister of Propaganda, posted on the Yongning Government website that "we [China] should actively carry out international propaganda battles against issues such as Tibet, Xinjiang, Taiwan, Human Rights, and Falun Gong."¹⁶ That same year he was quoted saying "Make sure that all... cultural activities reflect and conform to the socialist core values."¹⁷ Wang Gengnian, Director of China Radio International, issued similar statements in 2011: "We should quietly plant the seeds of our ideology in foreign countries, we must make good use of our traditional culture to package our socialist ideology."¹⁸ It's logical that a Chinese-sponsored

¹⁵Sahlins, *Academic Malware*.

¹⁶Sahlins, *Academic Malware*, 6.

¹⁷Sahlins, *Academic Malware*, 6.

¹⁸Sahlins, *Academic Malware*, 8.

institute would be expected to uphold its own nation's ideologies and principles- including Confucius Institutes. Sahlin's cherry-picked quotes may provide insight into China's methodology with foreign ventures, but must be criticized for the assumption that CIs are interchangeable with the term "propaganda."

Considering that most Confucius Institutes were established 2007 and beyond, with a majority between the years of 2010-2019, much of this information on censorship was already widely available. Speculation from critics was confirmed openly and transparently by CI directors and Chinese officials. Knowing that partnering with Confucius Institute programs would entail some form of censorship, a degree of fault falls on the U.S. university partners for accepting funding and establishing a program it castigates. The argument that CI censorship is covert is unsubstantiated; the extent and subjects of CI censorship were confirmed before many of these schools instituted their programs. Resting on this allegation that institutes infringed upon the academic security of U.S. schools completely ignores decisions to willingly partner knowing the regulations involved. They accepted the funding and layout of the programs and should take responsibility if they collaborated with an organization they didn't align with. If these schools took issue with the censorship, either they hadn't properly researched the program they were accepting funding from or ignored it. While it's understandable why many scholars would push against censorship in U.S. colleges, the blame cannot be entirely shifted onto the program that openly acknowledged such censorship. Without holding U.S. colleges/universities accountable, this demonization of Confucius Institutes plays into the "China Threat" and the preconceived notions of a deceitful, unfair China.

Aside from U.S. institutions dismissing their role in the matter, it has been argued that Confucius Institutes cannot even justly speak on the topics without scrutiny. Much criticism that

is directed at CIs comes not from what they are teaching, but rather from what they are not teaching. To combat this issue the National Association of Scholars (NAS) suggests requiring CIs to host classes or events on censored subjects.¹⁹ However, this recommendation itself expresses and disseminates Chinese political ideologies and propaganda. If the Chinese viewpoints on subjects such as the Dalai Lama, Tiananmen Square, or Taiwan were to circulate on U.S. campuses, CIs would be accused of spreading pro-CCP sentiments antithetical to Western values. Either way Confucius Institutes are set up for failure. Restricting conversation on the topics is equated to academic dishonesty, and promoting conversation on the topics is equated to political brainwashing. That is why CIs seek to limit their influence to teaching Chinese language and culture- without focusing on political dogma.

Program Funding

Economic pressures including the Great Financial Crisis and wavering support for modern language programs has threatened Chinese studies. As public colleges and universities in the United States have faced decreased funding from the government, more institutions are seeking alternate routes to secure financing for their programs. Moreover, U.S. language departments have taken a hit as foreign language proficiency has not been bankrolled as a priority. With a prevalent demand for an increase in Chinese language skills, Confucius Institutes provide many of their partners with the funding and structure to deliver a strong Chinese language and culture program. Jiang Feng, creator of the Confucius Institute, asserts that Hanban

¹⁹Peterson, Rachelle. Rep. *OUTSOURCED TO CHINA: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education*. National Association of Scholars, 2017.

received numerous requests from foreign nations to assist their Chinese studies programs, and that hundreds of inquiries were still on the waiting list.²⁰

Initially, Hanban provides CI host institutions with \$100,000-\$150,000 of funding annually for five years. With all U.S. Confucius Institutes combined, this equates to about \$15 million of funding from the Chinese government yearly.²¹ This sum does not include all of the other additional benefits to the host institution, including teacher recruitment, training, salaries, travel costs, investment, and more. These benefits are not immediately quantified in dollar amounts but are nonetheless tangible contributions to the host institution. Aside from visiting faculty, it also funds the cultural programming, curricular materials for the classes, and the reference libraries students have access to. Typically alongside this financing comes the opportunity to partner with a “sister” university located in China. Through this connection Hanban can train and send graduate students from the sister university to the host institution to teach and/or manage the CIs.

The CIUS asserts that Confucius Institutes are non-profit organizations run by Hanban and in affiliation with the CCP’s Ministry of Education. But some scholars, such as Sahlins, contend that the MOE is a fraudulent front for the CCP’s External Propaganda Department.²² In his pamphlet, Sahlins references Shambaugh, who argued that although the partnered institutions are told that the MOE funds their programs, it is secretly laundered from the CCPPD. Shambaugh contends that CIs’ purpose is to “...promote and popularize Chinese language and culture by offering Chinese language and culture classes...all intended to promote China’s cultural image and ‘soft power’.”²³

²⁰Hubbert, Jennifer. *China in the World: an Anthropology of Confucius Institutes, Soft Power, and Globalization*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2019.

²¹McCord, “Where’s the Beef?”.

²²Sahlins, *Academic Malware*, 12.

²³Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System", 50.

The way in which these programs are established follow two main routes. The first is that schools actively seek out Confucius Institutes and apply directly to Hanban to establish them.²⁴ This way the U.S. college acts out of its own self interest in order to have a CI on campus- whether through desire for a better Chinese studies program, and/or the prestige of collaborating with prominent Chinese universities. The second route takes the form of Hanban approaching a specific educational or cultural institution with a proposal to start a program. Historically Hanban has targeted elite universities in the U.S. and Europe, with the hope of maximizing its influence. This way Hanban selectively appeals to the school itself, acting out of China's own self interest with convincing benefits for the U.S. institution.

In conjunction with the financial deficit of foreign institutes and allure of program funding, scholars Zhou and Luk consider CI funding to be a bribe.²⁵ They argue that Hanban (and furthermore, the Chinese government) had the upperhand in these partnerships abroad; as schools were lacking/cutting back funding for their Chinese language classes, Hanban was convincingly offering program aid. They argue that hard-power coercion comes from this financial commitment. The work references one CI director who was quoted saying that the partnered CI programs should uphold China's national interest because Hanban is funding their institute- further pressuring other CIs to act accordingly.²⁶ In the official guidelines and constitutions/by-laws of CIs and Hanban, it is clear that the Confucius Institutes must abide by China's political and societal values. Bribes are by definition associated with dishonesty or illegality- but through the legal agreements with CIs, host institutions are well aware of these policies. There is something to be said about the clarity that Confucius Institutes must officially

²⁴Hubbert, *China in the World*, 14.

²⁵Zhou, Ying, and Luk, Sabrina. "Establishing Confucius Institutes: A Tool for Promoting China's Soft Power?" *The Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 100 (2016): 638.

²⁶Zhou & Luk, "Establishing Confucius Institutes", 638.

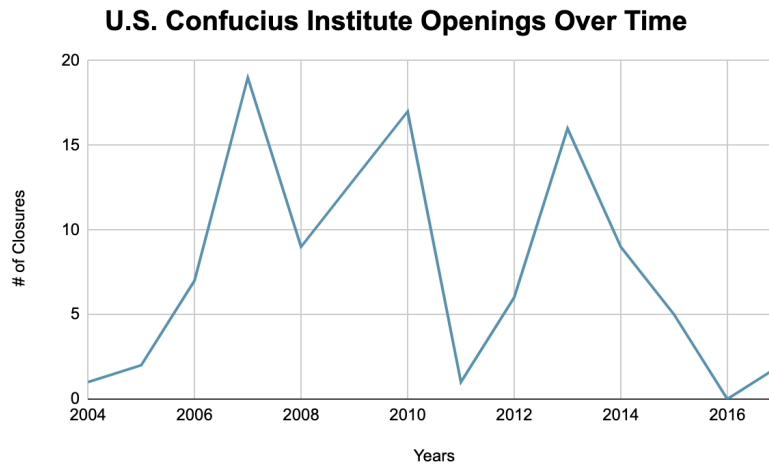
follow China's agenda, despite an uproar from scholars. More ambiguously, it can be debated whether Hanban's timing to allocate these funds was a part of a hard or soft power agenda; that during times of financial uncertainty, Confucius Institutes may have targeted financially vulnerable colleges for partnership with underlying motivations.

Schools may find Confucius Institute funding enticing- especially in the United States. Although since 2005 Chinese has been determined as "a language critical to the U.S. now and in the future" by the National Security Education Program (NSEP), the U.S. has made little financial and developmental effort to promote the language.²⁷ Some of the many problems in the Chinese field include a lack of: certified teachers, widespread national effort, training programs for instructors, learning materials, and immersive learning programs.²⁸ Figure #1 below displays the openings of American CIs over time; much of the graph's activity reflects the financial struggles and restrictions in the U.S. with few openings in 2008 (financial crisis) and 2016 (federal funding cutbacks). It is clear that America hasn't prioritized language development in times of economic uncertainty, and hasn't capitalized on supplemental funding during these years. While advancements such as AP Chinese classes and the National Council of Associations of Chinese Language Schools (NCACLS) have helped institutionalize Chinese learning, it must be acknowledged that many of these programs are conducted in association with China's organizations. If American schools wish to distance themselves from foreign financing, they need to alleviate this funding issue.

²⁷Wang, Shuhan C. "Building Societal Capital: Chinese in the US." *Language Policy* 6, no. 1 (2007): 37.

²⁸Wang, "Building Societal Capital".

Figure #1



(Data collected from MLA's 2016 Modern Language Census)

Political Agendas

Confucius Institutes have and will continue to serve under the guise of traditional Chinese culture including classical art forms (calligraphy, dragon dances), holistic medicine (cupping, herbal), and time-honored celebrations (Spring/Autumn Festivals). As stated by Liu Yunshan, the CCP's head of the propaganda department, the PRC will "Coordinate the efforts of overseas and domestic propaganda, and further create a favorable international environment for us... we should actively carry out international propaganda battles against issuers such as Tibet, Xinjiang, Taiwan, human rights and Falun Gong... We should do well in establishing and operating overseas cultural centers and Confucius Institutes."²⁹ However, scholars such as McCord contend that the usage of the translated Chinese characters 宣传(xuānchuán) to the English term "propaganda" is incorrect. The English word "propaganda" has a negative

²⁹Epstein, Ethan. "How China Infiltrated U.S. Classrooms." POLITICO Magazine, January 17, 2018. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/01/16/how-china-infiltrated-us-classrooms-216327>.

connotation, while the Chinese characters “xuānchuán” carry a broader usage of “give publicity to” or “disseminate” soft power.³⁰

If Confucius Institutes were promoting political propaganda, there would likely be concrete evidence of it. Although all CI instructors and classes are under U.S. oversight, no firm proof of CCP propaganda has surfaced. There is no instated rule that materials supplied by China must be used in CI classes- and oftentimes they are not used.³¹ The Hoover Institution, a conservative public policy think tank operating out of Stanford University, issued a report on Confucius Institutes discussing the proliferating accusations. After an analysis of Hanban textbooks the report stated that they didn’t find “any evidence of interference by CIs in the mainstream Chinese studies curriculum on U.S. campuses.”³² Still acknowledging the varying opinions and allegations, the report argues that there are no overt political sentiments in the materials or consistent controversies at the partnered institutions. The Hoover Institution takes a more neutral stance on the issue and instead provides evidence that counters critics’ claims.

On the other hand a report by Rachele Peterson from the National Association of Scholars, a conservative nonprofit advocacy group, recommends for all partnered universities and colleges to close their Confucius Institutes.³³ In Peterson’s “weapons of soft power” section, she details China’s political agendas through CIs; labeled as a “united front” the author slams the connection of Confucius Institutes to the Chinese government, citing it as a method for China to influence its public image abroad and “mobilize Chinese nationals living abroad.”³⁴ She concludes CIs are a part of China’s greater overseas propaganda efforts, and that students engaged with CIs are subjected to a narrow and pro-CCP version of Chinese studies. Alongside

³⁰McCord, “Where’s the Beef?”.

³¹McCord, “Where’s the Beef?”.

³²Diamond, Larry Jay, and Orville Schell. *China's Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2019. 56.

³³Peterson, *Outsourced to China*.

³⁴Peterson, *Outsourced to China*, 1.

the closing of all CIs, she recommends restricting visas to CI teachers, curbing federal funds to schools with CIs, warning other schools about the dangers of CIs, and registering CIs as “foreign agents.”³⁵ Peterson emulates this “China Threat” perception in her report and recommendations, criticizing schools for accepting funding from the Chinese government rather than criticizing the quality of the CIs themselves. Nonetheless, her argument to disband CIs due to political associations is a platform some CI critics rest upon.

Others believe that suspect activity is wrought between both players. Amidst accusations of nefarious political activity and the questioning of the sources of Confucius Institute funding, critics have speculated that partnered American institutions may be complicit in their role in China’s political agenda. Some CI critics believe there should be some distinction of suspect clauses in the confidential Memoranda of Understandings (MOU) drafted between Hanban and U.S. institutions that would reveal these allegations. For example one of the originators of the anti-Confucius Institute Movement, Marshall Sahlins, contended that there would be questionable activity in the MOUs with the University of Chicago. Although his suspicion behind the MOUs influenced his judgement on Confucius Institutes, once Sahlins inspected the formalized agreements he found nothing suspect.³⁶

After evaluating the mutual benefits, it is evident that the bond between the Confucius Institute and the university could bring political power to both countries. As countries including America have sought ways to curb the decline in the study and practice of foreign languages, Confucius Institutes pose educational and political opportunities to expand the global prowess of its students. By accepting funding and establishing a CI program, the participating institution can revive participation in lucrative languages such as Chinese that currently serve an important role.

³⁵Peterson, *Outsourced to China*, 2.

³⁶McCord, “Where’s the Beef?”.

For regions including (but not limited to) the U.S. and the U.K., Confucius Institutes provide a gateway to maintain and expand their relationship with China. While many of these Western countries rely on business and political dealings with China, broadening the scope of their relationship to cultural levels would solidify less transactional agendas. This also presents an opportunity for China to influence the world through soft power: by engaging schools in learning Chinese learning, more interest in China can be generated abroad.

China's Soft Power

In the time of China's current competitive economic, military, and political clout, its influence is no longer constrained to hard power ventures. As negative and aggressive images associated with China proliferate amongst Western political and economic discourse, featuring pictures of Mao Zedong or mythical fire-breathing dragons, China has escalated its efforts to improve its image abroad. With the goal in mind of expanding global access to Chinese cultural and educational materials, it has shifted its focus to show its "true" essence to the world community.³⁷ While Confucius Institutes have been seen by some as one of China's most forward-looking soft power initiatives, others have come to scrutinize the impact of foreign government intervention in academic programs.

Evaluating China's recent cultural ventures abroad, this section will examine Confucius Institutes as another mode of soft power. To better understand CIs under these criteria, their success will be evaluated after clarifying what soft power is and what the programs goals are. While scholars have often assessed the institutes under the guise of Nye's Western conception of soft power, the Chinese culture-centered version will be prioritized. To respond to the

³⁷Hubbert, *China in the World*, 10.

judgements on foreign soft power present at U.S. institutions, a subsection will be dedicated to understanding the educational impact of Confucius Institutes on American campuses. This will provide a clearer picture on how CIs serve as soft power, if they have been successful in the endeavors, and whether they have negatively or positively impacted U.S. education.

China's Soft Power Initiatives

The Chinese government has encouraged globalization action since the mid/late 1970's through the concept of "inviting the world in" (引进来).³⁸ Since at this time China was seeking prospects to expand economically, a promotion of foreign investment would secure domestic wealth for Chinese manufacturers. What followed was China's development in production and manufacturing, whose efficiency skyrocketed the nation as the "world's factory". Now consumer goods sought by Westerners were overwhelmingly being produced by and in China. This promotion of the country as the globe's manufacturer swept Western nations with goods labeled "made in China"- a small detail that would set up China for a broader expansion of influence.

Following its economic amplification in global markets, China began a new phase of globalization practices centered around increasing the government's power and influence through foreign projects. In the 1990's and 2000's, China began investing in global enterprises, purchased technology/development projects, founded multinational corporations, and raised its prominence in international organizations. Whether it was China's 2008 hosting of the Summer Olympics or joining of the World Trade Organization, China had its foot in the door. Now China's globalization has expanded beyond hard power limitations: it is a member of the international

³⁸Hubbert, *China in the World*, 5.

community. However, maintaining such a presence requires calculated effort within areas of importance.

Since the 2000's, China has prioritized specific soft power ventures; China created an international TV channel (CCTV), sent its art across the world for display (Terracotta Soldiers), translated their famous works into foreign languages, and began academic pursuits abroad (Confucius Institutes).³⁹ At this point China aimed to focus not only on the administrative power of advancing its military, economics, and politics, but also on the dissemination of its culture and language. Confucius Institutes are designed to fit into that agenda; at its partnered U.S. universities, Confucius Institutes employ professors from China, fund language and cultural classes, and host Chinese holiday/entertainment events. By financially supporting the interest in Chinese studies abroad, China seeks to increase foreign engagement with its language and culture.

Confucius Institutes as Soft Power

Academic soft power initiatives have been commonplace in the United States for decades- language/culture program funding from foreign governments is nothing new. Examples include Germany's Goethe-Institut in Washington D.C. and France's French Institute Alliance Française in New York City- both of which are promoted as language and culture centers. There are many merits to expanding soft power in this way. By encouraging a country's presence in foreign institutions, it is likely more educated individuals will pursue a career connected with the country where otherwise they wouldn't have the resources to do so. However, it is important to

³⁹James F. Paradise. "China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing's Soft Power." *Asian Survey* 49, no. 4 (2009): 647-69.

break down and analyze the underlying reasons why, when, and where a country chooses to promote their programs.

There are a multitude of factors that guided where Confucius Institutes were established: the degree of the college's population, prestige, private/public position, presence of international students, and existence (or lack thereof) of a Chinese studies program.⁴⁰ In choosing where to fund Confucius Institutes, China had a greater preference for larger universities with a student population exceeding 4,500- which usually entailed public or well-known colleges. Prestige is a large facet in the decision-making; not only would China seek high-ranking universities such as Stanford, Columbia, and Tufts, but also would seek universities close to large metropolitan centers such as Temple, Rutgers, and George Mason. The presence of Chinese students or a Chinese program at the university also plays an important role. Confucius Institutes are more likely to be instituted at schools that already have a large international student population and decent Chinese studies department. Having an existing presence of Chinese language and culture on campus aids the process of establishing a CI. All elements of the decision-making process considered, these facets work in conjunction to promote China's image effectively and efficiently. By choosing larger and more prestigious schools, China can maximize the impact of its Confucius Institutes through sheer widespread dissemination among the most successful students and academic communities. By choosing schools more integrated with foreign students and studies, China can sidestep potential criticism that it might face at less tolerant colleges.

However, it should also be noted that Confucius Institutes have partnered with schools lacking a concrete Chinese studies program or elite reputation. Hanban has funded CIs at religiously affiliated colleges (Pacific Lutheran University in Washington, Presbyterian College

⁴⁰Luqiu, Luwei Rose, and McCarthy, John D. "Confucius Institutes: The Successful Stealth "Soft Power" Penetration of American Universities." *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus)* 90, no. 4 (2019): 620-43.

in South Carolina), HBCUs (Xavier University of Louisiana), and career oriented institutions (State College of Optometry in New York, San Diego Global Knowledge University). In these instances Confucius Institutes serve to create language programs where they traditionally might not have existed. For many students this was an opportunity to finally take Chinese language and cultural classes, or participate in study abroad programs. While China has strategically partnered with high-ranking popular universities, it has diversified its impact by engaging with communities where a Chinese presence may be lacking.

It's clear that by nature Confucius Institutes are indirectly spheres of soft power- by promoting Chinese language and culture, the institutes are advancing China's image and relevance in foreign communities. The factors considered where to establish these programs also reflect China's desire to have impactful relationships. By choosing predominantly prestigious U.S. universities in/near populous cities, the mission of CIs reaches wider and more prominent communities. Simultaneously engaging with communities devoid of a Chinese presence, CIs diversify its reach and scope of soft power.

While many scholars contend that Confucius Institutes embody a form of soft power that is used to fulfill a broader agenda, there are some that argue that CIs are not soft power at all. Zhou and Luk press the idea that CIs are one facet of China's hard power, because they fulfill underlying economic and political goals in the long-term.⁴¹ By analyzing the "payments" and "bribes" incurred by Confucius Institutes alongside the negative associations, they assert that this initiative should no longer be seen as "soft". The authors believe China could use Confucius Institutes to promote soft power, but find there are several road-blocks that prevent such approach; Hanban is focused on the spread of CIs abroad rather than the strengthening of the established programs, leading to a decline in individual quality. They also argue the image and

⁴¹Zhou & Luk, "Establishing Confucius Institutes".

values of China represented through these programs seems unclear. Without consistent defined ideals and practices, critics have grown skeptical of what messages the program is trying to deliver.

Others contend that soft power is thought of and applied differently in countries. Fliegel and Kříž assert that the modern concept of soft power originated from the American scholar Joseph S. Nye, who popularized the term in the 1980's.⁴² After the Cold War when the U.S. felt its relative power receding, Nye formulated the concept in order to keep America in a dominant political and social position. Created by a U.S. liberal and primarily applied to serving that country's aims, "soft power" has been seen as only compatible with similar liberal mindsets. Contrary to this, the authors maintain that China has been practicing soft power as early as the fifth century; philosopher Sun Tzu emphasized the benefits of a state winning without applying force.⁴³ This is similar to Nye's vision of soft power of co-opting rather than coercing a country. A major difference is that China's soft power follows a top-down approach: high-ranking officials create the policies and are followed down through the ranks of lower officials. As American soft power functions from a bottom-up approach, critics come to see Chinese soft power ventures as a problematic power play. Since the governance of the U.S. and China differ between liberal-democratic and socialist institutions, there is a disparity between soft power actors operating with and without government constraints. Americans can actively voice their opposition when their country is at fault, giving the illusion that their society is free and equal. Chinese citizens cannot engage in such discourse, so soft power is controlled majorly by the government. China has embodied their own distinct soft power approach through Confucius

⁴²Fliegel, Michal, and Kříž, Zdeněk. "Beijing-Style Soft Power: A Different Conceptualisation to the American Coinage." *China Report (New Delhi)* 56, no. 1 (2020): 1-18.

⁴³Whyte, Leon. "Sun Tzu and the Art of Soft Power?" *The Diplomat*, March 31, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/03/sun-tzu-and-the-art-of-soft-power/>.

Institutes; as CIs are directly funded and controlled by the CCP, they are a governmental venture rather than a community-led venture. The institutes follow China's conception of soft power, and should be analyzed under its own terms rather than be defined by a Western notion.

Walker and Ludwig present a new conception of China's ventures domestically and abroad- what they deem are a part of "sharp power". Although the source does not touch upon Confucius Institutes directly, it presents a different synthesis to what many scholars would define as "soft power". As soft power has traditionally been identified as the "ability to affect others by attraction and persuasion", the authors proclaim China's endeavors cannot be seen as such. Instead, China's efforts should be conceptualized as sharp power: "...in which their actions seem to impair free expression to compromise and neutralize independent institutions, and to distort the political environment."⁴⁴ In this way it could be argued that Confucius Institutes do not reap soft power through appeal and attraction, but rather through changing or distorting institutions' outlook on China with overt political motives.

As shown through conflicting opinions on what defines soft power and whether Confucius Institutes should be regarded as such, there is no conclusive judgement on the situation. Different countries have their own approaches and opinions on soft power, and CIs should be evaluated under both the Chinese and American conceptions. Doing so provides insight to the scholarship criticism towards CIs when interpreting its intentions under a Western lens. Understanding the Chinese version of soft power gives more insight into what CIs hope to accomplish and clears up potential misconceptions.

The Impact of Soft Power in Higher Education

⁴⁴Walker, Christopher, Kalathil, Shanthi, and Ludwig, Jessica. "The Cutting Edge of Sharp Power." *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 1 (2020): 124-37.

Historically it has been difficult for China to spread its soft power in foreign countries. Both China's highly contested politics and early stages of soft power development contribute to its inefficiency.⁴⁵ However, it has recently made great strides in promoting Chinese language and culture abroad: China's government has worked alongside the College Board to create AP Chinese language courses and tests, has funded international teacher training programs, summer camps for U.S. students, and has provided scholarships for Chinese-interested foreigners. Confucius Institutes are another facet of China's growing influence in education, with the primary goal of engaging more outsiders with Chinese studies. However China's highly controversial hard power aims (politically, militarily) have led scholars, professors, and students to question whether China is fit to lead truly fair and informative educational programs abroad.

Scholars and U.S. government officials have generated major pushback on Confucius Institutes, with prominent argumentation asserting that the “threat the institutes pose to the ability of the next generation of American leaders to learn, think, and speak about realities in China and the true nature of the Communist Party regime.”⁴⁶ They believe that CI materials and agendas pose a serious risk to U.S. academics, and will essentially brainwash students into a pro-CCP point of view. Although it has been claimed that the institutes monitor the lives of Chinese students on campuses, heavily influence schools' curriculums, and restrict anti-China criticism in communities, these allegations are unsubstantiated with scant or nonexistent evidence. These critics largely overstate the power of Confucius Institutes on college campuses, and devise this narrative that the students' and schools' education can be toppled by one supplementary academic establishment.

⁴⁵Paradise, "China and International Harmony".

⁴⁶Rogin, Josh. "Opinion | Waking up to China's Infiltration of American Colleges." The Washington Post, February 19, 2018.

With carefully structured and devised Chinese educational programs comes the opportunity for students and scholars to examine the purpose of the format. As Confucius Institutes primarily promote traditional Chinese philosophy and culture, many have come to question why these programs avoid topics of modern Chinese society. Many Confucius Institutes are partnered with top U.S. universities, thus students and staff have the resources to form their own judgements on the instruction in CI classrooms. It is argued that CIs provide students with the platform to analyze and explore global agendas behind the institutes themselves; these orderly, carefully forged programs are a gateway to understanding modern Chinese political strategies, cultural values, and educational practices.⁴⁷ In this way students not only have access to learn traditional Chinese language and culture, but also engage with CIs in a constructive manner. Students and scholars are not benign actors in the entanglements of Confucius Institutes—they are active intellectual minds who formulate their own opinions based on a multitude of encounters with Chinese academics, media, and news. This is an unforeseen, and oftentimes overlooked, educational benefit of CI partnerships.

Success of Confucius Institutes as a Soft Power Force

To understand if Confucius Institutes are serving China as a successful soft power operation abroad, two things must be understood: what the original mission of CIs is, and what constitutes a successful form of soft power. The purpose and intent behind Confucius Institutes have been told differently among CI directors and scholars, as aforementioned in the scholarship review. A recent 2020 letter by Gao Qing, director of the Confucius Institutes, generally describes the mission as “a means to help students and educators find educational, academic, cultural and arts courses, initiatives and programs concerning Chinese language, culture and

⁴⁷Hubbert, *China in the World*, 19.

arts.”⁴⁸ While this description leaves out the Chinese self-serving aspects of initiating Confucius Institutes, this broad generalization encapsulates the basic elements and overall impact of Hanban’s funding to the partnered institutions. Previously noted, soft power is defined by Nye as “...the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies.”⁴⁹ Some scholars argue that China has a different conception of “soft power”, and others see CIs as sharp/hard power ventures.

Nye’s definition of soft power took hold amongst Chinese scholars, stimulating debate with varied perspectives. Chinese intellectuals believed that soft power was essential to China’s comprehensive national power, 综合国力 (zònghé guóli), and likened Nye’s theory to early concepts in Confucianism.⁵⁰ Wang Huning, the deputy director of the Policy Research Office of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC), was the first in China to publish on soft power. His opinion echoed the majority view on China’s soft power: that, for China, “the core of soft power is culture.”⁵¹ Rather than focusing on promoting national politics and policies, China has focused on making Chinese culture accessible and attractive to foreign audiences. Chinese university administrators have contended that Confucius Institutes should not be seen as a promotion of soft power, and should be seen in an academic light rather than a political one. However, I believe that this defensiveness is in response to Nye’s soft power concept. CIs function under the lens of Chinese soft power, as these institutes are fundamentally language and cultural centers. To better

⁴⁸Qing, G. Letter to Clifton C. Seagroves. “Letter to the State Department.” Washington D.C.: Confucius Institute U.S. Center, August 19, 2019.

⁴⁹Nye, Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

⁵⁰McGiffert, Carola. Rep. *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States*. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009.

⁵¹Wang Huning, “Culture as National Soft Power: Soft Power,” *Journal of Fudan University* (March 1993).

conceptualize the success of Confucius Institutes as soft power, I will be evaluating them under the lens of China's soft power and program goals.

Based on research into China's public image where Confucius Institutes are established, it seems that their soft power ventures have proved successful. Not only through the dissemination of Chinese language and culture in college societies, but also by relieving some of China's negative associations. The CCP has sought to promote positive sentiments of China through these institutions.⁵² In the areas in which Confucius Institutes are set, there has been a noticeable positive shift in the tone of media reports on China's affairs in contrast to before the establishment. China has favorably managed to shape its public image abroad, though not always locally, but by subtly changing the overall negative associations with China that circulate in discourse. By doing so Confucius Institutes have proved to be a beneficial and powerful soft power initiative.

In their empirical analysis on CIs redefining China's image abroad, Brazys and Dukalskis utilized the Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT) to cross-examine local medias' tonal shift in areas with active institutes. They gathered 315,923 foreign media observations on Confucius Institutes whose tones ranged from -20.97 (more negative) to +22.68 (more positive). After consolidating 6,012 global tone locations, they found 38,922 occurrences of Average Tone (+2.91) that shows neutral/slight positivity towards China. This 2019 study, while imperfect as measuring tone is subjective, suggests that there is a relatively even tone distribution across areas with Confucius Institutes.

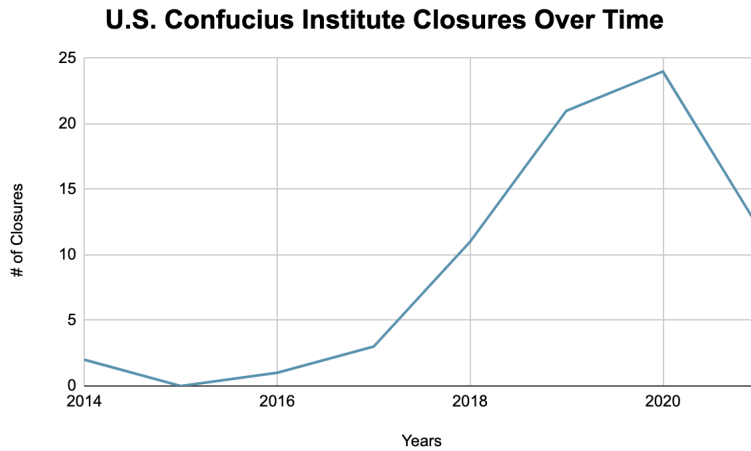
Despite the positive change in reports surrounding China, Confucius Institutes' activeness did not factor into this. To try and account for the variability in the tonal shift, Brazys

⁵²Brazys, Samuel, and Dukalskis, Alexander. "Rising Powers and Grassroots Image Management: Confucius Institutes and China in the Media." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 12, no. 4 (2019): 557-84.

and Dukalskis devised a chart to explain the discrepancies. Schools that have active Confucius Institutes presence generate a favorable shift in local tone media (+0.263) compared to that of inactive Confucius Institutes (+0.073). The divergence is seen as significant, and shows how the CI impact on local media decreases farther away from the CI location. Due to this analysis, actively engaged Confucius Institutes can be confirmed by this model as a successful soft power maneuver. CIs operating in communities were able to positively shape local perceptions on China, despite the mass closures since 2014.

There is evidence that Confucius Institutes were able to manage China's image abroad, which was the primary goal of China's soft power venture via the Belt and Road Initiative. But it can also be argued they were unsuccessful due to community backlash and the massive surge of program closures. Confucius Institutes are slowly becoming obsolete in the U.S. amidst a slew of government mandates and public pressure. Figure #2 below depicts the rapid nature of these closures, ending with the twelve closures announced for this year (thus far). CIs have failed in terms of longevity, but have nonetheless planted a seed of pro-China sentiments on college campuses across the country. A combination of the "China Threat" and the CCP's unwillingness to compromise eventually led to the demise of these institutions, but were a stepping stone in the formulation of more long-lasting Chinese influence abroad.

Figure #2



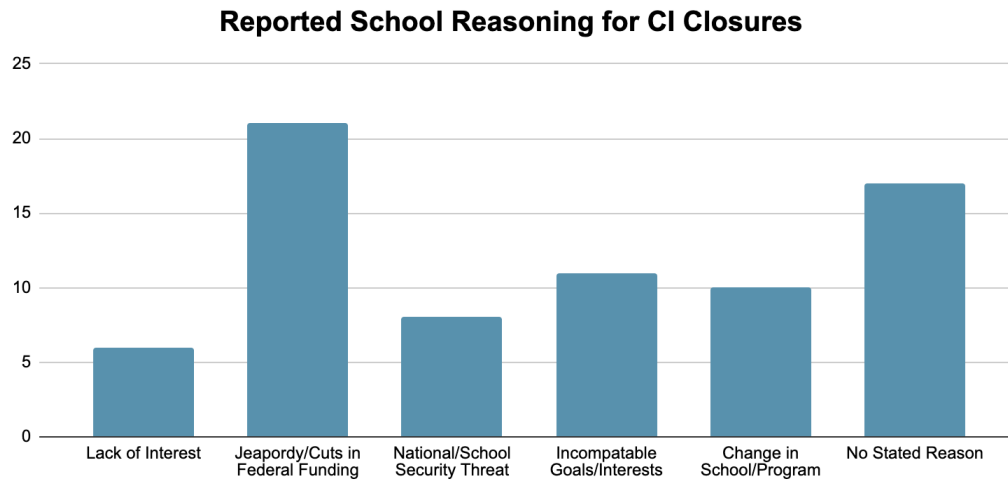
(Data collected from NAS' 2021 Closure Chart⁵³)

To see if Confucius Institutes closed due to their own inadequacies as soft power programs, I constructed Figure #3 below displaying the proportions of stated reasons for dissolving their CIs. A vast majority of these posted school announcements fell into six different types of reasoning: lack of interest, jeopardy/cuts in federal funding, national/school security threat, incompatible goals/interests, change in school/program (replaced by new Chinese program), or no stated reason. As depicted below, the reasoning was spread out with the highest proportion being jeopardy/cuts in federal funding or no stated reason. This follows logically, as the U.S. government's major pushback threatened the financial security of schools reliant on their aid. The presence of the national/security threat conformed to the concerns of the U.S. government rather than the school's individual concerns of security. Other reasons such as lack of interest, incompatible goals/interests, and change in school/program reflect the weaknesses of Confucius Institutes themselves. The institutes weren't engaging thoroughly with the host community, wouldn't expand its interests into research-based studies, and were sometimes replaced by other Chinese programs/departments. If they sought to alleviate these issues,

⁵³National Association of Scholars, "How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?"

Confucius Institutes would have been much stronger soft power programs. However there is a large presence of stated reasons outside the CIs' control, aggravated by the U.S. government's negative response to China in higher education.

Figure #3



(Data collected from NAS' 2021 Closure Chart⁵⁴)

Accountability

The utilization of soft power in foreign countries, especially in academics, is no new reality. Once a nation begins to gain prominence, it looks outward to expand its culture and influence. The United States is no exception to this; America has a multitude of connections around the world, using soft power to maintain its powerful standing in the international community. Whether that be through cultural centers abroad, funded scholarship programs such as Fulbright, or mission trips to third world countries, the U.S. has consistently pushed its democratic, Christian, and liberal ideals abroad. Since China's socialist and communist values

⁵⁴National Association of Scholars, "How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?"

are not in alignment with the Western-minded ideals and “soft power” theory, its comparable academic ventures have been labeled as propaganda “brain-washing”.

With U.S. educational institutions accepting partnership and funding from the CCP through Confucius Institutes, it raises the question who should bear responsibility for the criticism directed at the programs. China, who constructed, funds, and runs these programs, or the U.S. institutions, who accept the funding, guidelines, and gain their own distinct soft power benefits? Confucius Institutes unjustly bear the brunt of criticism in the scholarly community, so this section will offer a unique analysis of the wrongdoings and hypocrisy of U.S. institutions. CIs and U.S. schools both played a role in this relationship, so it’s essential to assign accountability to both. Confucius Institutes (and furthermore the CCP) have been relatively inflexible in addressing criticism, despite its desire to collaborate with colleges abroad. This unwillingness has aggravated the ill-feelings towards the institutions, and have generally made them appear weaker and less trustworthy. U.S. institutions should take accountability for their role in choosing to partner with CIs; American schools should not feel taken advantage of by Confucius Institutes, after consensually accepting funding, guidelines, and practices. Building off sentiments and information from the previous sections, this analysis will shed light on how CIs have been used as scapegoats for blame on American schools.

China/Hanban/CCP

Since Confucius Institutes were created and funded by Hanban, and by extension the CCP’s Ministry of Education, most criticism of the programs falls on China. This comes as no surprise as scholarly debate on the efficacy of the programs surrounds its sources of funding, censored materials, and underlying political agendas. In my opinion it is difficult to scrutinize

Confucius Institutes based on their agreed-upon content and procedures: the American schools actively chose to partner with CIs, knowing compliance for funding is required. One cannot demonize Confucius Institutes for enforcing the proceedings they set forth in formal agreements, as U.S. colleges are aware of what arrangements they agreed to. Based on this, I cannot argue that CIs should take sole accountability for their censorship, alleged political aims, and government funding- these components were permitted and known by U.S. colleges before partnership. Thus, this cannot be seen as coercion as some scholars have contended. Instead I offer the perspective that Confucius Institutes lack cooperation with the communities they seek to collaborate with- furthermore, that denying this responsibility has made Confucius Institutes a much weaker academic program.

Confucius Institutes are not inherently political in their materials and teachings, but it would be naive to believe Hanban didn't anticipate political/cultural pushback. The CCP is resolute in its adherence to its values and practices, oftentimes shying away from discussing its controversial actions. However there exists an immense benefit to blurring China's strict formalism of maintaining its international reputation; by opening itself up to criticism and encouraging students to be current on Chinese affairs, Confucius Institutes can protect academic freedoms while continuing to operate the same. The textbooks have already been proven devoid of political propaganda- and Confucius Institutes aren't required to use them anyways. Instead CIs should encourage students to research current Chinese events on their own accord, and allow students to discuss these topics with professors. Barring conversations on certain topics only incites more interest, so it would be wiser to diffuse tension in this way.

The Confucius Institute U.S. Center (CIUS) posted a final report in November of 2020 detailing the failures of the institutes, and suggesting ways to alleviate the negative tension.⁵⁵ Out

⁵⁵Lu, Lee, Mel Gurtov, and Dale Cope. Rep. *Confucius Institutes in the U.S.: Final Report*, 2020.

of the six recommendations, only a few struck me as viable for curtailing criticism: to train CI teachers on the “nature of governance in U.S. universities”, clarify the CI mission within the U.S. institution’s context, and promote the academic components of the programs. These are steps that could aid China in assimilating to working in foreign communities, which could make programs more palatable. These recommendations seem to align with my suggestions, although CI’s interpretation and actions could easily deviate from these thought processes. Training teachers on school environments/governance, as well as interpreting the institutes’ missions within the U.S. context, could easily aid the programs in readjusting. By promoting professor understandings of American schools and their practices, CIs could relieve some of the tension on campuses. CIs have traditionally barred anti-China topics from discussion, but redefining the mission and partnership to be cooperative could open that door.

U.S. Institutions

The major appeal of Confucius Institutes is the mutually beneficial relationship that comes from their partnership; U.S. schools have guaranteed funding for their Chinese department, ties to prestigious Chinese universities, presence in China’s academic community, as well as opportunities for their students to gain international experience. However, during my research I’ve found that very few critics of Confucius Institutes acknowledge this gain for America; instead, U.S. schools and students are often portrayed as benign actors who fell victim to China’s deceptive soft power antics. This perception is misconstrued, harmful, and unfair as both Confucius Institutes and U.S. institutions sought to benefit from this relationship. As analyzed previously, there is no conclusive evidence of wrongdoings by these Chinese programs. Thus, the subsequent denunciation of CIs by scholars and schools should be shifted to hold

American colleges accountability for their role in the issue.

U.S. institutions undeniably receive many benefits from Confucius Institutes; on a financial front these schools secured funding from the institute, recruited and trained teachers, materials including textbooks, and increased access to academic programs in China. Less directly, these colleges benefited from Chinese university partnerships, intellectual examination/interpretation of the programs, and development of their Chinese department. By fulfilling the demand for foreign language proficiency, these schools can stay competitive domestically. By enrolling more students in Chinese language and culture classes, U.S. schools have the opportunity to mold their students into global citizens. Confucius Institutes pose many financial, status, and structural benefits to Chinese departments- which is why many U.S. universities approached the Ministry of Education to request a program. The initial appeal was so great that many American colleges sought out CIs, instead of China targeting such foreign institutions.

These U.S. schools act upon their own free will, yet bear nearly no responsibility for the criticism thrown at CIs. They accepted funding, agreed to expectations, and sought benefits from this partnership. However, when Confucius Institutes began to face criticism and terminations, why were fingers not being pointed at American colleges for hosting them? These were not deceptive programs lurking in the backdrop, preying on schools needing assistance; it becomes apparent that anxieties surrounding China proliferated, leading the blame to naturally shift onto CIs. U.S. educational institutions, seen as purveyors of academic truth and freedom, evade being reprimanded when forcibly “othered” countries like China are involved in the situation. Scholars have continuously looked outward for the perpetrator of their problems, and instead refuse to look inward to their own country’s involvement.

Future of CIs and China's Soft Power

State actors, scholars, and U.S. institutions have influenced the legacy of Confucius Institutes in America. In the last six years there has been a sweeping trend of closing CIs, which has forced China to reconsider its approach in Chinese language/cultures abroad. There have been a few small acts of reform to alleviate some criticism towards the programs, but no concrete plan has been announced by Hanban. As more schools are at risk of closing, the spotlight is on China's program changes and U.S. institutions' decision to dissolve or restructure their relationship.

What the termination of Confucius Institutes on U.S. college campuses means for Chinese studies programs is still an open question. For schools reliant on CI funding to develop their Chinese department, the closures pose a threat to the continuation of these studies; underprivileged schools grapple with the potential of losing federal funding if they keep their Confucius Institutes. These educational institutions reliant on aid from external parties are vulnerable to this government pressure. To conclude my paper on Confucius Institutes on American campuses, I will predict what the future holds for Confucius Institutes and U.S. schools. This section will evaluate the trend in Confucius Institute closures/reorganization, how this shift will impact Chinese studies in the U.S., and what this means for the future of Chinese soft power in foreign academia.

CI Program Closures & Renaming

Since the introduction of the U.S. Confucius Institutes/Classrooms in 2004, 119 programs were set up in colleges, universities, and K-12 schools in the subsequent years. The University of Chicago was the first institution to close its Confucius Institute in September of 2014, and since

then, 74 other schools followed suit and shut down their CIs.⁵⁶ Since the closures disbanded over half of the Confucius Institutes in the United States, the question remains what is the future of CIs and China's participation in U.S. academics. What will happen to the remaining 50 CI programs is still very much up in the air.

To deal with these pressing concerns, Hanban has undertaken measures to ensure the longevity of CI programs. Hanban has rebranded itself as the “Ministry of Education Center for Language Exchange and Cooperation”- or the Ministry of Education in short. Hanban is also seeking to create a new non-governmental organization to oversee the programs, named the “Chinese International Education Foundation.”⁵⁷ Although realistically, the idea of China genuinely creating a NGO to oversee the institutes is unlikely; the CCP has a hand to play in virtually all organizations, companies, and programs originating from China.

The title changes could be interpreted as China's method to distance itself from potentially negative associations with overtly Chinese-sounding names. “Hanban” is a Chinese term and “Confucius Institute” carries associations with traditional Chinese ideology; meanwhile “Ministry of Education” (substituted for Hanban) and the “Chinese International Education Foundation” (substituted to oversee Confucius Institutes) sound more Western and carry neutral connotations. This could be a strategy to appeal to a broader Western audience or simply clarify the mission of the organization. There is no concrete evidence for the reason why, so readers must formulate their own judgements on the situation.

Despite the formal closures, the hypothesis exists that some colleges haven't overtly cut ties with their Confucius Institutes despite disbanding their programs. The National Association of Scholars believes that some CIs still secretly operate under a new name, continuing to employ

⁵⁶Peterson, Rachelle. “Confucius Institutes in the US That Are Closing,” February 2021.

⁵⁷Peterson, Rachelle. “China Is Rebranding Its Confucius Institutes.” RealClearEducation, July 22, 2020. https://www.realcleareducation.com/articles/2020/07/22/china_is_rebranding_its_confucius_institutes_110445.html.

the same staff and promote the same curriculum.⁵⁸ The NAS article had no proof to back up the accusations, but it could be alluding to the rebranding of Hanban's name or the creation of the NGO monitoring the CIs. In this sense Confucius Institutes are operating under a different name, but only at schools that haven't yet dissolved their programs. Accusations like this must be met with skepticism, as it misinterprets factual information and feeds into the "coercive" and "dangerous" China conception.

The Confucius Institutes that are still active have also sought methods to curb the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With decreased in-person access to cultural events and classes, many students have lacked the resources to succeed in Chinese studies. The pandemic has also brought new financial uncertainties to American colleges, which could aggravate the issue further. To curb the loss of interest or participation in Chinese studies this year, the CIUS has placed many teaching materials/classes online. This includes interactive cooking lessons, virtual storytelling, museum tours, and language instruction.⁵⁹ Other schools' institutes have enacted their own COVID-19 plans, hoping to counteract the devastating effects of the lockdown, federal pushback, and mass closures on Confucius Institutes. While both the future of the pandemic and CIs remain unclear, it's difficult to assess if these online classes will alleviate the educational and program losses.

Based on these trends, Confucius Institutes are likely to be obsolete on American campuses in the not-too-distant future. The renaming has likely not influenced the decisions being carried out. While the timeline is impossible to tell, strong reactions from the U.S. government have dissuaded schools to continue partnership with the programs. By cutting

⁵⁸Acevedo, David. "Confucius Institutes Get a Makeover." National Association of Scholars, March 23, 2021.

⁵⁹"Online Learning." Confucius Institute, March 11, 2021. <https://www.ciuscenter.org/online-learning/>.

federal funding, denouncing the institutes as espionage, and implying a new cold war with China, American government officials have taken large steps to wipe out CIs.

U.S. Government Response

The U.S. government launched a profusion of anti-PRC policies starting in 2018, including the infamous Department of Justice’s two-year China Initiative.⁶⁰ The components primarily sought out espionage or fraudulent activity within U.S. educational and economic spheres; although Confucius Institutes aren’t explicitly referenced, certain sections in the initiative exist to restrict institutes like CIs. The Attorney General lists several goals for the legislation, including to “Educate colleges and universities about potential threats to academic freedom and open discourse from influence efforts on campus”, and more directly to “Apply the Foreign Agents Registration Act to unregistered agents seeking to advance China’s political agenda, bringing enforcement actions when appropriate.”⁶¹ The enactment of this initiative was one of the first governmental moves towards ridding Confucius Institutes from college campuses.

In February of 2018 the FBI director Christopher A. Wray warned colleges that the bureau was actively monitoring CIs for planting conspirators on campuses.⁶² U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo echoed the same concerns in September of 2020, hoping all Confucius Institutes would be shut down by the end of the year. He cited the political risks associated with Chinese-funded and operated Confucius Institutes and said that these programs recruit “spies and collaborators” from college campuses.⁶³ Admitting there is some resemblance to Cold War

⁶⁰“Information About the Department of Justice's China Initiative and a Compilation of China-Related Prosecutions Since 2018.” The United States Department of Justice, March 9, 2021.

<https://www.justice.gov/nsd/information-about-department-justice-s-china-initiative-and-compilation-china-related>.

⁶¹“Information About the Department of Justice's China Initiative”.

⁶²Rogin, “Opinion | Waking up to China's Infiltration”.

⁶³“Pompeo Hopeful China's Confucius Institutes Will Be Gone from U.S. by Year-End.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, September 1, 2020.

tensions in the 1980's/90's, it becomes clear that this is distinctly political criticism. Additionally in the last year there has been a slew of U.S. government scrutiny against Confucius Institutes: the FBI, State Department, and members of Congress have all led allegations against CIs.⁶⁴ It only follows that many public and private U.S. schools would be required to yield to the sentiments of elite government organizations.

Representatives have continued to make public statements on the issues Confucius Institutes pose to the U.S. government; Republican representative Christopher H. Smith has also vocalized his opinion on the matter: Confucius Institutes “are nests of influence [and] reconnaissance,” that monitor Chinese students and promote an idealized conception of China.⁶⁵ However, Smith admits that most of CIs' actions are benign and that there is little proof of schools self-censoring themselves to maintain a pro-China stance. Somehow he still maintains they are a serious threat to U.S. institutions and the government. Additionally Republican senator Ted Cruz was quoted saying “Communist China is infiltrating American universities to meddle with our curricula, silence criticism of their regime, and steal intellectual property including sensitive dual-use research.”⁶⁶

In an attempt to curb “academic espionage”, Cruz has introduced legislation to advance the authority of the government in school dealings with foreign intelligence organizations. His Stop Higher Educational Espionage and Theft Act passed in 2018 sought to target foreign influences including China's presence in academic aid. This also gave the federal government the opportunity to brand an institute as a threat- which eventually led the Department of Homeland Security to designate Confucius Institutes as a foreign mission in 2020.⁶⁷ There are also several

⁶⁴Peterson, “China Is Rebranding Its Confucius Institutes”.

⁶⁵Rogin, “Opinion | Waking up to China's Infiltration”.

⁶⁶Rogin, “Opinion | Waking up to China's Infiltration”.

⁶⁷Seagroves, C. Letter to Gao Qing. “Letter to Director Gao Qing.” Washington D.C.: Office of Foreign Missions, August 13, 2020.

legislative barriers to stop the spread and longevity of the programs. For schools with a Confucius Institute who rely on funding from the Defense Department, the McCain Act (2019) states they could lose this federal funding unless they obtain a waiver or disband their program.⁶⁸ Congress also solidified government funding restrictions with its 2020 Confucius Act, which briefly stated that “An institution of higher education or other postsecondary educational institution... shall not be eligible to receive Federal funds from the Department of Education... or other Department of Education funds that are provided directly to students.”⁶⁹ These legal decrees present major financial obstacles for schools with Confucius Institutes, as siding with one language/culture program is not worth jeopardizing the funding of other areas of curricula.

U.S. Academic Impact (Foreign Language Demand)

As the world becomes increasingly connected and globalized, the need for bilingual and multilingualism has also risen. Employers and educational institutions value the human capital that comes from foreign language proficiency: in a 2014 survey of over 2,100 U.S. employers, 93% responded that they value workers who can engage with clients from diverse countries/cultures.⁷⁰ In this same report, it was identified that 66% of individuals acknowledged language proficiency in employee applications, and 41% gave advantages to these multilingual contenders. The survey concluded that public sectors such as the government, information aids, schooling, and health care actively sought out multilingual applicants. Language proficiency has been undervalued in U.S. education, despite its obvious value in professional careers.

⁶⁸Fuchs, Chris. “U.S. Colleges Face Tough Choice: Take Money from China and Lose Federal Funding.” NBCNews.com. NBCUniversal News Group, September 19, 2019.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/u-s-colleges-face-tough-choice-take-money-china-lose-n1055871>.

⁶⁹Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, and John Kennedy . Bill, S.939 Confucius Act §. S.939 (2020).

⁷⁰Damari, Rebecca Rubin, William P. Rivers, Richard D. Brecht, Philip Gardner, Catherine Pulupa, and John Robinson. “The Demand for Multilingual Human Capital in the U.S. Labor Market.” Wiley Online Library. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, February 28, 2017. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/flan.12241>.

U.S. Chinese language enrollment has increased in recent years, among the likes of other growing languages such as Arabic and American Sign Language. Its overall booming growth prior to 2013 led to an overall increase for the decade of the 2010's.⁷¹ This information is drawn from the Modern Language Association census data up to 2016; although the source isn't all-encompassing, it does give helpful references to the growth and demand of the Chinese learning in America. The reporting shows many lucrative modern languages such as Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, Korean, and ASL have shown increased enrollment some years while other languages including German, Latin, and French have shown stagnant growth or decline. Furthermore the proportion of introductory to advanced Chinese language students have shown evolution in recent years: the ratio of advanced students continued to grow from 2009 to 2012, perhaps showing increased interest in mastering the language or more opportunities to advance. The 6.5% increase in graduate Chinese enrollment between 2013-2016, despite the decline at undergraduate schools, reflects this expansion.

Beyond the high period of growth, has also been a concerning decrease in Chinese enrollments from 2013-2016. At two and four-year undergraduate institutions introductory students to Chinese decreased by 21.3%, while overall Chinese enrollments dropped 13.1%.⁷² While this might be accounted for by some of the CI closures starting in 2014, it's essential to note that the decline began before the widespread terminations. Between the same three years America's total enrollments in foreign languages dropped by 9.2%- and Chinese was able to mitigate the decline with nearly 47% of its programs reporting stable or increased enrollments.

⁷¹Looney, Dennis, and Natalia Lusin. Rep. *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Summer 2016 and Fall 2016: Final Report*. Modern Language Association of America, 2019.

⁷²Looney & Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English*.

With tens of thousands of students reported practicing the Chinese language, this nationwide decline in modern languages poses a threat to the security of their studies.

The loss of many Confucius Institutes likely influenced the Chinese language enrollment downturn. At its height there were over 500 Confucius Institutes and Classrooms active across the U.S., buttressing hundreds of Chinese departments and supplying educational aid to thousands of students. Currently at U.S. colleges, the number of programs has dramatically decreased to 50. How many Chinese departments will withstand this transition is still a question at large. It's difficult to predict the future academic impact of these CI closures, but it is clear that recently Chinese enrollments have been decreasing. While employers continue to value language proficiency, the demand must be met with adequate funding and resources.

China's Academic Soft Power in the U.S.

Confucius Institutes have operated as a relatively successful Chinese soft power venture. Yet if the trends continue, the onslaught of closures suggests that CIs will be eliminated in the U.S. during the following years. While this will be an obstacle in securing favorable relations in America, China has many other remaining prospects to help spread Chinese culture, language, and influence. Through AP Chinese classes, CCTV, lending art to museums, and translated Chinese novels, China still maintains soft power avenues to garner interest in its language and culture. Although these connections to foreign countries are likely to continue, if China wants to expand its soft power in academics it must adjust its approach.

The fundamental flaws of Confucius Institutes provide insight into the shortcomings of China's academic soft power. What made the institutes so undesirable was the lack of collaboration with the partnered colleges, as well as their unwillingness to assimilate to the

U.S.'s values of democracy and academic freedom. The CCP requires that programs abroad must promote China's socialism and traditional customs, which comes with many limitations. China's soft power ventures such as CIs will continue to fail unless changes are made to promote discourse potentially harmful to China's image, and engage in collaborative research and development with the host institution.

China's soft power is also notably shaped by its hard power behavior. The "China Threat" and negative preconceived notions originate from its militaristic, political, and economic wrongdoings- and influences the way benign Chinese programs are treated. This can be seen in other avenues of academia, including the targeting of Chinese professors at prestigious research universities. The recent arrest of Gang Chen, a professor and researcher at MIT, shines light on this phenomenon; the China Initiative was created by the Justice Department to prosecute Chinese scientists/researchers who were accused of sharing information with China.⁷³ 160 MIT professors pushed back, petitioning his prosecution and arguing that all his federal grants and academic activities were lawful. Dr. Chen's case is no anomaly- professors from Harvard, Temple, and Arkansas have all been charged with espionage, fraudulent funding, or aiding the CCP. The U.S. government's crackdown on China in academics, whether Confucius Institutes or Chinese professors, embodies a resurgence of cold war tensions between American and China.

The CCP's unwillingness to cooperate, lingering "China Threat", and U.S. government cold war tensions indicate the future of Chinese soft power in academics is relatively bleak. Confucius Institutes serve as an example to this prediction, and I predict similar standalone CCP-sponsored institutes would face a similar fate. Chinese AP classes, museum collections, and media outlets will survive abroad due to their connectedness to U.S. institutions. However,

⁷³Barry, Ellen. "A Scientist Is Arrested, and Academics Push Back." The New York Times. The New York Times, January 26, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/26/us/mit-scientist-charges.html>.

organizations like CIs reflect what the CCP sponsors, with little to no hint at reform. Future Chinese soft power in U.S. academics will be harder to implement, especially with the aftermath of the failed longevity of CIs. It is expected that America will be more skeptical to work alongside China, especially after China's domestic wrongdoings and federal regulations restricting Chinese intervention in U.S. education.

Conclusion

_____Confucius Institutes, centers for learning Chinese language and culture, have faced extreme scrutiny in the United States. Over the last seven years over half the American institutes have been terminated amidst an onslaught of criticism and government regulations. These anxieties of Chinese presence in U.S. academics originated from preexisting notions such as the "China Threat"- applying concerns of China's politics/economics to other unrelated sectors. The root of the China Threat, and anxieties about Confucius Institutes, have developed from years of othering the East and non-democratic ideologies. Western nations who created this concept now deploy this narrative against overall Chinese presence in U.S. academics.

After gauging the most pressing concerns scholars shared over Confucius Institutes, they predominantly debated three subjects: CI censorship, program funding, and political agendas. The censorship has been openly acknowledged by scholars, program directors, and Chinese officials, as well as accepted by the partnered schools. It is understandable why people would insist on academic freedom in America, but the institutes were not deceitful about this condition. The program funding comes from the Ministry of Education, which is run by the CCP. This heightened worries about Chinese money funneling onto U.S. college campuses- but overall is a commonplace practice by many foreign countries. There is some skepticism if the money comes

directly from the Ministry of Education, but there has been no evidence to prove otherwise. The political agendas are understated and benign; Confucius Institutes are not inherently political. The textbooks, teaching methods, and subjects have all been proven to not promote any political sentiments. On the contrary, CIs avoid political conversations to dodge any criticism about the CCP. While the soft power aspects of Confucius Institutes could be met with scrutiny, it is essential to note the United States practices similar soft power ventures abroad.

Confucius Institutes have been proven to be a successful form of soft power. The programs were able to disseminate Chinese language and culture, as well as positively impact China's image in CI communities. Although they failed in terms of longevity, these programs planted a seed of interest in Chinese among these college campuses. Intellectuals have seen soft power present in academics as a corrupting factor, arguing that it should not interfere with studies. Others have come to see Confucius Institutes as centers of socialist brainwashing, simultaneously writing off community actors as naive and hyper-impressionable. It's essential to remember these institutes are partnered with top universities, where students and staff have an abundance of resources to formulate their own opinions. In another light, CIs can be seen as a learning tool for students to analyze the messages from a CCP-run program. Foreign aid presence in education is typical at U.S. colleges, so it's interesting to contemplate why China has been so heavily targeted.

Discussions about who should take accountability in these partnerships have overwhelmingly been one-sided. Confucius Institutes, and furthermore the CCP, have faced the most criticism and blame despite the collaboration of U.S. colleges. By offering the underrepresented perspective that U.S. colleges need to take responsibility for the outrage sparked from these partnerships, this paper recognized these schools as culpable actors. U.S.

institutions willingly accepted funding, approved the guidelines, and openly sought Confucius Institutes to bolster their Chinese departments. Ignoring the American self-serving aspects of this relationship oversimplifies the issue and scapegoats China as the deceptive actor. Alternatively, Confucius Institutes have refused to adjust as they become more scrutinized; CIs do not collaborate with their partnered communities, and aren't sensitive to their host country's concerns. By avoiding uncomfortable conversations and refusing to expand into research projects, the programs isolate themselves and invite critique. This unbending behavior makes Confucius Institutes much weaker and less desirable.

What the future holds for Confucius Institutes remains unclear, but the continuous trend indicates most will be dissolved in upcoming years. There have been slight name modifications, but no real structural changes have been established. With the onslaught of U.S. government funding restrictions to schools with CIs, these policies aim to make Chinese presence in academia obsolete. The academic impact of these closures may be substantial; modern languages are underfunded and undervalued at many U.S. colleges, so the loss of CI funding could negatively impact many Chinese programs. Chinese has been proven to be a professionally desirable skill, and helps launch students into international careers. Further reductions in Chinese enrollment could result in a lack of American talent in Chinese-speaking relevant industries. China's soft power also faces a threat from the wipeout of the CIs. Confucius Institutes have been a relatively successful soft power program, as China has had difficulty influencing foreign academia. Confucius Institutes may eventually meet an unfortunate end, but they successfully managed to endorse Chinese language and culture in the foreign consciousness.