

ROUTLEDGE NEW DIPLOMACY STUDIES

Chinese Public Diplomacy

The rise of the Confucius Institute

Falk Hartig



Chinese Public Diplomacy

This book presents the first comprehensive analysis of Confucius Institutes (CIs), situating them as a tool of public diplomacy in the broader context of China's foreign affairs.

The study establishes the concept of public diplomacy as the theoretical framework for analysing CIs. By applying this frame to in-depth case studies of CIs in Europe and Oceania, it provides in-depth knowledge of the structure and organisation of CIs, their activities and audiences, as well as problems, challenges and potentials. In addition to examining CIs as the most prominent and most controversial tool of China's charm offensive, this book also explains what the structural configuration of these Institutes can tell us about China's understanding of and approaches towards public diplomacy. The study demonstrates that, in contrast to their international counterparts, CIs are normally organised as joint ventures between international and Chinese partners in the field of education or cultural exchange. From this unique setting a more fundamental observation can be made, namely China's willingness to engage and cooperate with foreigners in the context of public diplomacy. Overall, the author argues that by utilising the current global fascination with Chinese language and culture, the Chinese government has found interested and willing international partners to co-finance the CIs and thus partially fund China's international charm offensive.

This book will be of much interest to students of public diplomacy, Chinese politics, foreign policy and international relations in general.

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Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CC	Confucius Classroom
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	China Central Television
CEAIE	Chinese Education Association for International Exchange
CI	Confucius Institute
CICRM	Confucius Institute Conference Reference Materials
CIPG	China International Publishing Group
CNC	China Xinhua News Network Corporation
CPAFFC	Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries
CPIFA	Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CRI	China Radio International
CSC	China Scholarship Council
CSCSE	Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange
GAPP	General Administration of Press and Publications
Hanban	Office of Chinese Language Council International
NPC	National People's Congress
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RIAS	Radio in the American Sector
RMB	Chinese Renminbi
ROC	Republic of China
SCIO	State Council Information Office

1 Introduction

In his November 2014 address to the Australian parliament, Chinese president Xi Jinping¹ noted that while many people applaud China's achievements, others have concerns 'and there are also people who find fault with everything China does' (Xi J. 2014). China, according to Xi,

is like the big guy in the crowd. Others naturally wonder how the big guy will move and act, and they may be concerned that the big guy may push them around, stand in their way or even take up their place.

(Ibid.)

Xi dismissed those concerns, vowing that his country remains unshakable in its resolve to pursue peaceful and common development.

While critics may discount such a statement as rhetorical window-dressing, it clearly illustrates that the Chinese leadership is aware that China's behaviour on the global stage is an increasingly important factor and contributes to how other countries assess Chinese intentions that again may influence their corresponding responses to China's rising capabilities. There is increasing acknowledgement that China's concern over its international status and image is one driving force in China's foreign relations. In its search for status as a global power, China 'has discovered the importance of international image and soft power' (Shambaugh 2013: 207) and 'image considerations weigh heavily on the minds of Chinese decision-makers' (Rabinovitch 2008: 32). Those considerations are reflected in the increasing awareness of public diplomacy in China. In recent years the concept of public diplomacy, broadly understood as a country's communication and engagement with foreign publics in order to support national interests, received enormous attention in the People's Republic of China (PRC or China hereafter), both in official and academic circles. Public diplomacy is seen as a means for telling China's story to the world and thereby countering the negative accounts of the country in foreign, mainly Western, media. In this regard public diplomacy is aimed at introducing the 'real China' to the world and communicating China's peaceful global intentions. In doing all this, public diplomacy should contribute to national progress by creating a favourable global environment for China's (economic) development. In order to communicate and engage

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with foreign publics, China is increasingly active in the conduct of public diplomacy using various programmes and instruments including the Confucius Institutes (CIs or Institutes in what follows).

This book investigates Confucius Institutes and their role in China's public diplomacy. Confucius Institutes are administered and partly funded by the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban), an organisation under the authority of the Chinese Ministry of Education, and are comparable to international counterparts in terms of their fundamental tasks and services, namely teaching their language, introducing their culture to people in other nations, and conducting cultural exchange. Next to these idealistic purposes I argue that Confucius Institutes as an instrument of China's public diplomacy also contribute to more functional goals of China's overall diplomacy. And while people in charge of Confucius Institutes would normally define the CI's mission as strictly limited to language and culture and would deny any (foreign) policy related notions of their work, I argue that CIs in this regard are similar to their international counterparts such as the British Council or Germany's Goethe Institute. These organisations, although acting independently, are also working for their governments and their government's foreign policy goals. The fundamental difference, however, is in the nature of the political system Confucius Institute represent and the way they are structured and organised. Whereas British Council branches or Goethe Institutes are stand-alone institutes abroad, Confucius Institutes are normally organised as joint ventures between international and Chinese partners, normally but not always universities. This cooperation not only implicates that these Institutes are partially funded by the Chinese government, but also that CIs strategically engage local stakeholders and are located on campuses around the world. This is not to say that other cultural institutes do not work with local partners, but in the case of Confucius Institutes this cooperation is not only essential to maintain these Institutes, but it is very much the approach deliberately chosen by China to manage and run its cultural outposts.

As later chapters will outline in more detail, Confucius Institutes address, usually but not exclusively, a mainstream public audience that normally does not have any special knowledge about China. The main activities of CIs include language courses for various levels, the support for local Chinese teaching internationally and a wide range of cultural events such as exhibitions, screenings and various talks. Schedules differ from Institute to Institute, but generally all offer roughly similar content while trying to develop a unique feature or some singular programmes. From 2004, when the first CI was set up in Seoul, to late 2014, China has established 475 Confucius Institutes (and some 850 smaller Confucius Classrooms) in 126 countries.² In 2014 alone, 35 Institutes and 205 Classrooms have been opened worldwide, according to the umbrella organisation Hanban.³

Because of these astonishing numbers, and because of the affiliation with the Chinese government, suspicion and distrust emerged both in the media and academic circles, especially in the West, where CIs are mainly seen with suspicion, either assuming these Institutes are a propaganda arm of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or are undermining the academic freedom of their host universities

around the world. While one may question the rather one-dimensional criticism, it definitely helped to make Confucius Institutes the most prominent and most controversial tool of China's 'charm offensive' (Kurlantzick 2007). For critics these Institutes are 'academic malware' (Sahlins 2015) and an instrument for China to strengthen its geopolitical influence; its defenders state that CIs are 'hardly a threat to academic freedom' (McCord 2014), that China harbours no neo-colonial impulses and that it is a latecomer in respect of establishing cultural institutes abroad which European powers like France already did a century ago (Kluver 2014). The implicit message for the critics here is: don't worry, we are just as you are, we do just the same, and you did it long before us.

This study, which aims to sit in between these two opposing poles of hyper-critics and unconditional proponents, contributes to the growing debate about CIs as it not only engages with the ideological disputes they have engendered, but also as it analyses the practical aspects of the everyday work of these Institutes as well as the broader political dimension of this whole enterprise. This study uses the concept of public diplomacy as the frame for analysing CIs and applies this frame to in-depth case studies of CIs in Europe (with a focus on Germany) and Oceania (with a focus on Australia). The case studies provide in-depth knowledge of the structure and organisation of CIs, their activities and audiences, as well as problems, challenges and potentials. This study also explains what the structural configuration of these Institutes can tell us about China's conduct of public diplomacy.

As this study demonstrates, the most important and crucial difference between Confucius Institutes and their international counterparts concerns their organisational structure as joint ventures, a fact that has multiple implications not only for individual Institutes and their partners involved, but more generally for the Chinese conduct of public diplomacy. This unique setting, in my understanding, points to a more fundamental observation, namely China's willingness to engage and cooperate with foreigners in its public diplomacy, which, as all diplomatic endeavours eventually serves national interests. This approach, in my understanding, is strategically smart as it potentially raises the profile and prestige of Confucius Institutes and makes them a comparable cost effective instrument of China's public diplomacy. Overall I argue that by utilising the current global fascination with Chinese language and culture, the Chinese government has found interested and willing international partners to co-finance the Confucius Institutes and thus partially fund China's public diplomacy. This approach shows striking parallels to China's decision to push its economic development after the turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1978 the Chinese leadership under Deng Xiaoping initiated the Reform and Opening-up policy and since then China and the world have become more and more interwoven, not only economically but also in political, social and cultural terms. One crucial component of this new policy after the Cultural Revolution was the shift away from an inward-looking and closed China towards one which not only turned to the outside world again but also started to cooperate with foreign countries. This opening-up first and foremost related to economics

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as the leadership under Deng realised that China's languishing economy could only recover with foreign expertise and especially foreign investment. As a result, from 1980 onwards the Chinese government began to encourage foreign businesses to invest in China, and it approved the establishment of so-called special economic zones. This opening-up led to the expansion of foreign trade and foreign investment into China and intensified China's economic relations with the wider world.

This willingness (that was also a necessity) to engage and cooperate with foreigners in order to pursue national interests is of particular interest for this study, because, as I argue, a similar approach can be identified with regard to Confucius Institutes. To put it simply: in the late twentieth century, China opted for cooperation with foreigners in order to rebuild its economy; in the early twenty-first century China is opting for cooperation with foreigners in order to promote its language and culture and thereby to shape its global image.

Two months after he kicked off China's Reform and Opening-up policy, Deng Xiaoping anticipated the consequences for both China and the world: 'The role we play in international affairs is determined by the extent of our economic growth. If our country becomes more developed and prosperous, we will be in a position to play a great role in international affairs' (Deng 1984: 174). The ensuing economic development not only made China the world's largest exporter and the world's second largest economy, but China is also increasingly expanding its external influence on the global stage and turned into an economic superpower with global interests.

For the international community, however, the question arises as to whether an emerging China will use its economic strength to become a strong military power and whether it might try to challenge, and ultimately change, the existing international order. The academic debate revolves around the question of 'whether China's rapid rise will be peaceful or disruptive to the existing international order' (Zhao and Liu 2009: 3). Concerns about the rise of China, as Chapter 2 outlines, culminate in the so-called China Threat Theory. The assumption that China could become a threat is not only prevalent in some academic circles and is reflected in the debates on Confucius Institutes, but is also partly echoed in the general public, at least in parts of the world like North America, Europe and parts of Asia, where China has to struggle with its overall rather negative image.

Events like the Hong Kong protests in 2014 against China's decision on proposed reforms to the Hong Kong electoral system, the establishment of an Air Defence Identification Zone over the East China Sea in late 2013, the handling of the departure of Chen Guangcheng⁴ in spring 2012, the arrest of Ai Weiwei in spring 2011, disputes with Google in early 2010, or the Western impression that China was undermining a positive outcome at the Copenhagen Climate Conference in December 2009 all resulted in the situation that China 'has to deal with the reactions of sceptical publics across the globe' (Blanchard and Guo 2008: 15). China is seen as a 'spoiler' in international relations, as an enemy of human rights at home and abroad and the global public perceives China as a threat to

people's jobs. Whether such perceptions are true or not does not matter as 'the image of a certain nation exists in many people purely as affect with no knowledge basis whatsoever' (Kunczik 1997: 43).

Image problems, whether based on facts or fiction, are not something new for China and can be traced back centuries. What is new however, are China's comprehensive attempts to deal with its image, and to communicate more with the world by means of public diplomacy. From the Chinese point of view, there is an urgent need to better communicate with the wider world, as the scepticism towards China mostly results from an incorrectly perceived picture of the PRC. This argument holds that it is up to China to talk back and to explain its real self. These attempts to communicate recently became an important part of China's 'go out policy', which was originally initiated by the Chinese government in the late 1990s in order to encourage Chinese enterprises to invest overseas. The communication efforts can be seen as an addition to and expansion of China's economic development plan, which started with the mentioned Reform and Opening-up policy in the late 1970s. In the mid-2000s the economic strategy was extended to include public diplomacy and soft power policies to improve China's image in the world as well as the competitiveness and influence of Chinese cultural products and to actively promote Chinese culture in the world.

Conceptual background: political communication on the global stage

While the focus of analysis regarding the question if and how China's rise may threaten the world is on the economic and military dimension, a growing area of interest is in non-material and non-coercive means. Halper (2012: xxvii) argues that 'the principle battle space, the place where disputes between China and the West will be joined and where each will seek advantage, is the global information space.' In this global information space communication is essential and success increasingly 'depends not only on whose army wins, but also on whose story wins' (Nye 2005). Competition between major powers 'for favorable perceptions in global public opinion is increasingly evident today and likely to be a pivotal feature of the emerging international order' (Goldsmith *et al.* 2014: 88). Nowadays almost all countries are 'eager to develop positive images of themselves among foreign publics, because such images are considered important for achieving a range of objectives in foreign relations' (*ibid.*).

The way a certain country is seen and perceived in the world is an essential aspect of international affairs. With the 'rising importance of publics in foreign affairs, image-making has steadily increased' (Hertz 1981: 184) and globalised communication even further amplifies the importance of notions of image in order to assert a country's influence and international standing. According to Walter Lippmann (1922) images are the pictures in people's heads. He asserts that people define first and then see, rather than see first and then define. The real environment is so complicated that human beings reduce it to a simpler model, which Lippmann characterises as a pseudo-environment. Keeping this in mind,

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an image can be understood as the mental picture people have about something and this construct is ‘subject to influence by messages issued by some external actor’ (Manheim and Albritton 1984: 645). In their study on public diplomacy, Leonard *et al.* (2002: 9) argue that ‘the image and reputation of a country are public goods which can create either an enabling or a disabling environment for individual transactions’. A positive national image can thus influence the country’s ‘ability to build alliances and consequently enlarge the country’s international influence – that is, its soft power’ (Kinsey and Chung 2013: 6).

Soft power as developed by Joseph Nye is defined as the ability to obtain what you want through co-option and attraction rather than the hard power of coercion and payment. The soft power of a country rests primarily on its culture, its political values and its foreign policies. Although the concept is rather contested (as Chapter 3 will show), there is consensus that the instrument through which soft power is projected (and positive images are communicated) is public diplomacy, which in itself is a rather loosely defined concept.

It is, as Rawnsley (2012: 123) reminds us,

important to note that soft power and public diplomacy are not synonyms, but instead refer to different (but related) communication activities. Public diplomacy is the conscious act of communicating with foreign publics, and therefore is an important facilitator of soft power.

In other words: if a country does not communicate its culture, values and political ideas, those aspects cannot have any positive effect on others. This communication and engagement, which public diplomacy essentially is, can be divided into six elements: listing, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, international broadcasting and psychological warfare (Cull 2009). The very fact that public diplomacy is normally (still) initiated by governments leads to the accusation of crude state-directed propaganda and to one of the most salient debates in public diplomacy scholarship about ‘whether government-sponsored activities are manipulative “propaganda” or valid “public diplomacy”’ (Zaharna 2004: 219).

Taken as a whole, public diplomacy as a *diplomatic* tool is about the promotion of national interests and therefore should not be discounted as a ‘soft’ instrument or merely an altruistic affair (Melissen 2005). In the service of national interest, public diplomacy is about making friends and isolating enemies, promoting political dialogue, supporting trade and foreign investment, establishing links with civil society and it engages in the often quoted battle for hearts and minds. Public diplomacy, then, is one facet of political communication which, broadly understood, consists of: (1) all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives; (2) communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and journalists; and (3) communication about these actors and their activities in the media (McNair 2011). Communication of political actors clearly refers to the concept of public diplomacy which then is ‘political communication for foreign consumption’ (Pamment 2013: 6).

While the study of public diplomacy concerns a number of issues such as the purpose, its actors and audiences, or the question what instruments and procedures are used (which I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4), the scholarly debate also presents some more general aspects which are of particular interest for the study of Confucius Institutes and China's public diplomacy.

In recent years one can detect what some describe as a major paradigm shift in the field, characterised by the development from *old* to *new* public diplomacy (Pamment 2013). During the Cold War the primary goal of public diplomacy was persuasion while after the Cold War public diplomacy was increasingly concerned with the creation of understanding. Hans Tuch (1990: 3) therefore defines public diplomacy as a government communication process with foreign publics 'in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and cultures, as well as its national goals and current policies.' The most recent shift in the discourse on public diplomacy occurred after 9/11 when scholars started to emphasise reciprocal understanding and two-way communication described as relational turn or 'connective mindshift' (Zaharna *et al.* 2013: 1). Now, this new public diplomacy, at least in the West, is – or should be – more about 'building relationships: understanding the needs of other countries [...]; looking for areas where we can find common cause' (Leonard *et al.* 2002: 8).

Old, or traditional, public diplomacy is understood as a state/government-centric endeavour, characterised by a one-way flow of information in which actors control the messages by making instrumentalist use of channels and allow only limited interactions between the sending and the receiving side (Pamment 2013: 3). While, as it is the case with old public diplomacy, precise definitions of the new public diplomacy vary (Cull 2013), there is general agreement that new public diplomacy includes an emphasis on greater exchange and collaboration as well as dialogue, new technologies, and new actors such as non-governmental organisations, advocacy groups, or non-state actors. Kathy Fitzpatrick (2011: 6) summarises these new modes of communication in her analysis of US public diplomacy and argues for 'a shift from "telling America's story to the world" [...] to "engaging with the world"'.

This paradigm shift in the theoretical debate on public diplomacy is of particular interest for the study of China's public diplomacy and its Confucius Institutes. On the one hand, Confucius Institutes are obviously related to the Chinese public diplomacy system which largely remains a state-centric endeavour and therefore tend to be an instrument of *old* public diplomacy. Also, as Chapter 4 will show, the Chinese understanding of public diplomacy emphasises the need to tell China's story to the world in order to correct the world's misperception of China and is therefore not so much concerned with mutuality, engagement and looking for common cause. On the other hand, however, because of their unique structural configuration which not only emphasises but essentially needs the engagement of foreign non-governmental organisations, Confucius Institutes seem to be a prime example of the *new* public diplomacy.

Aims, materials and methods of the study

The aim of this study is to analyse Confucius Institutes in the context of China's public diplomacy. In order to do this, the book will provide a comprehensive analysis of the Chinese discourse on public diplomacy (and related concepts) which will be the foundation for a thorough empirically based analysis of Confucius Institutes by investigating their inner workings in a comparative manner. I examine the origination process, the structure and working modes of CIs; I investigate what actually is happening at CIs and what is not happening there; and I analyse what problems these Institutes face and what potential they have both with regards to the imparting of language and culture, but also with regards to China's broader foreign policy objectives. Looking at Confucius Institutes and their specific mode of organisation is significant for a number of reasons. Although these Institutes are subject of heated debates and are frequently mentioned in discussions about China's foreign policy and its soft power, so far comprehensive analysis of these Institutes is still in its early stages and the scholarship on Confucius Institutes is, in my understanding, characterised by two weaknesses.

On the one hand, there is confusion about the conceptual framework through which to analyse Confucius Institutes. Normally they are related either to China's soft power or its soft power strategy (which is a difference in itself) or to China's public or cultural diplomacy; they are discussed either in the context of sinister propaganda or as an example of inoffensive cultural exchange. While one may dismiss those differentiations as academic trifle or scholarly driven semantic quibble, clarification is necessary here because, as will be shown in the course of this study, the individual labels have different meanings and connotations and therefore determine how CIs are perceived, portrayed and eventually evaluated.

On the other hand, the scholarship is still characterised by a lack of in-depth knowledge about Confucius Institutes which in turn produces the variety of labels used for CIs. Here it is striking to see that still 'little of this literature [...] is based on actual evidence of activities of Confucius Institutes' (Sharp 2010: 2), and that the organisational configuration is so far not comprehensively analysed.

In my understanding it is crucial to investigate this unique joint venture set-up in detail because, first, it is something uniquely new, which opens new opportunities and challenges for cultural institutions in the field of public diplomacy. And second, because the fact that international organisations – mostly in the field of education – are working closely with an authoritarian state engenders criticism along the lines that Confucius Institutes are one of 'China's foreign propagandists' (Brady 2008: 159), are seen as 'academic malware' (Sahlins 2015) or are connected to 'cultural crusades' (Young 2009: 8). Those assumptions need clarification and have to be put into perspective and it is the aim of this book to provide empirical data to enable the critical engagement with such claims.

In my understanding, there are two cardinal aspects determining Confucius Institutes: First, their structural configuration and second, the political system

they are representing. Both these aspects influence how Confucius Institutes perform their function as an instrument of China's public diplomacy. As a whole I argue that Confucius Institutes have to be understood in the broader context of China's foreign policy objectives; that they are an instrument of Chinese public diplomacy and not crude propaganda; and that they, however, are not introducing the 'real' China, but that they tend to present a politically correct version of China to the world.

In more conceptual terms this study contributes to efforts to expand public diplomacy research more generally. In 2008, Eytan Gilboa (2008: 56) discussed weaknesses and gaps in existing scholarship of public diplomacy, noting that most studies 'are historical, and they mostly deal with the U.S. experiences during the cold war'. He also found that research on public diplomacy programmes and activities of countries other than the United States and of new international actors such as NGOs, civil society groups, and individuals is also limited. Although one can detect an increase in publications addressing those concerns, it is still a valid observation and this book contributes to better understand the global approaches to public diplomacy by focusing on China and its Confucius Institutes.

Although this study aims to broaden the understanding of China's public diplomacy, it will not venture on the difficult task of public diplomacy theory building, as others recently have done (Entman 2008; Yun 2006; Pamment 2013). The study is furthermore limited insofar as it focuses on Confucius Institutes as one executing agency of China's public diplomacy, but it will not engage in detail with the question of what impact these Institutes can have on their audience and their perceptions of China. The third limitation concerns the fact that this study does not, understandably, represent an analysis of all 475 Confucius Institutes around the world.

This study uses Confucius Institutes in Oceania (with a focus on Australia) and Europe (with a focus on Germany) as case studies while information obtained from Confucius Institutes elsewhere will be incorporated either to contrast or to underpin information and arguments drawn from the two major cases. The similarities between the two chosen countries include the fact that both Australia and Germany have close ties with China, especially in the economic sector, and it can therefore be assumed that both countries have a growing interest in Chinese culture and Chinese language. Both the Australian and the German governments stick to the One-China policy⁵ and it seems that both the Australian and the German publics – and published opinion – are once in a while more critical and outspoken towards China, as are the governments. This fact, as will be shown in the case studies, has implications for perceptions regarding Confucius Institutes. Another similarity is that both countries have roughly the same number of CIs (during the course of principal research, both countries were home to 13 Confucius Institutes each). While the similarities between both countries spring from their relation with China, there are also differences which are important in regard to Confucius Institutes. These differences include, for example, the languages spoken in the countries and the proportion of Chinese

residents. The distinctive characteristics of both countries that are relevant for this study will be elaborated on in more detail in the case study in Chapters 7 and 8.

An essential part of this research is the analysis of various kinds of documents, academic and non-academic publications as well as official data/records such as policy documents, white papers, and pamphlets either released into the public domain by the Chinese government or contributed by interview partners. Parts of this official data include documents directly concerning Confucius Institutes and/or its umbrella organisation Hanban. While most of these documents are available online from Hanban's website, some of these are only for internal use (*neibu* in Chinese), such as the annual working reports of individual CIs.

The second major source of empirical data for this study is in-depth semi-structured interviews, also known as focused interviews, to collect data and evidence in the case studies. The interviewees can be divided into two groups: people in charge of Confucius Institutes and Chinese officials at Hanban or Chinese embassies abroad; and academics and practitioners working in the field of public diplomacy or other China related fields inside and outside China.

In the case of Confucius Institutes, I generally interviewed the director, executive officer or executive director of the respective Institute, as these people are not only involved in day-to-day operations, but also in strategic decision making.⁶ This approach is known as 'purposive sampling' or 'judgemental sampling', in which the researcher purposely chooses subjects who, in the opinion of the researcher, are thought to be relevant to the respective research topic. Thirty-seven formal interviews were conducted – 24 involving Confucius Institute staff, three involving Chinese officials, and 10 involving academics and practitioners – either in person, by telephone, or by email between 2009 and 2014.⁷ Personal interviews were conducted in Australia, China, Czech Republic, England and Germany, and interviews via telephone or email were conducted with participants in Austria, Australia, Denmark, Scotland, Wales, Germany, South Africa, Madagascar, New Zealand and the United States. Further to the formal interviews, I also carried out about 35 informal, off-the-record discussions in order to find out more about the Chinese approach to public diplomacy, Chinese relations with the countries where Confucius Institutes were analysed and China's foreign policy and engagement with the world more broadly. During the course of the research between 2009 and 2014, I visited a number of Confucius Institutes in Australia, Germany, the UK, the Czech Republic and South Africa, to gain a sense of the surrounding contexts of these Institutes.

Furthermore, I attended the 6th and 8th Confucius Institute Conferences in Beijing in December 2011 and 2013 as well as the 9th conference in Xiamen in December 2014.⁸ These conferences are internal gatherings where teachers and directors of Confucius Institutes, presidents of host universities from around the world, as well as representatives of Chinese partner universities or institutions, the education departments of related Chinese provinces, and Chinese enterprises involved in the construction of Confucius Institutes come together to recall the past year and to discuss future developments of CIs. Recent conferences were

attended by about 2,000 CI affiliated participants. At these conferences, I talked with Chinese officials in charge of CIs (in 2011, amongst others, with Xu Lin, director-general of Hanban and general director of the Confucius Institutes Headquarters), attended several panel discussions and conversed with CI delegates from different countries.

Chapter outline

Chapter 2 outlines the fundamental objectives and relevant slogans of China's foreign policy in order to understand the circumstances that have led to the establishment of Confucius Institutes, which, as I argue, did not appear unexpectedly, but was at least partly driven by practical and strategic considerations. Related here is the issue of China's image, which I see as a major driving force behind the Chinese leadership's desire to intensify its public diplomacy in recent years.

Chapter 3 looks at mechanisms that states apply to communicate with and present themselves to the world. The focus is on the concept of public diplomacy that is increasingly central to contemporary international relations. The discussion will trace the evolution of public diplomacy from a propaganda-like one-way communication approach (talking) to a two-way communication focusing on dialogue (talking and listening) commonly referred to in the literature as the mentioned *new* public diplomacy (Melissen 2005). The chapter will discuss various aspects of public diplomacy by examining its purposes, actors, target audience and key instruments and its procedures. It also discusses the relation between public diplomacy and related concepts (propaganda, soft power, strategic narratives).

This deconstruction of the Western understanding of these concepts is necessary to work out differences and similarities between the Western and the Chinese conceptual understanding. In order to contextualise the theoretical underpinnings for Confucius Institutes, Chapter 4, based on an extensive analysis and evaluation of Chinese sources, investigates how public diplomacy and related concepts are understood in China.

While Chapters 3 and 4 provide the study's conceptual framework, Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the practical side of China's public diplomacy. Chapter 5 presents an overview of the main actors and programmes and Chapter 6 presents what I consider to be the most important information and assumptions about the Confucius Institutes which will be tested and evaluated through the case studies.

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 are the study's empirically based core. Both chapters provide the following context: after an outline of the bilateral relations between China and Australia/Germany, the chapters illustrate how CIs are perceived in both countries. Based on comprehensive interviews, field work and document analyses, the main part of the chapters deals with the inner workings of Confucius Institutes. After looking at the origination process, I outline how CIs are structured and organised and what both local and Chinese partners are contributing to the Institutes. The following section investigates what actually is

happening at CIs. Here, I investigate audiences and analyse the content provided. Related to the question of what is happening at CIs is the question of what is not happening there and how people in charge of CIs deal with these issues. The chapters conclude with a discussion of practical issues and problems of Confucius Institutes. Looking at these aspects not only provides a better understanding of how CIs actually work, but it also helps to broaden the frequent one-dimensional debate surrounding Confucius Institutes.

Chapter 9 puts the pieces of the preceding chapters together and links the two cardinal aspects that determine Confucius Institutes – the organisational structure and the political system behind them – to the overall arguments, namely that Confucius Institutes have to be understood in the context of China's broader foreign policy objectives; that they are an instrument of Chinese public diplomacy and not crude propaganda; and that they do not introduce the real, but a correct version of China to the world. The chapter concludes with a brief consideration of the prospects for Confucius Institutes and outlines opportunities for further research.

Notes

- 1 Xi Jinping is furthermore, and more importantly, also the current General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chairman of the Central Military Commission. He succeeded Hu Jintao as China's paramount leader in late 2012/early 2013.
- 2 It is important to note that there is an apparent difference between the number of Confucius Institutes *established* and the number of Confucius Institutes actually *operating*. According to Hanban statistics there were 358 established CIs in 2011, but only 340 were in operation while in 2012 there were 400 established and 354 operating CIs.
- 3 By comparison the British Council, established in 1934, has currently presences in 110 countries and territories. Germany's Goethe Institute, established in 1951, has 140 institutes and 10 liaison offices in 93 countries. Spain's Instituto Cervantes, established in 1991, has 77 institutes in 44 countries. The oldest of these European cultural institutes is the French Alliance Française, which was established in 1883 and is currently running over 1,000 establishments in about 135 countries. In 2010, the Institut Français was founded, which currently runs about 140 branches abroad and has, according to its mission statement 'sole responsibility for France's cultural diplomacy'. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is tasked with driving new ambitions for France's projection of soft power, helping to enhance France's influence abroad through greater dialogue with other cultures through a process of listening and partnership. While the Institut Français is funded by the French government, the Alliance Française, which has similar duties, finances itself through its courses and programmes and only gets about 5 per cent of its budget from government agencies.
- 4 Chen is a blind Chinese civil rights activist who worked on human rights issues in rural China. In spring 2012 he escaped house arrest and fled into the US embassy in Beijing and caused a diplomatic tug of war between the United States and China concerning his wish to leave China.
- 5 The One-China policy (*yige Zhongguo zhengce*) refers to the policy that there is only one state called 'China', despite the existence of two governments that claim to be 'China'. This means that countries seeking diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC = Mainland China) must not have official relations with the Republic of China (ROC = Taiwan). As a result, all countries recognising the ROC recognise it as the sole legitimate representative of all of China and not just the island

of Taiwan and similarly, all states that recognise the PRC also recognise the PRC as the legitimate representative of Taiwan.

- 6 Interviews were conducted either in person or by telephone. They were semi-structured and questions were customised according to the nature of the individual's work and/or institutional position. The majority of interviews were on-the-record and taped on a digital recording device. Some interviewees did not wish to be recorded, in which case I took written notes. The interviews are 20–120 minutes long (one lasted for more than five hours), while the average length is about 50–60 minutes. The interviews concerned topics related to the individual institutes (covering the organisational structure, staffing, funding, equipment, activities and programmes, problems and potentials) as well as CIs in more general terms. Data analysis techniques were employed in a variety of ways for qualitative and quantitative data. With regard to qualitative data, I looked for 'patterns, themes, categories and regularities' (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 147) in the material gathered from the interviewees. As mentioned above, most interviews were taped on a digital recording device and transcribed afterwards in order to identify common themes. Themes emerging from the ongoing analysis of transcripts emanating from raw data were constantly compared to build toward a complete exploration. For operational purposes numbers were assigned to each interview so they could be differentiated and referred to more easily. Although anonymity was affirmed to all interviewees, I am fully aware that this does not necessarily mean they would have unburdened their hearts to me and tell me about restrictions in their work (for the issue of trustworthiness, see, e.g. Shenton 2004).
- 7 Before my PhD studies I worked as a journalist in Germany focusing on international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy. Back then I became interested in the Confucius Institute phenomenon and published a first journalistic piece in 2007 for which I interviewed a number of academics at different European universities and a number of people in charge of CIs, see Hartig 2007 and 2009.
- 8 Although I was officially invited by Hanban, which is the prerequisite to participate, I did not, other than the CI representatives, receive any funding for my travel or accommodation.

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2 China on the global stage

Foreign policy implications and image considerations

To understand the circumstances and shaping factors that assumingly have led to the establishment of Confucius Institutes, the following chapter pursues two main goals. First, it outlines the issue of China's image, which is seen as a major driving force behind the Chinese leadership's desire to intensify its engagement in public diplomacy. Second, it examines the most relevant conceptual slogans related to China's foreign policy – namely Peaceful Rise (*heping jueqi*), Peaceful Development (*heping fazhan*), Harmonious World (*hexie shijie*) and the Chinese Dream (*Zhongguo meng*) – to build a better understanding for the context of China's public diplomacy efforts and the whole Confucius Institute-project.

Nowadays it is a truism that China and the rest of the world are interconnected in almost every aspect of international affairs. The growing connections between China and other countries have made China and the rest of the world interdependent. This interconnectivity was described by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s when he stated that 'China's development is inseparable from the world, the development of the world is also inseparable from China' (quoted in Zhou S. 2009: 27). This statement described the necessity for and the essential principles of better and faster development, and is still popular with Chinese leaders today, especially the second part which highlights China's importance for the world. Looking at China on the global stage one can see a country of multiple identities: on the one hand it is becoming more assertive, especially in East Asia, as it explores novel approaches to its foreign policies, while on the other hand it simultaneously displays thin-skinned sensitivities when confronted with international criticism (Heilmann and Schmidt 2014).

Although this study is not mainly concerned with China's foreign policy as such, a brief outline of its shaping factors, objectives and goals is necessary to better understand the whole Confucius Institute-project. According to Heilmann and Schmidt (2014: 11) several basic assumptions are driving China's foreign policy: first, there is the assumption that the historic 'Middle Kingdom' (*Zhongguo*) deserves, in the Chinese understanding, to occupy – or reoccupy – a central position on the global stage and second, that it has not yet reached the zenith of its power. Third, China understands international relations 'primarily determined by power politics and competition between nation-states' and accordingly

assumes, fourth, that international ‘enemy forces’, especially in the West, are ‘attempting to hold China down as it strives to achieve more power and influence’ (Heilmann and Schmidt 2014: 11).

The fundamental goal and motivation of China’s foreign policy is to assist the increasingly complex tasks of economic and social developments at home. Against this backdrop, foreign policy should (1) help protecting the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, a task that refers for example to the decrease of Taiwan’s international space. Foreign policy should (2) promote economic development and thereby should ‘help support one-party rule in China’ as it serves ‘these objectives by sustaining an international environment that supports economic growth and stability in China’ (Sutter 2012: 2). Thus, to secure and support economic growth, China’s diplomacy is used to build political relationships that diversify its access to energy and other natural resources and to expand its ability ‘to search for new markets for Chinese exports and investment’ (Zhu Z. 2010: 6). China’s foreign policy should (3) help reclaiming international respect, status and image, which is the most important task for the present study. There is, however, a certain contradiction: on the one hand, making China prosperous and strong can be regarded as one important source of the CCP’s domestic legitimacy while on the other hand the leadership in Beijing is fully aware that domestic development is only helped by a peaceful setting amid cooperative countries that may perceive a too strong China as a threat. For this reason a fourth important goal of China’s foreign policy is to reassure neighbouring countries and other concerned powers that China’s intentions are peaceful and benign. This approach of reassurance follows the motivation ‘to project China’s image as a responsible and peaceful power’ (Zhu Z. 2010: 6).

As already hinted, the ‘image of a nation is crucial in the conduct of international relations [as a] favorable image plays a critical role in asserting one’s influence’ (Cai P. *et al.* 2009: 213). This is especially true for China and some go as far as to argue that ‘China’s greatest strategic threat today is its national image’, and ‘how China is perceived by other nations [...] will determine the future of Chinese development and reform’ (Ramo 2007: 12). The Chinese understanding of national image (*guojia xingxiang*) largely corresponds with the Western understanding in which a national image can be described as ‘the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people’ (Kunczik 1997: 46). Images then represent ‘a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information’ connected with a nation and they are essentially ‘a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data’ about a given country (Kotler and Gertner 2002: 251). These images consist of a wide range of factors, such as geography, history, art and music, and famous citizens. Furthermore, product categories like wines or cars are elements strongly identified with certain countries, as well as negative components such as civil rights violations, attacks on the environment or other societal ills.

According to Hu Xiaoming, a journalist at Xinhua News Agency, a national image consists of a person’s knowledge about a country, and this ‘knowledge

about a country is based on the learning, personal experiences, booklore and knowledge from the media, and societal relations of this person' (Hu X. 2011: 22). He further outlines three related and partially overlapping Chinese understandings of national images. One approach describes a national image as the international audience's relatively stable assessment or evaluation of a certain country (Hu X. 2011: 23; see also Yang W. 2000). A second understanding defines national image as the appearance and behaviour of a sovereign state and its people on the international stage. In this understanding, not only the actual appearance and behaviour forms a national image, but also how both appearance and behaviour are perceived by global public opinion (Hu X. 2011: 23; Li S. 1999). A third understanding defines a national image as the sum of assessments, evaluations and convictions of both the domestic and international audiences towards a certain country. These assumptions, according to this understanding, concern the behaviour of the country, its actual activities, and the results of such activities (Hu X. 2011: 23; Guan W. 1999).

Another component of national image is highlighted in the related Chinese literature, namely the role of the Chinese people. Their manners are seen as a crucial part of China's image (Han F. 2012). As Ouyang Junshan (2012) points out, a government can do a lot to promote a good image, but what is more important is the individual behaviour of the country's citizens in everyday life that can have a direct and immediate influence on foreigners. Therefore people's behaviour is described as a 'living business card' of a country (Ouyang J. 2012: 168; see also Qiao X. 2010).

Taken together three interrelated points are important to note in relation to national images and they have special implications in the case of China. First of all, most people depend on second-hand experience or second-hand information for what they know about foreign countries. For most people, this information is not so important to shaping their lives, so there is usually no need for those people to try to obtain first-hand information (Kunczik 1997). The second-hand experiences or second-hand contacts that shape most people's images of other countries are mainly provided through mass media because, as Niklas Luhmann (2000: 1) points out, 'Whatever we know about [...] the world in which we live, we know through the mass media.' Second and relatedly, is the fact that whether a certain image is correct or not 'does not matter; the danger is that such an image is defined as reality' (Kunczik 1997: 61). Lastly, it has to be noted that images are something rather fragile in the sense that it takes a lot of time and effort to create a favourable image, but it is very simple to ruin a good image.

Perception gap: how China wants to present itself and how it is perceived

The problematic dichotomy between the perceived image and the projected image is a constant issue in the case of China's interaction with the world. According to Ramo, the reason why China's image of itself and other nations' views of China are out of alignment is because China has changed incredibly

fast but its image has failed to keep up with these changes. The problem of self-awareness versus external perception also originates from the fact that the world's view of China is 'too often an unstable cocktail of out-of-date ideas, wild hopes and unshakeable prejudices and fears' (Ramo 2007: 12). Moreover, this contradictory view meets a rather mixed self-awareness: 'China's view of herself often teeters between self-confidence and insecurity, between caution and arrogance' (ibid.).

As already indicated, the mass media are instrumental in creating, modifying and spreading images of foreign nations and therefore one way to understand how China (or any other country) is seen in the world is through an analysis of media reports. A number of studies found that leading US newspapers reported positively about China in view of its economic development, but generally portrayed the country in a negative manner (Liss 2003; Zhang and Cameron 2003; Ramirez 2011). In a more recent study, Yang and Liu (2012) reveal some interesting changes in the coverage of China. According to their investigation, perceptions of China as a political/ideological threat dominated media coverage in the earlier 1990s but steadily declined after 1995 and totally disappeared from US print media after 2001. Perceptions of China as a military/strategic threat replaced political/ideological concerns in 1995, and the military focus has dominated media coverage ever since. Perceptions of China as an economic/trade threat persisted steadily throughout the 15-year time period, with a clear upturn in recent years. This rather negative undertone and a focus on conflictive topics are confirmed by research dealing with the media coverage of China in other countries, including Germany (Wilke and Achatzi 2011) and Australia (Li X. 2012).

The overall rather negative perception of China is naturally contrasted by the image China wants to present to the world. China wants to be seen as a peace-loving nation, a victim of foreign aggression, an opponent of hegemony and a developing country. In recent decades the Chinese government has highlighted the images of China as an international co-operator and a major power, while de-emphasising the images of China as a socialist country and a supporter of (word) revolution that were highlighted before the Reform and Opening-up period (Wang H. 2011). Wang also investigated to what degree other's perceptions of China correspond with China's projected image and found out that Americans share the view of China as a socialist country, as a developing country and as a major power, but reject the image of China as international co-operator and peace-loving (Wang H. 2011). Precisely because of this perception, some Chinese scholars detect a 'new victim mentality' (Yu W. 2012: 85) in China. This mentality holds that the international community not only misunderstands, but does not appreciate China's development. On the contrary, the 'new victim mentality' maintains that China is always criticised, and therefore, as the same-named book puts it, 'China is unhappy' (*Zhongguo bu gaoxing*). As Yu Wanli (2012: 85) puts it, after China solved the problems of being beaten (by the Western powers) and being poor, China currently has to deal with the problem of being insulted and verbally abused. Another Chinese opinion in this regard is

the so called ‘Conspiracy Theory’, which claims that the West with its assumed superior values, discourse sovereignty and prerogative of interpretation deliberately wants to create a media atmosphere that ‘demonises China’. The alleged aim of this demonisation is to ruin China’s image and thus to damage China’s hard power, especially its economic might, and derail its development (Yu W. 2012).

It is in this context that Chinese scholars argue for an active Chinese strategy to shape China’s image by means of public diplomacy, as Chapter 4 will outline in more detail. As Zhao Kejin (2012), one of the leading Chinese scholars in the field of public diplomacy, points out, the Western media could theoretically play a role in shaping a positive image of China, but China should not rely and depend on the Western media because the Western media are characterised by Western values such as democracy and human rights. Another reason why China should not rely on the Western media, according to this line of argument, is that the West has racial prejudices and is afraid of Communism, a mindset traced back to the Cold War in influencing how Western media report about China.

Zhao Kejin (2012: 162–163) further predicts that as long as the Western *weltanschauung* or world-mentality does not fundamentally change, China’s broken image will limit China’s development. In order to change this situation, he contends that China has to spend time and effort in adjusting its diplomatic strategy. As he sees it, China should develop an image strategy that helps the West to better understand China. In this regard it is the necessary task of China’s public diplomacy to communicate with the West in a Western style and to introduce an image that is plain and simple to understand. Or as Zhao Qizheng (2010), former Minister of the State Council Information Office,¹ puts it, it is the task of China’s public diplomacy to present the ‘true image’ of the ‘real China’.

The necessity to communicate with the world greatly benefits, in my understanding, from the Chinese government’s tendency ‘to simplify complex phenomena into a *tifa*, a slogan or mindset, rather than encourage in-depth analysis of political intentions, actions, and processes’ (Suettinger 2004: 7). The following section illustrates this as it introduces the most recent slogans which have importance for the study of Confucius Institutes, namely the idea of China’s Peaceful Rise/Development (*heping jueqi/fazhan*), the notion of a Harmonious World (*hexie shijie*) and the latest catchphrase of the Chinese Dream (*zhongguo meng*).

While a number of scholars have linked Peaceful Rise and/or Harmonious World to either China’s soft power campaign (Shi Y. 2007; Brown 2012; Cabestan 2010) or loosely to its public diplomacy (Xing G. 2007; Zhao S. 2010), I follow David Shambaugh (2013) and argue for a more precise treatment as I understand them as political slogans that carry certain narratives about China (see Chapter 3). In the overall context of this study, I understand political slogans carrying more complex narratives as an instrument of public diplomacy.

Put simply, a slogan is a word or phrase that is easy to remember and is used by a group, organisations or business to attract attention. *Merriam Webster* defines a slogan either as ‘a word or phrase used to express a characteristic

position or stand or a goal to be achieved' or as 'a brief attention-getting phrase used in advertising or promotion'. While the necessary simplification of complex phenomena into slogans might raise the hackles of foreign policy analysts, it makes political slogans a fitting instrument of public diplomacy which is, as pointed out, essentially about communicating with foreign publics. In the context of political communication, a slogan can be defined as 'a brief, memorable, and striking phrase that may include labeling and stereotyping as a repetitive expression, idea, or purpose' (Koc and Ilgun 2010: 208). The most important function of a slogan is the simplification of complicated and complex ideas, issues, or ideologies (Denton 1980). Those more complex ideas or issues are here understood as narratives which, according to *Merriam Webster*, mark the representation of an event, a series of events or more broadly a story. Slogans, then, provide shortcuts through the problems of communication. They 'simplify the tasks of communicators and audiences in conditions when there are many ideas competing for a place on the political agenda, and a great deal of noise from competing messages' (Sharkansky 2002: 75).

The China threat theory

To better understand the slogans of Peaceful Rise/Development, Harmonious World and Chinese Dream it is necessary to describe the so called China Threat Theory (*Zhongguo weixielun*), which in itself can be understood as a slogan carrying a narrative about China and can to a certain extent be characterised as the triggering impulse for the three Chinese slogans.

China's continued economic growth, its ever-increasing accumulation of military power and its rising global influence have attracted worldwide attention and concern, more often than not articulated in a 'threat-opportunity paradigm' (Crookes 2011: 369). These perceptions of China as a threat are 'essentially foreign attributions to China as having a harmful, destabilising, and even pernicious international disposition' (Deng Y. 2008: 97). Although the discussion emerged in the 1990s, the topic of Western unease and rejection of China can be traced back for decades and even centuries, for example with the German Emperor Wilhelm II, who infamously railed against the 'Yellow Peril' in his Hun Speech in 1900.

The current threat discourse can, as already indicated, be summarised by three interrelated dimensions: (1) military/strategic; (2) economic/trade; and (3) political/ideological (Yang and Liu 2012). The military/strategic dimension emphasises China's military build-up and the Taiwan Straits issue. It is informed by the 'simple geopolitical perspective' that 'great powers behave like great powers' (Roy 1996: 761), meaning 'that China will threaten conflict by challenging the United States for global hegemonic leadership, just as Germany challenged Britain in the twentieth century' (Jeffery 2009: 311). The economic/trade dimension highlights job losses around the world to Chinese manufacturers, the artificially undervalued Chinese currency and Beijing's increasing global scramble for resources. The political/ideological dimension is primarily concerned with

China's monolithic one-party rule and its efforts to expand soft power worldwide (Yang and Liu 2012), which is especially illustrated in the debates on Confucius Institutes.

According to Roy (1996: 758), 'how one responds to these arguments obviously depends in large measure upon one's political orientation, that is, "pro-China" or "anti-China"' because the fears of China often say as much about the country itself as they do about those who hold them (Barr 2011). Although it is beyond the scope of this study to engage with the various arguments it seems reasonable to conclude that 'China is neither as benevolent as most of its supporters claim nor as malicious as its critics assert' (Al-Rodhan 2007: 64).

Beyond the actual debate about whether China poses a threat to the world or not, two more interrelated aspects are worth mentioning. First, there is the Chinese perspective that those threat theories 'are simply concocted by hostile forces seeking to threaten China' (Deng Y. 2008: 110) in order to achieve their own political goals. This argument is, for example, made by Yan Xuetong (2001: 36) who notes that ordinary Chinese people 'cannot see how the rise of China poses a threat to others, [and] they regard the allegation of a 'China threat' as indicating political hostility and strategic conspiracy'. This understanding, which can be linked to China's 'victim mentality' or 'victim narrative', is illustrated in the fact that various assumptions relating to the China Threat Theory have been attacked as simply reflective of Western 'ignorance' and 'bias'. Other views objectionable to the leadership in Beijing have been equated with 'malicious belittling and slandering statements' propounded by Western ill-wishers (Deng Y. 2008: 115).

A second aspect is of interest here, namely that the Chinese leadership is very aware that perceptions of China as a threat can lead other countries to adopt belligerent policies that might disrupt Beijing leadership's abilities to focus on economic development and to enhance Chinese security in a peaceful international environment. For these reasons, Chinese diplomacy has actively tried to neutralise the China threat arguments. On the one hand this diplomacy has sought to delegitimise China's critics by appealing to public sentiments and by accusing proponents of the China Threat Theory of having a Cold War mentality of containment. On the other hand, the leadership in Beijing is simultaneously trying to foster a benign image of itself by means of public diplomacy.

Peaceful rise and peaceful development

As a response to the growing threat sentiment in some parts of the world, the Chinese government developed the foreign policy slogans of the Peaceful Rise and Harmonious World with the narrative that not only China's cultural and civilisational tradition stress harmony, but also that its rise to power will be a peaceful and all-beneficial process. Overall those narratives aim to ease anxieties about China's global expansion.

In November 2003, Zheng Bijian² coined the term Peaceful Rise in a speech at the Bo'ao Forum. He argued that China's ascendancy would not be a threat to

the world order, unlike the challenges posed by Germany, Japan and the Soviet Union in the past. Zheng defined China's peaceful rise as an equivalent to China's modernisation and emphasised that China could secure capital, technology and resources through peaceful means because China opens itself to world markets. He furthermore insisted that although China would rely mainly on its own strength, it needed a peaceful international environment to accomplish the task of lifting its enormous population out of a condition of underdevelopment. He also pledged that China would rise to the status of a great power without destabilising the international order or oppressing its neighbours (Zheng B. 2005).

In December 2003, Hu Jintao³ and Wen Jiabao⁴ both used Peaceful Rise in public speeches. Wen used it in a speech at Harvard University on 10 December 2003, while Hu referred to it on 26 December, at a workshop celebrating the 110th anniversary of the birth of Mao Zedong, where the audience included many members of the Politburo Standing Committee of the CCP, commonly described as the most powerful people in China. This level of leadership attention 'gave the subject a great deal of impetus, and various institutions and publications began discussing the "theory of China's peaceful rise" at considerable length over the next few months' (Suettinger 2004: 4). However, within only a few months the slogan lost momentum and was eventually eschewed by the Chinese leadership. This became apparent when Hu Jintao in a highly anticipated speech at the Bo'ao Forum in late April 2004 made no mention whatsoever of peaceful rise and instead talked about 'peace and development' (*heping yu fazhan*) (Hu J. 2004).

This change in terms caught the attention of analysts both in China and abroad, and a number of interpretations and explanations were presented, but no official explanation of the change has been offered in China. Among a number of suggested reasons for the change, the most plausible is that the usage of the term 'rise' would have suggested 'a potentially combative stance' (Lanteigne 2009: 31) and thus 'could fuel perceptions that China is a threat to the established order' (Zhu Z. 2010: 12). In other words, while China was emphasising 'peaceful', the world primarily took note of the 'rise'. As this would have undermined the original intention of the slogan – to reassure the world – the term Peaceful Rise was replaced by Peaceful Development (*heping fazhan*).

The fact that the leadership dropped Peaceful Rise became clear when in December 2005 the State Council issued a White Paper entitled *China's Peaceful Development Road*, which outlined the narrative behind the slogan. In this White Paper, the Chinese leadership explained the inevitability of Beijing pursuing 'peaceful development,' outlined the major policies the Chinese government had taken to achieve the goal, and demonstrated its resolve to stick to the road of Peaceful Development. Referring to the fears that China as a rising power could behave like revisionist powers of the past, the White Paper stresses that

China's road of peaceful development is a brand-new one for mankind in pursuit of civilization and progress, the inevitable way for China to achieve

modernization, and a serious choice and solemn promise made by the Chinese government and the Chinese people.

(State Council Information Office 2005)

Furthermore, not only does it reassure the rest of the world of China's benign intentions, but it also emphasises the advantages of a developing China: 'China's development will never pose a threat to anyone; instead, it can bring more development opportunities and bigger markets for the rest of the world' (ibid.). And while it presents China as a modest state, it also stresses the importance China holds for the world as a whole: 'China's development is an important component of global development. China has promoted world peace with its own development and made contributions to the progress of mankind' (ibid.).

Ever since Peaceful Development was enshrined in the list of party slogans, the Chinese leadership has consistently employed the rhetoric of peace, and made clear that China's growth would bring stability, peace and other positive spill over effects, particularly in the economic realm, to the rest of the world. However, as mentioned before, 'China's perception of itself appears strikingly at odds with that of China in other parts of the world' (Loh 2011: 21). Possibly partly because of this, the State Council issued a second White Paper on China's Peaceful Development (State Council Information Office 2011) in September 2011 that hints at a certain degree of dissatisfaction about the way other countries perceived China at this time. It starts off with the sentence: 'China has declared to the rest of the world on many occasions that it takes a path of peaceful development and is committed to upholding world peace and promoting common development and prosperity for all countries' (State Council Information Office 2011). The White Paper then outlines that 'the central goal of China's diplomacy is to create a peaceful and stable international environment for its development' (ibid.). Moreover, while China is developing, it 'strives to make its due contribution to world peace and development. It never engages in aggression or expansion, never seeks hegemony, and remains a staunch force for upholding regional and world peace and stability' (ibid.).

The document further notes that China

will continue to carry out exchanges and cooperation with the parliaments, parties, local authorities and NGOs of other countries, [and] expand people-to-people and cultural exchanges to enhance understanding and friendship between the Chinese people and the people of other countries.

(Ibid.)

While this document also wants to reassure the world about China's placidity, it does not leave any doubt that 'China is firm in upholding its core interests', which include state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity and national reunification, China's political system established by the Constitution, overall social stability, and the basic safeguards for ensuring sustainable economic and social development.

Summarising and comparing both Peaceful Rise and Peaceful Development, it can be argued ‘that the Chinese leadership’s decision to eschew “peaceful rise” in favour of “peaceful development” was fundamentally a question of terminology and thus preserved China’s strategy for reassuring other nations’ (Glaser and Medeiros 2007: 291).

Harmonious World

The slogan of a Harmonious World was introduced by Hu Jintao to the global public in his speech at the United Nations in September 2005 and was officially adopted as guiding principle of China’s foreign policy at the 17th Congress of the CCP in late 2007. The idea of a Harmonious World is derived from the teachings of ancient Confucianism and is also the external manifestation of the domestic policy slogan of building a Harmonious Society (*hexie shehui*), which was originally advocated by the government in 2004 as a response to growing social discontent in the context of China’s rapid economic growth and restructuring.

In his UN-speech Hu (2005) explained that it is China’s goal to build a ‘harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity’ where countries with different values, cultures and political systems coexist in peace. Such a world should be based on multilateralism, mutually beneficial economic cooperation and respect for political and cultural difference, and would ensure lasting peace and prosperity.

Three months later Wen Jiabao (2005) called for respect for different civilisations to build this Harmonious World. ‘Harmony’, said Wen, ‘is the ultimate source of coexistence and development of the world’s civilizations’. He made clear that harmony would be the key for coexistence, development, peace among states, good relations between individuals and accord between humanity and nature.

The aforementioned 2005 White Paper on China’s Peaceful Development Road states that ‘China advocates the building of a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity and works with other countries in pursuing this goal. To China, it is both a long-term objective and a current task’ (State Council Information Office 2005). The White Paper proposes a set of ideas how this Harmonious World can be built. For example, in political terms, ‘countries should respect each other and treat each other as equals, and work together to promote democracy in international relations’. In cultural terms, countries should ‘draw on each other’s strengths, seek common ground while putting aside differences, respect the diversity of the world, and promote progress in human civilization.’ In this regard the White Paper calls for more dialogues and exchanges among civilisations ‘to do away with ideological prejudice and distrust, and make human society more harmonious and the world more colorful.’

As a whole Harmonious World – as with the slogan Peaceful Rise/Development – is undoubtedly meant to invalidate the China Threat Theory in the West and to assuage concerns about the uncertain impacts of China’s rising influence

in international affairs, thus presenting a better global image of China. According to Blanchard and Guo (2008: 4), 'PRC policymakers themselves are quite explicit that the desire to counter the China treat perception has something to do with China's championing of a harmonious world.'

While some go as far as to argue that China's idea of a Harmonious World can be regarded 'as articulating the most positive Chinese perception of the international community [...] since 1840' (Zhu L. 2010: 22), one should, however, not lose sight of the fact, that the idea to build a Harmonious World also hints at a rather strategic dimension. Although one objective of the Harmonious World is to appeal to major powers, first and foremost the United States, demonstrating China's cooperative position on global issues while showing no intention to challenge the existing US-centric international system, 'it is fairly obvious that China's call for democratic international relations, tolerance of distinct social systems [and] increased support of multilateralism [...] are directed, in part, at the U.S.' (Blanchard and Guo 2008: 5). Zhang Jian (2007: 3) also points out that the slogan of Harmonious World 'reflects a thinly veiled dissatisfaction with the current unipolar world order dominated by a perceived increasingly hegemonic United States which tends to impose its values upon the world often by acting unilaterally and through military means.'

It should furthermore be noted that from the Chinese point of view Harmonious World presents of model of international order that is rooted Chinese cultural norms and values. Of crucial importance here is the Chinese, or more precisely the Confucian, understanding of harmony (*hexie*), which is described with the phrase *he er butong*, meaning harmony with differences or without sameness or conformity. In this understanding, a society is harmonious when the members of this society act and behave according to their social position. In such a highly hierarchal society, the free development of the individual, for example, is unimaginable as it would disrupt social harmony and thereby social order. In this interpretation, central to this 'contemporary "harmonious world" order is the harmonious coexistence of different cultures, political systems and values, whereas "sameness" (*tong*) is perceived as leading to "disharmony"' (Zhang J. 2007: 4). To formulate it in slightly exaggerated terms, in such a harmonious world, countries would have to act and behave according to their international standing and position. While, as pointed out, the slogan of Harmonious World is partly directed at the United States and the current international order which China understands as a unipolar one lead by the US, if such a harmonious world would be realised it would not necessarily be characterised by a 'post-hegemonic world order that celebrates diverse ideas, cultures and peoples' (Callahan 2012: 22). Rather, such a world, in the Chinese understanding, would be more like a Pax Sinica which would "'harmonize" and "pacify" other peoples [...] into the new "benevolent rule" of the Chinese world order' (ibid.).

It might therefore somewhat stretch the point to describe the Harmonious World as a 'value-free concept' (Zhao S. 2010: 366), but Zhao is definitely correct when he notes that this slogan should be understood 'in response to US promotion of Western values such as human rights and democracy' (Zhao S.

2010: 366). Against this background it should become clear that Harmonious World is not only the goal and objective of China's Peaceful Rise/Development, but also that this slogan and the related narrative has a strategic flavour for China.

The Chinese dream and the problems of political slogans

Both the slogans of Harmonious World and Peaceful Rise/Development, although emerging during the Hu-Wen era (2002–2012), are frequently used by the current leadership under Xi Jinping, not only because they are officially regarded as important cornerstones of China's foreign policy but also because referring to concepts or slogans of the previous leadership clarifies the continuity and thereby stability of party rule. For example, Chinese premier Li Keqiang at his press conference after the 2014 National People's Congress⁵ noted that China is committed to 'pursuing peaceful development' (Xinhua 2014) as did Xi Jinping in his speech to the Australian Parliament in November 2014. In the same speech, however, Xi also noted that China is 'striving to achieve the Chinese dream, which is the great renewal of the Chinese nation' (Xi J. 2014a). And it is this latest catch phrase of the Chinese Dream (*zhongguo meng*), which can be understood as Xi's contribution to the official pantheon of Chinese party rhetoric, although the term 'dream' emerged about a decade earlier, frequently in conjunction with China's desire to host the Olympic Games.⁶

In late 2012, Xi Jinping began to promote the slogan when he noted that 'achieving the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has been the greatest dream of the Chinese people since the advent of modern times' (Xi J. 2014b: 38). The goals to promote the Chinese dream are to achieve national prosperity, the revitalisation of the nation and people's happiness. As analysts have pointed out, the Chinese Dream 'so far has not been clearly defined' (Wang Z. 2014: 2)⁷ but there is agreement that its 'main context [...] is domestic politics' (Wang Z. 2014: 8). Nevertheless, it also has a foreign policy dimension which Xi himself acknowledged in 2013 when he noted that the Chinese Dream will benefit not only the people of China, but also the people of other countries. Xi referred to the narratives of China as a peaceful country and a country full of opportunities:

To realize the Chinese Dream, we must pursue peaceful development. We will always follow the path of peaceful development and pursue an opening-up strategy that brings mutual benefits. We will concentrate both on China's development and on our responsibilities and contributions to the world as a whole. We will bring benefits to both the Chinese people and the people of the whole world. The realization of the Chinese Dream will bring the world peace, not turmoil, opportunities, not threats.

(Xi J. 2014b: 62)

This international dimension of the Chinese Dream clearly refers to its preceding slogans in the sense that China sticks to peacefulness and that it sees itself as a

contributor to global prosperity which is reminiscent of Deng Xiaoping's statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter. However, a closer reading of the official statements and speeches, most notable by Xi Jinping himself, also reveals that the Chinese Dream and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation are described in the light of the miseries brought to China by Western powers during the Century of Humiliation that started with the Opium War in 1840.

While the overall objective of all three slogans described above can be summarised as reassuring the world of the benign nature of China's rise, this approach 'of relying on a slogan with limited policy prescriptions, instead of on actual policies, to achieve foreign policy objectives' (Glaser and Medeiros 2007: 306) has been problematic for a number of scholars. For Medeiros, 'such slogans and policies are decidedly unsatisfying, prompting confusion and worry among many external observers' (Medeiros 2009: 2). For him the problem is not so much 'that such Chinese goals are patently untrue or a clever prevarication about Beijing's *real* intentions, a common refrain in the United States; rather, they are insufficient to explain the multiplicity of Chinese interests and actions' (*ibid.*, italics in original). This point is strongly made by Tang Shiping (2006: 129) who notes that 'while these new labels and slogans may seem attractive for the outside world, they are not, in general, very helpful for understanding China's foreign policy'. Tang goes on to note: 'while these labels may serve the purpose of projecting certain images of China, and may indeed create an imagined reality, they do not necessarily drive China's foreign policy' (*ibid.*).

I very much agree with Tang and others in the sense that such slogans can project certain images of China. I would, however, contradict their scepticism regarding the inherent simplification of complex narratives because it is precisely this simplification that make slogans a potentially useful tool of public diplomacy although the creation of seemingly simple slogans is not without its weaknesses. Lanteigne (2009: 11) indicates one problem when he notes that 'those who see China as a potential threat suggest that the state may be waiting until its strength is further increased before gradually shedding these ideals and behaving more like traditional rising powers'. In other words: if China would have the means and the chance to act differently, namely more aggressive and more assertive, it would do so.

With regards to the present study, another problem is more important and that is the fact that 'mere rhetorical refutation of the "China threat theory" and verbal pledges' (Glaser and Medeiros 2007: 306) that China will develop peacefully and will not strive for hegemony are less than convincing when China's power, both in economic and military terms, accumulates and when China does not behave in this way. Therefore, the best slogan does not succeed when the rhetoric is not turned into action which is a problem, as we will see later on, any instrument of public diplomacy is facing.

Notes

- 1 The State Council (*Guowuyuan*), synonymous with the Central People's Government (*Zhongyang renmin zhengfu*) since 1954, is the chief administrative authority of the People's Republic of China. It is chaired by the Premier. The State Council Information Office (SCIO, or *Guowuyuan Xinwen bangongshi*, literally: 'State Council News Office') is the chief information-office of the Chinese government.
- 2 Zheng Bijian is regarded as a close associate and adviser to Hu Jintao. When Hu was Director of the Central Party School, Zheng was vice director. Zheng also served as deputy director of the CCP Central Committee Publicity/Propaganda Department from 1992 to 1997.
- 3 China's paramount leader between 2002 and 2012. He was General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, President of the People's Republic of China and Chairman of the Central Military Commission. Predecessor of Xi Jinping.
- 4 China's Premier from 2003 to 2013. Predecessor of Li Keqiang.
- 5 The National People's Congress is the national legislature of the People's Republic of China.
- 6 It was therefore probably no coincident that the official motto for the 2008 Beijing Olympics was 'One World, One Dream' (*tong yige shijie tong yige mengxiang*).
- 7 The vagueness and uncertainty surrounding this new phrase became apparent when during a conference on 'Culture and Understanding in China–Europe Relations' in September 2013 Chinese delegates even debated whether the term should be translated as the Chinese Dream or the China Dream.

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3 How states communicate

Public diplomacy and related concepts

As public opinion is increasingly crucial in international relations, communication becomes a vital means of influence and an ever-more powerful aspect in the conduct of foreign affairs. This chapter looks at how nation states communicate with and present themselves to the world by means of public diplomacy. The chapter starts with a discussion of public diplomacy by looking at its purposes, actors, target audience and its key elements. Following Nicholas Cull (2008, 2009) these elements include listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, international broadcasting and psychological warfare. As this study deals with Confucius Institutes, cultural diplomacy will be analysed in more detail than the other elements. In order to contextualise the concept of public diplomacy, the second part deals with the communicative dimension of public diplomacy. Here I discuss different communication approaches of public diplomacy and analyse how public diplomacy is connected with the related concepts of propaganda and soft power. The final section introduces the notion of strategic narratives as put forward by Miskimmon *et al.* (2013), which is seen as a useful alternative to better understand China's public diplomacy efforts.

While there is not much academic consensus when it comes to public diplomacy, it is widely accepted that public diplomacy can be defined through a distinction from traditional diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy is concerned with the management of relations between states and between states and other actors, and it can be separated into the three dimensions of communication, representation and the reproduction of international society (Jönsson and Hall 2005). From a state perspective, diplomacy is concerned with advising, shaping and implementing foreign policy by conducting negotiations and maintaining relations between the various actors in the international arena. Traditional diplomacy can be described as the external management of state affairs, which is based on self-interest as well as on the particular values and historical experiences that shape a country's identity (Henrikson 2008). It is a political activity to ensure national interest and to enable states to secure foreign policy objectives (Siddiqui and Alam 2009). It is then an instrument 'through which states articulate, coordinate and secure particular interests using correspondence, private talks, the exchanging of views, lobbying, visits, threats and other related activities' (Barston 2014: 1). Overall, diplomacy is essentially a communicative activity.

A general classification of diplomatic activities might include government-to-government activities, diplomat-to-diplomat contacts, government-to-people contacts, and, under certain circumstances, people-to-people contacts (Manheim 1994). The first and second belong to traditional diplomacy while the third and fourth belong to the area of public diplomacy. Taken together, the difference between traditional and public diplomacy is that public diplomacy is not only the public and interactive dimension of diplomacy, but that it also ‘involves a much broader group of people on both sides, and a broader set of interests that go beyond those of the government of the day’ (Leonard *et al.* 2002: 8/9).

Public diplomacy

Public diplomacy is regarded as one of the most salient political communication issues of our times and practitioners and scholars alike pay increasing attention to it. Despite the growing significance and the consequently intensified academic engagement – or precisely because of the increasing academic debate and the myriad of voices – there is no consensus how public diplomacy should be defined or what it entails. To emerge from the thicket of definitions and approaches, the following section sheds light on the purpose of public diplomacy, its actors and target audiences as well as its different elements.

The purpose of public diplomacy

As Jan Melissen (2005: 8) points out, almost all countries, whether small or big, democratic or authoritarian, affluent or poor ‘have in recent years displayed a great interest in public diplomacy’. The reason why countries engage in public diplomacy may vary from case to case, but one can identify some general purposes which are interrelated and to a certain degree may be relevant for the very same country simultaneously.

One basic reason to conduct public diplomacy may be the desire to be noticed, preferably in a positive way, by other countries, or to increase people’s familiarity with one’s country, a reason especially true for small and middle powers. Arguing from a Canadian perspective, Potter (2009: 3) stresses that countries ‘cannot afford to be anonymous in today’s world.’ The main problem for these states is their relative global invisibility. They receive much less attention in the global media and thus try to catch the attention of the world, for example by positioning themselves as pioneers for international issues such as human security, foreign aid, peace-making or international mediation.

Another common reason why states apply public diplomacy is to generate understanding for their policies and to present a positive image to the world. The attempt to project a favourable picture of a state points to a certain dilemma of public diplomacy generally: On the one hand it should present a realistic picture of a country because overstated positive self-expression backfires by being exposed as crude public relations or, even worse, as propaganda. On the other hand, presenting such a realistic picture normally means to address issues and

problems a country is facing, and such a realistic display can potentially spoil the favourable picture every country understandably wants to present. Good public diplomacy, therefore, has to find the right balance between realism and favourability, a task that is not easy to accomplish as the case of China will illustrate.

A number of countries, especially in the West, aim to spread their values to others or argue to promote universal values by means of public diplomacy. Yet another important reason why states engage in public diplomacy is to rectify negative external perceptions, or to build 'a line of defence against foreign criticism' (Melissen 2011: 14). Countries in this category normally do not have to put themselves on the global map, but are already in the global spotlight and have to deal with a myriad of criticism. Some of the most prominent examples include the United States, Russia and China.

Taken as a whole, public diplomacy is about the promotion of national interests and therefore it 'is no altruistic affair and it is not a "soft" instrument' (Melissen 2005: 14). It can pursue a wide range of objectives which can broadly be described as either normative-idealistic or more functional. Functional objectives include promoting economic interests by supporting trade and foreign investment, supporting alliance management, developing bilateral relationships and helping to maintain bilateral relationships in times of tension. Idealistic purposes include the development of mutual understanding, combating ethnocentrism and stereotyping as well as preventing conflicts. While those idealistic purposes may at times be highlighted by practitioners, one can argue that even these idealistic purposes eventually serve more functional objectives.

The actors of public diplomacy

A central issue with regards to actors is whether public diplomacy is fundamentally a government endeavour or whether it 'includes the "diplomatic" actions of nonstate actors' as well (Fitzpatrick 2010: 95). While a small number of definitions explicitly define public diplomacy as the domain of government, more scholars are of the opinion that 'state control over diplomacy is eroding' (Kelley 2010: 288), which is especially true for public diplomacy. Traditionally public diplomacy was carried out by the state and/or its organs, but in course of globalisation more and more non-state and non-governmental agents are involved in public diplomacy. Those agents may include education and cultural organisations, NGOs, journalists, political parties, citizen groups or business associations. Normally such non-governmental agents have the advantage of being more credible, 'often to the extent to which they are seen as critical of their own government' (Riordan 2005: 191).

Between these two poles (non-governmental versus inherently governmental), it is generally accepted nowadays 'that, while government is still the driving force behind public diplomacy, the onus can no longer fall on the nation-state government alone' (Wang J. 2006: 94). In this regard, public diplomacy can be understood as all of the activities by state and non-state actors, but to describe it

as a diplomatic activity it ‘requires an official purpose’ (Potter 2009: 33). Or as Canadian (public) diplomat Mark McDowell (2008: 8) puts it:

We know that [public diplomacy] takes place in *public*, but for it to be *diplomacy*, it has to entail a role for the state. There must be an element of government intention and participation – not necessarily undertaking the entire conception and execution of a project but at least playing a role, working with civil society partners, funding, coordinating, and/or directing. Public diplomacy also has to have a clear goal or message. In the absence of these two elements – a government role and a conscious message – we are merely talking about the background noise of international communication.

While all these actors – including the business community, educational, cultural and academic organisations, think tanks and NGOs – are increasingly found outside the nation-state’s domain, they normally belong to the country that conducts public diplomacy. Another approach, however, can also be identified within public diplomacy, namely the inclusion of *foreign* non-state actors in a country’s conduct of public diplomacy.

For one thing, governments unable or unwilling to wage full-scale public diplomacy are outsourcing these activities to lobbyists or public relations firms in the target country, an approach labelled as ‘strategic public diplomacy’ (Manheim 1994: 7) or ‘the reversed public relations variant of public diplomacy’ (Gilboa 1998: 59). The reason for this approach is quite obvious:

a local public relations firm is likely to know best how to achieve the desired goals in a given political and cultural context, how to identify the weaknesses in the positions of the government interested in the campaign, and how to deal with them effectively.

(Gilboa 2001: 7)

Another reason to work with foreign actors, next to their local expertise, concerns questions of credibility and trust. Both those aspects are highly valued as part of effective public diplomacy, and yet as discussed earlier in relation to realistic and favourable pictures a country has and wants to present, they are increasingly hard for foreign governments to obtain. The credibility of a government nowadays is often suspected, because the audience tends to perceive *any* form of communication by *any* foreign government as crude political propaganda. Therefore, as Wang Jian (2006: 94) makes clear, ‘without source credibility, no amount of communication and information will ever be effective and, worse, could even be counter-productive’. The issue of source credibility can, to a certain extent, alleviated by means of engaging local stakeholders who not only have something in common with the potential target audience, but who also know local settings and specific circumstances which a dispatched public diplomat may not be aware of and therefore may not be able to get the message across. Therefore, ‘if a message will attract distrust simply because it is

perceived to be coming from a foreign government, make sure it appears to be coming from a foreign government as little as possible' (Leonard *et al.* 2002: 55). Thus, if a government wants its voice to be heard and eventually wants to have influence on events or narratives outside its direct control, it should work through 'organisations and networks that are separate from, independent of, and even culturally suspicious toward government itself' (*ibid.*).

In this regard Cowan and Arsenault (2008) argue that collaboration may be the most effective technique of public diplomacy in certain instances. Defined as 'initiatives that feature cross-national participation in a joint venture or project with a clearly defined goal' (Cowan and Arsenault 2008: 10), these projects can be short term with a clear endpoint, such as putting on a play or writing a piece of music, or larger in scale and longer in term, such as side-by-side participation in natural disaster reconstruction efforts. While the collaborative form of public diplomacy sometimes can be the most important form, it is not without weaknesses since many collaborations 'fail because a stakeholder feels disenfranchised, conflict derails the process, and/or parties either disagree or change their minds about the project goals' (Cowan and Arsenault 2008: 24). It is precisely this approach to public diplomacy, relying on cooperation with stakeholders of the target country, which is of particular interest in the case of Confucius Institutes. This approach will be discussed in more detail in the second part of this chapter and in the case studies.

The target audience of public diplomacy

The question of public diplomacy's audience is closely linked to the question of purposes. As mentioned before, public diplomacy is about promoting national interests through engagement and communication with foreign peoples, with the ultimate aim 'to influence a foreign government by influencing its citizens' (Frederick 1993: 229).

Terms often used in this context include 'foreign publics', 'foreign audiences', 'foreign peoples', 'foreign population', 'people in the world', 'people of other countries', 'citizens of foreign countries' or 'overseas audience' to name a few. The problem is that this grouping is often generalised to the point of ambiguity and therefore 'making it difficult to qualify what exactly constitutes the "public" beyond sometimes amorphous constituencies whose commonalities change depending on context' (Kelley 2009: 75).

Following media studies scholar John Hartley (2011: 16) audience in the context of this study can be understood as a 'number of individually unidentifiable and mutually anonymous people, [...] united by their participation in [a public diplomacy programme or initiative]'. Hartley further notes that given the 'varying demographics of this group [and] variations between nations, the concept [of 'the audience'] itself is a means by which such an essentially unknowable group can be imagined.'

When audiences are discussed in public diplomacy scholarship one can detect a certain tendency to define the target audience rather narrowly as 'key

individuals' (Nye 2004: 109) or 'educated elites that might one day become movers and shakers in their own society' (Taylor 2009: 12), which definitely 'begs the question of whether public diplomacy is as "public" as the name implies' (Kelley 2009: 75). Those future elites or opinion leaders of today (such as teachers, journalists, writers, public intellectuals or civil society representatives) are traditionally seen as the target audience of public diplomacy, because they are not only supposed to influence their own government in the interests of the entity that conducts public diplomacy, but also to influence the broader public which then in turn should also influence their government.

This idea contains notions of the Two-Step Flow Model of Communication by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld (1955/2009). The model, essentially, says that most people form their opinions under the influence of opinion leaders, who in turn are influenced by the mass media. So according to Katz and Lazarsfeld, ideas flow from mass media to opinion leaders, and from them to a wider population. If one replaces 'mass media' with 'public diplomacy programmes/initiatives' one is not far from how various definitions describe the mechanisms of public diplomacy. The Two-Step Flow model suggests that mass media does not directly influence audiences, but highlights that interpersonal connections and communication play a larger role in influencing the public. This interpersonal, or face to face, communication is prominently described as the 'last three feet' in public diplomacy research,¹ which means that the above described key individuals and opinion formers, who are influenced by public diplomacy programmes, can in turn influence the broader public in favour of the foreign country that conducts public diplomacy.

This understanding, however, leads to another aspect, namely that not only key individuals are the audience for public diplomacy. This point is in line with criticism regarding the Katz/Lazarsfeld model as it was noted that media information also directly flows to the audience without the detour of opinion leaders. With regards to public diplomacy this means that there are public diplomacy programmes or instruments that not only target the intellectual elite, but also the broader public directly (see the following section on public diplomacy's elements).

Before looking at the various elements of public diplomacy that can be used for different audiences, the point about the mass audience raises yet another related aspect, namely the fact that audiences 'are not passive audiences, but are active participants' (Fisher 2013: 219). This being active can be understood in the sense that the audience not only interprets or decodes messages and thereby is not at the mercy of the sender, but it may also actively look for information and may also actively reject information under certain circumstances.

The notion of an active audience comes from cultural and media studies and goes back to early media sociology, which studied people's use of mass media in the context of uses and gratifications (Hartley 2011). Uses and gratification theory understands audience members not as passive consumers, but argues that the audience has power over their media consumption, assumes an active role in interpreting content and its media use is motivated by needs and goals that are defined by the audience itself.

Basically this line of thinking concerning an active audience can be applied to public diplomacy as well. Whosoever designs a public diplomacy programme with whatever intention essentially depends on whether the audience eventually will make use of it. And even if the audience will make use of it, it is beyond the control of the programme-designer, or sender, how the audience interprets and construes the content provided by the sender. In the context of public diplomacy this critical reflection is extended by another crucial factor, namely that actions must be in line with words, meaning that the best public diplomacy programmes will not work if the audience realises that words and deeds do not go together.

Public diplomacy at work: its elements

The conceptual confusion that surrounds public diplomacy also concerns approaches, instruments and components. The following section therefore discusses different elements of public diplomacy following Nicholas Cull's (2008, 2009) taxonomy which includes listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy and international broadcasting. As a sixth element he lists psychological warfare as parallel activity (Cull 2009: 22).

Listening, according to Cull (2009: 18), 'precedes all successful public diplomacy' as it refers to an actor's attempt to collect information about publics and their opinions to redirect this actor's policy or its wider public diplomacy approach accordingly. This information gathering therefore should help to better understand the surrounding and context 'in which communication takes place' (Pamment 2013: 29). The importance of listening springs from the knowledge that an actor can only tell its story to an audience if this actor is also listening to what this audience is thinking about this actor. Advocacy refers to attempts to 'promote a particular policy, idea or that actor's general interests in the minds of a foreign public' and might include embassy press relations, lobbying and informational work (Cull 2009: 18). Advocacy thus relies on 'simplistic transmission communication modes' in order to persuade its audience (Pamment 2013: 30). The audience for this element of public diplomacy are realistically opinion leaders or multipliers such as journalists or civil society organisations.

Exchange diplomacy refers to visits by citizens to foreign countries and 'the positive role this performs in generating international understanding' (Pamment 2013: 31). Those exchange programmes are especially designed for a rather elitist audience or key individuals and are characterised by access control via a more or less competitive application and selection process. Probably the most prominent of these programmes is the US Fulbright Program as the flagship international educational exchange programme sponsored by the US government which is a highly competitive, merit-based grants scheme for students, scholars, teachers, professionals, scientists and artists. Other such programmes target current or emerging foreign leaders, such as the International Visitor Leadership Program, also run by the US Department of State or Germany's German Chancellor Fellowship for Tomorrow's Leaders.

Although Cull highlights the element of reciprocity in the sense that a country not only sends its citizens but also reciprocally accepts citizens from overseas, there might not be such a strict reciprocity in each and every of such programmes. Germany's Chancellor Fellowship scheme, for example, does not automatically provide German citizens with the opportunity to go abroad. The German programme is of interest for another reason which hints to the rather functional objectives of those programmes: the fellowship scheme is only open for potential future leaders from certain strategically important countries: the United States, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, Brazil and India.²

Another element of public diplomacy put forward by Cull is international broadcasting which concerns the usage of radio, television and the internet to communicate and engage with foreign publics. These channels 'may be wholly-owned and maintained by a government agency, or may come under the independent editorial control of a private or non-governmental institution with partial government support or guidance' (Pamment 2013: 31). While all these channels are components of mass media, it seems at least partially debatable whether those mass media channels – in the context of public diplomacy normally still international broadcasting – actually reach a *mass* public. The latter case was probably true with radio stations like Voice of America or RIAS, the United States' radio station in Berlin during the Cold War, and it is probably also true with the BBC nowadays. However this should not be generalised too far, as several of these stations are presumably only heard by a limited number of people due to issues of transmission technology (which potentially is not such a big issue anymore nowadays as the internet provides other means of transmission), while others are not even allowed to broadcast in certain countries, such as Germany's Deutsche Welle in China.

Before I turn to cultural diplomacy which will be treated in more detail here, it seems suitable to briefly look at the element of psychological warfare. Cull (2009) notes that it is controversial even to include it within a discussion of public diplomacy and he is apparently rather reluctant to describe psychological warfare as an element of it. This unease is justified when applying Cull's definition of psychological warfare as an 'actor's use of communication to achieve an objective in *wartime*, usually through communication with the enemy's public' which is about 'breaking of the enemy's will to resist or facilitating surrender or dissent within enemy ranks' (2009: 22; emphasis added).

In *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* Jacques Ellul (1965: xiii) describes similar objectives when he notes that psychological warfare is about destroying a foreign adversary's moral 'by psychological means so that the opponent begins to doubt the validity of his beliefs and actions', but he does not link it so exclusively to wartime. He actually describes it as 'the daily bread of peace policy' (Ellul 1965: 134) as it allows to replace military aggression by indirect aggression, namely economic or ideological. While 'aggression' may sound alarming nowadays, during the heyday of the Cold War when Ellul published his book, economic or ideological aggression was seemingly seen as the less evil alternative compared with military aggression.

Closely related here is the concept of information warfare which can be described as the use of information and communication technologies ‘with either offensive or defensive purpose to immediately *intrude, disrupt, or control* the opponent’s resources’ (Taddeo 2012: 109, emphasis added). Both concepts are closely related to the term propaganda (which will be discussed in more detail in the second part of this chapter) and are of particular interest for the case of China’s global communication activities. In recent years China has not only demonstrated a foreign policy that several analysts describe as increasingly assertive as it employs various types of economic and military leverage, but it is also increasingly engaged in the conduct of the so-called Three Warfares (*san zhan*), which consist of psychological warfare, public opinion/media warfare, and legal warfare (Lee 2014). But before discussing these more sinister components of international political communication, I want to return to Cull’s taxonomy of public diplomacy and elaborate more on his last element, namely cultural diplomacy.

Public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy

This study understands cultural diplomacy as one element of public diplomacy as the latter ‘incorporates a wider set of activities than cultural diplomacy, primarily those government media and public relations activities aimed at a foreign public in order to explain a course of action, or present a case’ (Mark 2009: 15).

The basic and fundamental question at this juncture, of course, is how one understands culture as such. If one applies an anthropologic understanding of culture in the sense of Raymond Williams’ notion of culture as a whole way of life, the components of Cull’s taxonomy would all exist inside the realm of culture. While I do not understand culture so broadly defined and define cultural diplomacy as an undertaking concerned with the use of both cultural artefacts and cultural activities, I follow Williams (and others) as they reject prejudices against popular culture and instead want to highlight its importance. As Williams argues in *Culture and Society*, it is accepted that the mass distribution of an artefact does not necessarily say something about its quality. As a result, this study rejects the term ‘arts diplomacy’ which is narrowly defined as ‘the use of high art (music, literature, painting) as an instrument of diplomacy’ (Brown 2009: 57) and refers to an understanding in which it is ‘common to distinguish between high culture such as literature, art, and education, which appeals to elites, and popular culture, which focuses on mass entertainment’ (Nye 2004: 11). The point of view expressed here is in line with Evan Potter (2009: 125), who notes that cultural diplomacy ‘will have to move from its traditional highbrow form [...] to middle-brow or popular form of entertainment’ in a process of mainstreaming cultural diplomacy. As Potter continues, this does not mean that traditional cultural diplomacy – which mainly means the use of high art – needs to be abandoned, but that it also should include notions of popular culture.

The discourse on cultural diplomacy is, very much like the discussion of public diplomacy, characterised by diversity and confusion about what cultural

diplomacy actually is.³ Basically following Aguilar (1996), cultural diplomacy is here understood as a government's attempt to portray its country to another country's people in order to help achieve foreign policy goals by using both cultural artefacts – as presented in exhibitions for example – and cultural activities – such as language teaching – for this self-portrayal.

In order to conduct cultural diplomacy, a state has various tools at hand, which include the use of art, sport, music, educational exchanges, book-related programmes, and exhibitions. One of cultural diplomacy's core sectors, however, is language promotion. In the idealistic realm, learning a foreign language can be understood as a means of showing an interest in other countries and its people and thus may contribute to the creation of a climate of mutual understanding. While this aspect of language learning emphasises the symbolic dimension and focuses more on of the individual learner, the second and more functional approach focuses on the promotion of language through organisations like the British Council, Goethe Institutes or Confucius Institutes which theoretically achieves 'economic ripple-effects' (Lending 2000). Some see culture and language as a trade policy instrument that helps to promote a country's economic interests under the notion 'He who speaks French buys French' or 'She who knows Goethe buys Mercedes-Benz'. Whether foreign language skills are necessary to buy everyday objects remains undecided; that mastering a foreign country's language is helpful for increasing tourism or the sale of cultural products such as movies, books or music produced in that country is obvious. Taken together it can be said that language teaching through cultural institutes' plays a crucial role for a country's cultural diplomacy.

As in the discussion of public diplomacy, the question arises whether cultural diplomacy should entail a role for the government. The debate is more intense in relation to cultural diplomacy, not least because various artists want to separate themselves from policy-related activities. One end of the spectrum defines cultural diplomacy as being beyond the jurisdiction of the state. Among proponents of this view, Ota (2010) takes an extreme position when he dismisses the necessity for state government activities at all describing cultural diplomacy 'as any official and unofficial undertaking to promote a national culture among foreigners, when performed by those who identify themselves as part of the national culture at hand' (Ota 2010: 189). Two aspects are worth noting here. First, the explicit mention of unofficial undertakings would allow, for example, any activity by a privately funded museum or theatre abroad to be defined as cultural diplomacy. Even more interesting is Ota's idea that anyone who identifies with a certain national culture can become a cultural diplomat of the respective country, which means that there is no need to belong to a certain country to present its culture to foreigners.

On the other side of the spectrum, state involvement and state interests are emphasised and thus 'the use of culture becomes an instrument of state policy' (Gienow-Hecht 2010: 9). This involvement by the state or government leads to the classic 'problem of the "politicization" of culture by foreign policy' (Belanger 1999: 678). Belanger argues quite persuasively that 'cultural diplomacy has never

been apolitical, even if in general, and quite naturally, it claims to be so' and states which have made culture a part of their foreign policy 'have clearly been more inspired by realpolitik precepts of cultural imperialism and the virtues of a policy of prestige [...] than by the idea of fostering peace through culture' (ibid.).

The government's role can be limited to sponsorship or the arms-length guidance of activities executed/delivered by non-state actors and similarly as with public diplomacy, a wide range of actors can be involved in a country's cultural diplomacy, including government ministries and departments, independent agencies, and private non-for profit foundations. However, as Mark (2009: 5) correctly points out, 'it is not always clear how the non-government entities contribute to a country's diplomacy.'

One of the most fundamental issues concerning cultural diplomacy is the question of its relevance and meaningfulness. This question directly leads to the issue of funding which directs the attention back to the role of the state. Back in 1964, Philip Coombs⁴ noted that almost everyone in the respective government departments would agree that cultural diplomacy activities are "good things to do", and in the long run perhaps even essential' (Coombs 1964: 1). However on a day-to-day basis cultural diplomacy activities get brushed aside by the pressure of current affairs and crises. With a touch of resignation Coombs also explains why: those activities occupy 'the quiet, calm and sunny side of foreign relations, not the dramatic, stormy side' (Coombs 1964: 1). This situation has not changed very much over of the last 50 years as the Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy at the US State Department illustrates. The report describes a particular on-off relation between foreign policy and culture:

When our nation is at war, every tool in the diplomatic kit bag is employed, including the promotion of cultural activities. But when peace returns, culture gets short shrift, because of our traditional lack of public support for the arts. Now that we are at war again, interest in cultural diplomacy is on the rise.

(US Department of State 2005: 1)

Overall, probably the biggest issue for cultural diplomacy is its generally low standing as a diplomatic strategy in various countries. In principle it is supported, but in terms of daily practice it is normally just a secondary diplomatic activity. Lending (2000) raises the simple but important question: 'Why do we engage in official cultural cooperation with other countries?' Anticipating the arguments of the critics, she explains:

Culture is not a lucrative business, at least not in the short term. Whether it is a matter of language education [...] or sending a pottery exhibition or a dance group on tour, the expense is likely to exceed any ticket revenues or course fees.

(Ibid.)

While those statements could be dismissed as petulant commentary by those in charge of cultural diplomacy and thereby could be rejected as irrelevant, the low priority of cultural diplomacy in the overall context of foreign policy eventually becomes important – indeed glaring – when it comes to the question of funding. As Coombs (1964: 18) observed 50 years ago there are still those who ‘deride the notion that anything wearing the label [culture] could possibly have [an] important bearing on the serious business of foreign policy.’ This low priority and the related reluctance to provide funding arises from the difficulty in determining cultural diplomacy’s long term impact on the behavior of audiences. The question of effectiveness is a contested topic in the context of the overall public diplomacy discussions but ‘what really makes cultural diplomacy’s importance and effectiveness less visible is the fact that its record is composed of individual success stories rather than a broad mass effect’ (Aguilar 1996: 270).

Foreign cultural activity is mostly, by definition, financed from public funds: that is, taxpayers’ money. Against this background, cultural diplomacy has to almost constantly argue its right to exist as there are almost always financial debates over it, and governments are normally rather reserved about the provision of funding. It is precisely in this light that the funding model of Confucius Institutes attracts attention from cultural diplomats in various countries.

The conduct of public diplomacy: how and why to communicate

While this study will not venture on the difficult task of public diplomacy theory building, it is necessary to further conceptualise public diplomacy. The second part of this chapter will therefore discuss how public diplomacy actually communicates and it will analyse the connection between public diplomacy and the most related concepts of propaganda and soft power.

Due to the definitional complexity and discord there are various ways to describe the conduct of public diplomacy. One way distinguishes communication activities in regard to the timeframe of their potential effectiveness. In this context, activities range from mainly reactive direct government information (the day-to-day dimension working within hours and days) to proactive advertising or campaigning activities (the strategic communication dimension working within weeks and months) to, further still, the creation of long-term and lasting relationships (the relationship building dimension working over years) (Leonard *et al.* 2002).

Related to these dimensions is the procedure of how to communicate. In this regard, Hocking (2005) identifies ‘“two worlds” of public diplomacy’ with two competing paradigms, the hierarchical and the network-based approach. The hierarchical approach stresses the centrality of intergovernmental relations and top-down aligned bureaucratic systems resting on a traditional model of public diplomacy reflected in a one-way communication approach which is essentially about spreading the message out and is described as solely talking to audiences.

The network model provides a ‘fundamentally different picture of how diplomacy works in the twenty-first century’ and emphasises non-hierarchical cooperation and multidirectional flows of information (Hocking 2005: 37).

Traditionally, most nation-states employed public diplomacy that involved one-way communication, following the simple sender-message-receiver model. Although this model is still omnipresent today, there are moves away from linear approaches, reflected in the notion of *new* public diplomacy. The idea of a new public diplomacy was put forward by Jan Melissen, according to whom this ‘new public diplomacy moves away from [...] peddling information to foreigners and keeping the foreign press at bay, towards engaging with foreign audiences’ (Melissen 2005: 22). The new public diplomacy emphasises two-way communication focusing on dialogue and engagement (talking and listening) characterised as a ‘two-way street’ through which public diplomacy programmes are no longer merely ‘pushed out to target audiences’ (Fitzpatrick 2011: 9).

Dialogue and engagement in this context imply ‘equality among parties, respect for the opinions of both sides, a conversation instead of a monologue, and an effort to find solutions that serve the interests of both sides’ (Krause and Van Evera 2009: 113). It is in this setting that listening, dialogue and collaboration emerge ‘as the preferred means of contact within an environment of multiple communication choices, competing communication actors and multiple possibilities for making meaning’ (Pamment 2013: 27). Kathy Fitzpatrick (2011: 6) summarises these new modes of communication in her analysis of US public diplomacy and argues for a shift from ‘messaging to mutuality’ which essentially means a shift away from ‘telling America’s story to the world’ to ‘engaging with the world’.

Rhonda Zaharna approaches the notion of engagement from another angle as she looks at how engagement and collaboration affect the content production in public diplomacy. In this regard she describes the mass communication approach as a strategy that ‘relies on carefully crafted *messages* disseminated via *mass media vehicles* to a *target audience* with the goal of *changing attitudes or behavior*’ (Zaharna 2010: 94, emphasis in original). The dynamics of this approach differ drastically from a network communication approach which focuses on information exchange and asks for the strategic engagement of (local) stakeholders (Zaharna 2010, 2011):

In contrast to the mass communication approach, which *begins* with a pre-determined message, the network paradigm *ends* with the message or story. Rather than trying to design a message independent of the intended audience and then use the mass media as a communication channel to cross the cultural barrier, networks *first* establish the structure and dynamics for effective communication channels, *then* members collaborate to craft the message. Because the message or story is co-created across cultures, it is not tied to any one culture. Rather than acting as a barrier or impediment, culture is incorporated into network dynamics and becomes a rich source of team-coalition synergy. With the addition of network synergy, a local story

can evolve into a global master narrative, carrying with it the soft power that attracts and persuades across national and cultural borders.

(Zaharna 2010: 111, emphasis in original)

There is, however, one fundamental limitation to keep in mind when thinking about this new public diplomacy and that is the fact that it is normative in the sense that it does not explain how public diplomacy is actually practised, but much more ‘how it *should* be practised in a changing environment’ (Pamment 2013: 8, emphasis in original). One fundamental shaping factor for this potential two-way engagement with publics is the development away from traditional broadcasting models towards the usage of social media (Pamment 2013). While scholars highlight the importance of public diplomacy 2.0 – understood as public diplomacy by means of social media – the question remains whether the usage of these new instruments and channels actually changes the conduct of public diplomacy. Khatib *et al.* (2012: 471), for example, note that technological advances ‘not automatically realize the vision of “public diplomacy 2.0”’ while Kersaint (2013: viii) in her comparative study of German and US Digital Public Diplomacy argues that ‘in spite of claims to the contrary, social media did not substantially change the practice of public diplomacy’. In this regard Pamment (2013: 127) argues that while theories of the new public diplomacy highlight the shift towards greater dialogue and engagement, in practice strategies and objectives of governmental communication remain locked in simplistic one-way communication approaches which merely ‘have been updated with new delivery methods rather than systematically re-imagined.’ He therefore concludes that the new public diplomacy ‘is still *propaganda in the age of strategic communication*’ (Pamment 2013: 136, emphasis in original).

Public diplomacy and propaganda

The described paradigmatic tensions between the one-way and two-way approaches to public diplomacy highlight one of the most salient debates about whether government-sponsored activities ‘are manipulative “propaganda” or valid “public diplomacy”’ (Zaharna 2004: 219). The thinking implicit in this is that propaganda as a means of distortion and sinister manipulation is something done by ‘others’, while ‘we’ do public diplomacy in the sense of ‘civilized persuasion’ (Gilboa 1998: 58). This dichotomy calls for further conceptual clarification regarding the term propaganda: in its original context propaganda was meant to describe the neutral process of disseminating or promoting particular ideas, views or opinions. Nowadays, however, there are two opposing ways to look at propaganda, namely the ‘moralist school’ and the ‘neutralist school’ (Brown 2006).⁵

The moralist school states that propaganda is intrinsically misleading, evil and therefore morally reprehensible. This understanding mainly results from the historical baggage of the term and normally focuses on the sender of propaganda. The sender, in this understanding, is perceived as evil and sinister with hostile intents which explains the above mentioned ‘we vs. them’ mentality.

Germany won notoriety here for its use of propaganda during the Nazi time, while during the Cold War the sinister source was identified in Moscow which was spreading 'Communist propaganda'. It is this moralist understanding which explains why contemporary instruments like the TV channel Russia Today or the Iranian satellite network Press TV are described as propaganda tools of the respective governments.

The neutralist understanding – in the words of Brown the 'no-nonsense view' – is reflected in Harold Lasswell's statement that 'propaganda as a mere tool is no more moral or immoral than a pump handle' (quoted in Sproule 1997: 69). The neutralist understanding is supported by Philip Taylor who defined propaganda

in value-neutral terms as a planned process of communication which utilizes available means (media) to promote thought and/or behavior amongst target audiences that primarily benefits the source, either directly or indirectly. It does not exclude the possibility that the recipient may also benefit as well.

(Taylor 2011: 19)

This viewpoint is echoed by Gary Rawnsley (2000a: 136) who notes that propaganda 'is (wrongly) associated with manipulation, and we are naturally suspicious of any form of manipulation since it implies the secret exercise of power that is beyond our immediate control'. Accordingly, it is essential to understand 'that propaganda is merely the means to a predetermined end', and 'it should be without moral judgment, since history has demonstrated that propaganda can serve either constructive or destructive interests' (Rawnsley 2000b: 3). John Hartley (2002), looking at propaganda from the perspective of the audience, even argues that although the term has a bad name, it is not necessarily a bad thing. He views the audience as sophisticated enough and used to being exposed to propaganda, and therefore not easily manipulated. Others relativise the role of the recipient and argue that propaganda 'remains the most useful term *as long as readers understand* that it does not imply the use of dishonest methods or false information, although it does not necessarily exclude them either' (Wolper 1993: 17, emphasis added). Although I agree that all communication 'has some sort of spin' (Hartley 2011: 214) and I also argue in favour of the active audience, the question, however, remains whether the audience has a chance to debunk propaganda as this 'requires some work by the reader or viewer' (Hartley 2011: 213). I would further argue that this uncovering also requires a certain level of knowledge of the subject matter.

From my point of view, the weakness or limitation of this academic debate about the two approaches to propaganda lies in the very fact that it is an *academic* debate, and as such it is generally not recognised in the broader public which normally equals propaganda with lies, hostile manipulation or deceit. Therefore although I acknowledge the (academic) understanding of propaganda as a value-neutral term, I follow the popular understanding⁶ in the negative sense, even more so because the discussion of whether Confucius Institutes are a

propaganda tool of the CCP – as will be shown later – also applies the popular and negative understanding of this term.

The late Richard Holbrooke (2001) encapsulated the conceptual ambiguity when he noted that it does not matter whether the communicative action of getting the message out is called ‘public diplomacy, or public affairs, or psychological warfare, or – if you really want to be blunt – propaganda.’ Some scholars likewise equal both terms and understand public diplomacy just as a ‘euphemism for propaganda’ (Berridge 2010: 179, 182).

Manheim (1994: 7) argues somewhat more nuanced when he defines ‘strategic public diplomacy [as] the practise of propaganda in the earliest sense of the term, but enlightened by half a century of empirical research into human motivation and behaviour.’ Furthermore, Taylor (2011: 19), understanding propaganda as a value-neutral term as outlined above, describes public diplomacy as ‘propaganda for peace’. He notes that while public diplomacy differs from propaganda ‘by virtue of its mutuality and its reciprocity of intentions as well as gains, it remains a form of “national self-advertisement”’ (ibid.). Melissen (2005) acknowledges that broad and inclusive definitions of propaganda make it hard to distinguish it from some definitions of public diplomacy. However he speaks for a clear distinction between the two:

Modern public diplomacy is a ‘two-way street’, even though the diplomat practicing it will of course always have his own country’s interests and foreign policy goals in mind [...]. It is persuasion by means of dialogue that is based on a liberal notion of communication with foreign publics. In other words, public diplomacy is similar to propaganda in that it tries to persuade people what to think, but it is fundamentally different from it in the sense that public diplomacy also listens to what people have to say.

(Melissen 2005: 18)

Joseph Nye points to one crucial difference when he states that propaganda ‘often lacks credibility and thus is counterproductive as public diplomacy. Good public diplomacy has to go beyond propaganda’ (Nye 2008: 101), because ‘information that appears to be propaganda [...] may turn out to be counterproductive if it undermines a country’s reputation for credibility’ (Nye 2008: 100). Others argue in the same vein, saying that public diplomacy deals with ‘the known facts’ while propaganda is based on a mixture of facts and untruths’ (Wolf and Rosen 2004: 3). The present study not only refers to Melissen’s notion of listening as a distinguishing feature, but also harks strongly to Nye’s argument that information that appears to be propaganda eventually backfires and becomes counterproductive.

Public diplomacy and soft power

While public diplomacy is one of the most noticeable issues in political communication, the related concept of soft power is apparently even more prominent,

especially in the field of international relations studies. This is not least due to the fact that this once-academic concept, as its sloganeer Joseph Nye notes with some pride, 'has migrated to the front pages of newspapers and has been used by top leaders' around the world (Nye 2011: 81).

There is little agreement about soft power in the academic discourse, but it is generally accepted that 'soft power and public diplomacy are not synonyms, but instead refer to different (but related) communication activities' (Rawnsley 2012: 123). Public diplomacy, as pointed out before, is the act of communicating with foreign publics, and therefore is the instrument to facilitate or project a country's soft power. Shambaugh (2013: 209) describes soft power as 'a magnet that pulls and draws others to a nation simply because of its powerful appeal by example.' Understood in this way, soft power largely originates from a society's capacity to attract others, while public diplomacy is an instrument in the hands of governments aimed at persuading others.

Shambaugh's statement is helpful here as it indicates that in contrast to hard power resources, soft power capacities do not always belong to or cannot directly be influenced by a government. Soft power 'is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments' (Nye 2004: x). This form of power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, its political ideas and values, and (foreign) policies. For Nye, 'soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others' (Nye 2004: 5). However, it 'is not merely the same as influence. After all, influence can also rest on the hard power of threats or payments' (Nye 2004: 6). It is also more than 'just persuasion or the ability to move people by argument, thought that is an important part of it' (*ibid.*). It is also the ability to attract, and in Nye's view attraction often leads to acquiescence. 'Simply put, in behavioural terms soft power is attractive power' (*ibid.*).

The enormous popularity of the term comes along with an erosion of its meaning as 'the definition seems to change depending on what the observer wants to argue' (Breslin 2011: 2). Not least due to these different interpretations and its hardly tangible nature, the term as proposed by Nye entails a long list of reactions. Soft power has been criticised for being too blunt (Lukes 2007), too soft and ineffective (Ferguson 2003, 2005), for being *not* so soft at all and hard to distinguish from hard power (Mattern 2005), or for being 'cultural imperialism with a semantic twist' (Schiller 1991: 18). Others take issue with the sources of soft power and with the uncertainty about how soft power actually works. In this regard Li Mingjiang (2009: 7) argues in favour of a "'soft use of power" approach'. For him, soft power 'does not exist in the nature of certain resources of power but rather it has to be nurtured through a soft use of power' (Li M. 2009: 3). He rejects the resource based definition of Nye and sees a behaviour-based definition as more suitable. As he observes:

these sources of soft power [culture, ideology, values] do not always produce attraction, persuasion, appeal and emulation. Culture, ideology, values, and norms also often result in resentment, repulsion, hostility, and even conflict. On the other hand, hard power is not always used for

coercion, threat, intimidation, and inducement. Hard power can also produce attraction, appeal, and amity in certain circumstances.

(Li M. 2009: 4)

It is against this background that he argues that ‘soft power lies in the soft use of power to increase a state’s attraction, persuasiveness, and appeal’ (Li M. 2009: 7). Even though this argument has some persuasiveness, it still shows one major flaw, namely the abstractness of the concept, which makes it hard to quantify. As Gerry Groot (2006: 54) observes, one ‘key problem is that many aspects of the concept depend on degrees of subjective judgment’ and therefore ‘soft power may be near impossible to quantify with any great accuracy.’

Another unsolved problem is how to define attraction, because ‘in gauging how attractive a source is there is a perception gap between the sender and the receiver’ (Watanabe 2009) that becomes even bigger when sender and receiver belong to different cultures. Bially Mattern (2005: 583) argues that attraction should be understood as a ‘relationship that is constructed through representational force – a nonphysical but nevertheless coercive form of power that is exercised through language.’ Against this background, the phrase ‘you are either with us or with the terrorists’, coined after 9/11, can be understood as an exercise of hard power. Though military and economic force was not used to pressure other states to join the US-led coalition, representational force was used that threatens the identity of the subjects at whom it is directed, forcing them to comply or risk being labelled as evil. This being the case, soft power is therefore not so soft (Mattern 2005).

Furthermore, even if there is no gap about attraction it is almost impossible to measure soft power. One can count tanks and soldiers as indicators of military hard power, but such accounting does not work with soft power. For this reason, it is more common to measure its impact on other countries through a description of ‘sources of soft power’ (Nye 2004: 33–34). Such sources include, according to Nye, the inflow of foreign immigrants, the number of overseas students enrolled in (US) universities, or the number of Nobel Prizes. However, these sources do not necessarily give a real sense of the influence soft power can have on other publics. As historian Niall Ferguson (2003: 21) puts it, all over the Islamic world kids like and enjoy ‘Coke, Big Mac, and CDs by Britney Spears.’ But, asks Ferguson, do ‘any of these things make them love the United States more? Strangely not.’

Public diplomacy and strategic narratives

The most recent critique comes from a group of scholars who also lament that soft power degenerated into a ‘catch-all term that has lost explanatory power’ (Roselle *et al.* 2014: 70). They take, as others before, issue with Nye’s definition as they see difficulties (1) in identifying soft power resources, (2) difficulties in identifying the processes through which soft power operates, and (3) difficulties in understanding under what conditions soft power resources can be used to support foreign policy. They therefore argue that the concept of ‘strategic

narrative helps solve many of the fundamental questions associated with [the] analysis of soft power' (ibid.).

Strategic narratives 'are a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of international politics, and to shape the perceptions, beliefs, and behaviour of domestic and international actors' (Miskimmon *et al.* 2012: 1). Those narratives are tools with which states 'can project their values and interests in order to extend their influence, manage expectations and change the discursive environment in which they operate' (Antoniades *et al.* 2010: 3). A compelling narrative can be a power resource, as people may be drawn to certain actors, events, and explanations that describe the history of a country, or the specifics of a policy. If such a narrative is 'comprehensible and appealing to other powers or transnational audiences, a country may meet aims where the use of material resources and capabilities would fail to do so' (Antoniades *et al.* 2010: 7). This interpretation is closely related to Nye's understanding of soft power as a means to get others to do what you want through persuasion, wherefore Roselle *et al.* argue that 'strategic narrative is soft power in the 21st century' (Roselle *et al.* 2014: 71, emphasis in original).

Strategic narratives can be identified at three levels: international system narratives that 'describe how the world is structured, who the players are, and how it works' (Roselle *et al.* 2014: 76). Examples include narratives such as the Cold War, the War on Terror, the rise of China or the narrative of the BRICS countries. One can also identify national narratives that set out what the story of a state or nation is and what values and goals it has. Examples of national narratives include the US as peace-loving and historically committed to freedom and democracy (in the US), and the US as world bully (in other parts of the world). Finally, there are issue narratives 'that set out why a policy is needed and [...] desirable, and how it will be successfully implemented or accomplished' (Roselle *et al.* 2014: 76). Examples may include the narrative of climate change and its message that carbon emissions play a causal role and must therefore be limited or strategic narratives regarding the use of force which may, or may not, help to generate public support for a military mission abroad (Dimitriu and de Graaf, 2014). In order to communicate these messages, states can use traditional diplomacy or, as the global public opinion is becoming increasingly important, public diplomacy to project these strategic narratives.

When analysing China and its Confucius Institutes, narratives about the international system and national narratives are of particular importance. One essential international system narrative today is that of a rising China. This is a narrative used by other states, a narrative *about* China, exemplifying how other states such as the USA think China may behave in the future, how they wish it would behave and how other states aim to deal with such a rising China. In this narrative China is described and perceived 'alternately as an aspiring normal great power to balance others or as a rising hegemon' (Miskimmon *et al.* 2013: 104), which is reflected in the China Threat Theory as discussed in Chapter 2.

This international system narrative about China is closely related to China's own national narratives, which are aimed at setting out 'what the story of the

state or nation is [and] what values and goals it has' (Roselle *et al.* 2014: 76). This narrative *produced by* China is reflected in the slogan of Peaceful Rise/Development, which carries the narrative that China reassures the rest of the world that its rise will not pose a threat to peace and stability and that other nations will actually benefit from China's growing power and influence.

Therefore, Peaceful Rise/Development can be understood as slogans carrying both a national narrative about how China sees itself and, at the same time, a narrative about how China wants the international system to be. Closely related to this is the concept of a Harmonious World. While the mere phrase Harmonious World constitutes the slogan, the more complex narrative carried by the slogan is that such a world would be characterised by multilateralism, mutually-beneficial cooperation, the spirit of inclusiveness to build a world where all civilisations coexist harmoniously, and by a reformed United Nations. The notion of a Harmonious World was described as 'a Chinese vision of world and regional order' (Zhang 2007: 2), which makes it a prime example of a narrative about the international system and order being promoted by China. While the rise of China is an international system narrative with China as the subject of narrative, both Peaceful Rise/Development and Harmonious World are slogans illustrating narratives in which China, as the narrator, explains how it sees and envisions the world.

Notes

- 1 The quote is attributed to Edward R. Murrow, a broadcast journalist and director of the United States Information Agency and later name giver for the Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, who noted:

It has always seemed to me the real art in this business is not so much moving information or guidance or policy five or 10,000 miles. That is an electronic problem. The real art is to move it the last three feet in face to face conversation.

- 2 Until 2014 only citizens of the USA, China and Russia were entitled to apply.
- 3 This is aggravated by the fact that various concepts are in use and more often than not cultural diplomacy, (international) cultural relations and external/foreign cultural policy are thought of as synonymous.
- 4 Philip Hall Coombs (1915–2006) was a programme director for education at the Ford Foundation, and in 1961 he was appointed by US President John F. Kennedy to be the first Assistant Secretary of State for Education and Culture.
- 5 Another way to look at propaganda is its classification into one of the following: *white propaganda*, which comes from a source that it identified correctly and accurately reported; *black propaganda*, which is credited to a false source and used to spread lies, fabrications and deceptions; and *gray propaganda* where the source 'may or may not be correctly identified, and the accuracy of the information is uncertain' (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 16–21).
- 6 A second reason to look at propaganda from this angle is its described historical baggage and the position of this researcher as a German citizen who was born and raised in the former German Democratic Republic – a country with its own history of propaganda. This, admittedly, personal and subjective reason also informs the understanding of the term used here.

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4 Public diplomacy in China

In his report to the 18th Congress of the Communist Party in November 2012 outgoing General Secretary Hu Jintao noted that ‘public diplomacy and cultural exchanges should be pushed forward’ (Hu J. 2012b). Although the term only appeared once, the very fact that public diplomacy was, for the first time, mentioned in such a highly official document that determines the party’s overall political direction for the coming years, illustrates the ‘signifying integration of public diplomacy into China’s national strategy’ (Han F. 2013: 2).

The current Chinese leadership is similarly well aware of the importance of public diplomacy. In October 2013, Hu’s successor Xi Jinping addressed a conference on neighbouring diplomacy where he highlighted the importance of public diplomacy and the fact that all seven members of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee were present proves, according to Chinese analysts, ‘the amount of attention state leaders devote to public diplomacy’ (Han F. 2013: 3). In May 2014, Xi noted that due to China’s rapid development in recent years, different people outside China assume that the country will follow the historic logic after which ‘a strong nation is bound to seek hegemony’ and this understanding would further fuel debates about China as a threat. Therefore, Xi noted, it is important for China to pay attention to public diplomacy in order to spread China’s voice thoroughly in order to reassure the world of China’s benign intentions (Xinhua 2014a).

Han Fangming, deputy director and public diplomacy convener of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)¹ National Committee and president of China’s leading public diplomacy think tank, the Charhar Institute, points out that public diplomacy in China started late but developed rapidly in recent years (Han F. 2011) and ‘thousands of articles have been written [...] and some even managed to draw attention from the central leadership’ (Zhang Z. 2009: 14–15). However this increased academic engagement has led, similarly to within Western debates, to considerable theoretical confusion and ambiguities as different disciplines approach the subject.

One attempt to classify the different voices and opinions in China is provided by Zhao Kejin, who identifies four partially overlapping schools of public diplomacy in China (I-C8; see also Myers 2013). First, there is the ‘Soft Rise School’,

whose representatives see public diplomacy as a means of advancing China's soft power and as an alternative to Western norms. The second school is described by Zhao as the 'National Image School' and is concerned with advancing China's national image while countering Western biases. A third way to look at public diplomacy is from the 'Discursive Power School', which seeks to advance Chinese discursive power to offset the China Threat Theory and to give China a greater voice in world affairs. Last but not least there is also a 'National Interest School', which holds the opinion that public diplomacy as such will not be able to help solve the real problems of conflicting national interest and thus does not deserve much investment.

On top of the disciplinary diversity, one has to deal with a certain terminological disorder due to the fact that public diplomacy has a foreign origin and is translated into Chinese either as *gongzhong waijiao* or *gonggong waijiao*, the latter of which is the officially used term and is also used in most academic publications. Although scholars try to provide explanations for the differences, it remains somewhat unclear what the actual differences are between the two Chinese terms.² To complicate matters even further, two more terms are frequently used in Chinese publications dealing with public diplomacy: people-to-people diplomacy (*renmin waijiao*) and non-governmental diplomacy (*minjian waijiao*).³

To provide insights into the vibrant Chinese discourse on public diplomacy and in order to enable comparison with the outlined Western debates, this chapter approaches the Chinese understanding of public diplomacy by discussing the purposes of China's public diplomacy, the role of actors and the question of audiences. The second part starts with a discussion of the relation between public diplomacy and soft power, it will then elaborate on the role of culture and cultural diplomacy, and then turns to the relationship between public diplomacy and propaganda and psychological warfare respectively. The chapter concludes by outlining what Chinese scholars understand as the most important challenges for China's public diplomacy.

The purpose of Chinese public diplomacy

As China has become increasingly dependent on the outside world (and vice versa), the Chinese government has realised the importance of a favourable international public opinion to the development of the country. As a result, public diplomacy has become an important part of China's overall diplomacy. There are three interconnected reasons why China engages in public diplomacy. First, public diplomacy is used to explain China to the world (see, for example, Lin K. 2012; Zhang W. 2009; Han Z. 2011; Wang Y. 2011); second, public diplomacy is used as a tool to create a favourable image (Han F. *et al.* 2012; Qiu H. 2009; Zhang Z. 2009; Zhao Q. 2012); and third, public diplomacy is about achieving national interests (Liao H. 2009; Zhao K. 2007; Zhao Q. 2012). While all these reasons are closely related, they highlight different aspects that drive China's public diplomacy endeavour.

According to Lin Kai (2012: 72), governments use public diplomacy in order to explain their positions and viewpoints to the world. From the Chinese point of view this is a crucial aspect as China sees itself as not only misunderstood but also as wrongly represented in the global – especially Western – media (Su S. 2008b; Yu Y. 2014). This leads to misunderstanding and misperceptions about China that should be eliminated via public diplomacy in order to influence global opinion and thus to enhance the world's understanding of China (Liao H. 2007; Tian J. 2008; Zhou H. 2012). Misunderstandings concern, for example, the assumption that Socialism with Chinese Characteristics lacks democracy, that China builds up its military to seek hegemony, that China's economic development will lead to job losses in other parts of the world or that China's engagement in Africa is a form of neo-colonialism (Su S. 2008b: 74).

In this view, the fundamental reasons why Western people worry about the rise of China are their 'lack of understanding' and the various 'misconceptions' about China, resulting in 'prejudices' (Liao H. 2009: 103; Han Z. 2011: 18). Prejudices is, as Zhao Kejin (2010: 301) argues, even worse than a total lack of knowledge as they may create hostility which in turn fuels the China Threat Theory. To proceed against the China Threat Theory is therefore seen as one fundamental task of China's public diplomacy (Yu Y. 2014; Zhong and Wang 2006; Gao F. 2005). Next to the China Threat Theory, public diplomacy should also target the China Collapse Theory (*Zhongguo bengkui lun*) (Liao H. 2007: 113) and some go even as far as to reject the idea of China as a responsible stakeholder (*Zhongguo zeren lun*) (Zhou H. 2012: 42).

There is consensus that these negative perceptions of China result from negative Western media reports about the country rooted in the fact that the international media landscape is dominated by precisely these Western (especially US) media setting the international agenda (Ye H. 2012: 12; Zhao Q. 2012: 43). This situation is aggravated by the fact that the voice of China's media in the world is still very weak (Zhong and Wang 2006: 68). According to Su Shumin (2008b: 74), Western politicians create an 'ideological divide' which in tandem with 'powerful media campaigns' leads to the described misperceptions which lead to the understanding of China being a threat. This line of argument imputes that Western media has attempted to 'demonize China', as China's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Fu Ying (2008), famously wrote in spring 2008 after negative, and partly wrong, reports about China in the aftermath of the Tibetan riots in March 2008.

Another common reproach towards Western media by both Chinese scholars and Chinese officials is that of lingering 'Cold War stereotypes' (Lin K. 2012: 74) or 'Cold War thinking' (Zhao Q. 2009: 2). According to Zhong and Wang (2006: 67) the focus of the Western 'public opinion war' shifted after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union from former Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to China. As China's critics initially realised that socialism in China would not collapse they hoped to 'badmouth' China. Later, as they saw that China's development was surprisingly good, they initiated the China Threat Theory (Zhong and Wang 2006).

It is against this background, in China's view, that public diplomacy should not only be used to help foreign publics to understand the 'real China' (Zhang W. 2009: 14; Zhao Q. 2012: 15), but also to 'change the "marketplace of ideas"' (Zhou H. 2012: 45) and to increase China's discourse power (Huang and Tang 2014: 39), which essentially means that China should 'talk back' (Zhao Q. 2007).

The attempts to present the real China are closely related to the attempts to present a positive image of the country (Liao H. 2009: 100; Wang Y. 2008: 268). Presenting a good image of China is clearly one major driving factor for China's public diplomacy (Li and Li 2012; Yin X. 2013; Tian J. 2008; Huang and Tang 2014; Luo H. 2014). There is, however, little mention what a good image actually consists of and it seemingly goes without saying that the Western attributions form the negative image that public diplomacy should correct and remedy. In the Chinese understanding public diplomacy should explain and outline the real conditions of China's development better, public diplomacy should project China as a 'responsible partner' (Gao F. 2005: 110) and should bring to mind that China is contributing to the global development by developing itself peacefully. According to d'Hooghe (2011: 24) China 'wants to portray itself as a country that strives to build a harmonious society and that works hard to give its people a better future'; it also wants to be seen as a 'stable, reliable, and responsible economic partner, a rising economic power that the international community does not have to fear.' Furthermore, Beijing wants China to be seen as a 'trustworthy and responsible member of the international community' and 'China wants to be acknowledged and respected as an ancient, but vibrant, culture'.

While this is the image China wants to project, Chinese analysts are somewhat frustrated that the increasing public diplomacy efforts do so far not pay off. Wang Yiwei (2014: 43), for example, refers to the BBC Country Rating Polls and notes that in 2013 China's image score was the lowest since the polls started in 2005. He then asks why China is investing so much money in its public diplomacy when the effects of improving its image are so poor and why China's standing is so negative. To answer those questions, Chinese scholars normally tend to focus on the outside world, rather than identifying mistakes from within. Wang, for example, notes that in order to understand why China's image is still so bad, it is necessary to know who actually defines the image. In his understanding, China's image is still defined by the West and the problem is that China's public diplomacy is facing a Western hegemonic discourse (Wang Y. 2014: 42) which complicates the task for China's public diplomacy to present a positive image of China.

The very fact that China's increasing attempts to project a favourable image do not have the desired effect is especially crucial as image shaping is understood as a contribution to national interests in the Chinese discourse. Li and Li (2012: 76) note that 'national image' and 'international status' are of importance for China's overall diplomacy. Liao Hongbin (2007: 111–112) relates China's image to its 'international influence' and argues that by promoting these aspects, China's public diplomacy promotes the country's 'national interests'. Overall,

Chinese scholars frankly state that the principal goal of public diplomacy, similarly to that of traditional diplomacy, is to 'safeguard and promote national interests' (Zhang W. 2009: 12; Zhao Q. 2012: 29). Tan goes as far as to describe public diplomacy as a 'weapon to enhance national interests' (Tan Y. 2011: 37).

Similar to the vagueness regarding the question what constitutes a good image, it is not totally clear what these national interests are. Between the lines it is indicated that because public diplomacy can enhance trust and understanding as well as dispelling suspicion and distrust, it may contribute to a better environment for China's business development, for example on the African continent (Luo H. 2014: 132). One concrete aspect is the relative cost effectiveness of public diplomacy. With a 'small price' public diplomacy can have huge effects on China's long term development (Huang C. 2005: 32). It can help to achieve 'national strategic interests' as it can create 'trust' which is necessary for international interactions; it also brings 'huge economic benefits' and helps to 'win and safeguard national security' (Huang C. 2005: 31). Wu goes one step further and argues that public diplomacy can help reducing security costs and costs for national defence as it promotes dialogue and understanding (Wu Z. 2012: 34).

Taken together, China's public diplomacy

informs and is informed by a specific political agenda and a determination to project an image of strength, affluence, and political responsibility that surmounts the popular impression of China as a state which routinely violates human rights and threatens global stability.

(Rawnsley 2009: 282)

Furthermore, public diplomacy should help 'promoting business activities both within and outside China' (Aoyama 2007: 5). Overall it can be assessed that the Chinese academic discourse surrounding public diplomacy focuses more on functional than purely idealistic purposes; or idealistic purposes such as enhancing friendship and promoting friendly exchanges, which some describe as 'constructive public diplomacy' (Wu Z. 2012: 33), is also used to realise more functional goals such as safeguarding China's economic development.

Nonetheless though, China's public diplomacy is seen as a benevolent undertaking which, as some scholars suggest, is not the case with every country's public diplomacy. Some also identify a 'destructive' form of public diplomacy which is aiming at 'transforming political and economic systems of the target country' or even intends to 'subvert the target country's government and social system' (Wu Z. 2012: 33). Qu Xing, president of the China Institute of International Studies,⁴ notes that one 'major differences' between China's public diplomacy

and that of western countries is that China does not use it to manipulate public opinions or influence political situation of other countries, not to say to fabricate facts and spread rumours, or incite other people to overthrow their governments.

(Qu X. 2010: 16)

Actors and audiences of China's public diplomacy

Closely related to the question why China should conduct public diplomacy are the questions who should conduct China's public diplomacy and who the audience should be.

Although there is a tendency amongst Chinese scholars to broaden the scope of actors, it is generally accepted that China's public diplomacy is 'guided by the government' (Ye H. 2012: 11). It is widely noted that the government should provide guidelines, strategic input, general direction (Yang J. 2011: 262), as well as funding and human resources for public diplomacy (Zheng H. 2012: 68; Zhao K. 2010: 309). It is also noted that while the government provides this kind of support and backing, it should remain 'hidden' or 'invisible' behind the scenes to forestall problems of too-obvious government involvement (Han F. *et al.* 2012: 258; Hu B. 2009: 35). Against this background Ye Hao (2012: 11) calls for a change in style away from 'officials in charge' to '(private) people in charge', meaning that the government should include various actors to execute public diplomacy such as non-governmental organisations, companies or individuals (Zhao K. 2010: 293–294).

According to Tang Xiaosong (2007: 46), the government should conduct public diplomacy via independent actors that could more favorably act as 'spokespeople' as they could create more trust than government bodies. In such a setting, 'the government pays the bill and private institutions are responsible for the implementation' (Zheng H. 2012: 69). Zheng points out that the biggest advantage of this approach is that the 'political colour dilutes', the culture of the host country is better understood, and it reduces government engagement (*ibid.*). Furthermore, there are calls to work with what Ye Hao (2012: 11) describes as 'foreign forces' via a 'clever use of foreign media' and a strengthening of cooperation with Western public relations firms. The arguments of both Zheng Hua and Ye Hao are similar to what Western scholars like Leonard *et al.* (2002) or Gilboa (2008) discuss in the context of outsourcing public diplomacy.

Li Anshan (2007: 128) argues in a similar way and candidly states that from a 'rational point of view' the government should conduct propaganda,⁵ but from a 'tactical point of view' propaganda done by the government is not as efficient as if done by non-governmental forces (such as academics and NGOs). Li further points out that propaganda done by Chinese people is not as efficient as if done by foreigners. With regards to Africa he argues that the best actors would be Africans themselves which would generate 'double revenue for half the effort' as their assessment would not cause antipathy in the Western media and would at the same time not create the impression that the Chinese are 'blowing their own trumpet' (Li A. 2007: 128). Nevertheless, as their influence would be limited to Africa, China should also conduct its propaganda with the help of Western academics because while some of them are biased against China, the majority respect the facts, which for Li is a starting point to positively shape China's image.

With regards to the audience, the majority of Chinese scholars understands foreign publics as the major target. The prevailing understanding is that public

diplomacy should target foreign audiences and influence the foreign public's opinion so that this influenced public opinion has a positive impact on how the government of the foreign country deals with the government of the country that is conducting public diplomacy (Liao H. 2007: 112). There are, however, also other voices describing public diplomacy as a means to target both international and domestic audiences. Han Fangming *et al.* (2012: 63), for example, note that public diplomacy is a diplomatic activity targeting 'domestic and international audiences'. As Gao Fei (2005: 106) notes, the goal of public diplomacy is to win public support for a country's foreign affairs, and this support has not only to be generated abroad, but also at home. Tian Jianmin (2008: 127) argues in a similar way noting that public diplomacy also has a domestic dimension in the sense that a government and the public are interacting in the diplomatic realm that reflects a certain degree of democratisation of diplomacy.

Zheng Hua (2011: 150) refers to the difference between public diplomacy (*gonggong waijiao*) and public affairs (*gonggong shiwu*) when looking at the target audience. As Zheng points out, in the traditional sense these two activities had two different target groups: the former is a cross-border activity targeting foreign publics while the latter traditionally refers to domestic public. In this regard, the main task of public affairs is 'informing', while public diplomacy is about 'influencing'. However, due to the growing interdependence between countries, the increasing flow of information and frequent visits, links between the two concepts are becoming closer and closer and a clear-cut distinction between the two becomes more and more complicated (*ibid.*).

The question of whom to target abroad is also debated in the Chinese discourse. While for some the audience includes both foreign governments and publics (Ye H. 2012: 11; Guo X. 2009: 23), Zhao Kejin (2010: 294) is very strict when he notes that 'the target of public diplomacy is solely publics abroad and not governments abroad.' Without being overly strict in their argumentation, the majority of authors emphasise that publics abroad are the targets (Li H. 2010: 91), as they have the potential to influence their home governments (Zhao and Zhang 2010: 58). In addition, some also see overseas Chinese citizens as both a potential target audience and a group of actors for Chinese public diplomacy (Zhao and Liu 2013; Shi X. 2013).

A number of Chinese scholars categorise, similar to Western approaches, foreign audiences according to the instruments that should be used to target them. One part of the target audience is 'ordinary people', a category that can also include interested amateurs or 'laypeople'. This audience is mainly reached through the dissemination of information via mass media (Han F. *et al.* 2012: 85; Zhao K. 2010: 307). Another part consists of so called 'elites' and 'opinion leaders'. For this group information programmes and various forms of exchange activities are equally important (Han F. *et al.* 2012: 85). Others argue that public diplomacy should not deal with the ordinary people directly: Zheng Hua (2012: 68), for example, argues that the government's budget is 'limited', and therefore public diplomacy should only focus on 'key people' and 'opinion leaders', who in turn can influence ordinary people positively.

Public diplomacy and related concepts in the Chinese debate: soft power, cultural diplomacy, propaganda and three warfares

While concrete instruments of China's public diplomacy will be discussed in Chapter 5, the remainder of this chapter looks at the conceptual dimension of public diplomacy as it discusses public diplomacy's relation with soft power, cultural diplomacy, propaganda and the three warfares.

Although this study sees the communication of strategic narratives as a more suitable means of public diplomacy compared to projecting soft power due to the vagueness of the term (as outlined in Chapter 3), the notion of soft power cannot be ignored when discussing China's public diplomacy because as Gary Rawnsley (2012: 126) makes clear: 'China has embraced the concepts of soft power and public diplomacy with an enthusiasm rarely seen in other parts of the world.'

Similarly to within Western debates, Chinese scholars see public diplomacy as an important instrument to build or enhance a country's soft power. In this regard some argue that China has rich soft power resources, but its public diplomacy needs further strengthening in order to better use those resources (Tan Y. 2011). Debates about soft power have 'gained considerable currency in the official and scholarly discourses in China' (Lai and Lu 2012: 2), and the concept is seen as one important component of the 'competition between great powers' (Guo X. 2009: 20). A growing body of literature deals with China and its soft power, so I will not duplicate the debate and only highlight aspects that are of importance for the discussion of Confucius Institutes.⁶

One noticeable aspect is the fact that the Chinese leadership frequently refers to the concept and the term found its way into the lexicon of Chinese politicians – before the term public diplomacy was enshrined – when Hu Jintao mentioned soft power in both his political reports at the seventeenth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2007 (Hu J. 2007) and the eighteenth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in November 2012 (Hu J. 2012b). Hu's successor Xi Jinping also frequently refers to the term. For example in October 2014 Xi stressed that China should increase its soft power by promoting exchanges with other cultures. According to Xi, it is 'through the contacts with other cultures and learning from them that China can increase its soft power and contribute to world peace' (Xinhua 2014b).

This official recognition has led some observers to claim that the 'case of China offers the most explicit demonstration of the soft power concept in foreign policy discourse' (Hayden 2012: 169). In China, soft power is understood as part of the broader concept of Comprehensive National Power (*zonghe guoli*), which can be described as an effort to rationalise China's re-emergence as a great power. According to Chinese scholars, comprehensive national power consists of hard power and soft power (see, for example, Yan X. 2007; Wei M. 2007; Men H. 2007). According to Guo Xuetang hard power consists of: a country's territory; its population or human resources; its military strength; its total economic volume; and the level of its technology. All these elements, as Guo points

out, are 'concrete' and can be 'compared by counting' (Guo X. 2009: 21). Soft power, according to Guo Xuetang (2009: 21), consists of 'intangible' things that cannot be easily compared by counting. This includes the 'government's leadership competence', the 'quality of domestic and foreign politics', the 'quality and morale of its people', the 'ability to repel outside pressure', the ability to engender 'international agreement', and the 'ability to create appreciation for the national culture'.

Another important aspect of China's soft power understanding is its domestic dimension. Domestically, soft power involves discussions toward national cohesion, the construction of political institutions, social justice and improvements in the quality of education. While it remains somewhat vague as to how soft power can help to improve social justice and moral standards or fight corruption, Michael Barr's argument is convincing when he says that soft power is used domestically 'to help the Party sustain its legitimacy and acceptance among China's fifty-six different ethnic groups' by 'providing the cultural means for minorities to identify as Chinese' (Barr 2011: 30). In this light, it seems obvious that 'Chinese soft power helps its leaders solidify their own grip on power' (ibid.).

Another distinctively Chinese aspect of soft power is the importance of culture for the Chinese soft power discourse although a minority of Chinese scholars dismisses the importance of culture. Probably the most prominent opponent of this view is International Relations scholar Yan Xuetong, who forcefully argues that 'the central point of soft power is not cultural strength, but political strength' (Yan X. 2007: 5). Using the United States as an example, Yan argues that its soft power is based on its political system, policy making and political leadership rather than the English language or Hollywood movies, because, as he puts it: 'There are many nations speaking English but they do not have the same soft power as the United States.'⁷

The mainstream intellectual view, however, follows the argument that 'the core of soft power is culture' (Yu X. 2007: 115) and one can therefore find frequent references to 'cultural soft power' in both the Chinese official and academic discourse of soft power. For example, in early 2014, Xi Jinping has vowed to promote 'China's cultural soft power by disseminating modern Chinese values and showing the charm of Chinese culture to the world' (Renmin Ribao 2014: 1). It is generally accepted that the 'centerpiece of China's current soft power strategy is the development of "cultural soft power"' (Wang J. 2011: 12), while the most reliable source of Chinese soft power is mostly seen in China's traditional culture. This emphasis on traditional culture makes sense, at least from the Chinese leadership's point of view, for several reasons. First, one can say that emphasising Chinese culture celebrates several thousand years of Chinese cultural history. Second, culture itself is seen as more apolitical and therefore more harmless than Nye's other soft power components. Third, Chinese traditional culture has the advantage of being genuinely 'Chinese', which might seem less the case with contemporary Chinese culture, which partly reflects and incorporates Western cultural ideas and concepts. Recalling Nye's overall argument that

soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas or values, and policies, one can interpret this emphasis on culture as an admission that Chinese political ideas and policies are seen as less convincing to the global audience than China's culture.

It is apparently against this backdrop, that culture is seen as strategically important as a means to defend strategic interests against 'fierce international competition' (Jia W. 2012: 216). In this regard, culture is also seen as an effective tool in the struggle of power and interests between nations (Li Z. 2005), as it can be used to attract societies and people of other countries (Li Z. 2005: 12). To put it more succinctly, the country whose culture is the 'mainstream and leading culture' is 'the winner in the international power struggle' (Li Z. 2005: 2).

In this context, it is noted that Western nations, based on their political, economic and cultural strength, hold a dominant position (Bian Y. 2009). Li Zhi (2005: 3) blames US culture for its tendency to 'wolf down local cultures and to influence local people's thoughts and behaviour.' In his understanding, US culture is mainly spread via the 'brutal information policy' of the 'media power USA' (ibid.). It is in this light that Chinese scholars see the danger of cultural imperialism (*wenhua diguo zhuyi*) in relation to Western cultural diplomacy (Bian Y. 2009). To hold fast against such imperialism, the argument goes, it is necessary for China to take part in this cultural competition and promote its culture in the world (Xu Y. 2011; Zhang D. 2013). The tool for these activities is cultural diplomacy as a part of China's foreign policy aimed at promoting national interests (Wu X. 2012: 40).

Public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy: similarities and differences

Analysing Chinese writings on public and cultural diplomacy, it is not entirely clear what cultural diplomacy actually is and how it should be distinguished from public diplomacy. The overall similarities between the two concepts essentially relate to the aims and goals. Similar to public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy is also seen as a form of diplomacy which can enhance a country's 'international status' and 'international influence'; it can create a favourable external environment for building a Harmonious World; and it can contribute to the development of 'cultural diversity' in a global context (Wen N. 2012: 58). Furthermore, it is generally accepted that cultural diplomacy can play an important role in increasing international understanding and enhancing a country's cultural soft power. Zhang Dianjun (2012: 35) understands culture as an important means to maximise participation in the international cultural competition and to safeguard 'China's national cultural interests', while Pang Weihua (2012: 224) argues from a more idealistic perspective that culture is a bridge to communicate with other countries.

A number of analysts hold the opinion that public diplomacy is essentially a form of cultural diplomacy because not only does the concept of public diplomacy have deep cultural roots (Ji L. 2012: 327), but culture also determines its fundamental purpose as it helps to reduce or even eliminate hostility from people

abroad and thus can help to 'increase their goodwill and love for both the Chinese government and the Chinese people' (Wang and Ji 2012: 16). Another proponent of this culture-orientated definition of public diplomacy is Li Zhiyong (2009: 58), who argues that 'the original form of public diplomacy in China is not international propaganda – as other scholars assume – but cultural diplomacy'.

According to Wu Xiaochun (2012: 40) both public and cultural diplomacy are forms of official diplomacy applied by a government in order to target publics abroad. Both also share the same political purpose, namely to create a good image and to promote understanding and support by the public abroad in order to support the implementation of the country's foreign policy. For these reasons, according to Wu, in various countries both cultural and public diplomacy are very closely associated, with the UK for example calling public diplomacy 'cultural diplomacy', and the USA having for a long time placed cultural diplomacy in the category of 'public diplomacy'. According to Fan Ding (2013: 122), culture is so crucially important for public diplomacy which is why France actually translates public diplomacy as cultural diplomacy.

Nevertheless, both concepts also have basic differences. In regard to diplomatic goals, cultural diplomacy is more concerned with long-term objectives than short-term ones. Cultural diplomacy is about mutual understanding between people in the pursuit of 'long-term foreign policy objectives'. Public diplomacy on the contrary is about explaining the policies of a government to publics abroad in order to achieve rather 'short-term goals' (Wu X. 2012: 40). Due to its short-term approach, public diplomacy often uses 'methods of propaganda' and 'rhetoric of deception' (Wu X. 2012: 40).

Another distinction between both concepts concerns the role of the government. As Han *et al.* (2012: 4) point out public diplomacy stresses the role of the government by emphasising that it is the government that conducts various activities in order to create a good national image; cultural diplomacy, although also conducted by the government or guided by the government in such a way that the actual activities are outsourced to non-governmental organisations, stresses cultural cooperation.

While most scholars focus on the positive effects of cultural diplomacy, a number of them also admits that cultural diplomacy as such is not a universal remedy. While Pang Weihua (2012: 224) notes that cultural diplomacy can also cause conflicts, Zhao Kejin (2010: 300–301) describes what he calls the 'dilemma' of cultural diplomacy. In his view, when a country does not engage in cultural diplomacy, or does only very little, it runs into the danger of not achieving its overall diplomacy goals. However where a country engages in too much cultural diplomacy, there is the danger that other countries will perceive such activities as 'cultural invasion' or 'cultural imperialism' (Zhao K. 2010: 300–301; see also Chen Y. 2013). Wen Nuo (2012: 58) describes these 'negative effects' in a similar way, and blames Western countries, claiming that they are not just doing cultural exchange but practicing a strategy of cultural imperialism and, in doing so, trying to 'control the world'.

Wu Xiaochun (2012: 42) points to another principal problem, namely the fact that national interests play the most crucial role in international politics, and cultural diplomacy ‘cannot effectively solve the problems in international politics’. Chinese intellectuals might admire German philosophy, American intellectuals might enjoy Russian literature and music, and Hollywood blockbusters may be shown in the Middle East, but these facts do not mean that there are no problems or issues in international politics. Indeed, even when one country knows another country very well and admires its culture, if fundamental conflicts of interest arise, culture, according to Wu, does not help.

Public diplomacy, propaganda, and the three warfares

According to Chinese scholars, the use of non-military means to influence publics in other countries can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn and the Warring State periods (770BC–221BC) and is mentioned in classical Chinese texts such as the *Shiji*⁸ or the *Sunzi Bingfa*⁹ (Han *et al.* 2012: 2). The tactic of creating a certain public opinion or atmosphere to alienate people or to ‘confuse and corrupt people’s minds’ was an important diplomatic procedure at this time, and seems a likely origin, at least in part, of contemporary public diplomacy (Zhao K. 2010: 292).

Chinese scholarship discusses the relation between public diplomacy and propaganda similarly to non-Chinese debates in a way that distinguishes, or attempts to distinguish, public diplomacy from propaganda, mainly because China knows about the Western problems with the very term which one scholar describes as the West’s ‘propaganda phobia’ (Ye H. 2012: 14).

Public diplomacy, as noted, is a foreign concept in China, and the Chinese originally preferred the term *dui wai xuan chuan*, which is translated as ‘external propaganda’. Unlike its English translation, the term ‘has a positive connotation associated with such essentially benign activities as the release of news, general shaping of ideology, or even advertisement’ (Wang Y. 2008: 259).¹⁰

Despite the originally neutral connotation of the term, Chinese scholars strongly argue for a differentiation between propaganda and public diplomacy because, as Zhao Kejin (2012: 292) notes, ‘external propaganda’ is a ‘contentious’ activity, and the term has a ‘pejorative meaning’ abroad (Han F. *et al.* 2012: 7). The explanation for this follows the description in the Western literature, namely that propaganda originated in relation to the Catholic Church with a neutral meaning, but received its negative connotations in World War II and during the Cold War which led to the ‘universal detestation’ of the term in Western societies (Ye H. 2012: 14). Tian Jianmin (2008: 128) notes that propaganda normally has ‘a pejorative connotation related to inciting public opinion, deceiving the public and straining the truth which lead to a highly negative and perfidious understanding of the term.’

A number of Chinese scholars seem to understand public diplomacy as a natural evolution of external propaganda and some are ‘even often inclined to define the issue as a simple terminological matter’ (Zappone 2012: 15). One case

in point here is the very fact that not least due to the West's unease with the term, the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP issued a notice in 1997 that the English translation for the Chinese term *xuanchuan* was no longer 'propaganda' but 'publicity', an alteration subsequently implemented in English names of Chinese organisations, most notably the Central Propaganda Department's changed to being the Publicity Department in English in 1998. For most Chinese scholars this actually proved that China has changed from the traditional external propaganda approach towards the more modern concept of public diplomacy (Zhong and Wang 2006; Ye H. 2012; Han F. *et al.* 2012). This argument is rather puzzling from a non-Chinese perspective as the simple change in words does not reveal anything about a change in style. This is even more surprising as a number of scholars apparently realise that it is crucial to move China's public diplomacy away from an 'external propaganda' mode to the mode of 'international dissemination of information' (Ye H. 2012: 11).

Ye Hua (2012) provides six differences between external propaganda and international dissemination of information that reflect similar debates in the non-Chinese discourse: (1) external propaganda focuses on the performing country while international dissemination focuses on the international audience; (2) external propaganda concentrates on direct spread of information while international dissemination concentrates on indirect spread of information; (3) external propaganda uses uniform mediums while international dissemination uses different and pluralistic mediums; (4) external propaganda uses a rigid and stiff approach while international dissemination uses a more flexible one; (5) external propaganda focuses on information selection and screening, international dissemination focuses on open information; and lastly, (6) while external propaganda outreach is unidirectional, international dissemination outreach is bidirectional.

Tang Jiamei (2008: 33) takes a look at the style applied by Chinese media to report about China to the outside world since the late 1970s, and provides some similar insights. She distinguishes China's foreign media work into three phases, namely external propaganda, external communication, and public diplomacy. The first phase lasted until 1989, and the aim was to 'propagate China'. During the second phase until 2003 the goal shifted from propagating China to 'reporting about China', or what Zhao Kejin (2012: 30) describes as the active matter of 'explaining China to the world'. The third and current phase started in 2003, and is characterised by presenting news with a 'Chinese perspective' to the world (Tang J. 2008: 31–32). This current approach has become increasingly popular in China, and illustrates China's attempts to increase its 'international right to a say' (Zhao K. 2012: 30).

While Zhao Kejin (2010: 295) admits that public diplomacy developed from external propaganda and that both concepts try to 'influence' foreign publics, he also points to the differences between the two: external propaganda is normally an 'aggressive' undertaking which is 'lying' while 'targeting the masses'; public diplomacy on the contrary emphasises 'cooperation', 'honesty and truthfulness' and focuses on particular target groups. He further sees public diplomacy as a

‘reciprocal exchange process’, while propaganda is ‘unilateral information processing’ (Zhao K. 2010: 304–305), which clearly reflects the Western debates concerning propaganda, public diplomacy and new public diplomacy. Huang Chao (2005: 32) in turn applies a distinction which can be found in various Western writings on public diplomacy when noting that propaganda works with ‘false information while public diplomacy is based on facts as well as on trustworthy and real information.’

While the Chinese attempts to distinguish between sinister propaganda and benign public diplomacy reveals important insights into the academic discourse, Gary Ranwsley (2013: 148) makes a point worth considering when he notes that

there is reason to suspect that the Chinese do not separate clearly their understanding or their practice of propaganda and public diplomacy, and that often the activities are so blurred that the cynic might suggest that, in the Chinese world, public diplomacy is merely a euphemism for propaganda.

When analysing Confucius Institutes it is important not only to have an eye on the notion of propaganda, but it also provides further insights to recognise the ongoing debates (mainly in military and strategic studies circles) on the Chinese concept of the Three Warfares (*san zhong zhanfa*, abbreviated as *san zhan*), which include legal warfare (*falü zhan*), psychological warfare (*xinli zhan*), and public opinion warfare (*yulun zhan*).

Timothy Walton (2013), for example, understands the proliferation of Confucius Institutes as a concrete manifestation of China’s psychological warfare strategy and he also discusses CIs with regards to China’s foreign media warfare. Philip Towle (2013) also mentions Confucius Institutes and China’s various media outlets such as China Central Television (CCTV) or Xinhua News Agency in the context of the Three Warfares, as do Sangkuk Lee (2014) and Dean Cheng (2012). Another recent report on *The Chinese People’s Liberation Army and Information Warfare* describes Confucius Institutes as ‘another sophisticated example of public opinion warfare that seeks to “use foreigners as a bridge” to promote and convey the message of the Chinese government and Communist Party’ (Wortzel 2014: 32), which all should be understood in the ‘broader national realm of perception management and image shaping’ (ibid.).

Some see the Three Warfares as a consolidation and summary of the idea of Unrestricted Warfare (*chaoxian zhan*), a concept outlined in a book written in 1999 by two colonels in the People’s Liberation Army (Singh 2013). The book deals with the question how China can defeat a technologically superior opponent (such as the United States) through a variety of means. Rather than focusing on direct military confrontation, this book instead examines a variety of other means which are aimed to place the opponent in a bad position and circumvent the need for direct military action (Qiao and Wang 1999).¹¹ Those means include, among many others, psychological warfare in the sense of spreading rumors to intimidate the enemy and to break down his will; media warfare in the sense of manipulating what people see and hear in order to lead

public opinion along; or cultural warfare in the sense of leading cultural trends along in order to assimilate those with different views (Qiao and Wang 1999).

In 2003, the CCP's Central Committee and the Central Military Commission approved the Three Warfares as a new warfare concept for the People's Liberation Army. While the concept is therefore closely linked to the military realm, there is no clear-cut distinction between civilian and military usage as well as civilian and military audiences.

Legal warfare uses international and domestic law to justify China's own actions and asserting its interests while it is aimed to undermine the cases for an adversary's actions (Halper 2013: 28). Psychological warfare is broadly understood as operations that influence targets' psychology and behaviour by disseminating particular information via various channels, such as the mass media or people-to-people contacts in order to accomplish political and military goals (Lee 2014: 202). Methods of psychological warfare include deterrence, coercion, deception, instigation, seduction, but also bribery, inducement, or more generally confusion (Wu and Zuo 2006). Psychological warfare may also include cultural and educational activities, such as exchange programmes or visiting schemes which are meant to 'use foreigners as a bridge' to promote China and convey Chinese messages (Walton 2013: 355).

Public opinion warfare, often also described and translated as media warfare, is aimed to win over the public both at home and abroad through various media channels and instruments (Liu G. 2005; Zhu J. 2005; Lao C. 2011). In the international arena, public opinion warfare seeks to shape China's external image (Sina Military 2014), it seeks to counter the hegemonic dominance of Western media and similarly to improve China's international capabilities to make its voice better heard (Wortzel 2014; Walton 2013). Its potent form, as one observer notes, 'is on account of its relative imperceptibility and slow poisoning effect. It is a constant and ongoing activity aimed at influencing perceptions and attitudes over the long term and is rarely used to precipitate an armed confrontation' (Singh 2013: 35). It thus refers to government or army controlled propaganda and manipulation as well as the planned steering of the target audience by means of information selection and thereby influencing public opinion (Fan G. 2005). In order to conduct successful media warfare campaigns, it is necessary, as one observer points out, to keep the audience in mind (Liu X. 2004). The audience – and here Liu argues very much along the lines of the before made argument about the active audience – is autonomous, they not only select information, but they also interpret information individually and they decide whether to accept or to dismiss information (Liu X. 2004).

Looking at the debates on propaganda and psychological warfare inside and outside of China, it is rather complicated to make a clear-cut distinction between these concepts and public diplomacy. Trying to do so is certainly 'fraught with terminological, political, and ideological peril' (Mulvenon 1999: 176). Seen in a sober light and approached from a purely functional perspective, it is, in my understanding, somewhat complicated to distinguish clearly between public diplomacy and propaganda and even between public diplomacy and public

opinion warfare. All concepts can be understood as manifestations of political communication, they are all used for different purposes, all are about influencing opinions and actions, and all concepts are about advancing the interests and values of the actor who uses them.

There are, as illustrated in this and the previous chapter, differences with regards to the style of communication: public opinion warfare, propaganda and traditional public diplomacy apply one-directional communication processes whereas the new public diplomacy theoretically emphasises bidirectional communication and engagement. This understanding, as pointed out, is also shared by Chinese scholars who see (new) public diplomacy as a reciprocal exchange process while propaganda is unilateral information processing.

As Ingrid d'Hooghe (2015: 28) observes, another often made distinction between public diplomacy and propaganda – which can easily be extended to public opinion warfare – is that the very intent and motivations make the difference: the *intent* to manipulate beliefs and behaviour is what makes both propaganda and public opinion warfare the sinister components of international political communication whereas public diplomacy is characterised as the benign and civilised form of persuasion.

While it is hard to decode intentions and motivations of communication, it seems helpful to shift the attention to how this communication is perceived and observed. This, in my understanding, is of particular interest with regards to China and its communication efforts. As pointed out, the biggest weakness of propaganda is when it is exposed or perceived as propaganda, and the same applies to public opinion warfare. If the end-user realises that a certain act of communication is propaganda, or even only presumes that it might be propaganda, this communication is doomed to fail.

But the notions of propaganda or public opinion warfare can also be used as a strategic means to discredit the opponent. Those terms can be used as an allegation and a means of blaming and shaming on the global stage as exemplified in the distinction between benign public diplomacy and sinister propaganda or even more evil public opinion warfare. While Chinese analysts, for example, would normally describe US media operations during the First Gulf War and the Kosovo War as psychological warfare, the US for its part would label China's communicative backing of its activities in the South China Seas as psychological warfare; while China would describe its Confucius Institutes as a benign instrument of public diplomacy or cultural exchange, critics perceive them as examples of crude state-directed propaganda; and while Western countries would use their public diplomacy to spread universal values, countries like China would strongly guard against what it interprets as the infiltration of highly unwelcomed values. Therefore, to borrow from public diplomacy scholar Bruce Gregory (2008), it is determined by interests, values, identities, memories and geo-strategic contexts how we think about public diplomacy, propaganda or psychological/public opinion warfare. In this regard, it seems, the concepts and labels used to describe the communicative activities by 'others' apparently say as much about those who use them as they do about the communicator itself. While this

is one overarching issue of China's public diplomacy efforts, China's public diplomacy also faces other, more concrete, problems which are comprehensively debated amongst Chinese scholars.

Challenges of China's public diplomacy

The Chinese discourse mentions a number of challenges and constraints for China's public diplomacy (d'Hooghe 2015), but in the following I want to highlight two problems which are frequently discussed by Chinese scholars: first there is consensus that China's current public diplomacy suffers from institutional-organisational limitations, and second there is the awareness that the style or approach of China's public diplomacy has to change.

With regard to institutional limitations scholars criticise the lack of a coherent and unified strategy (Li and Li 2012; Zhang D. 2012) and call for a special agency or institution to develop and implement public diplomacy policies and to coordinate the various instruments and activities in the field (Su S. 2008a, b; Liao H. 2007). The basic problem is that the Chinese diplomatic system 'is complicated by many departments and groups [and it is therefore] difficult to make long-term strategic arrangements to practice public diplomacy' (Wang Y. 2008: 264). This is echoed by Zheng Hua (2012: 67), who notes that the coordination between the various agencies is 'imperfect', the 'division of power is not clear' and 'supervision is poor'. The problem here is that 'most of these institutions are at the same administrative level and therefore it is very hard to perform efficient organizational work and coordination' (Zheng H. 2012: 68). Furthermore, public diplomacy activities carried out within one department not easily accept supervision of another department. Zhang Zhexin (2009: 15) notes that some key agencies concerned with public diplomacy such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education 'are excluded from the strategy-planning and decision-making processes, many a time resulting in poor effect of public diplomacy due to lack of necessary information as well as other resources.'

Under such circumstances, as Zhang Zhexin (2009: 15) explains, 'China's public diplomacy has been exercised as two almost completely separate practices', namely communication activities on the one hand and cultural and exchange activities on the other, 'which sometimes tends to create quite different images of China for lack of a unified strategy and coordination.' Cultural activities 'center on the rich culture and history and thus enhance the image of a seemingly harmonious China of ancient values', while communication activities 'keeps promoting another picture for China that is dynamic, quickly getting open and commercialized, and tending to embrace international values and norms of behavior' (ibid.).

In order to reduce the influence of parallel bureaucratic departments on the implementation of China's public diplomacy, Zheng Hua (2012: 68) proposes the establishment of a full-time cross-sectoral coordination body with clear authority and the right to segregate duties and to coordinate arrangements in order to effectively use the resources of the various departments to thus boost

the development of China's public diplomacy. Furthermore, it is necessary, according to Zheng, to increase the participation of civil society representatives and non-governmental actors into China's public diplomacy.

According to Zhang Dianjun (2012, 2013) to be effective, public and cultural diplomacy need an independent institution to act as its guide. Developed countries, according to Zhang, have unified institutions in command of these diplomatic undertakings. In China, by contrast, the various actors in this field are 'decentralized' and 'fragmented', the 'division of labour between different institutions is unclear and fuzzy', and every institutions works for itself (Zhang D. 2012: 37). Zhang acknowledges that China has set up the Public Diplomacy Division (*Gonggong Waijiao Chu*),¹² which is run under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, this office's 'administrative standing is rather low', and it is 'not authoritatively strong', so it is hard for this office to take a nationwide lead in coordinating the various cultural activities across various sectors (Zhang D. 2012: 37).

The necessity to change the style of China's public diplomacy is seen as another crucial problem. One important aspect in this regard is what Zhang Dianjun (2012: 36) describes as the need 'to water down strong official overtones'. Although the government should give full play to its political capabilities – such as efficiently and quickly mobilising resources – if the 'political character' of public diplomacy is too obvious, it will inevitably 'reduce the credibility and objectivity' of these activities (Zhang D. 2012: 37). Similarly Wu Zelin (2012: 35) argues that contemporary public diplomacy requires the need to 'deemphasize the official character', which refers back to the insight to include more actors outside the government realm, as discussed before.

The necessity to change the style of China's public diplomacy concerns, according to Chinese scholars, furthermore the need to adopt to international, normally understood as Western, audience customs (Wu Z. 2012: 35). In this regard Chinese scholars admit that the traditional propaganda character is still relatively strong (Zhong and Wang 2006: 68) and that simply copying the domestic communication approach does not work on the international stage and leads to misunderstanding (Qiu Y. 2010). Just replicating domestic propaganda content and practices gives foreign audiences the impression of 'forced indoctrination' which is 'daunting' and scares them away (Zhong and Wang 2006: 68). To solve this problem it is necessary for China to understand the habits and needs of the foreign audiences (*ibid.*). Others more loosely call to improve the quality of content (Zhou H. 2012) without closer examination on this.

Another issue is that 'proactive public diplomacy' is still limited, which is a problem as public diplomacy should emphasise 'openness and transparency' (Wu Z. 2012: 34). In this regard Zhao Qizheng (2010) laments that Chinese officials do normally not want to talk to foreign media and thereby are losing opportunities to introduce the real China. Next to government officials and press officers, Chinese scholars also urge the domestic media to be more open (Zhuang E. 2011). Zhao Qizheng (2014: 154) notes that the media should report in a transparent way about domestic issues as this would help to improve China's

image and bad reporting, on the contrary, would damage the country's image. Similarly Zou Jianhua (2011) calls for transparency in reporting and for the importance of balanced information, which means not covering up problems and not exaggerating accomplishments.

Next to this qualitative dimension, which – not surprisingly – leaves out why the media does not report in such a way – another focus is on the quantitative dimension which is reflected in a call for more resources (Su S. 2008a; Zhang D. 2012, 2013), the broadening of China's distribution channels as well as calls for the improvement of its technology in order to better reach out to international audiences (Zhou H. 2012; Yu Y. 2014).

According to Wang Yiwei (2014: 44) it is crucial to have control over one's story and narrative, because 'if you are not able to express yourself, someone else will do it for you.' This essentially can be seen as a fundamental reason for China to conduct public diplomacy. From the Chinese point of view the Western media report tendentious about China which is why the PRC has to build up its capacity to explain the real China to the world. Or as Li Changchun (2008), former propaganda chief, noted some years ago: 'communication capacity determines influence'. In this day and age, Li continued, the nation 'whose communication methods are [most] advanced and whose communication capacity is the strongest' will have 'the most power to influence the world' (Li C. 2008). In late 2011, Hu Jintao argued in a similar way when he noted that the country that 'takes the dominant position in the cultural development has a strong cultural soft power and thus can be the winner in the intense international competition' (Hu J. 2012a).

Those statements clearly illustrate that while idealistic purposes such as enhancing mutual understanding are mentioned as reasons for conducting public diplomacy in the Chinese discourse, the focus is on more functional reasons in order to advance national interests. This, in my understanding, can be seen as a difference to Western debates on public diplomacy where idealistic purposes are emphasised. While Western public diplomacy, as indicated in the Introduction of this study, after the Cold War was more functionally defined as 'a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its national goals and current policies' (Tuch 1990: 3), post-9/11 approaches emphasise reciprocal understanding and two-way communication described as relational turn or 'connective mindshift' (Zaharna *et al.* 2013: 1). Now, public diplomacy in the West is more concerned with 'building relationships: understanding the needs of other countries [and] looking for areas where we can find common cause' (Leonard *et al.* 2002: 8). It is, at least theoretically, no longer about telling your story to the world, but to engage with the world, as outlined before.

In contrast to this normative understanding, Chinese public diplomacy is more concerned with functional purposes such as publicising China's intentions to the outside world; forming a desirable image of the state; issuing rebuttals to overseas distorted reports about China; improving the international environment surrounding China, and exerting influence on the policy decisions of foreign

countries (Zhan K. 1998: 73). It is precisely in this mindset that China is using a growing number of actors and a multitude of programmes, initiatives and instruments to conduct its public diplomacy that will be introduced in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 The CPPCC is the national political advisory body of China which consists of delegates from a range of political parties and organisations, ethnic groups and independent members.
- 2 *Gonggong* means public, common, communal and is used to describe, for example, public property (*gonggong caichan*), public welfare (*gonggong fuli*), or also public affairs (*gonggong shiwu*). *Gongzhong* refers to the public as in public opinion (*gongzhong yulun*) or public gathering (*gongzhong jihui*).
- 3 *Renmin* is translated into English as ‘people’ or ‘populace’. *Minjian* on the one hand can be translated as ‘popular’, ‘folk’ or ‘among the people’; on the other hand it can also mean non-governmental or involving people rather than governments.
- 4 The Institute is a research institute directly administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with reportedly close links China’s Ministry of State Security.
- 5 Li uses the term *xuanchuan* – propaganda, mainly because as one of China’s most influential Africanists he is more concerned with China’s image on the African continent and not so much with theoretical debates about soft power, public diplomacy or propaganda. For a discussion of the problematic terminology of propaganda, see the section on public diplomacy, propaganda and the three warfares in this chapter.
- 6 Book length studies include, among others, Kurlantzick (2007); Ding, S (2008); Li, M. (2009); Barr (2011); Lai and Lu (2012); Sun, J (2012). Other studies include, for example, Ding and Saunders (2006); Heng (2010); Lee, G (2009); Edney (2012); Lee, J-N (2008); Gill and Huang (2006); Wuthnow (2008); Suzuki (2009); Hayden (2012); Rawnsley (2012).
- 7 Yan in an email to the author, 6 March 2009.
- 8 Record of the Grand Historian, assumingly compiled around 100 BC.
- 9 The Art of War by Sun Zi, who assumedly lived from around 544 BC to 496 BC.
- 10 Western scholars note that the term *xuanchuan* has a neutral meaning in Chinese (see, for example, d’Hooghe 2015: 107). For China’s use and understanding of propaganda see most notably Anne-Marie Brady (2008) and Kingsley Edney (2014).
- 11 For an English translation see the CIA’s Foreign Broadcast Information Service website: www.cryptome.org/cuw.htm.
- 12 The Public Diplomacy Division (*Gonggong Waijiao Chu*) was established in 2004 and was upgraded to the Public Diplomacy Office (*Gonggong Waijiao Bangongshi*) in late 2009.

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5 China's public diplomacy at work

Major actors and main programmes

As outlined before, it is a widely held view in China that public diplomacy should either be directly or indirectly conducted by the central government (Li Z. 2009: 64) and many of China's public diplomacy instruments or programmes are under state control. That said, this study also takes into consideration the fact that although China's public diplomacy remains largely a state-centric endeavour, non-state actors are also increasingly involved, a fact of crucial importance for the case of Confucius Institutes. It is, however, also important to note, that due to the structure of the Chinese party state most of these 'non-state' actors 'are not fully independent' (d'Hooghe 2011a: 22).

Without digging too deeply into the structure of the Chinese party state, it is necessary to note that the Chinese political system is dominated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which has, in one way or the other, control over all other political institutions, including the state. The relation between party and state is defined through the fact that the party created the state in 1949 and thereby was above the state from the very beginning (Zheng Y. 2010). To ensure its control over the state system, the CCP maintains a robust presence inside the system. As Lawrence and Martin (2013: 28) point out, top officials at each level of the state system routinely hold concurrent party posts, although they often do not publicise them, and Party committees are embedded in the State Council, ministries and government departments at every level. While powerful CCP bodies that exist in parallel to the state bodies set policy at all levels and make major decisions, the state system implements and executes these policies.

With regard to China's public diplomacy, one can identify about a dozen ministries and agencies involved in its conduct and this variety leads, as discussed in Chapter 4, to a 'somehow deficient organization of governmental agencies in public diplomacy – sometimes a central agency is absent to coordinate the work of different organs and at some other time different agencies overlap in function' (Zhang Z. 2009: 15). In order to provide a better structural understanding of China's public diplomacy system, this study follows Han Zhaoying (2010: 296), who divides China's public diplomacy actors and related programmes into two categories, namely government, or government-related, actors conducting information programmes, and actors conducting educational and cultural programmes.¹

Major actors dealing with information programmes

According to Ingrid d'Hooghe (2011, 2015) the primary actors in China's public diplomacy are the Communist Party's Office of External Publicity, an organisation under the Communist Party's Central Publicity Department, and the State Council Information Office (SCIO). The concrete description and allocation of the two bodies remains somewhat confusing (Han Z. 2010; Wang Y. 2008; Brady 2006, 2008). The official website ChinaCulture.org notes that the 'Information Office of the State Council can best be understood as the State Council's office equivalent to the Publicity Department which reports to the Party Central Committee' (Chinaculture.org, 2008). While this implies there exist two separate bodies, the Chinese website China.com.cn, run by the State Council Information Office itself, notes that the State Council Information Office and the Office of External Publicity of the CCP are 'one institution [with] two signboards' (*yige jigou liangkuai paizi*) (China.com.cn, 2011), which points to an equalisation of party and state organs.

With regards to the CCP's Office of External Publicity it is important to recall the terminological changes made in the late 1990s. Until today this party department is known colloquially as the *Zhong Xuan Bu* in Chinese, *xuan* referring here to either 'propaganda' or 'propagate' as well as to 'publicity' or 'publicise'. As pointed out, the *Zhong Xuan Bu* changed its official English name from 'Propaganda Department of the CCP' to 'Publicity Department of the CCP' in the late 1990s. It is therefore that Western scholars either refer to the official version by using 'publicity' (d'Hooghe 2015), stick to the original version by using 'propaganda' (Brady 2012) or use both 'propaganda' and 'publicity' to describe the *Zhong Xuan Bu* (Shambaugh 2007).

With regards to the actual tasks, both the SCIO and the CCP Office of External Publicity 'are responsible for developing public diplomacy plans and guidelines, monitoring foreign media, and guiding and censoring domestic media, including the Internet' (d'Hooghe 2011a: 21). Due to the described parallel structure of the Chinese party state, many officials serve simultaneously in both SCIO and the CCP Office of External Publicity. The

exact division of work and mandates between the two offices is unknown, but one can safely assume that the Office of External Publicity sets the rule of the game and that it also has the final say in major decisions.

(d'Hooghe 2011a: 21)

The SCIO is in charge of promoting 'Chinese media to report on China to the world' as it provides 'policy guidance and coordinates the external media reports, holds regular press conferences on important economic, political, and social issues and policies' (Han Z. 2010: 297). It furthermore issues White Papers 'to clarify China's policies on critical issues such as human rights, foreign policies, national defense development, the Chinese party system, energy, climate change, Tibet, Xinjiang, etc.' (ibid.) and it monitors and evaluates foreign media coverage about China and opinion polls of China's development (d'Hooghe 2015).

The SCIO also 'assists foreign journalists in conducting their interviews in China to promote objective and accurate reporting on China' (Han Z. 2010: 297) and it issues publications on the Chinese economy, history, culture, geography, etc., in the form of books, journals, and audio and video products. SCIOs work on public diplomacy got a 'real kick-start' in 1998 when Zhao Qizheng became its director (d'Hooghe 2015: 135). Zhao left the office in 2005 and became one of the most prominent voices in the Chinese public diplomacy discourse.

Another main actor is the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with its Information Department. As one of 28 departments, the Information Department releases information on China's major diplomatic events and states China's foreign policy. It manages press coverage on major diplomatic events and guides China's overseas diplomatic missions on information work. It provides, according to its mission statement, services to foreign media organisations and foreign journalists in China, mainly through its International Press Centre. This Centre is in charge of issuing visas for foreign journalists based in China and it also provides information to journalists through what are called 'reporting opportunities'. The Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also covers public diplomacy and information collection and processing (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

In 2004, the Foreign Ministry established a Public Diplomacy Division (*Gonggong Waijiao Chu*) under its Information Department, and upgraded it into the Public Diplomacy Office (*Gonggong Waijiao Bangongshi*) in late 2009, which was understood as a sign of public diplomacy's increasing importance (Outlook News Weekly 2010). However, Wang Yiwei and Ingrid d'Hooghe both point out that this body 'mainly organizes activities to inform domestic, not international, audiences about China's foreign policy and diplomacy' (d'Hooghe 2011b: 165; Wang Y. 2008: 260). Furthermore, the Foreign Ministry has set up a Public Diplomacy Advisory Committee that introduces China's national conditions and governing philosophy and interprets China's policies and propositions to the outside world (Yang J. 2011).

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the political advisory body in China, is another player in the country's public diplomacy, especially through its Committee of Foreign Affairs. Although it remains somewhat vague what this institution practically does in terms of public diplomacy besides organising exchanges with international officials or representatives from non-governmental organisations, a number of people involved indicate that the CPPCC is closely linked to China's public diplomacy establishment and research. First, the above mentioned Zhao Qizheng was chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the CPPCC, which mainly deals with communication with foreign countries, thus public diplomacy. He also was the spokesman for the eleventh CPPCC. Another important figure in China's public diplomacy is Han Fangming. Han is currently deputy director of the CPPCC's Foreign Affairs Committee and president of the Charhar Institute, China's foremost public diplomacy think tank. The Foreign Affairs Committee also publishes, in cooperation with the Charhar Institute, the journal *Public Diplomacy Quarterly* (*Gonggong Waijiao Jikan*).

Media and information instruments of China's public diplomacy

In the previous chapter I quoted former CCP propaganda chief Li Changchun saying that 'communication capacity determines influence' (Li C. 2008). Li further noted that

strengthening the setup of our domestic and international communication capacity is related to the overall situation of China's reform and opening up and modernization; it is related to China's international influence and international status; it is related to the upgrading of our nation's cultural soft power and the role of our nation's media in the international public opinion structure.

(Ibid.)

Against this background, China has in recent years strengthened its international communication capacities and investing approximately US\$6.6 billion (d'Hooghe 2015: 164). The money was mainly used to create new media outlets or to expand the services of existing ones.

Xinhua News Agency

Xinhua News Agency is not only China's largest news agency, but also the largest news agency outside of the OECD nations (Hong J. 2011; for Xinhua in general see also Xin X. 2012). Xinhua is commonly known as the mouthpiece of the CCP and plays a crucially influential role in the hierarchical Chinese media system. Directly subordinate to the State Council, Xinhua is 'responsible for setting the general tone for other media outlets in the coverage of politically sensitive events' (Xin X. 2008: 47). Cui Jizhe, a former vice president of Xinhua, explained me the agency's role in an interview in the following way: 'Xinhua is not a private news agency, it is owned by the state. Therefore we work on behalf of the state' (I-C1).

Xinhua provides its worldwide subscribers (currently about 80,000) with news and financial information in the form of text, photos, graphics, audio, video and mobile phone text messages 24 hours a day in eight languages: Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese and Japanese. It publishes more than 20 newspapers and magazines and runs the website Xinhuanet.com. Xinhua has about 10,000 employees worldwide, 1,000 correspondents in 162 bureaus around the world and plans to have 180 bureaus by 2020 (Wang D. 2012: 71). In its latest moves, Xinhua has launched a video news service, a mobile media service, and the English TV channel China Xinhua News Network Corporation (CNC World) in 2010. Although CNC World started with the implicit aim to challenge its international counterparts by presenting 'an international vision with a China perspective', as Li Congjun, former Xinhua president, noted at the launch (Xinhua 2010), the station is far from catching up with other international TV stations like the BBC or Al Jazeera.

While Xinhua in the West is mainly seen as the propaganda instrument of the CCP and is therefore not very successful in explaining China's point of view, this is somewhat different in the global south where Xinhua partially succeeds (Wang D. 2012: 71).² This is either through emphasising the common status as developing countries in opposition to the West or because Xinhua's content and services are much cheaper than that of Western agencies. The non-Western point of view and engagement with developing countries, which does not happen too often in Western news agencies, is appreciated by other developing countries. However, and this seems to be the principle crux, reports explaining China's official points of views – which eventually is the core business of public diplomacy in this regard – are also not used by various media outlets in other developing countries, mainly for the same reasons as why Xinhua reports do normally not resonate with Western media outlets (Wang D. 2012: 71).

Television and radio

China Central Television (CCTV) is the national TV station of China and is one of China's most important news broadcast companies. In addition to its TV programmes, CCTV has built up a multimedia broadcasting platform and business operation that includes movies, newspapers and the internet. CCTV is the main news source for the Chinese public. It is described as an important window through which the Chinese can learn about the outside world, and through which the world can learn about China (Han Z. 2010).

Currently, CCTV is running six international channels in six different languages, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic. Its English-language channel CCTV-News, formally known as CCTV 9 and until 2010 as CCTV International, broadcasts 24 hours a day. It is dedicated to reporting news and information to its global audience, with a special focus on China. In January 2012, it opened its first overseas broadcasting centre in Nairobi, Kenya, from which it broadcasts CCTV Africa. CCTV has also started business in such new media platforms as Internet TV, Mobile TV, Bus Mobile TV and Internet Protocol TV provided by CCTV.com. The signals of CCTV are available around the globe and it maintains cooperation with 241 media outlets in 140 countries and regions, and has correspondents in 19 places around the world and bureaus on all continents. Han Zhaoying (2010: 301) notes that its 'programs reach 140 countries and regions'. This rather vague formulation points to a tricky issue, namely the audience of CCTV. This issue is twofold. First, the question arises *how many* people watch CCTV, and, second, *who* actually watches it.

According to Zhang Xiaoling (2011: 63), CCTV International 'claimed to cover 98 percent of the world within a few years after its launch, with 45 million subscribers outside China.' The problem, however, as Gary Rawnsley points out, is that these 45 million people should be understood as '*potential* audience [and] it is more likely that the *actual* audience remains small' (Rawnsley 2012: 132, emphasis in original). Related here is the question of who watches CCTV? Referring to a study from 2002, Rawnsley notes that 90 per cent of CCTV-9

viewers lived in China, of which only 4 per cent were foreigners. Furthermore, 80 per cent of the viewers watched to develop their English skills. Zhang quotes another survey from 2007 which presents different numbers, but the overall direction is the same, namely that most viewers are Chinese who want to practice their English. The study reveals that 39 per cent of the viewers were non-Chinese outside China, 3 per cent were non-Chinese in China, and 58 per cent were Chinese, with the majority (43 per cent) of them from within China.

Taking CCTV-News as an example, another aspect of China's strategy to reach an international audience can be exemplified, namely the inclusion of foreign – mainly Western – journalistic expertise. On the one hand Chinese journalists participate in exchanges programmes with international colleagues which provides them with the opportunity to go abroad to better understand the mechanism of Western media and journalism (Wang D. 2012: 71).³ On the other hand, more and more Western journalists are working for Chinese media companies either behind the scenes to train Chinese media workers or as language polishers (Swan 1996; Newham 2011), but also on screen as it is the case with CCTV. This approach to put foreigners on screen should not only be understood as a means of adapting to Western journalistic standards, but also as a means of winning (more) international credibility. And as CCTV is growing, it is looking for more foreigners, mainly English native speakers. Nowadays the channel is looking for international journalists who not only 'want to be part of the world's fastest growing TV channel' but also to be 'part of the next generation of television' either in Beijing or in Nairobi as part of CCTV Africa. Positions offered included (at the time of the recruiting campaign in early 2013) anchors for news, business and sports programmes, newsroom copy editors, copy editors and news correspondents. In order to reach out to an international audience, CCTV was 'looking for experienced TV professionals who want to grow their careers as we grow the channel. No beginners please.'⁴

China Radio International (CRI), originally Radio Peking, was founded in 1941 and is owned and operated by the state. It 'is the only Chinese state-owned radio allowed to broadcast to overseas audience' (Chen *et al.* 2010: 1). CRI now broadcasts about 1,500 hours of programmes each day in 59 languages domestically and internationally. CRI has also expanded its services with new developments in information technology. CRI Online, founded in 1998, as one of the key official website, operates in 59 languages.

Newspapers and other publications

Founded in 1981, *China Daily* is the national English-language newspaper. Its target is the Western mainstream society and the China Daily Group includes 12 English publications. Since 2009 it has produced a US edition, followed by a European and Asian weekly edition since 2010 and in 2012 *China Daily* started its African weekly edition. Another newspaper in this regard is the English edition of the *Global Times* (*Huanqiu Shibao*) which was established in 2009 (for more on the *Global Times* see Edney 2014).

Another instrument in the information realm is the China Foreign Language Publishing Bureau, commonly known as the China International Publishing Group (CIPG). It is under the supervision of the SCIO and is 'the oldest and largest Chinese government agency targeting foreign audiences' (Han Z. 2010: 297) through books, magazines and websites. CIPG operates 10 publishing houses, among them the Foreign Language Press publishes various periodicals such as *Beijing Review*, and runs more than 30 websites, the most prominent one being *www.china.org.cn*. Another publisher that exists under the SCIO is China Intercontinental Press. Established in 1993, according to its mission statement, it is one of China's leading international publishing companies, producing 200 new titles per year, half of which are in English. Its 'mission is to present China, especially the information of Chinese culture, to the world and share the traditional and modern China's essence with everyone on earth' (China Intercontinental Press, 2009).

The major actors dealing with culture and exchange programmes

As pointed out before, in late 2011 Hu Jintao gave a speech at a meeting of the CCP Central Committee in which he outlined how China should become a 'socialist cultural great power' (Hu J. 2012). Hu said:

Due to the fact that intellectual and cultural exchange as well as integration and competition globally are getting more and more intense, he who takes the dominant position in the cultural development has a strong cultural soft power and thus can be the winner in the intense international competition.

(Hu J. 2012)

The speech caused a stir in the Western media mainly because of what followed, because Hu continued by saying: 'We must clearly see that international hostile forces are intensifying the strategic plot of Westernizing and dividing China, and ideological and cultural fields are the focal areas of their long-term infiltration.' But focusing on the first part of Hu's statement, between the lines it becomes obvious that China should engage in international cultural competition, just as it should engage in the international communication competition.

The main actors in the cultural realm include the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA) and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) (Han Z. 2010: 301). Two further, although rather unexpected, actors should be mentioned here, namely the Chinese State Forestry Administration and its China Wildlife Conservation Association, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, with its subdivision, the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens. Both institutions are involved in China's famous 'panda diplomacy' (Hartig 2013).

Both the CPIFA and the CPAFFC 'claim to be NGOs' but have strong connections with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National People's

Congress respectively (Han Z. 2010). The CPIFA was the People's Republic's first institution engaged in people-to-people diplomacy and it focuses on international issues and foreign policy research, aiming to conduct international exchanges and expand people-to-people diplomatic activities (CPIFA.org, n.d.). In doing this, CPIFA works 'to enhance friendship between the Chinese people and the people of other nations, promote the development of China's international relations and contribute to the cause of world peace' (China.org.cn, n.d.). Its members include numerous retired Chinese ambassadors, and it mainly targets social elites in other countries, including distinguished politicians, former officials, social activists, entrepreneurs and distinguished scholars.

The CPAFFC is a national people's organisation and is also engaged in people-to-people diplomacy in China. Its aims are 'to enhance people's friendship, further international cooperation, safeguard world peace and promote common development' (CPAFFC.org.cn, n.d.). It primarily promotes exchange and cooperation between private organisations and local governments in China and other countries. Through the CPAFFC various cities and provinces have established sister-ship relations with counterparts abroad and educational, cultural, scientific, technological exchanges and trade between Chinese and foreign partners.

The Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture is in charge of organising a number of China's cultural outreach activities, especially through its Bureau for External Cultural Relations and Office for Cultural Affairs with Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Regions. The main duties of this bureau include the guidance and administration of 'international cultural exchange and cultural communications', to organise 'the stipulation of policies and drafting related laws and regulations for cultural exchange with foreign countries and Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan regions', to guide and administer 'the work of Chinese Cultural Centers in foreign countries [and] administering foreign cultural centers in China' (Ministry of Education, 2009). It furthermore prepares 'the signing of cultural cooperation agreements and programs with foreign countries on behalf of the State' and organises 'major international cultural exchange activities at home and abroad' (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The Ministry also organises a number of large-scale cultural (exchange) projects, most notably the so-called China Culture Years abroad, sometimes also described as China Year. In 2003, the ministry established 'a group composed of senior officials of state-controlled news organizations and information officials [...] to coordinate "Culture Year" activities' (Zhang J. 2008: 311). The Culture Year project is a series of cultural exchange programmes between China and foreign countries and includes art exhibitions, sports activities, fashion shows, concerts and similar events. Such Culture Years have been held in France, England, Greece, Russia, South Korea, and recently in Australia and Germany (see, for example, Ji L. 2012; Wang and Ji 2012; Maags 2014).

Next to these large-scale events, the Ministry of Culture operates so called Chinese Culture Centres Abroad. The first Culture Centres were set up in Mauritius and Benin in 1988, and since 2002, Centres were opened in Cairo, Paris, Malta, Berlin, and Tokyo. By the end of 2014, a total of 20 Centres had been established. In 2015, Centres in Brussels and Singapore are planned to open, and by 2020, China plans to have 50 Culture Centres. In February 2015, the Ministry of Culture announced that the Chinese government invested about 1.33 billion yuan (US\$214 million) by the end of 2014 to build overseas China Cultural Centres and that it is expected to add another 360 million yuan for developing and running the Centres in 2015, which made it an increase of 181 percent from the previous year. These Culture Centres 'provide information services and training programmes and organize various educational and cultural activities such as lectures on China' (Han Z. 2010: 302–303) and thus do not differ too much from Confucius Institutes in terms of content offered as will be shown later on. The biggest difference between Confucius Institutes and Chinese Culture Centres concerns the ministry in charge and the organisational structure. Based on bilateral cultural agreements between China and host countries, Culture Centres are stand-alone institutions operated by China (Hartig 2009: 409) and therefore can be roughly compared with Germany's Goethe Institute or the British Council.

The Ministry of Education

Probably the most prominent player in the cultural and educational realm is the Ministry of Education, which, amongst other things, is responsible for organising and guiding international educational exchanges and cooperation; formulating policies of programmes for Chinese students studying abroad and foreign students studying in China, as well as joint educational programmes by Chinese and foreign educational institutions. It has, furthermore, the responsibility '[t]o plan, coordinate and direct the work of promoting the Chinese language in the world' (Ministry of Education, n.d.). The Ministry's Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges is, as the name suggests, primarily responsible for international educational exchanges. Next to this department and the educational offices in Chinese diplomatic missions, there are four so-called affiliated organisations in charge of international cooperation and exchanges.

The Chinese Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) describes itself as 'China's nationwide non-for-profit organization conducting international educational exchanges' in order to promote 'the advancement of education, culture, science and technology, and strengthening understanding and friendship among the peoples of all countries and regions of the world' (CEAIE online, n.d.). CEAIE runs numerous programmes, including youth forums, vocational education symposia, or university forums.

The Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) provides various 'services for international scholarly exchanges, including both Chinese students and scholars going abroad, returning from abroad and international students and scholars coming to study in China' (CSCSE online). Another affiliated

organisation is the China Scholarship Council (CSC), which was established in 1997 in order to handle the administration of scholarship programmes for both Chinese and international students. This is done

in order to develop the educational, scientific and technological, and cultural exchanges and economic and trade cooperation between China and other countries, to strengthen the friendship and understanding between Chinese people and the people of all other countries, and to promote world peace and the socialist modernization drive in China.

(CSC online, n.d.)

The fourth organisation affiliated to the Ministry of Education is the Office of Chinese Language Council International, known by its colloquial abbreviation Hanban. Hanban is governed by the Chinese Language Council International.⁵ As mentioned earlier, in China language policy had also a strong domestic notion, but after since the late 1970s, 'language promotion activities were extended to the international stage, epitomised [in] the establishment of the Hanban in 1987' (Starr 2009: 79).

The Council, and thereby Hanban, is composed of members from 12 state ministries and commissions, namely the General Office of the State Council, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Radio Film and Television, the State Press and Publications Administration, the State Council Information Office and the State Language Work Committee. The Council is chaired by Liu Yandong, described in Western media as 'China's most powerful woman' (Moore 2012).⁶ But the probably most well-known figure in the Hanban context is Xu Lin who serves, since 2004, as Director-General of Hanban and Chief Executive of the Confucius Institute Headquarters.⁷

According to its mission statement Hanban makes 'policies and development plans for promoting Chinese language internationally', supports 'Chinese language programs at educational institutions of various types and levels in other countries' and drafts 'international Chinese teaching standards and develop[s] and promote[s] Chinese language teaching materials' (Hanban.org, n.d.). To fulfil its functions, Hanban runs a number of programmes and initiatives. It provides Chinese teacher education and training, runs a volunteer Chinese teachers programme, it develops teaching materials, is in charge of various Chinese language tests and competitions, and runs a scholarship scheme. However, Hanban is mostly notable for its Confucius Institute programme that combines a number of the initiatives mentioned above. With the establishment of the Confucius Institute programme, Hanban 'shifted to a much more high profile phase' (Starr 2009: 79) and is now so closely related to Confucius Institutes, that its official name is Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters (*Hanban/Kongzi Xueyuan Zongbu*).

Notes

- 1 For a comprehensive overview on China's public diplomacy system, see d'Hooghe 2015, chapter 4.
- 2 Put simply, the success of a news agency can be measured by how many news items a news agency sells to other news organisations and how many stories are used by these other news organisations.
- 3 One such programme, the Sino-German Media Ambassador programme, provides Chinese and German journalists the opportunity to work in either a German or Chinese editorial department for three months. The purpose of this programme is to foster a better mutual understanding of the working conditions in the respective countries. In doing so the programme 'aims at winning over journalists for the task of fostering international understanding between China and Germany' (Medienbotschafter China-Deutschland, n.d.). Next to these mutual idealistic goals, one may assume another, at least implicit, reason why China engages in such a programme: by letting foreign journalists to have a look behind the scenes of Chinese journalism, China shows its willingness to cooperation and openness.
- 4 The job ad was originally posted on the CCTV website, but can still be found online, for example here: <http://ngozikaniwiro.blogspot.de/2013/01/cctv-news-recruitment-campaign-apply-now.html>.
- 5 The Chinese Language Council International was set up in 1987 by the State Council under the name National Small Leading Group for Chinese Language Teaching Overseas and was renamed in 2006 into its current name. Hanban previously also had another name, which was the China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (Han, Z 2010:302).
- 6 Liu is a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, vice-premier of the State Council, and a member of the Leading Party Members' Group of the State Council. She previously held the post of State Councilor between 2007 and 2012, and headed the United Front Work Department between 2002 and 2007. Liu is widely seen as a protégé of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. As her father was a former vice minister of agriculture, she is grouped in the informal party faction of the so-called princelings, children of former party leaders.
- 7 In this position, Xu is vice-minister-level official serving on the State Council and as a member of the 12th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. She graduated from the Chemistry Department of Fudan University, obtained her Master's degree in economics from Beijing Normal University, and received her Honorary Doctorate of Humanities from the University of Arizona. She worked at Shanxi Changzhi Bicycle Factory, Chemistry Department of Shanxi University, Higher Education Bureau of Shanxi Province and China Educational Film Studio. Later on she worked in different positions for the Ministry of Education where, as she told me, she was responsible for reducing illiteracy and to provide children with the chance to get the compulsory nine-year school education.

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6 Confucius Institutes

The star of China's public diplomacy

One of the most prominent and most controversial instruments of China's public diplomacy are the Confucius Institutes. The following chapter provides general information and highlights the most important discussions concerning these Institutes that will be the point of origin for the case studies presented in subsequent chapters.

Various Chinese scholars are enthusiastic about the Confucius Institutes and describe them optionally as the 'most unique and most successful combination of China's public diplomacy with China's traditional culture' (Ji L. 2012: 329), as the 'most eye catching initiative' of China's public diplomacy (Zhang W. 2009: 13), or simply as 'the most wonderful export good of China's culture' (Wu Y. 2012: 144). This enthusiasm is not shared by a number of non-Chinese observers; nevertheless, outside China a growing body of literature is dealing with Confucius Institutes. A considerable part of the relevant English literature provides an overview, and discusses critical issues and the Institute's connection to China's soft power (Ding and Saunders 2006; Paradise 2009; Zhe R. 2012; You Z. 2012; Park 2013; Schmidt 2013; Lo and Pan 2014). A second group of scholars understands CIs as an instrument of China's public and/or cultural diplomacy (d'Hooghe 2015; Wang and Lu, 2008; Rawnsley 2009; Hartig 2012; Pan, 2013; Wheeler, 2014). A third group of authors approaches Confucius Institutes from a higher education and language teaching perspective (Gil 2009; Starr 2009; King 2010; Zhao and Huang 2010; Yang R. 2010) and some discuss Confucius Institutes from a business perspective (Lien *et al.* 2011; Li *et al.* 2009). Fourth there is a line of scholarship that sees CIs, partially justified, earnestly critical (Hughes 2014) and describes them either as a 'propaganda project' of the Chinese leadership (Brady 2008, 2012; Niquet, 2011) or even as 'academic malware' (Sahlins 2015).

Chinese publications discuss the relation between soft power, image, Chinese language fever (*hanyure*) and Confucius Institutes (Xu D. 2006; Chen and Zheng 2007; Duan Y. 2008; Li R. 2008; Guan B. 2012), or focus on cultural components of Confucius Institutes (Nie Y. 2012a, 2012b; Shi and Zhang 2012). Others describe Confucius Institutes and Chinese language teaching for international students as a platform of China's public diplomacy (Han Z. 2011; Wu H. 2012), as a means to internationalise Chinese education (Liu W. 2007) or present case

studies of Confucius Institutes in individual countries or continents (Shen L. 2007; Zhou H. 2007; Chen R. 2008; Lei L. 2013).

Confucius Institutes: the idea, the purpose, the name

This section presents basic information about how the idea to create Confucius Institutes emerged in China, what the official purpose of Confucius Institutes is and why they are named after Confucius. The section draws on publications, materials provided by Hanban, and information obtained through interviews and conversations with various stakeholders.

The initial idea and the first Institutes

The history of the origins of the Institutes remains somewhat vague. While some outside China state that the CCP developed the plan to set up Confucius Institutes in 2003/2004 (Chey 2008: 38), various Chinese scholars note that the Chinese Ministry of Education and the Hanban started to think about the idea to set up an overseas agency to promote language teaching in 2002 (Guo F. 2007: 57; Li R. 2008: 53).

According to German sources, the initiative to establish Confucius Institutes goes back to the former Chinese Ambassador to Germany, Lu Qiutian (Geiges and Aust 2010: 100). When I asked Lu whether these reports were correct, he confirmed that it was indeed his initial idea to set up such cultural institutes and name them after Confucius (I-C5). Lu served as Chinese Ambassador in Luxembourg and Romania, and from 1997 to 2001 in Germany. Back in Beijing he was president of the already mentioned Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs from 2003 to 2006. During his diplomatic career he 'deeply understood the cultural differences between East and West' and he realised that 'the failure to know the differences always leads to unnecessary misunderstandings' (I-C5). Against this background, Lu said, he came to the conclusion that China should also establish cultural centres abroad such as Germany's Goethe Institute or the British Council. 'So I sat down with a couple of people from Leipzig University and we developed this idea' (ibid.). According to Lu they not only had the initial idea but also came up with the name Confucius, not least because the East Asian Institute of Leipzig University at this time was a strong research centre of Confucianism. After Lu returned to Beijing he 'mentioned this idea to someone in the Foreign Ministry [*sic*] and, seemingly, they picked up the idea' (ibid.).

In the words of Jiang Feng, former Councillor of Embassy in charge of education at the Chinese Embassy in Berlin, there was 'someone in the international department of the Education Ministry who said that there were numerous requests from abroad to get help to teach Chinese as a foreign language' and this was, according to Jiang, the triggering effect for the ministry to consider the idea to establish such an institute (I-G12). There is no final confirmation of the actual process as Hanban did not reply to any related questions and Zhe Ren (2012: 3) correctly observes that 'there is no way to know the kind of debates that have

been taking place among China's leaders over the creation of these institutes'. It might also be the case that people try to connect themselves with this initiative, which is apparently seen as a great success within the Chinese leadership. On the other hand, however, the idea must have emerged somehow, and taking into consideration ambassador Lu's rather senior position one cannot exclude his involvement in this project in one way or the other.

The first Confucius Institute was a pilot institute set-up in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in June 2004, and the first proper Confucius Institute was established in Seoul on 21 November 2004. A related and obvious question concerns the year of occurrence of these Institutes: why was the first CI established in 2004? I did not come across any reference or evidence in this regard in either Chinese and non-Chinese literature, and my interviewees were not able to provide valid reasons. Some linked the emergence to the revival of Confucianism in China (I-A2), while others speculated that it should be related to China's growing financial capabilities (I-A5). While both aspects are worth considering and both possibly contributed to the establishment, they do not really explain why the idea emerged in the early 2000s as both phenomena – the revival of Confucianism and China's growing financial capabilities – appeared earlier on in China's recent history.

Another, admittedly purely speculative, explanation should be provided here. When looking at the year dates – the idea emerged in 2002 and the first Institute was set up in 2004 – one may relate this initiative to the leadership change that took place in late 2002. Back then, the CCP held its 16th National Congress that was characterised by the handover of power from the third generation of party leaders, with Jiang Zemin at its core, to the fourth generation of leaders, with Hu Jintao as the core.¹ Further, keeping in mind that Hu Jintao during this time in office emphasised Confucian notions, most notably the idea of harmony (*hexie*) as exemplified in the domestic concept of creating a Harmonious Society and the idea of creating a Harmonious World, one may connect the dots and speculate on whether the creation of Confucius Institutes can be understood in this context. But as there is no evidence that supports this claim whatsoever this theory remains speculative.

The principle purposes of Confucius Institutes

Either way, it is clear that in 2004 Hanban started to set up Confucius Institutes around the world to 'promote Chinese language and culture in foreign countries' in order to satisfy the 'sharp increase in the world's demand for Chinese learning' (Hanban FAQ, n.d.). According to the General Principles of the 'Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes':

Confucius Institutes devote themselves to satisfying the demands of people from different countries and regions in the world who learn the Chinese language, to enhancing understanding of the Chinese language and culture by these peoples, to strengthening educational and cultural exchange and

cooperation between China and other countries, to deepening friendly relationships with other nations, to promoting the development of multiculturalism, and to construct a harmonious world.

(Hanban, n.d.3)

Looking at these principal purposes two aspects are noticeable: first, Confucius Institutes are presented as a reactive and responsive instrument through which China wants to offer the world the chance to learn more about China. Second, as with other cultural institutes, CIs pursue idealistic goals in relation to international understanding and cultural exchange.

The Constitution and By-Laws further outline how CIs should realise these goals, namely they shall provide the following services: Chinese language teaching; training of Chinese language instructors and providing Chinese language teaching resources; holding the HSK examination (Chinese Proficiency Test) and tests for the Certification of Chinese Language Teachers; providing information and consultative services concerning China's education, culture and so forth; conducting language and cultural exchange activities between China and other countries. Another objective of CIs is to support on-campus degree programmes and to fuel research work in Chinese studies (Niquet 2012). This is a critical development as universities 'must vigilantly guard their autonomy and academic freedom' (Chey 2008: 33) and will be analysed more closely in the following case studies.

Referring to a Hanban official, Paradise (2009) lists three main objectives of the Confucius Institutes, namely to teach Chinese, to promote cultural exchanges, and to facilitate business activities. The business dimension is also highlighted in the (early) Chinese literature. According to Li Junping (2008: 46–47), Confucius Institutes are mainly to help China to do business and to open markets and Duan Yi (2008: 51), a former Hanban staff member, explains that Confucius Institutes are – besides other things – an effective mechanism for the scientific contribution to economic globalisation. For China's economy and trade, Confucius Institutes can provide competitive advantages through language and cultural consulting. Duan mentions examples where Confucius Institutes are involved in cooperating with the business world, thus illustrating the practical value of them: The Confucius Institute in Poitiers, France, teaches French staff of the Chinese communication company ZTE Chinese and the Confucius Institute in Thailand, with its partner Southwest University, is helping the company Chongqing Motorbike to enter the Thai market (Duan Y. 2008: 51).

Next to these idealistic and practical purposes, it is at times also argued that Confucius Institutes pursue more strategic objectives, although officials and most practitioners in individual CIs would refute this argument. Without further elaborating on the issue, Jean-Pierre Cabestan (2008: 209) writes that Confucius Institutes are officially designed 'to teach the Chinese language and promote Chinese culture', but they 'are also aimed at balancing the dominant American (popular) cultural influence and improving China's image around the world.' The relation between Confucius Institutes and China's image is echoed by Chinese scholars. According to Chen Qiang and Zheng Guilan (2007: 74),

Confucius Institutes are not a passive reaction to Western cultural domination but much more ‘a pro-active expansion [...] to change China’s image’. Liu Wenya (2007: 51) argues in a similar way, stating that the establishment of Confucius Institutes is not just about the internationalisation of education, but that Confucius Institutes are a special representation of China’s soft power, which is an important contribution to presenting a good image of China.

It would, however, appear that people in charge of Confucius Institutes and the Hanban have a certain unease with this more strategic dimension as well as with the very term ‘soft power’. As outlined above, the concept has been enthusiastically taken up by the Chinese government but ‘the Hanban officially denies its intention of soft power projection’ (Yang R. 2010: 238). As Jiang Feng from the German Embassy told me: ‘Xu Lin does not like the term soft power’ (I-G12) and Xu herself emphasises that Confucius Institutes ‘are not projecting soft power, nor aim to impose Chinese values or Chinese culture on other countries’ (quoted in Yang R. 2010: 238). China, Xu continues, ‘just hopes to be truly understood by the rest of the world. CIs are designed to be an important platform to promote Chinese culture and teach Chinese language.’ According to two Chinese scholars I talked with, the reason is possibly that although the discussion is about soft power, it still is a form of *power* which may cause alarm in Western ears (I-C3). Paradise quotes a programme director at Hanban with a very similar statement: ‘I don’t like soft power. I think power is aggressive. We just do something all people like’ (Paradise 2009: 658).

This are fascinating observations that are obviously related to the issue of how China is perceived in the world, how China wants to be seen and what images it hopes to project. Certain voices within China were and are very much aware of potential reactions and potential unease in foreign countries, especially in the Western world. These voices are aware that a China that appears too boastful and self-confident may only fuel negative animosity towards China. They therefore argue the case for keeping a low profile in rhetorical terms, and distance Confucius Institutes not only from the notion of soft power but also from broader strategic and foreign policy related intentions. While this is an understandable manner, I argue that Confucius Institutes are related to China’s broader foreign policy objectives as I will outline in the following chapters.

The name issue

According to numerous Chinese sources, Chen Zhili, then State Councillor in charge of education and predecessor of Liu Yandong, in March 2004, proposed that these institutes be named after Confucius, the most prominent representative figure of Confucianism.² For Wang Ping (2006: 65), Confucius is *the* representative figure of China’s traditional culture and thus choosing Confucius as titular saint for teaching Chinese abroad is an indicator of the revival of traditional Chinese culture. While this revival is undeniable, it is not that plain and simple, because as Louie (2011: 79) points out ‘naming is never a benign process – names matter, and they matter particularly within a Confucian rubric.’³ The

choice of Confucius as the icon of Chinese culture indicates the direction that the Chinese government wants to take’.

There cannot be any doubt that Confucianism (or parts of it) and Confucius are currently in vogue again in China. This selective recourse results from the fact that the communist leadership is very well aware that the original communist guiding principles of Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thoughts, although still held in high esteem officially, no longer succeed in persuading the Chinese public. On the other hand, Western values are not an alternative to this ideational vacuum and therefore the obvious recourse was to go back into China’s millennia long history for spiritual guidance, a move that was particularly pushed under the Hu-Wen leadership in the early and mid-2000s. This reference to China’s traditional thoughts was most prominently reflected in the already mentioned propagation to build a Harmonious Society in China and a Harmonious World globally.

Coming back to the naming of the Confucius Institutes, it is safe to say that they ‘are not intended to propagate Confucianism’ (Siow 2011: 1) although, as the case studies will show, Confucius and Confucianism are topics occasionally discussed in Confucius Institutes. Although one can question both the selection of Confucius and the practice to name an institute that should promote the culture of a whole country after one figure, it was essentially ‘a branding issue: Confucius had positive associations with teaching in particular, and culture more generally, and the name offered global brand recognition’ (Starr 2009: 69). This is very much the same procedure with Germany’s Goethe Institute, Italy’s Società Dante Alighieri or Spain’s Instituto Cervantes. Taken together it is obvious that Confucius is a global household name and as Jain and Groot (2007) put it aptly: ‘A “Mao Zedong Institute” probably would not be welcomed in most countries.’

Practical considerations: structure, funding, criticism

In numerous (media) articles Confucius Institutes are simplistically put on the same level with its European counterparts, such as Alliance Française, Germany’s Goethe Institute or the British Council. This, however, is not exactly correct and it seems more precisely to say Confucius Institutes are ‘modelled loosely’ (Rawnsley 2009: 285) after its European counterparts because Confucius Institutes are normally joint ventures located within foreign universities. Certain resemblances, however, are undeniable as is a certain closeness between Confucius Institutes and Germany’s Goethe Institutes. During a discussion with Michael Kahn-Ackermann, the former regional director of the Goethe Institute in China, Xu Lin explained that before the first Confucius Institute was set up, Chinese officials were looking at foreign cultural institutions ‘and Goethe Institute in Beijing was the first institution I visited and the set-up of Confucius Institutes was mainly learned from the Goethe Institutes’ (quoted in Liu X. 2011). This Sino-German relation became even closer when Kahn-Ackermann, after his retirement from the Goethe Institute, took over a post as a senior adviser for Hanban.

Structure and set-up

While it seems rather normal to follow other national organisations who conduct cultural diplomacy, or at least to learn something by watching others, critics of CIs point out that by ‘referencing these institutions, China positions itself as just one “normalized” power amongst others’ (Niquet 2012: 83). Such scepticism results from two related reasons: first, the authoritarian nature of the Chinese political system as the initiator of these Institutes and second, the unique set-up and organisational structure of Confucius Institutes.

In structural terms, China’s approach differs considerably from those of European countries insofar that in the latter cases an operational headquarters in the home country creates stand-alone branches overseas. China, however, has created its cultural institutions abroad in a different way, that is, as a cooperative arrangement between Chinese and international partner organisations under the guidance of Hanban. It is precisely this structure that makes Confucius Institutes a unique actor in the field of public diplomacy. In the eyes of its critics, this very fact distinguishes CIs considerably and negatively from its international counterparts; I use it as a starting point that informs my case studies as it is assumed that this unique structure has implications and influences on the whole CI project, be it in terms of organisation, funding, working modes, or content provided.

According to the General Principles of the Constitution and By-Laws a Confucius Institute ‘can be established in various ways, with the flexibility to respond to the specific circumstances and requirements found in different countries’ (Hanban.org, n.d.3). This is echoed in the literature where different modes of operation for Confucius Institutes are outlined (Starr 2009; Zhe R. 2012), but apparently the ‘overwhelming majority’ (Yang R. 2010: 241) of Confucius Institutes are a partnership between the Hanban, a Chinese institution (normally but not always a university), and a foreign institution (normally but not always a university). This is also echoed in the Chinese literature. Han Zhaoying (2011: 17), for example, notes that the main form of Confucius Institutes is that of Chinese-foreign cooperation (*zhongwai hezuo*). Next to Confucius Institutes there are the so-called Confucius Classrooms. Confucius Classrooms normally act as focal points for Chinese language learning and teaching by connecting secondary schools to the Confucius Institute network. Through the Confucius Classroom, these schools can benefit from the expertise and resources of the Confucius Institute network and can establish and conduct their own Chinese language courses.

One discussion which is of relevance for this study are the questions of how and where Confucius Institutes are actually established. To better understand this discussion, it is necessary to know how Hanban officially describes the formal and regular procedure to establish a Confucius Institute. The General Principles of the Constitution and By-Laws note:

Any corporate entity outside of China capable of facilitating language instruction, conducting educational and cultural exchange activities and

meeting the requirements for application as stated in [the] Constitution and By-Laws may apply to the Confucius Institute Headquarters for the permission to establish a Confucius Institute.

(Hanban.org, n.d.3)

The requirements ‘for the permission to establish a Confucius Institute’ include, amongst others, proofs that ‘there is a demand for learning the Chinese language and culture at the applicant’s location’; that ‘the personnel, space, facilities and equipment for language and culture introduction are available’; and that ‘the capital for the establishment is in place, and that the sources of funds for operation are stable’ (Hanban.org, n.d.3). An organisation that wants to set up a Confucius Institute has to submit to Headquarters a self-introduction, a plan that explains the premises and equipment, a projection of market demand and the applicant is ‘entitled to find a Chinese partner institute’ (Hanban.org, n.d.4). According to Lien *et al.* (2011: 48) interested parties should also demonstrate ‘the willingness of the applicant to contribute (both fiscally and physically) to the establishment and the growth’ of the Institutes. They further note that a Confucius Institute ‘will officially be in place approximately 18 months after the initial project is undertaken by the host. This long gestation period would enhance CIs’ reputational and trust effects’ (Lien *et al.* 2011: 148), and therefore could be understood as a mechanism of quality control as well.

Taking all this into consideration it appears that international partners have to take the initiative to establish a Confucius Institute. Therefore it seems somewhat surprising, at first view, when Niquet (2010: 82) states that ‘Hanban decides where and when to open Confucius Institutes.’ The argument that only Hanban – and thereby the Chinese government – decides where to establish Confucius Institutes was put forward in one of the earliest analyses of Confucius Institutes by Ding and Saunders (2006: 22), who revealed that

the distribution of the Confucian Institutes shows that China in fact is favoring nations which embrace liberal-democratic norms of government [...] or, at minimum, have managed democracies with fairly dependable levels of personal freedom and respect for human rights [...]. Those countries which tend to reject pluralism, the rights of women and ethnic minorities, and the rule of law have not (as yet) been the target of China’s massive language outreach program.

Others also imply a strategic approach in the sense that China is specifically targeting certain countries to establish Confucius Institutes (Zhe R. 2010; Niquet 2012). Analysing Hanban’s official statements and the relevant literature presents two ‘extreme poles’ – only international institutions apply or only Hanban decides where to set up a CI – and the following case studies shall provide more insights into this issue.

Facilities, equipment and funding

The standard Confucius Institute agreement, according to Starr (2009), is made for a five-year initial period between the foreign partner and the Hanban, which then appoints a Chinese partner institution. These joint ventures require the Chinese side to supply the teachers, a deputy director, books and course materials. The headquarters also authorises individual Institutes to use its online courses. Visits by experienced language instructors from China, as a part of the structured programme, are also organised and financed by the headquarters (Yang R. 2010). The local partner institution provides facilities, space and administrative staff (Zhao and Huang 2010).

Hanban furthermore supports Confucius Institutes financially. Hanban's expenditure on the Confucius Institutes increased constantly according to the official annual work reports from about US\$45 million in 2006 to US\$295 million in 2014 (Hanban 2006; Xu L. 2015: 12). By way of comparison it is noted here that Germany is funding its Goethe Institutes in 2015 with about €215 million.

The amount of money each individual Institute eventually receives remains somewhat vague. Xu Lin (2010: 18) reported that the average budget for each CI in 2009 was 'over 400,000 U.S. dollars' and different reports and studies reveal somewhat differing numbers. Some report that Institutes get a 'starting budget of €850,000 and an operational budget of €200,000 per year' (Le Corre 2011), while another study reveals that several Institutes in Japan had annual budgets of over US\$200,000 (Zhe R. 2010). It is furthermore reported that Hanban provides start-up funding of US\$50,000–100,000 to European CIs (Starr 2009; Niquet 2012). It is important to note here that officially the basic rule is 'equally shared funding' (Starr 2009: 71), meaning that both international partners and the Chinese side roughly invest an equal amount of money. However, these arrangements vary across countries. In third-world countries for example 'China takes care of the finances' (Chew Chye Lay 2007: 14). Hanban officially also pays the salaries of one or two language instructors the amount of which slightly differs depending on the region, but on average it is about US\$1,500 per month (Zhe R. 2012: 7).

Criticism and scepticism at home and abroad

Criticism of Confucius Institutes comes from both international and domestic fields. Abroad, CIs are accused of being propaganda instruments of the Communist Party, and that they may interfere with, and undermine, the freedom of academic teaching. At home, the question is raised as to why China is subsidising foreign organisations, especially those in developed countries, to teach Chinese to foreigners whereas in China schools and teaching facilities, especially in rural areas, lack proper funding.

Domestic critics further claim that some Chinese universities want to transform Confucius Institutes into a 'cash cow' or a 'poster child' and use them as a mere 'opportunity to travel abroad' (Li R. 2008: 55). Public opinion on

Confucius Institute in China is also rather sceptical. They are criticised as either being a ‘platform of money laundering for the kids of the bigwigs’, a place with too little work for too many people, or just as a ‘waste of tax-payers money’ (Xu D. 2012). As one netizen puts it: ‘to tell you the truth about Confucius Institutes: just a corrupt and bureaucratic product that wastes tax-payers money’ (Wangchao zhi shang 2013). Another often heard complain is that teachers and volunteers do not know much about Chinese cultural values the Institutes claim to represent.⁴ Furthermore, Confucius Institutes are also accused of corruption. In 2010, the Ministry of Finance commissioned the building and maintenance of the Confucius Institute Online website to a Hanban subsidiary company which was registered to Wang Yongli, then deputy director-general of Hanban and deputy chief executive of the Confucius Institutes Headquarters. The contract was worth US\$5.7 million which made it, according to media reports, the ‘most expensive website in history’ and led to considerable complaints online (*National Business Daily* 2010).

Based on my interviews with Chinese officials, it becomes clear that Hanban is very well versed in the complaints; especially questions about providing money to foreign institutions while China’s rural areas basic school education is still in poor conditions. In 2011, Xu Lin told me that her current job at Hanban, which is about reducing the number of illiterate foreigners who want to learn Chinese, puts her in a very contradictory position:

The first two years I worked for Hanban I couldn’t fall asleep because I felt that I was committing a crime (*wo zai fazui*) when using money and sending teachers abroad to teach Chinese to foreigners. Therefore I can understand when ordinary Chinese offer this kind of criticism. But if the Chinese people want other people to better understand and know them, then China has to present itself in a good way. You have to explain to others who you are and how you are and to do this you have to send people abroad.

(I-C4)

In order to do this, it is necessary to invest at the beginning to be able to send people abroad to teach Chinese to foreigners. The Chinese people should keep in mind, said Xu, that if China’s culture is not understood in foreign countries, its trade with foreign countries will not work smoothly. ‘We have to make sure foreigners understand us. If foreigners don’t understand us they will fear our development and this will prevent business and trade overseas’ (I-C4).

Xu not only links the work of Confucius Institutes to China’s economic development but also to the progression of China’s culture. Because, according to Xu, if China goes abroad into 100 plus countries, then ‘the culture of these 100 plus countries can come back to China through our teachers and the information they bring back home. In this regard, Chinese culture can also be reformed and renewed (*gaige he gengxin*)’ (I-C4).

And while she understands the scepticism of ordinary Chinese, she seemingly shares with the frustration of other cultural diplomats: ‘I really get into a bad

mood when people [in charge] don't want to spent money for cultural exchange and it is really hard to convince those critics that cultural exchange is important' (I-C4). Xu also said that ever since the first Confucius Institute was set up, there have been fewer and fewer proposals from representatives of the National People's Congress and the CPPCC questioning the work of Hanban. 'Previously they were very much against us and said [spending money for such Institutes] is just nonsense (*hulai*). But nowadays they think it is a very good idea' (I-C4).

Anticipating that this may not reassure her critics, especially netizens, Xu made it clear that China will probably not always invest so much money and that, overall, Chinese investment is comparatively small and, compared with such other cultural institutions as the British Council, 'setting up Confucius Institutes is rather cheap.' She said that the Chinese people should understand Hanban's investment into Confucius Institutes as an advertising fee (*guanggao fei*) for China (I-C4).

Criticism of Confucius Institutes abroad mainly falls 'into two categories: "insiders" with practical concerns, and "outsiders" with ideological concerns' (Starr 2009: 78). The practical concerns focus on finance, academic viability, legal issues, relations with the Chinese partner universities and long-term support from their own institutions. Ideological or political concerns are mainly raised 'by those not involved in the CIs' and relate to 'the presence of a Chinese government-backed institution on Western university campuses' (Starr 2009: 78/79). In this regard some critics assume that Confucius Institutes 'have a hidden agenda beyond the stated objectives. Because most [...] operate with universities, their sponsorship of language and cultural course offerings might jeopardise the academic integrity of higher education' (Li *et al.* 2009: 474).

A report in 2009 stated that Confucius Institutes 'aim not only to improve China's global image, but also to gain influence over the academic study and teaching of Chinese and China Studies in foreign universities' (Simcox 2009: 124). In this regard it is argued that CIs are welcomed 'by many academics in the Chinese Studies field as a way to save their disciplines from being axed and as a way to strengthen their teaching by bringing in language teachers from China' (Chey 2008: 44). Those considerations, as Chey continues, 'apparently outweigh concerns about potential loss of academic freedom.'

Some critics further claim that the CCP established 'Confucius Institutes around the world to spread communist party culture in the name of Chinese culture. None of the Confucius Institutes offers the Confucian teachings, but in language courses communist propaganda is spread' (Xu P. 2008). Others argue that 'through the teaching material, Beijing propagates its ideology of patriotism for the Communist Party and China, autocratic culture, and nationalism' and thus 'Beijing Chinese language schools brainwash students overseas' (Yuan *et al.* 2009: B2). Less emotional accusations are that 'by teaching Beijing's preferred version of Chinese, and utilising reading from a Beijing perspective, rather than the traditional Chinese characters used in Taiwan or Taiwan-based points of view, the Institutes also serve to advance China's foreign policy goal of marginalising Taiwan's international influence' (Gill and Huang 2006: 18).

These accusations demonstrate the political dimension of the debate, which is also reflected in the description of Confucius Institutes as ‘cultural crusades’ (Young 2009: 8). In 2007, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service came to the view that China uses Confucius Institutes ‘in its drive for global dominance’ (The Canadian Press, 2007) and the Vancouver Sun reported in 2008 about

deeply divided views about the [local] Confucius Institute: some say it’s a goodwill gesture by Beijing to teach Chinese language and culture, while others believe it’s part of a plot by an emerging superpower to infiltrate and influence foreign citizens and their government.

(Steffenhagen 2008)

One critic claimed that informally Confucius Institutes

become a vehicle that the Chinese government uses to basically intimidate the academic institutions to run according to their guise and also as a vehicle for infiltration and spying into campuses to find out what’s going on hostile to their interests.

(quoted in Steffenhagen 2008)

While some scholars argue that ‘there appears to be little factual support’ for the academic related accusations (Li *et al.* 2009; Yang R. 2010), nevertheless for host institutions in the West ‘the discourse is often on the defensive, stressing the fact that Confucius Institutes are strictly apolitical’ (Niquet 2012: 84). Whether these points of criticism are justified or whether they reflect a fear of China more generally shall be tested through the following case studies.

One accusation that worries official China in particular is the insinuation that Confucius Institutes are seen as tools of China’s cultural invasion or cultural imperialism. What is interesting, however, is the fact that these accusations are much more prominently rejected by China than they are articulated by critics of Confucius Institutes. In 2010, an opinion piece by *Xinhua News Agency* noted that ‘[p]erhaps no one will label Goethe Institutes, Alliances Francaises or Cervantes Institutes as propaganda vehicles or tools of cultural invasion, so why all the fuss over China’s Confucius Institutes, an identical organization?’ (Liu C. 2010: 5). In the same year the *Global Times* newspaper published an opinion piece by a Western Chinese language learner which states that ‘some Westerners have expressed their worries about a new cultural imperialism coming out of China’ (Masar 2010).

Asked about criticism in foreign countries, Xu Lin made some clear statements that China has no evil intentions in this regard. Although she referred particularly to Germany, her answer can be read as a general statement towards foreign criticism, especially when coming from the West:

You Germans are really interesting. If you are afraid we could influence you, I have to say that you influenced us at first. Take for example philosophy, think of Marx, Hegel or Feuerbach. Officials in my age all studied

German philosophy. I studied chemistry, but also had to study philosophy. So you don't say anything about that you influenced us, but it is not ok if we influence you. We want to influence you so that you can better know us; we don't have any other ideas in this regard.

(I-C4)

Even though the comparison is flawed in the sense that Chinese chemists had to study certain German philosophers because of the Chinese political system, the basic argument that the West influenced China in the past cannot be denied. Xu continued by referring to the official narrative of the peaceful history of China:

You Germans like to say that China has ulterior motives in what it does or wants, but look into history: what did the Chinese do, did they attack anyone? No, Chinese did not attack anyone. Why do you always think in the wrong direction, just as Chinese people would be a vexation (*hongshui mengshou*).

Xu furthermore made it clear that Chinese culture is not an attacking culture (*bushi yige gongji de wenhua*), neither is it a possessive culture (*bushi zhanyou de wenhua*) nor is it a culture that wants to invade others (*bushi yao qinlue de wenhua*). She concluded by demanding contact on an equal footing: 'We just want you to understand who we are, what kind of people we are. Don't think we are better than you, but also don't think you are better than us.'

Confucius Institutes – so what?

Apart from this partly ideologically driven scepticism, mainly in the West, Confucius Institutes also face ample practical problems and challenges. First, because several countries want to promote their language and culture globally, there is 'intense competition' in the arena of international culture spreading (Guo Y. 2009: 181). Therefore, Confucius Institutes have, amongst other things, to adopt their working mechanisms and have to invest more money (*ibid.*). Related problems include the lack of standards to set up Institutes; the money available is often not enough for the huge number of Institutes established, and local partners have different opinions on how to manage Confucius Institutes (Guo Y. 2009: 182).

Second, there are several problems for Institutes already established. In some countries there is no proper research done before setting up an Institute, and therefore the current operation model does not work to accommodate the demand for language teaching (Guo Y. 2009). Beyond that and amongst others, practical problems concern the lack of experienced language teachers, the quality of teaching materials and communication between individual Institutes and Hanban (Chew Chye Lay 2007; Zhao and Huang 2010; Siow 2011; Zhe R. 2012). While Hanban is aware of several of these problems – which are actually multiplied because of the enormous international demand – and is trying to solve them, the

question remains as to what degree that individual Institutes are affected and how these Institutes deal with such problems. By looking at selected Confucius Institutes in Oceania and Europe this study presents answers to these practical questions.

Taking all this together – the practical issues and the partly hostile international environment – one basic but fundamental question must be asked: why do Chinese and foreign institutions joint hands to establish Confucius Institutes? It can safely be assumed that both sides are looking out for their own benefits and do not engage in the Confucius Institute project just for idealistic purposes.

Based on the literature, one can identify two broad reasons, namely money and prestige. Chey points to one commonly reported aspect that is important for understanding why international partners are interested in setting up Confucius Institutes: ‘In a climate where many Western governments have cut funds for tertiary education, and where arts faculties and language departments are particularly affected, offers of outside funding are welcome’ (Chey 2008: 43). Niquet (2012: 85) makes another worthwhile observation when she notes that for smaller universities outside China, ‘Confucius Institutes are also a way to promote and advertise their “internationalization” and try to seduce business circles and potential donors.’ In these cases, CIs ‘are presented as part of the development of networks with China’ (ibid.). Such universities ‘tend to underscore the fact that they have been “selected” by China through the Hanban, as a way to distinguish themselves and build an image of excellence in a very competitive educational community’ (ibid.). Niquet furthermore argues that this circumstance reflects precisely the image that the CCP Propaganda Department and the Hanban would like to project, namely that ‘of high level Western institutions and individuals “begging” for the opening of Confucius Institutes.’ Internationalisation also seems to be a crucial aspect for the Chinese side. Cooperation with international universities and the establishment of Confucius Institutes helps Chinese universities to improve their domestic academic relevance, because ‘international exchange’ is an index for evaluation of Chinese universities and colleges (Guo X. 2008: 32).

To sum up, it can be said that ever since the first CI was established in 2004 there have been obscurities as to what these Institutes actually are, what they do, and what their goals and purposes are. The literature that deals with Confucius Institutes so far illustrates – from my point of view – at least two weaknesses. First, there is confusion about the conceptual framework to analyse Confucius Institutes which may be termed the theoretical puzzle. As outlined, Confucius Institutes are discussed either as a means of soft power, as instruments of Chinese public diplomacy, or they are described as one of China’s propaganda or psychological warfare tools. As outlined before, this study understands Confucius Institutes as a tool of China’s public diplomacy that the Chinese government conducts to introduce the real China, to shape China’s image and to communicate specific narratives about how China sees itself and its position in the world. I therefore understand Confucius Institutes not only as an institution to introduce Chinese language and culture to interested audiences, but I also

imply broader foreign policy related objectives and there is, in my understanding, basically nothing scurrilous about it.

Second and related, one can detect a missing reality check, meaning that although the body of literature is growing there still is a considerable lack of knowledge about Confucius Institutes in the sense that people discuss *about* Confucius Institutes, but rarely engage *with* Confucius Institutes. Despite the considerable debate surrounding Confucius Institutes, it is striking that little of the literature dealing with Confucius Institutes, as Hans Hendrichske, former director of the Confucius Institutes at the University of Sydney, points out: ‘is based on actual evidence of activities of Confucius Institutes’ (quoted in Sharp 2010: 2). This changed to some extent very recently⁵ in the process of finalising this manuscript, but comprehensive comparative empirical data is still only insufficiently available.

The following case studies therefore provide comprehensive data concerning the circumstances and inner workings of Confucius Institutes in order to outline what the structural configuration of Confucius Institutes tells us about China’s conduct of public diplomacy. The premise here is that the structural configuration influences the organisation, the funding, the working modes, and the content of Confucius Institutes. It is furthermore assumed that Confucius Institutes depend heavily on the commitment of its local stakeholders, and – as mentioned earlier – they are related to broader foreign policy objectives.

Notes

- 1 Because the CCP promotes according to seniority, it is common to discern distinct generations of the CCP leadership. According to the official interpretation, the first generation, from 1949 to 1976, consisted of Mao Zedong as core, along with Zhou Enlai and others. The second generation of leadership lasted from 1976 to 1992 and the official discourse identifies Deng Xiaoping as the core of this second generation. The third generation lasted from 1992 to 2003, with Jiang Zemin as core, with other leaders including Li Peng and Zhu Rongji. The fourth generation lasted from 2003 to 2012, including Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao, and Li Changchun. Currently the fifth generation of leaders is in office with Xi Jinping as the paramount leader.
- 2 When asked about the possible role of Chen Zhili in the name giving, one of my interviewees was somewhat reserved. Without having further evidence she stated it seems rather unlikely that Chen Zhili of all people should have had the idea. As a member of the so-called Shanghai faction or Shanghai clique (*Shanghai bang*) Chen was a close confidante of Jiang Zemin and my interviewee argued that it seemed unlikely that a close ally of Jiang Zemin would ‘defect’ in the sense of officially agreeing with Hu Jintao’s course to highlight Confucian notions by proposing such a name (I-A5). Although this is again purely speculative, one could of course turn the whole argument upside down and portray it as a way to politically survive the transfer of power.
- 3 In the Analects 13.3 Confucius explains that the first thing to do in order to rule a state is to rectify names or correct terms (*zhengming*). Because, ‘if names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things’ (*yan bu shu*) with the result that ‘affairs will not be accomplished’ (*shi bu cheng*), which in turn results in that ‘rites and music will not flourish’ (*liyue buxing*) which eventually results in the situation that ‘punishments and rewards will not be appropriate’ (*xingfa buzhong*) (for a complete translation see, for example, Legge 1971). Taken together, things should be handled in accordance with the

implication attached to them by names as every name contains certain implications which constitute the essence of that class of things to which this names applies.

- 4 In 2012, the website TeaLeafNation summarised some online voices: www.tealeafnation.com/2012/05/chinese-netizens-to-export-culture-we-first-need-stronger-values/.
- 5 Recent articles include Ngamsang and Walsh 2013; Park 2013; Leung and du Cros 2014; Wheeler 2014; Hsiao and Yang 2014; Nguyen 2014.

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7 Confucius Institutes in Australia

The following chapter provides the first case study by analysing Confucius Institutes in Australia. It starts with an outline of Australian-Chinese relations and illustrates how Confucius Institutes are perceived in Australia. The main part of this chapter deals with the inner workings of Australian Confucius Institutes. After looking at the origination process, I outline how CIs are structured and organised in Australia, and what both Australian and Chinese partners are contributing to these Institutes. The following section investigates what actually is happening at Confucius Institutes. In this section, I introduce the intended audiences and analyse the content provided. Related to the question of what is happening at CIs is the question of what it *not* happening there and how people in charge of CIs deal with these issues. The chapter concludes with a discussion of practical issues and problems of Confucius Institutes.

To better understand the circumstances in which Confucius Institutes developed and are working in Australia, the following section gives a brief summary of the bilateral relations between Australia and China. The first Chinese Consul-General to Australia arrived in Melbourne in 1909, but it was not until 1921 that Australia established a representation in China through a trade commissioner, an effort that was disbanded the following year. Australia's first diplomatic mission in China opened in 1941, but closed again after the Communist victory over the Nationalist Kuomintang and the subsequent establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Cold War fears of Communism characterised Australia's relations with China over the next two decades, with Australia refusing to recognise either the Communist government of the PRC in Beijing or the Nationalists in the Republic of China (Taiwan). In 1966, a diplomatic mission was established in Taipei but was closed down seven years later when Australia established diplomatic relations with the PRC on 21 December 1972.

The current relations between the two countries are characterised by close links in various areas and a growing interdependence. In March 2010, the then Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith, admitted that 'it is hard to think of a single international issue of importance to Australia where China is not a key player on the world stage' (Smith 2010). And in late-2010 the then Chinese Vice-Premier, Li Keqiang, said China and Australia 'hold the same or

similar stances on many major international and regional affairs, and share broad common interests in maintaining regional stability and promoting common development' (Xinhua 2010).

Within this setting, trade and investment are seen as the most important components of the present relationship between Australia and China and analysts argue that 'China is more likely to determine Australia's prosperity in the 21st century than any other country' (Jakobson 2012: 4). The economic dimension of this relationship is indeed striking. In late 2007 China overtook Japan to become Australia's largest trading partner, and in 2009 became Australia's largest export market. Two-way trade was less than AUS\$100 million 40 years ago. Now it is more than AUS\$100 *billion* (Australian Embassy in China 2012). Australia is China's seventh largest trading partner and China is now by far Australia's largest trade partner, accounting for nearly one fifth of goods traded. About 60 per cent of all Australia's exports to China are iron ore, and 'Australia's wealth now stems largely from Asia's demand for Australia's natural resources' (Liew 2012: 542).

This enormous economic development and interdependence has led some observers to conclude that the rise of China 'poses a challenge of historic significance for Australia, matched only by the shift from Britain to the United States as Australia's major security partner following World War II' (Reilly and Yuan 2012: 20). However, as Linda Jakobson (2012: 1) argues, 'Australia's political relationship with China is far less developed than its economic relationship.' She also notes that Australia 'risks being viewed by China's leaders merely as a provider of resources and – since the decision to base US Marines in Darwin for parts of the year – a junior partner of the United States' (ibid.).

The Australian government's decision in late 2011 to allow the United States to station troops in Australia were strongly criticised and viewed with suspicion by China and official voices in Beijing were questioning why Australia would want to alienate its largest trading partner (Packham 2011). Other such resentments – from the Chinese point of view – included the release of the Australian Defence White Paper in May 2009, which strained the relationship with its assertion that China's rise poses a security threat. Bilateral relations were also temporarily strained because of the Rio Tinto espionage case¹ and the visit of Uyghur businesswoman and political activist Rebiya Kadeer to the Melbourne International Film Festival in 2009.² Chinese government representatives 'regarded this as an unfriendly act, assuming that the Australian government had the right to ban material that was offensive to China and other friendly countries' (Chey 2010: 16).

Next to these political quarrels, two different aspects are of special interest for this study. First, Chinese migrants have established themselves as a significant minority group in Australian society. In 2005–2006, China (not including Hong Kong or Macao) was the third major source of permanent migrants to Australia behind the United Kingdom and New Zealand and the Australian Chinese community plays 'an [increasingly] important role in Australia's social, political and economic life, contributing to Australia's multicultural heritage' (CIW-CICIR Joint Report 2012: 24). Second, it is worth noting that although China's

economic development ‘has directly contributed to Australia’s prosperity [...] many Australians feel unease with China’s rising nationalism and assertiveness in regional affairs, tight political controls and state-driven investments’ (Reilly and Yuan 2012: 2). The 2010 Lowy Poll illustrated that Australians were increasingly conscious of China’s rise and had started to grapple with its implications. The poll noted that China has loomed so large ‘that Australians have developed a somewhat exaggerated view of its global weight’ (Shearer 2010: 1). Australians are positive about growing trade with China, but are more reserved towards investment by Chinese state-owned entities due to concerns about China’s authoritarian political system and possible strategic motives (Shearer 2010: 1). In 2010, Australians were becoming more concerned about the geopolitical implications of China’s rise, and almost half of all Australians thought ‘our major trading partner may attack us within the next two decades’ (Shearer 2010: 1). This rather sceptical perception continued in the 2012 Lowy Poll, which highlighted a lack of trust amongst Australians on whether China’s intentions were entirely benign.

Confucius Institutes in Australia – overview

There are currently 13 Confucius Institutes and about 35 Confucius Classrooms in Australia (see list on page 121).³

A closer look at this list provides initial insights into Australian Confucius Institutes. First of all it becomes clear that the general assumption about how Confucius Institutes are mainly, but not exclusively, established applies very much to the Australian case, as 12 out of 13 Australian Confucius Institutes are established through Australian universities and only one CI is operated by another public body in the educational field. The same can be noted for the Chinese partners involved, as there are 11 universities involved in 13 Australian CIs. Another general assumption is confirmed by the Australian case, namely that one Chinese institution is involved in more than one Confucius Institute overseas, as the example of the Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education illustrates, being involved in both the Confucius Institute at the Queensland University of Technology and the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities Confucius Institute. Much more manifest evidence in this regard is provided by the case of Nanjing University. Nanjing University, one of China’s oldest and most prestigious universities, is not only the partner of the Confucius Institute at the University of Melbourne, but it is also involved in the Confucius Institutes at the University of Sheffield (UK), the University of Waterloo (Canada), Artois University (France), Catholic University Santiago (Chile), University of Freiburg (Germany) and the Confucius Institute in Atlanta (USA).⁴

Another important aspect is the fact that out of the 12 Australian universities hosting a CI, six belong to the so-called Group of Eight. This is a coalition of Australia’s leading tertiary institutions, sometimes described as Australia’s ‘own little Ivy League’ (Healy 2010), which shows that high ranking international universities are more and more eager to engage with Hanban. The Group of

Table 7.1 Confucius Institutes in Australia

<i>Australian partner</i>	<i>Chinese partner</i>	<i>Chronological placement</i>
CI at the University of Western Australia in Perth	Zhejiang University in Hangzhou	Signed on 15 March 2005; officially unveiled 20 May 2005
CI at the University of Melbourne	Nanjing University	Signed on 6 July 2005; launch of the first public education programmes in March 2007
CI at the University of Adelaide	Shandong University in Jinan	Signed on 10 November 2006; officially launched in March 2007
CI at the University of Queensland in Brisbane	Tianjin University	Signed on 9 August 2007; official opening 19 November 2010
CI at the University of Sydney	Fudan University in Shanghai	Signed on 19 October 2007, launched on 17 June 2008
CI at the University of New South Wales in Sydney	Shanghai Jiaotong University	Signed on 11 December 2007; established in 2009
CI at Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane	Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education in Nanjing ¹	Signed on 16 June 2008; officially opened on 15 June 2009
Chinese Medicine Confucius Institute at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine	Signed on 3 October 2008; officially opened by Xi Jinping on 20 June 2010
CI at the University of Newcastle	Central China Normal University in Wuhan	Signed on 16 October 2008; officially opened on 11 May 2011
CI at La Trobe University in Melbourne	Chongqing University	Established in November 2011
New South Wales Department of Education and Communities Confucius Institute at Ryde	Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education in Nanjing	Officially launched 28 November 2011
Charles Darwin University Confucius Institute	Anhui Normal University in Wuhu and Hainan University in Haikou	Signed on 6 April 2011; officially opened 31 July 2012
Tourism Confucius Institute at Griffith University in Brisbane	China University of Mining and Technology in Xuzhou	Unveiling ceremony on 9 April 2011; officially opened 16 November 2012

Note

1 A group of five universities in the Jiangsu Province have been selected by the Department of Education to be associated with the Confucius Institute at QUT, namely: Yangzhou University, Nantong University, Nanjing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Nanjing Art University and Xuzhou Normal University (CICRM 2009: 50).

Eight consists of the University of Adelaide, the University Sydney, the University of Queensland, the University of Melbourne, the University of New South Wales, the University of Western Australia, Monash University and the Australian National University (ANU). Out of this group, only Monash and ANU do not host a Confucius Institute, and this leads to the question why, especially as both universities have much engagement with China. Monash University, for example, ‘secured the first licence in a decade granted to a foreign university to operate a campus in China’ (Trounson, 2012). According to Bruce Jacobs, Professor of Asian Languages and Studies at Monash, his university was approached by Hanban in about 2005, but the university just did not answer. Jacobs, who himself was on leave at this time, says that this first contact was also the last contact in this regard: ‘They did not push us and we did not push them. That’s the whole story’ (I-A9). The only cautious public reaction from ANU concerning Confucius Institutes was a statement by John Minford, a Professor of Chinese at ANU’s School of Culture, History and Language, who told Allan Sharp (2010: 4) that cultural institutes such as the British Council or the Goethe Institute had well-established track records as academic partners with universities, individuals and cultural groups. Minford also said: ‘We note the more recent Confucius Institute initiative and look forward to seeing how it evolves’.⁵

Since Australia’s first Confucius Institute was founded at the University of Western Australia in Perth in 2005, its proponents have acknowledged that ‘Confucius Institutes are playing an increasingly prominent role in promoting Chinese language and culture and exchange’ (CIW-CICIR Joint Report 2012: 26). However, as in many other countries, Confucius Institutes and school-based Confucius Classrooms in Australia are not without critics and some even argue that ‘[c]oncerted opposition to the program has [...] limited their growth’ (Penny 2012: 151).

As outlined before, and as it is the case in other countries, criticism mainly concerns the fact that Confucius Institutes are connected to the Chinese government and the Communist Party, as well as to local universities, and that this relation may jeopardise academic freedom. One of the early critical voices in Australia was former diplomat Jocelyn Chey. In 2007, when the University of Sydney decided to establish a CI, she remarked that if ‘there were to be a presence on campus, with a Chinese official link, it would be more difficult for academics to maintain their freedom and independence’ (quoted in Lane 2007). According to Penny, the bigger issue, however, is the perception of Confucius Institutes as a tool of soft power. It is worth quoting him at length to better understand his point:

Criticisms have focused on the possible threat to academic freedom [Confucius Institutes] represent by being located in universities: topics sensitive to the Chinese government such as Tibet, Taiwan or Falun Gong cannot be discussed in the fearless way we expect to be the norm in academic institutions. *More problematic*, Confucius Institutes are perceived as a tool of

China's soft power diplomacy. 'Soft power' refers to a state or other international actor attaining their objectives through such means as culture, education or reputation rather than through military or coercive measures.

(Penny 2012: 151–152, emphasis added)

This is a puzzling line of argument, which literally means that banning certain topics is not as problematic as the fact that CIs are wielding China's soft power. It is not entirely clear why the latter should be more problematic than the former, and from my point of view the more questionable issue is the banning, but at least this argument illustrates why Hanban officials are adamant about separating Confucius Institutes from the soft power debate.

Another point of criticism concerns the version of the Chinese language that the Confucius Institutes teach. Originally discussed by Ding and Saunders in 2006, the issue has again been injected into the debate, especially in Australia (Churchman 2011; Lane 2011; Penny 2012). For critics the fact that CIs conduct Chinese language instructions in Mandarin, using Standard Chinese Characters, 'is the only explicit evidence for the exclusion of certain subjects from the teaching syllabus of Confucius Institutes' (Churchman 2011). Such a curriculum, the argument goes, 'excludes the very many other forms of Chinese currently spoken in the Sinophone world (Cantonese, Shanghainese, Hokkien, etc.) as well as the traditional writing system' (Penny 2012: 152), which eventually leads to 'semi-literacy in Chinese' (Churchman 2011) and therefore 'students trained exclusively in [Confucius Institutes] language programs would be unlikely to be able to read *The Analects*' (Penny 2012: 152).⁶

Another apprehension concerns funding from Beijing which could be welcomed by universities short of money but would further raise the question of academic freedom and integrity. This issue was discussed in Australia in late 2011 when the University of Newcastle decided to downgrade its Chinese studies major. The initial plan was that the major should 'be replaced with a minor in Chinese offered by the Confucius Institute' (Lane 2011). Although the plan was officially abandoned, it was reported in early 2012 that Chinese studies had been transferred to the Confucius Institute (Lane 2012).⁷ A similar discussion came up in 2011 in the state of New South Wales when plans were announced to establish Confucius Classrooms at schools in New South Wales and a petition in order to remove them from schools was signed by more than 10,000 people.

The origination process of Confucius Institutes in Australia

According to the Hanban guidelines outlined earlier, the initial idea has to originate from the international entity that wants to establish such an Institute. Although several of my interview partners were not personally involved in the actual negotiations, as these normally happen between high ranking university officials, nevertheless their statements provide a good insight into the origination procedure and illustrate that in reality the guidelines are implemented more flexibly.

Actually, only two of my interviewees from early established CIs confirmed that the Australian universities made the first move to establish a Confucius Institute: 'I think it was an initiative of our central administration, rather than coming out of the faculties, as they saw it as an opportunity to ally themselves with China' (I-A3). The other statement sounds very similar and also highlights the role of high ranking university officials:

The idea probably emerged here within our university. Back then our Vice Chancellor was very interested and he was pushing this quite a lot. He had contacts with China before and it lied at his heart to bring a CI to our university.

(I-A6)

Another director notes that both the Australian university and the Chinese side developed the idea to set up a CI. The Australian university was very interested in working with the Chinese government, but was also encouraged by the Chinese side to establish a CI (I-A8).

Interestingly enough, a number of Australian universities were approached from the Chinese side to establish a Confucius Institute (I-A2; I-A4; I-A7). One of the directors could not exactly recall which Chinese entity came up with the idea, but he was very clear that it was not the Australian institution (I-A2). Another Australian university was approached by the local Chinese consulate to establish a Confucius Institute (I-A7).

Initially the university thought 'well maybe not really if it's only language teaching' as the university here has one of the oldest Chinese language institutes in Australia. But then the university asked [a consulting firm] if there was a niche for the Confucius Institute [here] and they came up with some aspects of corporate training and focusing on business. And they thought this is worthwhile and this is what we do.

(I-A7)

According to another interviewee it was Hanban itself spreading the information about the Confucius Institute project:

From my understanding it was very much the Ministry of Education, or more precisely Hanban, that when they were developing this idea in the early/mid 2000s they then promoted the fact that they start to establish Confucius Institutes around the world.

(I-A5)

As we will see later, this has changed over time and nowadays Hanban is much more cautious as it is overwhelmed with applications.

Another issue that came up in a number of interviews was the initial question of how many Institutes should be established in one country or in one city.

Several responses indicate that in the early days of Confucius Institutes in Australia, the universities were of the opinion, or had the impression, or were given the impression, that there would only be one Institute in the whole of Australia, or at least in each of the respective states. But after the University of Western Australia and the University of Melbourne established CIs at roughly the same time, as one interviewee puts it, ‘this set a precedent for the growth in other places [...] and so it almost became a competition between the universities and the states’ (I-A5). A director from one of the early Institutes confirms this initial understanding:

the university assumed that we would be the only one on the east coast and that we could develop our courses nationally. And this made a big difference for the university [to agree to establish a CI]. But then they popped up everywhere without any consultation with the university.

(I-A7)

Although it sounds somewhat odd to assume that Hanban would ask international partners whether it could open other Confucius Institutes, those statements touch on a crucial issue, namely the question of how to position Confucius Institutes in the market, especially when there are more than one in a city. In this regard it is worth noting here that another interviewee, whose CI is the only one in that city, admits ‘we certainly don’t want to have another CI here; that would very much jeopardise our existence and would make it very, very difficult’ to run the Confucius Institute (I-A3).

Related to the question of which side takes the initiative to establish a Confucius Institute is the question of which institution actually becomes the partner institution in China. Interview data indicates that most of the Confucius Institutes in Australia were developed based on previous relationships between the two sides. Either both universities or individual faculties had long standing relations before, based on exchange or research corporations (I-A3; I-A4; I-A5; I-A6), or the cities or regions had governmental or sister relations and therefore the respective universities were the obvious partner (I-A3; I-A7). Although in some cases the choice of the Chinese partner was obvious because of those already existing links, nevertheless interviewees also reported that either the local consulate suggested a Chinese university to overseas institutions (I-A4) or Hanban recommended or nominated corresponding partners (I-A5; I-A8). It is not hard to seek that this may be the case with international universities that do not yet have relations with China, and one may speculate whether those ‘arranged marriages’ will eventually lead to a smooth operation of Confucius Institutes.

Structure, equipment and funding of Australian Confucius Institutes

Referring to Don Starr and his three-part division of CI models, the case study illustrates that Confucius Institutes in Australia are established as cooperation

between an Australian entity and a Chinese counterpart. According to the relevant literature in such a setting the Chinese side normally has to offer teaching materials; equipment for the library, such as books or audio-visual material; human resources (a Chinese director and language teachers); and parts of the funding for the Confucius Institutes. The international partner organisation provides facilities and local staff, and also contributes to the funding. Although this is basically the arrangement in Australia, there are differences from Institute to Institute, which leads Allan Sharp (2010: 1) to conclude that ‘there is nothing “standardised” about [Confucius Institutes in Australia].’ The following section looks at the defining structural and organisational aspects which in part indeed differ from Institute to Institute and thereby clarify a somewhat flexible structure of Confucius Institutes. Nonetheless, in my understanding, it would go too far to argue that there is *nothing* standardised about Confucius Institutes.

China contributes to the funding of Confucius Institutes in two different ways. First, a newly established CI will receive ‘aid to its initial operation in the form of a set amount of funds’ (Hanban.org, n.d.). Second, Hanban contributes to the annual project budget according to the rule that ‘funds for annual projects shall be raised by individual Confucius Institutes and the Chinese Parties together in a ratio of approximately 1:1 commitment in general’. This was confirmed by all of my interviewees, who describe the basic rule to get money from Hanban as ‘the expenditure is divided 50:50, one-half coming from China via Hanban, the other half from the host university’ (I-A6). This actually means that if a Confucius Institute wants to put on an exhibition that in total costs US\$10,000, the international partner should provide US\$5,000, and then Hanban would also provide the same amount of money.

Regarding the start-up funding, one interviewee confirmed that his Institute received about US\$100,000 in the initial phase, without specifying how long this initial phase was (I-A3). Without saying how much money it actually was, another interviewee explained that her Institute got a set amount for the first three years ‘no matter what our projects were’ (I-A7). Another director indicated that there was no substantial aid to getting the Institute running (I-A5) and yet another interviewee noted that ‘for something like this [starting a Confucius Institute], you don’t need huge start-up funding; it’s not that you have to build a factory, the university just has to have a place and that’s it’ (I-A6).

Furthermore, the Confucius Institute Headquarters (n.d.) commits itself to ‘provide Confucius Institutes around the world with the support and services of teaching resources’ and to ‘select and dispatch Chinese directors and teaching staff to Confucius Institutes, to offer training programs for the management teams and teachers of Confucius Institutes’. While the interviewees in Australia confirmed that their Institutes received teaching materials and resources from Hanban (I-A2; I-A3; I-A4; I-A7), asked after the dispatch of Chinese staff, the answers varied considerably. Some Institutes did not have a director or teachers sent from China and at Institutes with Chinese directors, they were normally in charge of the communication with Hanban and the Chinese partner university. However, it was also noted that some of the dispatched Chinese directors did not

teach Chinese (which was expected by the international partners) but were more concerned in regulating their academic objectives during their stint abroad (I-A4; I-A5).

At the time of the interviews, three Confucius Institutes did not have a Chinese director (I-A2; I-A6; I-A7). One Institute had two Chinese associate directors in the past and it was 'not sure when the next one will arrive' (I-A7). Another Institute was also waiting for a Chinese director, but did not have one before (I-A2). The third director without a Chinese counterpart stated that there were discussions about 'whether every Institute should have a Chinese director' (I-A6) and he indicated that the debate about having a Chinese director at all was rather new. He also indicated that he was not unhappy about *not* having a Chinese co-director.

From my point of view [having a Chinese director] is somewhat problematic. In the ideal case both Chinese and Australian director work together very well and are autonomous in their work, this would be the ideal world. But I don't want to have someone here who possibly is a party member and might have a different plan or agenda. For me this is a crucial point to keep in view in the future.

(I-A6)

At the time of my interviews, there were also two Confucius Institutes in Australia without any Chinese teachers sent from China (I-A2; I-A7), which led one interviewee to conclude that this 'Institute is completely run by [our university] staff' (I-A2).

The Australian side, in turn, provides facilities and local staff, and normally contributes at least half of the project funding (I-A2–I-A7). In relation to the facilities of Confucius Institutes, although it is correct that international partners do not have to build a factory in order to run a Confucius Institute as one interviewee indicated, facilities are a cost factor and is reflected in the university budget, which becomes clear when analysing the Reference Materials in which international partners are asked to outline what they contribute to the CI.

The University of Western Australia (UWA), for example, provides the CI in Perth with around '160 square metres of dedicated office space' and 'one 100 square metre classroom that is specially designated for the CI to use.' Furthermore, the university 'has fully equipped the CI at UWA with office equipment. The initial office set-up (including photocopier, fax machine, computers, and so on) were provided by the University in addition to the core funding' (CICRM 2009: 108). The same arrangement is in place at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Brisbane, which provides its Confucius Institute with specifically created offices measuring 250 square metres. 'QUT does not charge any rental for these spaces and so this is part of the contribution of the university to the operating of the Confucius Institute at QUT' (CICRM 2009: 51). Roughly the same arrangements can be found at the University of Queensland in Brisbane and the RMIT University in Melbourne, both of which provide their respective

Confucius Institutes with venues of about 150 square metres (CICRM 2009: 33, 36). The CI in Adelaide provides the most details and informs Hanban not only that the total space directly dedicated to the Confucius Institute is 105 square metres, but also that this item is worth of AU\$42,000 in space rental (CICRM 2009: 13).

Taken together, two aspects are of interest here: first, this is a considerable contribution of international partners when the often mentioned US\$10,000 as start-up funding is taken as a reference. Second, it is revealing to see how detailed international partners report to Hanban about their contribution just as they want to remind Hanban of their contribution to the whole project.

Another substantial contribution from Australian universities concerns the salary of the local staff at their CI (I-A2–I-A7). In 2009, for example, the University of Adelaide's direct financial input for the Institute's director, deputy director and executive officer was AU\$206,345 (CICRM 2009: 13). At the QUT Confucius Institute, the salaries of the director, business coordinator and administrative support officer are all funded by the university and was estimated to be AU\$312,064 (CICRM 2009: 51). In this regard it is not entirely clear how the salary of local directors are calculated when they already work at the university in an academic position. It is assumed that they do not get any money for their CI job, but are paid by the university for their academic job as professor or lecturer. One of the interviewees was very clear about it when he said: 'My salary and the salary of our business manager is a hundred per cent paid by [our university]' (I-A2). The situation is somewhat different where universities hire external people to be the director of the CI, who have to be paid by the university and in this regard the university has to invest more. Another interviewee explained that some of the staffing cost is paid through the revenues the Institute generates with its programmes (I-A3).

According to the Reference Materials from 2009 the overall direct financial input from the University of Adelaide to its Confucius Institutes was AU\$275,345 (CICRM 2009: 13), the University of Queensland overall invested AU\$313,800 in 2009 and estimated AU\$284,100 for 2010 (CICRM 2009: 36), while the University of Melbourne provided AU\$100,000 in cash and AU\$100,000 of in-kind support, accounting for 27 per cent of the entire funding (CICRM 2009: 83).⁸ This money, however, is necessary just to keep the Institutes running; as outlined above, the Australian partners have to contribute about half of the annual project budget for the Institute's programmes. Figures in this regard ranged from about US\$100,000 (I-A3; I-A7) up to AU\$240,000 (I-A5). The most likely explanation for this difference is that after contributing the defined start-up funding, the Institutes apply for project money, and some might apply for more than others. In this context it was revealing when one interviewee pointed out that 2010 was the first time Hanban reduced funding, and it was not entirely sure whether funding policy might change in the future, especially due to the ever growing number of new institutes (I-A4).

Taken together it becomes clear that CIs are not a cash cow for international partners, as they have to invest substantial amounts in them. One Australian

director even said that the major source of funding was the Australian host university: 'We apply for money from Hanban for additional programs, but the major source of funding is coming from [our university]' (I-A2). Beyond funding from the partner organisations and revenues from courses, Institutes also have external sponsors. In the early phase of its existence one Australian Institute received money not only from the hosting university and Hanban, but also from the regional state government (I-A7). The same interviewee revealed that her Institute got about AU\$250,000 over the year in-kind support from corporations, either in the form of providing a venue or catering for an event or from human resources management and admin support (I-A7).

What is happening at Australian Confucius Institutes?

While the previous section has outlined how Confucius Institutes are equipped and funded, the following paragraphs explain and analyse what is actually happening at Australian CIs by focusing on both the target audience and the content provided. It is obvious that target audience and content are closely related as the content is determined by the audience and, in turn, the audience also informs the content. A closer look at content provided is also important in regard to the broader question of which image of China the Confucius Institutes want to constitute.

In order to get a better understanding of what Confucius Institutes actually do, it is worth asking who they are actually aimed at. The broad and general tasks of Confucius Institute put forward by Hanban, namely to 'promote Chinese language and culture in foreign countries' in order to satisfy the 'sharp increase in the world's demand for Chinese learning' (Hanban FAQ, n.d.), does not indicate any specific target audience or group. In practical terms, at least three broad groups for Confucius Institutes can be identified in Australia although not all Institutes under review necessarily work with all three groups equally.

First of all, there are students and staff of host universities (I-A2; I-A3; I-A4; I-A5). As one director put it 'we have 50,000 students and staff on campus, I don't need to look outside the gates' (I-A5). However, she also admitted that in the big cities like Melbourne and Sydney there were so many China related offerings, especially in terms of language teaching, 'so why should people come to us?' (I-A5). The second target group is business people and local companies who already do or want to do business with China (I-A2; I-A3; I-A7), and a third group can be described as the interested public and the broader community (I-A3; I-A6).

In relation to the broader public, two aspects became apparent through the interviews. First, those Institutes who have the broader community as a recognisable part of their target audience do not want to limit their outreach to this group and want to engage more with its university, and academia more generally (I-A3; I-A6). On the one hand, this tendency reflects partly what Jocelyn Chey stated in 2008, namely that CIs originally focused 'on community outreach' but 'the Confucius Institute program is now moving into a new phase of involvement in academic teaching and research' (Chey 2008: 33), an assumption

I will return to in the concluding discussion. On the other hand, one gets the impression that some CIs do not want to be seen as an Institute only working with the general public, as this may be seen as a limitation on fully-fledged cultural exchange work. Concerning the general public, it is striking that in the bigger cities like Melbourne or Sydney, people of Chinese descent have become part of the audience that comes to Confucius Institutes either to learn about their ancestors' culture and heritage or to learn the Chinese language because it is no longer used in their families (I-A4; I-A5). As one interviewee points out:

I think it was not the intention of the Hanban when it started to go out to promote Chinese language and culture that [people with Chinese background] would be their target audience. But the demographic reality is that they are by far the most dominant learners of Chinese in Australia.

(I-A5)

Areas of activities and content provided by Confucius Institutes

Based on the data gathered through interviews and through the evaluation of annual working reports of individual Confucius Institutes, it can be said that the main activities of Confucius Institutes include language-related activities, culture-related activities and business-related activities.

Language-related activities refer to actual Chinese language teaching conducted by Confucius Institutes. Here, the CIs provide a range of courses ranging from beginners classes to more advanced courses. A number of language courses are particularly designed for business people, either in the sense of topics and themes or for customised courses. However, although Hanban emphasises the language teaching aspect, this is not a core business for all CIs (I-A3; I-A5). As one interviewee explains

We don't teach much Chinese at all because basically within the university all the opportunities to teach Chinese were already taken before the CI was established. So we are very much aware that we step not on other peoples toe in terms of going in and trying to do what's already been done.

(I-A3)

Therefore, next to teaching Chinese to students itself, Confucius Institutes increasingly promote language teaching by either training local Chinese teachers or by developing teaching materials. According to the 2011 Reference Materials both the Confucius Institutes at the University of Adelaide and at Queensland University of Technology were focusing on both aspects (CICRM 2011: 14, 46, 47) and the CI at the University of Melbourne also designed 'specific training materials for corporate training and secondary school Chinese learners' (CICRM 2011: 79). Furthermore, a Chinese Teacher Training Centre was established in Melbourne with seed funding from Hanban, and was founded on research from the Confucius Institute (CICRM 2011: 78).

Cultural-related activities refer to a wide range of cultural activities, such as exhibitions, movie screenings and concerts, courses for Chinese painting, tea ceremony or calligraphy. A typical example of such a cultural activity would be the celebration of Chinese New Year or Mid-Autumn (CICRM 2011: 11, 56, 77, 107). Another typical, almost classic, example of cultural activities is Tai Ji classes. In 2011, the CI at RMIT in Melbourne offered Tai Ji classes to all university staff and students, gaining 100 learners (CICRM 2011: 30); Tai Ji for university staff also happened at QUT (CICRM 2011: 45); and in Perth the CI organised a Tai Ji training short course to people in the neighbourhood community (CICRM 2011: 107). Since the Confucius Institute at the University of Sydney started to offer its Tai Ji course in 2009, the programme has become one of the most popular CI activities there. In 2011, 64 students enrolled in the Tai Ji courses. The CI also hosted a Tai Ji workshop in which over 100 people participated. The classes were composed mostly of students and staff from the University, who were joined by members of the general public (CICRM 2011: 123).

Another important part of most Confucius Institutes programmes, subsumed under cultural-related activities, are public lectures or seminars dealing with a variety of topics. Topics discussed at Australian Confucius Institutes in 2011 included, amongst others, 'China's Rise and the Power Shift in Asia', 'China, Australia and Food' or 'The Rise of Confucianism' in Adelaide (CICRM 2011: 11, 12, 20); 'An intercultural debate on parenting and education' at the University of Queensland in Brisbane (CICRM 2011: 36); 'Environmental Virtue Ethics: Western and Chinese Perspectives' at La Trobe University in Melbourne (CICRM 2011: 58); a discussion about the China Model and talks with Chinese film director Chen Kaige⁹ or Chinese Novelist Yan Lianke¹⁰ at the Confucius Institute at the University of Sydney (CICRM 2011: 124, 128).

The Confucius controversies: sensitive topics, accusations of propaganda and possible self-censorship

Although various lectures in Confucius Institutes deal with a considerably wide range of topics one of the most heated debates, if not the single most contested controversy, concerns the question of what Confucius Institutes can do and what they cannot do; whether they intervene in academic teaching and spread communist ideology through their language courses; or whether their dispatched staff from China are working for the Chinese intelligence service.

Before having a closer look at how Confucius Institutes in Australia adhere to such discussions and how they handle it, it is helpful once again to refer to the Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes. In its General Principles it is noted that Confucius Institutes 'shall not involve or participate in any activities that are not consistent with the missions of Confucius Institutes', they furthermore 'shall abide by the laws and regulations of the countries in which they are located, respect local cultural and educational traditions and social customs, and they shall not contravene concerning the laws and regulations of China'.

The mingling of local cultural traditions with laws and regulations of China, in my understanding, hints at a conflict of interest. For example, if the media's right to speak out and be critical about political conditions at home and abroad or the enforcement of freedom of expression, which also includes unpleasant expression, are understood as local cultural tradition in Western countries, this can lead to difficult situations that eventually have to be handled by Confucius Institute staff.

People in charge of Confucius Institutes in Australia are fully aware of both the discourse surrounding CIs as well as the fact that not all points raised by critics are just made up out of thin air. Asked about Jocelyn Chey's warning that Confucius Institutes should not be integrated into the regular academic system, one interviewee recalls that although the debate back then sounded somewhat polemic, it was eventually a very conventional argument about whether CIs should provide curricula for academic teaching (I-A4). But he also made clear that this was never a question at all at his university, not least because there are very specific and strict rules at Australian universities for setting up academic programmes (I-A4). This was echoed by another director according to whom Chey made 'some very valid points and valid observations' (I-A5).

Those Institutes actually teaching Chinese either noted that they did not offer credit courses for university students (I-A2; I-A4), which means Chinese language courses are just a supplemental offering, while other Institutes noted that they only taught business people and did not teach university students at all (I-A7). Nevertheless, and rather obviously, Confucius Institutes do engage with students at their host university, either through supporting the teaching of Chinese, as in the case, for example, in Adelaide (CICRM 2011: 9), or through the organisation of various in-China programmes, China study tours or student or academic exchange schemes (I-A2; I-A3; I-A5).

Asked whether there were any restrictions in their daily work, all interviewees in Australia assured me that so far there had been no interference from the Chinese side and no attempts to push topics in a certain direction.¹¹ 'As long as I am here, we did not get any kind of instruction, which for me is a counterargument to the accusation of propaganda' (I-A6). Another interviewee replied very similar: 'So far there was not a single case that someone came and said anything about what we did' (I-A4). However, this interviewee did not want to rule out the possibility that it could happen under certain circumstances in the future but then, he reflected, it would rather be the local consulate than Hanban that would interfere (I-A4).

Although this notion makes perfect sense insofar as the consulate is in the host country, and maybe even in the host city, and has a chance to know what is happening on the ground whereas Hanban in Beijing may be unaware of the issue, the question of which organisation actually would intervene would be totally irrelevant. Another interviewee clarified that 'we never had any indication from anyone at the embassy or Hanban that they are unhappy with the things we put on' (I-A3). Another director agreed, saying 'the Chinese don't dictate to us what we should or cannot do' (I-A7). A statement that is repeated throughout the

Institutes in Australia is that ‘there are no restrictions regarding our daily work. Not at all’ (I-A7). The same director also highlighted that she had no problems whatsoever working with a language teacher from Taiwan and, furthermore, said that her Institute was free to use whatever teaching material they thought would suit their students best (I-A7). Another interviewee shifted the attention away from the Chinese side and focused more on the people in charge when he noted: ‘I am a professor here [at our university], so why should I do propaganda for the Chinese side?’ (I-A2). In this regard the interviewee also referred to the discussion that teaching materials sent by Hanban are used to spread Communist propaganda:

I only can say that we can pick the material we like, so we choose the material that suits our needs. And if there would be any material doing propaganda this would just go to the trash bin. And one also has to keep in mind that Hanban is very smart; they know about the concerns in the West and they know if they would do propaganda we would not use their materials.

(I-A2)

However, to avoid any false impression, of course not everything is sweetness and light, and there are limitations for Confucius Institutes. First, although Hanban seemingly does not intervene in the daily work of CIs, as all of my interviewees credibly claimed, it still has a bearing on the programmes of Confucius Institutes through either rejection or approval of the annual project budget. According to one director, although she discussed this when I asked her about practical issues, pointed out that Hanban’s agreement on the funding depended on ‘whether they actually like the proposal’ (I-A5). And within this setting it stands to reason that Hanban may not like a proposal for a project that is deemed inappropriate.

Second, and probably more importantly, there are topics off-limits, topics normally not dealt with as they are regarded sensitive for official China, such as Tiananmen (referring to the crackdown of the protest movement), Taiwan (referring to the legal status of the island), Tibet (referring to China’s role there) and the Dalai Lama or Falun Gong, and people in charge of Confucius Institutes are aware of this problem. While one dialogue partner simply said: ‘I don’t care two figs about politics and my only interest is that the Institute works’ (I-A1), others were more conflicted. One of them acknowledged that although there were no restrictions in the daily work, nevertheless there could be ‘a tendency towards self-censorship and nobody, me included, is totally resistant in this regard’ (I-A6).

Although other interviewees would not speak of self-censorship directly, their statements point to the same direction. As one interviewee put it: ‘There are no restrictions, but obviously if I paid the Dalai Lama to come to Australia with Hanban money, they would not be happy. You don’t have to be a genius to know that’ (I-A7). Another one argues the same way: ‘If there are Falun Gong people on campus [...] I probably wouldn’t invite them for tea in my office and have a photograph taken’ (I-A5). Asked about what kind of events they thought would

probably not work at their Institute, one interviewee admitted that ‘you’d be stupid [...] to promote some kind of a large event which is pro Falun Gong’ (I-A3). Another director speculated ‘whether we could even talk about Lu Xun as he is in conflict with Confucianism and Confucianism is now the new set of values’ (I-A5). Two more statements are worth quoting in detail as they illustrate the area of tension quite well. One director said:

If there was to be a demonstration to free Ai Weiwei I probably may go, most likely I would go, but I wouldn’t wear my Confucius hat. I think it is important to separate the personal from the job. You know, when you work for governments, you don’t have to agree with government policies, but you have to respect them. It’s just a matter of making this separation.

(I-A5)

And it is seemingly precisely this separation, or the necessity to separate, which makes it sometimes somewhat complicated for some of the people in charge of a Confucius Institute. One of them illustrated this when he recalled a lecture given by a Chinese scholar:

The things that we want to do, we are able to do [...]. A couple of years ago we did a lecture on human rights in China. But, the lecturer was a Chinese human rights expert [...]. So he was giving the Chinese perspective of human rights in China, rather than a typical Western perspective. It is very clear that most people in the West, myself included, think that the presentation was very one-sided and did not address a lot of serious issues. But, still, for a Western audience, myself included, it is really important to understand what the Chinese discourse about human rights is and to hear that. Because without understanding how they see it, we don’t understand how it really is. I think presenting a Chinese view, even if I personally don’t agree with it is an important thing to do. Put it out there and make it part of the debate. But if we only hear a stereotypical negative Western view and we don’t take into account what the Chinese side actually thinks and what their debates are we won’t understand it, won’t understand what’s going on and we won’t be able to engage with. That is, for myself, a way that I can get around some of this ethical difficulties.

(I-A3)

Overall, the general understanding throughout the Institutes is very much like this: ‘We take a pragmatic approach to all of this [and if you had contact with China before] you know where your boundaries are’ (I-A5). It should be mentioned that all the people I interviewed had profound expertise and knowledge about China, either through training in Sinology or China Studies or they had long time work experience in China.

Yet another aspect worth considering was brought up in the interviews, namely the contract situation of the individual local person in charge of the CI.

This might determine how the individual person handles such issues. For people working at the university independently, whether the CI exists or not, it might be easier to push the limits, but as one interviewee speculated it might be more problematic if someone ‘depends on the job a hundred per cent’ (I-A6). It is interesting to note, that three of my interviewees were externally appointed, meaning they had no previous connection with the host university of the respective Confucius Institute.¹²

Practical issues and problems of Australian Confucius Institutes

Next to these controversial issues, Confucius Institutes also face a number of practical problems, which partially differ from CI to CI. Based on the interviews, one can summarise them as follows. One issue is only applicable to Confucius Institutes in cities with more than one CI, namely the question of how to position the respective Institutes on the market, as one interviewee put it (I-A2). Although China is becoming increasingly important to Australia, the target audience is limited, which may ‘lead to some kind of competition between the Institutes in one city’ (I-A2). However, in Melbourne or Sydney, for example, there is not only competition from the Confucius camp, but also from commercial providers, mainly in the language training business. One interviewee gets to the heart of this aspect when he admits that in the big cities it is hard to survive if CIs only concentrate on language teaching:

Take a look in the weekend papers, there you can find classified ads for Chinese language teaching by the page full. In such a city you cannot just declare ‘Now, I am doing this as well.’ There are various providers on the markets for years. In such an environment you have to distinguish yourself with a specific profile.

(I-A4)

In order to circumvent those issues and to generate demand, Institutes in these cities try to develop a unique characteristic, which mainly concerns the content provided. This of course does not mean that CIs do not teach the Chinese language, but they provide courses for certain audiences, as the CI at the University of Melbourne does for business people or the CI at the University of Queensland does by offering language courses for ‘Translation and Interpreting for Science, Engineering and Technology’ (UQ online, n.d.). In language teaching one issue that rises is in terms ‘of classroom psychology and teaching methodology teachers from China are unfortunately not always suitable to the Australian environment’ (CICRM 2009: 25). Another practical issue that relates specifically to Australia and presumably other countries in the southern hemisphere is that it ‘is hard to fit in programs that are designed according to the calendar in the Northern Hemisphere’ (ibid.; I-NZ).

A seemingly bigger issue concerns communication with Beijing, especially in relation to funding (I-A3; I-A4; I-A5; I-A6). A number of directors were not so

much concerned about funding as such, but more about the information flow regarding the status of their funding proposals and the timeframe of receiving the funding. This, as different interviewees pointed out, makes it complicated to put together and run a programme or to organise a larger scale event (I-A3; I-A5; I-A7). 'If there would be more transparency, more feedback, more punctuality in terms of responses, particular with the budget submission that would be appreciated' (I-A3). A related problem for CIs is that they are only funded year by year and longer term confirmation for project funding for two to three years would provide CIs with a certain planning security, not only project wise, but also 'to offer staff secure employment' (CICRM 2009: 97).

In this regard it is also interesting to see that different Australian CIs in the Reference Materials ask for better and more frequent communication and better guidance. The CI at La Trobe University, as a newly established Institute, for example, points out that it 'needs more guidance from Hanban, and share experiences and lessons with other Confucius Institutes' (CICRM 2011: 60) and the CI at Queensland University of Technology also asked for continued support from Hanban for its programmes and activities, such as research internship study tours to China or CI fellowships to support staff exchange between the university and China (CICRM 2011: 37–38).

Another issue concerns the position of the CI within the host university. One director explained that it was hard to get in contact with academics in order to cooperate, as they saw the CI as something not properly academic and therefore not worth working with (I-A6). Beyond that, CIs know about discussions regarding academic freedom, prompting the CI at the University of Melbourne to highlight that the 'major issue in terms of managing a Confucius Institute is ensuring that faculties within the University do not see us as a threat to their academic freedom' (CICRM 2009: 97). Against this background, the CI at Melbourne University also noted that it 'would be great if the CIs in a particular region coordinated some media response to negative publicity or at least coordinate themselves so we all have a similar response to a controversial event' (ibid.).

Notes

- 1 In 2009, four executives of Australian mining giant Rio Tinto – Australian Stern Hu and three Chinese colleagues – were accused of bribery and espionage by Chinese authorities and went on trial in Shanghai in 2010.
- 2 In 2009, a documentary film, *The 10 Conditions of Love*, about Kadeer was released and its premiere was scheduled for the Melbourne International Film Festival. The organisers of the festival refused a request from the Chinese consulate in Melbourne for the film to be withdrawn and for Kadeer's invitation to the festival to be rescinded.
- 3 This chronological order provides only a rough overview as some dates are rather generic and the respective websites only provide the year of foundation.
- 4 Other Chinese universities cooperating with Australian universities and involved in other Confucius Institutes include Zhejiang University, cooperating with the University of Rhode Island (USA) and the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (Japan); Shandong University which is also involved in the CI at Nanyang Technological University (Singapore) and Leiden University (Netherlands); Tianjin University also

- running a CI in Bratislava (Slovakia); Fudan University involved at the CI at Hamburg University (Germany), the University of Edinburgh (Scotland) and the University of Nottingham (England); Shanghai Jiaotong University cooperating with Purdue University and UCLA (both USA); and Central China Normal University also involved in the CI at Carleton University (Canada).
- 5 I contacted ANU to get a statement regarding this topic, but did not get any reply.
 - 6 The Analects, or *Lunyu* in Chinese, are the 'Selected Sayings' attributed to Confucius and his contemporaries.
 - 7 Although I was in contact with representatives of the Newcastle CI an interview did not come about.
 - 8 More recent Reference Materials (CICRM 2013, CICRM 2014) for unknown reasons do not say much about what the international partners are contributing to individual Institutes. It is worth noting here that Hanban provides the templates that are filled out by the CIs and sent back to Beijing.
 - 9 Chen Kaige is a leading figure of the fifth generation of Chinese cinema. His most famous film in the West, *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), was nominated for two Academy Awards and won the Palme d'Or at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival. The film was first banned in China and then released due to international pressure and was later censored.
 - 10 Yan Lianke is a Chinese writer of novels and short stories based in Beijing who received both the Lu Xun Literary Prize and the Lao She Literature Award. But due to his highly satirical writing some of this most renowned works have been banned in China. One of his most famous books (*Wei Renmin fuwu* – Serve the People) was banned in China apparently because of its depiction of items related to Mao Zedong and political issues.
 - 11 Although anonymity was affirmed to all interviewees, I am fully aware that this does not necessarily mean they would have unburdened their hearts to me and told me about restrictions in their work.
 - 12 Although it may be sheer coincidence, it is a matter of fact that all three of them are not working at the respective Confucius Institutes anymore. In this regard it appears also interesting to see that three Australian academics who were involved in setting up a Confucius Institute at their university are also no longer working for the CI.

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8 Confucius Institutes in Germany

In order to broaden the understanding of CIs and to scrutinise the gathered information from the Australian case, the following chapter looks at Confucius Institutes in Germany. It follows the structure of the previous chapter: after an outline of Sino-German relations it looks at the public perception of CIs in Germany and then goes on to discuss structural and contextual aspects of German Confucius Institutes.

Sino-German relations and the German intellectual engagement with China can be traced back several hundred years. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Germany was one centre of the European Chinoiserie, the China-excitement amongst European aristocracy and intellectuals, which was a recurring theme in European artistic and cultural styles, characterised by the use of fanciful symbolism of an imaginary China, by asymmetry in format and whimsical contrasts of scale. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) was one of the leading thinkers devoting himself to the study of China, which he understood as the seat of an ancient and highly developed civilisation independent of Europe. His fascination is probably most prominently reflected in his *Novissima Sinica* (The Latest News from China) (1697/1699).

Although Leibniz was followed by numerous thinkers and intellectuals, most prominently Goethe, in his fascination for China, during the second half of the eighteenth century, the dominant discourse of Sinophilia shifted toward Sinophobia. Equally radical and intensive, the prevailing Sinophobic attitude portrayed China as the prototype of a stagnant and despotic society. The German writer and philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) with his *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* played a leading role in dismissing the long duration of Chinese history, praised by the Sinophiles, as an ‘embalmed mummy’ lacking life and the capability of transformation. With his negative assessment of Chinese civilisation, Herder very much informed the picture of China in German intellectual circles for a long time (Lee 1991).¹

The negative connotation culminated in the appearance of the term *Yellow Peril* in the late nineteenth century. The term, probably coined by the German Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1895, was meant to fan fear of Asian countries, especially China, and is, as mentioned earlier, related by some observers to the current China threat debate(s). Five years later, Wilhelm II delivered his notorious

Hunnenrede (Hun speech) where he bade farewell to the German expeditionary corps sailing to Beijing to defeat the Boxer Uprising in 1900. Wilhelm (1900) urged the soldiers: 'so shall you establish the name of Germans in China for a thousand years, so that a Chinese will never again dare to look askance at a German.'

If we fast-forward to the twentieth century, it can be mentioned that like Australia, the Federal Republic of Germany established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1972² and current relations are, just as Australian-Sino relations are, strongly determined by economic ties and interests. Germany is China's number one trading partner in the EU, as nearly half of all EU exports to China come from Germany and nearly a quarter of EU imports from China go to Germany. China is now the second largest market for German exports outside the EU, and may overtake the United States as the largest very soon, if growth continues. Somewhat similar to Australia, Germany's economy also rapidly recovered from the economic crises in 2008 mainly because of demand from China. Put simply, 'China needs technology and Germany needs markets' (Kundnani and Parello-Plesner 2012: 2).

While both Australia and Germany have strong economic ties with China, Germany's political relations with the People's Republic are considerably stronger than Australia's. China views Germany as a dominant player and as its 'gateway to Europe'. Furthermore, Beijing realises that Germany's economic dependence on China, and because of its strategic preferences, make it a preferred partner. Overall, there are more than 30 dialogue mechanisms in place, many of them at senior government level, between line ministers, state secretaries and the heads of government authorities. In 2011, the first China-German government-to-government consultations took place in Berlin and for this joint cabinet meeting, then-Premier Wen Jiabao came to Berlin with 16 Chinese ministers. This was the first time, that China had established such high-level intergovernmental consultations with an EU member state.

Altogether, one can state that China-German relations are very much driven by economic considerations, which has led some observers to conclude that topics such as China's human rights situation have been marginalised. This is best illustrated in the change of attitude of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who caused bilateral resentment in 2007 when she received the Dalai Lama for a talk that was labelled as a private event but which, for the first time ever, took place at the Chancellery. But things changed and in 2012 Merkel visited China twice, mainly 'to court Chinese investors' (Peel and Hille 2012), but she shied away from direct criticism of China.

However, similar to Sino-Australian relations, the relations between Germany and China are also not free from tensions and occasional frictions, especially in the civil, social and cultural realm. One low point was a symposium on *China and the World – Perceptions and Realities* held in the run up to the 2009 Frankfurt Book Fair co-organised by the Frankfurt Book Fair and the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP)³ because China was the official guest of honour. Organisational chaos surrounding two Chinese dissidents provoked

strong and harsh reactions from the German media, which accused the Frankfurt Book Fair of compromising freedom of expression in order to not anger and offend official China. When both dissident writers eventually took the stage, members of the official Chinese delegation walked, temporary, out of the room in protest.⁴

Another high profile cultural event caused controversy in China–German relations in 2011. In March of that year, the exhibition ‘Art of Enlightenment’, put together by three German museums, opened in the National Museum of China in Beijing. The German Foreign Office put about €6 million into the project, making it the most important, and by far the most expensive, example of German cultural diplomacy towards China ever. The exhibition drew a great deal of criticism in the German media, especially the arrest of Ai Weiwei, who is very popular amongst German intellectuals and journalists, shortly after the exhibition opened, triggering a huge debate about how appropriate it was to organise cultural projects with undemocratic China. Some voices in Germany even called for the closing of the exhibition.

When looking at German public opinion towards China, it is worth noting that although only 36 per cent of German elites (from media, academia and politics) see China as a partner for Germany and 68 per cent describe it as a competitor (Körber-Stiftung 2011: 9), the general public is not very concerned about the rise of China overall. While in 2011 about 40 per cent feared a rising China (Stern 2011), this number dropped to 30 per cent in 2012 (Stern 2012); 68 per cent of Germans did not worry about China’s development into an economic powerhouse. Germans are sceptical, however, when it comes to the access of Chinese companies into German markets, which was only supported by about 24 per cent (Stern 2012). And while some critics argue that the German government does not care too much about human rights in China, it is a pressing theme for the German public as 71 per cent of Germans say relations with China should only be further expanded when China makes progress in this regard (Stern 2012).

Confucius Institutes in Germany – overview

Currently there are 15 Confucius Institutes in Germany and three Confucius Classrooms. Furthermore, there exists at least two so-called Confucius Kindergartens, with a third in the planning. The list on page 142 provides an overview of Confucius Institutes in Germany, their partner institution in China and their operational milestones.

Similar to the Australian case, most German partner institutions for CIs are universities. Of the 15 existing Institutes, one is established through a private foundation, one through a public charity organisation and 13 are at German universities. Of these 13, only three do not have a Department of Sinology, or China Studies. Another aspect to mention is the question of the reputation of the German partner universities involved in Confucius Institutes. Although the German case in this regard is not as straightforward as it is in Australia, with its

Table 8.1 Confucius Institutes in Germany

<i>German partner</i>	<i>Chinese partner</i>	<i>Milestones</i>
CI at Free University Berlin	Beijing University	Officially opened 27 April 2006
CI at the University Erlangen-Nuremberg	Beijing Foreign Studies University	Officially opened 2 May 2006
CI at Heinrich-Heine University Dusseldorf	Beijing Foreign Studies University	Officially opened 6 December 2006
CI at the Chinese Center of Hanover	Tongji University Shanghai	Officially opened 24 April 2007
CI at Goethe University Frankfurt	Fudan University Shanghai	Launched in September 2007
CI at the University Hamburg	Fudan University Shanghai	Officially established 20 September 2007
CI at the University of Leipzig	Renmin University Beijing	Officially opened 9 April 2008
CI at Trier University	Xiamen University	Officially opened 29 October 2008
Confucius Institute Munich	Beijing Foreign Studies University	Officially established in March 2009
CI at the University of Freiburg	Nanjing University	Officially started to work in November 2009
CI of Metropolis Ruhr at the University Duisburg-Essen	Wuhan University	Officially opened 6 November 2009
CI at Ruprecht Karl University of Heidelberg	Shanghai Jiaotong University	Officially opened 20 April 2010
CI at the University of Applied Sciences Erfurt	Zhejiang University of Sciences and Technology Hangzhou	Officially opened 7 November 2011
CI at University of Applied Sciences Bremen	Capital Normal University Beijing	Officially opened 23 October 2013
CI Georg-August-University Göttingen	Nanjing University, Beijing Foreign Studies University	Officially launched 2 June 2014
CI at Media University Stuttgart	Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication	To be launched in 2018

Note

In June 2015 it was reported that Media University Stuttgart scuttled plans to establish its Confucius Institute due to stated concerns over finances.

Group of Eight universities or the United States with its Ivy League universities, it can be noted that currently eight universities hosting a Confucius Institute are part of Germany's *Excellence Initiative*, initiated by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the German Research Foundation.⁵

The discussions surrounding Confucius Institutes in Germany can be described as manageable. In late 2010, after Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the leading German press agency, *dpa*, reported that the award was 'deliberately ignored' by most German CIs (*dpa* 2010). Somewhat surprisingly the story was only sporadically picked up by any media, although it provided some interesting insights into approaches to such sensitive topics, which will be discussed later on. Also in relation to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize, one of Germany's leading national newspapers criticised the silence of numerous German sinologists, mainly because they receive money (and Confucius Institutes were mentioned as one example here) and doctorates from China (Strittmatter 2010). In this regard, the article also discusses Confucius Institutes and quotes one German sinologist, whose university does not have a CI, as saying he does not want to have a 'Chinese submarine' at his university (*ibid.*). The piece also quoted a Professor of Sinology, who is in charge of a Confucius Institute, as admitting that a critique of Beijing is not what Confucius Institutes should do (*ibid.*).

A single newspaper article in late 2011 can be seen as the high point of controversy in Germany. The author⁶ notes that CIs are, according to their by-laws, Chinese enterprises where foreigners contribute, which in turn means that although German universities are supposed to promote Chinese culture and help to create a Harmonious World, they do not have any definatory power over what Chinese culture or a Harmonious World actually means (Rudolph 2011). He furthermore outlines in detail which organisations are involved in Confucius Institutes and who its highest managing staff are in order to demonstrate the close relation to the Communist Party. While this is a valid observation, the way it is presented suggests a biased tendency in the arguments, which become more obvious when looking at a rather small but telling point, namely how the author translates Chinese terms into German, best illustrated in the case of the term 'Confucius Institutes Headquarters'. He translates the Chinese term *zongbu* with *Hauptquartier* into German, which, as he notes, has a strong militaristic meaning and connotation, and he uses this fact against the Institutes and more so against the German partners cooperating with them.⁷ He furthermore notes that in late 2010 the directors of German CIs and their Chinese counterparts were invited to the Chinese embassy in Berlin, where they reported to the ambassador about their work. Overall, the author, through, in my understanding, a rather tendentious translation of Chinese sources, indicates that CIs just went there to get their marching orders.

The crux of these kinds of statements is that they undermine some very valid observations and points made by Rudolph, for example, when he submits that the whole setting of Confucius Institutes within foreign universities raises the question of how free and independent China scholars can be when they engage

with official China. In 2007, Rudolph told me in an interview that the economy is a coward and caves in towards official China ‘and this is somehow legitimate.’ But if this was also the case in the cultural and educational realm, it would be a problem (Hartig 2007: 62). In his article, he also criticises Hanban, claiming that it had developed a plan to support ‘new sinology research’ (Rudolph 2011), another aspect worth keeping a wary eye on, and I will discuss this later on.

This article provoked a public panel discussion in Germany in early 2012, which was organised by the Confucius Institute in Hannover. Rudolph made clear that, for him, the set-up of Confucius Institutes is problematic, and he accused universities of allowing themselves to be taken in by China’s soft power strategy.⁸ During the discussion, one director of a German CI admitted that ‘Confucius Institutes are not necessarily the right place for debates on topics pertaining to touchy subjects like Tibet’ (Ricking 2012).

Another more general observation is worth noting in relation to the public debate about Confucius Institutes in Germany, namely that it solely focuses on Confucius Institutes, and not, as in Australia (and elsewhere), on Confucius Classrooms, which have been established in grammar or high schools. Currently there are only some Confucius Classrooms in Germany, and there is no (reported) debate about whether it is advisable to cooperate with official China when it comes to educating children rather adult students of legal age. Although it is a completely different story whether the points of criticism are justified or not, but discussing them in the context of kids’ education has as of yet to take place. For whatever reason, critics in Germany do not mention Classrooms at all, and local media reports about opening ceremonies of Confucius Classrooms do not discuss any of those aspects and mainly highlight the importance of learning Chinese as early as possible.

The formation of Confucius Institutes in Germany

Similar to Australia, the German case also illustrates that it is not solely international partners that make the first move to establish a Confucius Institute. Of the eight Institutes I investigated in Germany, five were approached by the Chinese side, either from representatives of the Chinese embassy in Berlin or from their partner institutions (I-G1; I-G2; I-G3; I-G5; I-G6). For example, the three universities that set up the first Institutes in Germany were all approached by China, which is not something too surprising as the whole project was not too well known at the beginning. It was furthermore noted by interviewees that their university was approached by different Chinese universities willing to establish a CI (I-G4; I-G7), which confirms Paradise’s (2009) observation that Chinese universities were holding fieldtrips abroad to convince international institutions to establish a CI with them.

Nevertheless, there are also German universities that took the initiative to establish a CI. One of the interviewees made it very clear that ‘the idea definitely emerged here in the city’ (I-G7). Not only was the university engaged very early on, but there also was a keen interest on the part of city politicians. One

triggering effect corresponds with the statements of an Australian director regarding the question of how many Confucius Institutes should be set up throughout Germany:

The local politicians here realised that Confucius Institutes started to emerge and they thought this would be something our city should definitely have. At the beginning there was the impression that there would be only one Institute in the whole of Germany. As it turned out this was a misconception, but this understanding was a triggered effect in the sense that it was seen as a locational advantage for the city to have a Confucius Institute.

(I-G7)

A similar situation surrounded the establishment of the Confucius Institute in Düsseldorf, which joined hands with its long-time partner Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) to establish one of the early Institutes in Germany. It was BFSU that brought the initial idea to establish a CI to the attention of the local university (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 535), but later on the German side was very keen to secure such an Institute in Düsseldorf. As the current CI director reports, the city of Düsseldorf is not only one of the major actors involved in the CI, but was also supportive in the set-up process as the Institute was seen as an enrichment for Düsseldorf as a business location (Eberspächer 2010). The university in turn was very much in a hurry to establish the CI because two other universities also had plans to set up one. In the early stages, Ruhr University Bochum (about 50 kilometres away) made efforts to get a CI and was seen as a ‘serious rival’ (Eberspächer 2010: 708). Later, the University of Düsseldorf was informed by the Chinese Embassy in Berlin, that Cologne University (some 40 kilometres away) had also applied for a Confucius Institute (Eberspächer 2010: 709). While both universities did not establish a Confucius Institute, it is not without some irony that the Confucius Institute of Metropolis Ruhr was established in late 2009 at the University of Duisburg-Essen just 30 kilometres away from Düsseldorf.⁹

While all this may appear just as a local curiosity, it nevertheless points to more general and fundamental aspects of CIs, namely that Hanban, seemingly, is not too selective in its choice of locations and there does not appear to be any regulations on how many Institutes should be in one region. Furthermore, it illustrates that international partners are keen to establish a Confucius Institute. This interest is partly due to the anticipated financial gain, access to China or as a means to boost the international profile of the host university and/or the host city. This attitude, as already mentioned, reflects exactly the image official China wants to project, namely ‘high level Western institutions and individuals “begging” for the opening of Confucius Institutes’ (Niquet 2012: 85). Niquet furthermore states that smaller universities ‘tend to underscore that they have been “selected” by China [...] as a way to distinguish themselves and build an image of excellence in a very competitive educational community’ (ibid.). One example for this observation is the case of the Confucius Institute established at

Erfurt University of Applied Sciences in November 2011. In various statements, the university highlighted that it was the twelfth ‘and for the moment the last Institute scheduled for German’ (Hahn 2011), while another press release notes: ‘in a thrilling tendering process Erfurt University of Applied Sciences prevailed against universities from Ingolstadt and Munich’ (Konfuzius-Institut an der FH Erfurt, n.d.).¹⁰ The Erfurt CI, however, was not the last in Germany, as the cases of Bremen, Göttingen and Stuttgart show, and during the 9th Confucius Institute Conference in December 2014 speculation were spreading amongst German CI representatives that another five Institutes should be established in Germany in 2015 or 2016.

However, as in Australia, there are universities in Germany that are not interested in setting up a Confucius Institute. As mentioned earlier, in the debate surrounding the Nobel Peace Prize for Liu Xiaobo and the silence of German sinologists, a prominent German sinologist said he did not want to have a ‘Chinese submarine’ at his department (Strittmatter 2010).¹¹ Another German sinologist, although questioning whether it should be the task of a foreign university to work for China’s cultural diplomacy, had much more practical reasons to reject several attempts by Chinese partners:

We were asked several times whether we would be interested to set up such an Institute. But we came to the conclusion that under the provided circumstances it was not really an option for us. The biggest problem was that the university has to provide space and this was just not manageable for us as we are bursting at the seams. Another aspect was the anticipated work load for the German director which was also not manageable for us. Overall, it was much more practical considerations and not so much any ideological reservations.

(I-G4)

Elaborating more on the touchy issues the interviewee was reasoning that

if we would have agreed to set up an Institute, it would have been clear that I would have furthermore worked with the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation,¹² and I actually think this would not have been such a big issue for them [Hanban]. But taken together the provided package was not terribly attractive for us.

(I-G4)

Whether working with a Taiwanese foundation would constitute a problem for Hanban could have remained speculative until summer 2014 when precisely the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation was the trigger for the most serious incident and worst publicity stunt concerning Confucius Institutes to date when Xu Lin ordered pages torn out from the main conference programme of a major European Sinology association conference in Portugal to remove any reference to the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation which was, among Hanban, one of the sponsors.

That Taiwan could become an issue in the context of the Institutes became clear in the conversation with one German interlocutor (I-G10). In the case of this Confucius Institute it took almost five years to establish it for several reasons. One reason was the fact that the Sinology department of the host university, which cooperates closely with Taiwan, insisted on the right to teach traditional characters at the beginning, which evoked ‘a strict veto from the Chinese side’ (I-G10). It is not entirely clear how this dispute was settled, but eventually the Institute was established after several years.

The manner of how universities select their partner university in China is relatively clear in the case of Germany. All Institutes I investigated had previous contact with their Chinese partner institution, be it only on a personal level (I-G10) or between departments or sections of both universities (I-G1; I-G2; I-G3; I-G6; I-G7) cooperating with each other before the Confucius Institutes were established. As one interviewee put it: ‘we started this project with our long-time partner in China and there were never any discussions to do this with another university in China’ (I-G3). Another director recalled that his university was approached by four Chinese universities, but the German university only wanted to work with its long-time and current partner and did not want to establish a new cooperation (I-G7). However, despite already existing ties, the long-time Chinese university partnered with another German university to set up a CI there.

Therefore the situation for us was a bit complicated as there were a number of Chinese universities interested to collaborate with us, but we had to compete for our preferred partner. It worked out eventually; also because the head of our Sinology Department made it clear to the education department of the Chinese embassy in Berlin that we would only establish a CI with our long-time partner and wouldn’t do it with any other university.

(I-G7)

While Chinese universities were interested in cooperating with this German university, another German university saw its long-time Chinese partner become rather reluctant when approached by the German side (I-G8):

Back then Confucius Institutes were something very new and nobody really knew which direction this whole project would take and therefore our Chinese partners back then were reserved. But eventually we established our CI within the framework of the new university partnership with our current Chinese partner.

(I-G8)

Structural components and practical issues of German Confucius Institutes

Generally speaking, the overall structure and endowment of Confucius Institutes in Germany by and large corresponds with the situation in Australia. Institutes

are organised as joint ventures between German and Chinese partners and both sides contribute to the CI in one way or another as already described in the case of Australia. The following section mainly focuses on practical issues that came up during the interviews, as these provide further insights into the inner workings of Confucius Institutes in Germany which can also exemplify more general aspects about CIs. The section will focus on funding issues, on aspects of human resources, on issues related to the joint venture structure and the equipment of Institutes.

Financing of Confucius Institutes in Germany

One major aspect concerns the financial support and the question of who pays for what. According to the former German and Chinese directors of the Confucius Institute in Düsseldorf, China expects a 1:1 involvement in funding, but in reality there are different models possible as China, in developing countries, normally contributes the major part of funding (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 534).

CIs in Germany received the already mentioned set-up fee of US\$100,000 for an initial period, which is reported to be either for three (I-G1; I-G2; I-G3) or five years (I-G7; I-G8; I-G10).¹³ During the interviews two aspects were raised by different people. First, the fact that Hanban pays its funding in US Dollars. This may not sound very spectacular in the first instance, but the dimension of this issue becomes clearer when considering that German CIs at times only receive about €79,000 (I-G6), while another director reported his Institute once only got some €67,000 due to the bad exchange rate (I-G7).¹⁴

Another issue, especially in the early years, concerned the question of how long Hanban would fund Confucius Institutes. The original plan, according to a number of interviewees, was that Hanban would only subsidise Institutes for this initial period, which led to a degree of uncertainty in the early days and the question came up of whether all Institutes could survive independently without Hanban funding (Hartig 2007). When asked about this in 2007, Liu Jinghui, then Minister Counsellor at the Department of Education at the Chinese Embassy in Berlin (and currently Secretary-General of the China Scholarship Council), remained guarded over this issue and said ‘we are only at the beginning and have to gather experience’ (quoted in Hartig 2007: 62).

Directors I talked to back then were more outspoken, and one noted that China accustomed itself quite quickly to competition and contest. In this regard she even assumed that ‘they establish various Institutes, and only the best will survive’ (quoted in Hartig 2007: 62). One director was convinced that CIs could survive after this initial three years, although he emphasised it would be hard for any cultural institution anywhere in the world to work without subsidies. ‘I suppose the Chinese side will further fund Institutes whose operation is persuading. But of course, foolproof security is never possible’ (quoted in Hartig 2007: 62).

The more recent interviews illustrate the wariness of German partners in this regard as one of them notes ‘it is practically impossible to run such an Institute,

financially, totally independent. There is actually no way to make money with Chinese language teaching, at least not so much that which would enable the Institute to survive' (I-G3). However, it also purports that the Chinese consideration to provide funding only at the beginning is not such a big issue anymore, especially because, as one interviewee puts it:

I think over time Hanban realised that CIs can hardly pay for themselves. And I strongly assume they actually don't even want this to happen. Because if they wouldn't provide any further funding, they wouldn't be involved anymore.

(I-G3)

Similar to the Australian case, one German interviewee confirmed that in 2010/2011 it was the first time that Hanban had not approved all funds his Institute had applied for, which simply can be explained with the ever growing number of Institutes around the world. Therefore it does not come as a big surprise that some local partners put more into the CI project than the Chinese side does as one interviewee indicates:

Currently we have a budget of about 600,000 euro and about 40 percent coming from the Chinese side. The rest we have to earn ourselves. The university paid 120,000 euro for three years, altogether 360,000 euro. But they want to pay us only another 50,000 euro in the future. The local city council pays the rent for the Institute, but for the rest we have to find external sponsors. We heavily rely on external funding.

(I-G10)

The necessity of external sponsors, be it the local city council or corporations or other institutions, providing either cash funding or in-kind support is confirmed by all Institutes across Germany. In Düsseldorf, the city joined hands with the university and paid the annual rent of €50,000 for the first three years, as well as the operating costs for the same timeframe, of €37,500 (CICRM 2007: 113). Another Institute was getting €10,000 annually from the local government and a €10,000 one-time payment in the first year from a local bank (I-G3). In 2009, the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg provided its CI about US\$143,000 for rent, side costs and salary for the German director while, external sponsors supplied the Institute with about US\$19,350 (CICRM 2009: 270). The CI at Trier University in its first year of operation secured about €155,000 from various local partners, and in 2009 received about €57,500 from external sponsors (CICRM 2009: 279). But not all Institutes are successful in securing external sponsors, either be it that their host city does not have well-financed companies (I-G6) or because 'the idea of donations and charitable contribution is not so well established in Germany as, for example, in the US' (CICRM 2011: 160).

For at least two reasons these sponsors are helpful and sometimes necessary to maintain the operation of the Institutes. First, various universities provide the

Institutes with substantial non-cash benefits, but in order to run projects, CIs have to have money at hand so they can contribute the described 1:1 sharing approach. Second, it is reported that Hanban is rather reluctant to pay local managing staff and wants only to pay for projects (I-G1; I-G3). This puts CIs in an unpleasant situation, because although CIs in Germany nominal have a German director, this is mainly a professor of Sinology or China Studies from the host university, he/she does not run the Institute on a daily basis. For these tasks, CIs have to hire an executive or managing director who is normally paid by the German side (I-G1; I-G3; I-G7; I-G10).¹⁵ Due to Hanban's reluctance to pay for these local staff, CIs have to find ways to fund such positions, and one way is to seek money from external sponsors. At least two CIs did not have a managing director in the initial phase, which created a situation where the founding director worked for the Institute and did the CI job on a voluntary basis (I-G1; Eberspächer 2010: 711).

Staffing level of German Confucius Institutes

It is interesting what one interviewee pointed out in this context, namely that his Institute signed a supplement to the overall contract with Hanban in which 'it is regulated that no personnel from our local Sinology department works for the Confucius Institute' (I-G3). As this department is very short of personnel, the department wanted to make sure that it had not to assign some of their staff to teach at the Confucius Institute. 'This was made very clear in this supplement because assumingly this is something the Chinese side expects international partners to do. This is actually one of the reasons why CIs are placed within universities' (I-G3).

Looking at the opposite situation, namely whether teachers sent from China may teach at the local Sinology department, answers differ. While one interviewee said that in order 'to strengthen Chinese language teaching at our Sinology department we require our Chinese directors to teach four hours at the department for free' (I-G1), another dialogue partner noted that staff sent from China only teach at the local CI and not at the Sinology department (I-G8). Yet another said there was the initial idea that the Chinese director could teach at the university department as well, but this did not happen, because 'he did not offer it and we did not ask him' (I-G7).

Asked about a statement in a Chinese academic article¹⁶ in which it said Chinese teachers have to be trained ideologically, one interviewee said she did not realise anything in this regard (I-G6), but another one noted:

I can very well imagine that, because after all they are sent abroad as representatives of the People's Republic. There are certain exams for directors and teachers. I don't know much about such exams content-wise, but I strongly assume it is, amongst other things, also partly about to check the code of values of potential candidate and also to make sure what values should be facilitated and communicated through CIs.

(I-G3)

It is somewhat unclear how many Chinese teachers were sent to CIs in Germany as numbers change rather frequently (CICRM 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011), but it can be noted that they usually have at least one teacher sent from China and/or volunteer teachers sent by Hanban, a number of locally hired language teachers and local staff for the daily administrative work. Take, for example, the CI in Düsseldorf. In 2011 it had one Chinese teacher sent from the partner university, five local teachers and three other employees running daily office work (CICRM 2011: 144). In the same year, the CI in Hamburg had 13 people working part-time administratively and 12 teachers for language and cultural courses, three of which were sent from Hanban and nine were locally hired (CICRM 2011: 181).

Another human resources related issue is worth noting, namely the situation of Chinese directors sent from partner universities to German Confucius Institutes. While in Australia three of the Institutes I was in contact with did not have a Chinese director, all but one German Institutes had a Chinese director sent from China, although there may have been short periods without a Chinese director, and one CI had a Chinese director based in China who normally went to Germany once a year to discuss projects and developments (CICRM 2008, 2009, 2011), which effectively means the Institute is run by the German side.

The joint venture structure and its consequences

This unique setting of having both a Chinese director and a German director or managing director working together contains both opportunities and challenges for CIs, which provide insights into the whole joint venture approach. One German executive director told *China Daily*: ‘I like the institute’s unique way of governing, where there is cooperation between two directors. Geng [the Chinese director] and I have become best friends’ (quoted in Xu L. 2012). The Chinese director agrees and notes that both ‘complement each other perfectly’ (ibid.). Both share responsibilities, but there is no clear line of duty. While the Chinese director mainly deals with teaching language to students his German counterpart shoulders ‘more responsibilities in terms of financial affairs, because I’m more familiar with German laws’ (quoted in Xu L. 2012). Overall, both ‘use their expertise, do their best and go with the flow’ (Xu L. 2012). While this case can be exemplary in the sense that there is no strict differentiation between the German and Chinese counterpart in charge of the Institute, not all cooperation works that smoothly, as one interviewee indicated:

We have a Chinese director, she is with us for eight months now, but we still define her duties, this is a huge problem. Overall there are huge problems and conflicts between Chinese and local directors. Originally Kahn-Ackermann [former director of Goethe Institutes in China and senior advisor for Hanban at the time of the interview] was very enthusiastic about this dual leadership because for him this symbolises the cultural cooperation very good, but after he heard a lot of complains he is more pensive.

(I-G10)

The interviewee furthermore said that he was ‘not totally convinced of this structure, but if they [Hanban] want to do it this way, that’s fine’ (I-G10). He summarised the problems that can be heard throughout other Institutes:

at least it is necessary to clearly define the tasks and duties of the Chinese director and they should be better paid when they come here and they should stay longer, not only one year as visiting scholars. It’s complicated to find people who are willing and able to work as Chinese director. Our first director did neither speak English nor German and went back after one year. Another one did speak English but was not a trained Chinese language teacher. And one of our teachers was trained as a teacher, but trained in China which means her approach was not terribly useful for our environment what we realised when students were running away from her classes.
(I-G10)

While this statement may be a bit pointed, at its core it clearly hints at more general problems concerning both Chinese directors and teachers that affect all German Confucius Institutes in one way or the other (I-G1; I-G3; I-G9; CICRM 2007: 147; CICRM 2011: 179). First of all there is a clear need for (more) qualified language teachers, especially those sent from China.¹⁷ Related are the issues that some dispatched teachers do not speak German and normally do not stay long enough in the estimation of the people in charge. As one interviewee put it: ‘In the worst case you are more of a babysitter for these people and they cannot be employed as teachers’ (I-G1). The issue of teachers not speaking the target language, according to a number of interviewees, is very much on the radar of Hanban.

This was and is a very frequent complaint from Institutes all around, and we [international partners] brought this up frequently in meetings with Hanban and now they want to train such teachers in the destination country. This, I think, is a really good idea and, by the way, illustrates that Hanban is pretty flexible and they really react in a very pragmatic manner to suggestions and proposals by international partners.

(I-G3)

Whereas the issue of skills (both language and pedagogical) and length of stay affects students of Confucius Institutes, payment is of particular interest for teachers who get money from their home university and a certain amount from Hanban. ‘Overall this is not very much which makes it hard for the partner universities to find people to send abroad’ (I-G3). In this regard, another interviewee pointed to another issue, namely the question of who actually is willing to leave China to work abroad:

People in the middle of their career don’t go; its mainly young people, recently graduates, or old people with not too much expectations anymore,

job-wise. This is the case with us. And overall there is the quality problem. The real good teachers don't go to CIs, at least I don't know any. This, once again, is all related to the payment and career opportunities overseas.

(I-G10)

The problem in finding people willing to work abroad either as director or teacher at Confucius Institutes is a real challenge and the situation seems to be so pressing that one Chinese university that maintains numerous Confucius Institutes around the world looked for potential staff not only within the university and its language departments, but also within the academic publishing house affiliated with the university (I-C2).

Issues of equipment and coordination

In relation to the teaching materials and related stock, one also finds different opinions throughout German Confucius Institutes. In terms of teaching materials, there is no correspondence between the Institutes, the only consensus is – similar to the Australian case – that Institutes are free to use whatever materials they think suits their needs best. One interviewee made it clear that his Institute does not use Hanban materials at all (I-G7): 'At the beginning we compared the teaching materials sent from Hanban and materials available here in Germany and the local once were simply better, so we use those' (I-G7). A related statement can be heard throughout the Institutes in this regard, namely 'we actually never asked anyone at Hanban whether we are allowed to use these materials' (I-G7). Another person in charge of a CI admitted that his teachers were divided about the quality of the text books coming from Hanban (I-G3).

I personally think many of the teaching materials sent from Hanban still partly miss the point in relation to the needs, taste and habits of German learners. Especially in terms of layout and more fundamentally in terms of teaching methods, not least because in China the teaching approach is still rather teacher centred.

(I-G3)

Interestingly enough the exact opposite opinion can also be heard:

I think the teaching materials coming from China are getting better and better. The books changed and so did teaching methods. There is no longer this teacher-centred teaching, it's much more a communicative approach nowadays. And yes, we could use other materials not provided by Hanban, but we would be stupid not to use their materials as they are quite all right. And it makes a difference whether we can provide our customers with books for free or whether they have to pay 25 euro.

(I-G2)

Another issue only becomes obvious in non-English speaking countries, namely the fact that Hanban textbooks and other teaching materials are only provided in English, which makes it difficult for those who do not speak English very well, or at all (I-G3; I-G10). But when CIs, on the other hand, use local German materials this also can become a problem because ‘if a Chinese teacher does not speak German, we can’t use the local teaching materials either. So sometimes it’s a bit complicated to standardise materials and thereby also classes’ (I-G3). Hanban is aware of these problems and has encouraged Institutes in Germany, but also in various other countries around the world, to develop local teaching materials, and a number of Institutes have done so (CICRM 2009: 230, CICRM 2011: 165, 182, 209). This, however, is easier said than done, because it is ‘very complicated and complex and should be done by experts, because we don’t have the necessary expertise’ (I-G10). Books sent from Hanban not related to language teaching are, in the opinion of people in charge of German CIs, not of the highest standard:

I guess we could order these 3,000 books every year, but so far we did not order any. First of all it was an issue of workload [to select and order] and secondly we have a very well equipped Sinology library and I think the books provided are not terribly interesting or academically high-class. But I guess we will order some later on, because, to be honest, as long as we don’t have to pay for, we first can order and then see what we get.

(I-G1)

Other Institutes more actively try to equip their library and combine books sent by Hanban with books locally bought (I-G2; I-G3).

We get books and the like from Hanban but we also use parts of our budget to buy books and to expand our library stock in a meaningful manner. Because the book-post from Hanban is sometimes not very suitable for our local needs and it is sometimes a bit chaotic and it can happen that we get a book load with Italian books.

(I-G3)

Another practical problem that was also highlighted by various Australian Confucius Institutes becomes apparent when closely reading the Reference Materials in which CIs are normally asked to not only provide their annual work reports, but also to provide suggestions on how to improve the working of Confucius Institutes. Various Institutes have suggested to Hanban that there should be more and better coordination and cooperation between Institutes in one country in order to share resources and experiences. The Düsseldorf CI, for example, made this suggestion in 2008 (CICRM 2008: 199), in 2009 (CICRM 2009: 231), and in 2011 (CICRM 2011: 148).¹⁸ As other Institutes also asked for more coordination and cooperation (CICRM 2008: 228; CICRM 2009: 251; CICRM 2011: 179/180, 182), it seems to be a crucial issue throughout Germany.

What is happening at Confucius Institutes in Germany

Back in 2007, Liu Jinghui from the Chinese embassy in Berlin described the main target audience of Confucius Institutes as ‘non-sinological audience interested in Chinese culture and language’ (quoted in Hartig 2007: 62), that is to say, the general public. The general public is of course one major target group of CIs in Germany, but as with Australia, German CIs also target students (and sometimes staff) both from Sinology or China Studies or other disciplines of their home universities, as well as companies and institutions with an interest in China.

According to Lai Zhijin, former Chinese director of the Confucius Institute in Leipzig, there are three general reasons why people go to Confucius Institutes. First, people go for work related reasons, as they either already do or they want to do business with China; second, because of cultural curiosity and interest. The third reason, strongly informed by the location of the Institute in the East German city of Leipzig, is what Lai calls ‘special feelings’ (quoted in CNPolitics 2012). She notes, and having been at several lectures and discussions at this CI, I can confirm this, that a lot of elderly people who lived in the former GDR come to the Confucius Institute out of a certain attachment with China due to the, at least assumed, ideological proximity to their former country of origin. Although this study is not primarily concerned with the question why people go to Confucius Institutes, information gathered through random conversations with visitors backs this description: people either go to CIs because they have a business relationship with China or they have a personal interest. This underpins the argument made earlier that the audience of Confucius Institutes is an active and self-paced one which is looking for personal benefits and gratification.

Overall, the provided contents are roughly similar throughout Germany and can be divided into language courses for different target groups and levels and various cultural events (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 537).¹⁹ Looking closer at these two segments presents some interesting details.

Institutes provide a variety of language courses to a wide range of students, which include people from all walks of life, from children to elderly people. One cohort in this diverse group of people is university students: numerous, if not all, Confucius Institutes in Germany in one way or another provide courses for these audiences.

The CI Berlin, for example, ‘offers credit-earning courses in Chinese Language and Culture [...] for students at Freie Universität Berlin as an additional qualification with regard to their future vocation’ (CICRM 2011: 140). Language courses that can be transferred into credit points were also offered at the Confucius Institute in Hamburg (Confucius Institute Hamburg online) and the CI at Trier University in 2011 offered credit courses in Chinese language to law students and courses in oral Chinese for students from the Sinology department (CICRM 2011: 214, 215). Another example is the CI at the University of Leipzig, which provided classes ‘specially conducted for Sinology students’ of

the host university (CICRM 2011: 192), including courses dealing with ‘Cultural knowledge and basic conversation’, ‘Pinyin and four tones’, or a course to ‘Refresh sinology students’ Chinese language abilities’ (ibid.).

Another aspect concerns the actual attendance figures of language courses. Since the establishment of the CI Nuremberg-Erlangen in 2006 until October 2009, a total of 785 people attended language courses there (CICRM 2009: 270). The Düsseldorf CI provided language courses to about 700 people in 2008 (CICRM 2008: 187). In 2009, it ran try-out courses for 11 people, Basic Chinese 1 for 53 people, Basic Chinese 2 for 22 people, Basic Chinese 3 for 19 people, and Intermediate Chinese for 13 people (CICRM 2009: 231).

In 2011, the Confucius Institute Metropolis Ruhr organised 43 language classes for 355 students (CICRM 2011: 159), while the Frankfurt Institute, from January to November 2011, provided 1,250 teaching hours for about 519 students (CICRM 2011: 164) and in Heidelberg there were, according to ‘incomplete statistics’, about 250 students enrolled until mid-November 2011 (CICRM 2011: 178).

Last but not least the numbers from the CI in Leipzig from 2011 provide a detailed overview and thereby a closer look into the offering of this CI (CICRM 2011: 191–192). 474 people attended 13 different language classes, including beginner classes, intensive beginners classes, one-on-one classes for traditional Chinese, in-house courses for middle school students, Chinese for senior citizens, Chinese for kids and Chinese for travellers. Furthermore, the Institute provided the three already mentioned classes to students from the Sinology department (altogether 93 participants) and conducted middle school classes in and around Leipzig, which were attended by 434 students, but this included a single one-hour session about ‘Greetings and introducing yourself’ for 359 students.

In relation to language courses one issue that is clearly recognisable is the number of course participants. It was interesting to hear at least two interview partners very straightforwardly (I-G1; I-G3) noted that the number of participants ‘is, admittedly, not terribly high’ as one of them put it (I-G3), and others indicated the same issue. Interviewees raised two other related issues: a large drop-out rate and the problem of course fees. This issue came up in several interviews (I-G1; I-G3; I-G5; IG6; I-G9; I-G10) and can also be detected from the Reference Materials. In 2007, the CI in Nuremberg-Erlangen reported to Hanban that the demand for lower level courses was ‘far greater than the demands for advanced courses’ and therefore it had ‘cancelled (temporarily) the advanced courses, enlarged the number of elementary courses and added a basic course’ for beginners (CICRM 2007: 147). In 2009, the CI at Trier University complained about the large fluctuation of people learning Chinese (CICRM 2009: 90). One interviewee described the situation as follows: ‘One problem, especially in the early days, was that people would come to sit in one of our beginner’s courses or gratis try-out courses and afterwards said “well, this was interesting and fun, but that’s enough”’ (I-G9).

Others described this issue in relation to cultural activities:

We do more cultural events compared to language courses. Because, to be honest, not so many people want to learn Chinese, but a lot of people are interested in certain aspects of China, especially Chinese culture, literature or TCM.

(I-G5)

Another interviewee, who also admitted that his Institute did not have too many people in language classes and that culture activities worked better, gave a simple, but important, reason: 'Why is that? Because our cultural activities are for free and for language courses people have to pay' (I-G3).²⁰ And this, as another interviewee correctly pointed out, is a problem, especially in Germany where there is no tradition to pay for education (I-G6).

Next to language courses, Confucius Institutes are more and more engaged in local teacher training, which is seen as one way to overcome the described shortage of qualified teachers. Institutes throughout Germany hold courses and further education in various forms and also provide German Chinese teachers with advanced education possibilities in China. Furthermore, Confucius Institutes offer a wide range of what is called cultural activities, or events, in order to present a 'preferably colourful picture of Chinese traditional and contemporary culture' (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 537). This includes exhibitions, readings, concerts, celebrations of traditional Chinese festivals such as Chinese New Year or Moon Festival, film screenings, and courses or workshops dedicated to calligraphy, painting, Tai Ji or Qigong and Chinese cuisine.

Another important service is lectures and seminars dealing with both modern and traditional China in which German CIs provide a wide range of topics through which to present opinions on various aspects of traditional and contemporary China. Normally, lectures are given by distinguished speakers, many of them German academics, talking about their China related research topics. Some of the lectures are also given by Chinese writers, scholars or officials. The following listing provides a rough idea of the topics discussed in Confucius Institutes in Germany.

In 2008, the CI Berlin held a lecture on China and the Olympic Games and a lecture about 'Contemporary China and its Cultural Memory'. In 2009, Berlin hosted talks about 'Political Participation in China' and 'Traditional Chinese Medicine' (CICRM 2009: 220). Furthermore, Berlin held a lecture by Jiang Feng from the Chinese embassy in Berlin about the 'Chinese Education System' and a lecture on the 'Policy concerning AIDS in China' by Dr Jin Wei of the Central Party School of the Communist Party of China.

In 2009, Leipzig held lectures about 'Cultural hybridisation and economic dynamics in China' and on 'China's role in the world economy crisis' (CICRM 2009: 263). Trier CI in 2009 not only held a lecture series about 'Chinese Culture', but also talks about 'The value of the Contemporary Chinese Literature' and a lecture dealing with 'The background of the Problems of Chinese

Minorities' (CICRM 2009: 295). The Frankfurt CI in 2009 held a reading session with Mo Yan (CICRM 2009: 230). In 2011, a lecture at the Confucius Institute at Trier University discussed whether China was a military threat (CICRM 2011: 220) and Frankfurt held a talk by the before mentioned former Chinese ambassador to Germany Lu Qiutian about 'Different ways of thinking – a comparison of Eastern and Western Culture' (CICRM 2011: 165).

Although there are overlaps in terms of topics and lecturers, which is due to the manageable number of people working on China in Germany,²¹ normally Institutes organise their activities independently. However, for certain events, some CIs in Germany cooperate. The mentioned lecture of former ambassador Lu is one example: after Lu gave his lecture at the CI in Frankfurt, he also talked about this topic at the Confucius Institute in Leipzig. Another example here concerns a cultural event that got a bit out of line from the usual Confucius Institute presentations. In early 2012, the Leipzig CI invited a Chinese punk rock band called *CHAN* (*chan yuetuan*) for a concert in Germany. In order to reduce costs, Leipzig joined hands with the CI in Hamburg, where the musicians also performed a few days later. A similar collaboration saw gigs by the Beijing punk rock band *First Day of Autumn* (*jinri liqiu*) in Düsseldorf and Hamburg, in 2010, invited by both Confucius Institutes (Ito 2011).

What is not happening at German Confucius Institutes

Analysing topics and events provided by Confucius Institutes in Germany one can contend that within the limits of their resources they present quite a comprehensive picture of China, but in order to not raise any false pretence, there are limitations for Confucius Institutes in Germany as well.

As Hachenberg and Li point out there are regular critical, sometimes polemical, requests by the media about how Confucius Institutes deal with 'problematic topics' such as the situation of human rights in China (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 539). First of all, according to Hachenberg and Li, it has to be noted that Confucius Institutes are 'official Institutes of the Chinese state insofar that they can only be established with approval from Hanban and are financed with an essential part from the Chinese side' (ibid.). Thereby there arises some 'naturalness', such as that CIs according to their Constitution 'shall not contravene the laws and regulations of China' (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 539). They furthermore quote that Confucius Institutes 'shall not involve or participate in any political, religious, ethnic/racial, or any such related activities' (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 539). Anticipating that such regulations could bring critics to the scene, both former directors of the Confucius Institute in Düsseldorf continuing to remind their readers that he who thinks such regulations are peculiar should keep in mind that 'surely the same criterion applies for German Goethe Institutes abroad' (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 539).

Bearing in mind accusations from the media, they make clear that Confucius Institutes are 'by no means propaganda machines of the Chinese government' (ibid.). This, they explain, is excluded through the 'joint venture construction

with a national partner who always has a weighty say' (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 539). But they also make clear that Confucius Institutes are not instruments for dissident organisations either. They see Confucius Institutes as a platform, a platform that can also be used for critical dialogue about controversial topics as long as the dialogue 'is fair and balanced' (Hachenberg and Li 2007: 539). These statements can be seen as exemplary and were echoed in one way or the other in my interviews. All interviewees assured me that there was no interference from Hanban and no attempts to push topics in a certain direction.

We are no executive organ of the Chinese Ministry of Education. [...] Of course, who is giving the money may try to have a say, but as far as I can see none of the Institutes connected to a university would allow an intervention in its independence.

(I-G6)

'Hanban doesn't impinge on our daily work at all' (I-G9) is a statement which can be heard from almost any staff member at German Confucius Institutes. Accordingly, 'Hanban is much more like an offering platform. You can choose various parts and structural elements to integrate in your own program' (ibid.). Another revealing point is the following argument: 'Hanban is much more an administrative body which is not that much interested in questions of content. Besides, there are too many Institutes around the world and they cannot have a close look at everyone' (I-G5).

All this sounds like the old Chinese saying 'the sky is high and the emperor far away' (*tian gao huangdi yuan*), but there are limitations for Confucius Institutes in Germany. Similar to Confucius Institutes in Australia, these limitations concern sensitive topics, which can be labelled the T-words: Taiwan, Tibet and Tian'an'men. People in charge of Confucius Institutes are fully aware of this problem. One managing director in 2007 put it this way: 'If you sign such a contract, you know the limits' (Hartig 2007: 62). This seems to be the general understanding throughout the Institutes. 'Our independence is limited regarding precarious topics. If topics like Tibet or Taiwan would be approached too critical, this could be difficult' (I-G3). Another director is sure that 'as long as I don't do anything anti-communist or pro Falun Gong, I don't think my Chinese co-director would intervene in anything I do' (I-G1). Even though it is true that 'circumstances have changed in China, it's no more 1976 and there is a bigger openness in the cultural sphere' (I-G2), nonetheless Confucius Institute staff know 'of course in which context we operate' (ibid.).

Essentially it is up to every Institute to define this context and try to find ways to organise events. 'If we cover critical topics, it has to be in a balanced way and with the necessary respect towards Chinese sensitivities' (I-G3). Another interviewee admitted that there was 'this initial suspicion that we are a propaganda arm of the Communist Party. But de facto there is no interference' (I-G10). He also noted that 'if we really would invite a dissident who is overcritical with China then we would have a problem' and explained how to work in such a setting:

We have a rough idea what is possible and what not and you develop a sense for this which, of course, sometimes may also include a certain self-control/self-regulation. I do not deny the problems with human rights and other issues; however, I try to follow a balancing approach. In this regard I'm always referring to the German Federal Government's official policy which follows an integrative and not a confrontational approach. And this is my approach as well, as I have to live with this setting when I do this job.

(I-G10)

But it seems that Hanban does not really trust its international partners. According to Weigl (2009: 36) at the Third Confucius Institutes Conference in 2008 there were 'no direct content-related precepts' but it came up 'that the following topics are not very welcomed: Tibet, Falun Gong and Taiwan', a fact that was later confirmed by one managing director when I asked him about this statement. Another statement described the area of tension in which people in charge of Confucius Institutes in Germany operate:

Of course you have to know that German journalism goes somewhat into hysterics when it comes to such [sensitive] issues. Therefore you have to watch out not to get any problems from the Chinese side, but you also have deal with German journalism in a smart way.

(I-G1)

One manager speculated that the Institute 'probably couldn't exhibit Ai Weiwei but I guess we could hold a discussion with the Tibet Initiative'²² (I-G6). Yet another manager admitted that 'it would be very interesting to see what happens if someone would really invite dissidents. It would be interesting to see someone testing how far one can go and how this would be handled' (I-G9). But the general understanding is more like this:

Confucius Institutes are not an Institute for anti-Chinese organisations, like dissident groups or Falun Gong. It would be dewy-eyed to affirm this. We know where we stand and I think we make full use of the space we have. But that Falun Gong appears here, that's a physical impossibility.

(I-G2)

Therefore, it depends on local German staff what happens and what does not happen at Confucius Institutes. 'I didn't ask anyone what we can do or not. Insofar I surely square it with my conscience or with what I know about China, what we can do and what we cannot do' (I-G7). One interviewee, similar to an Australian director, noted that she did this job voluntarily and if some interference should come up she could 'quit the job at any time' (I-G1).

There cannot be any final judgment whether all this may lead to self-censorship, but it can be argued that staff members of Confucius Institutes or

members of Confucius Institute councils – mostly recognised scholars – probably would not risk their reputations doing active propaganda for the Chinese government. But it is also obvious that they would not risk losing the money coming from Hanban – although it is not a massive amount – by covering anti-China topics.

Notes

- 1 Other German thinkers joint in this intellectual China bashing back then. German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) famously said that China does not have history and for Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) Confucius' remarks were just 'unbearable, because every individual can reel them off' (quoted in Loudon 2002: 89).
- 2 For PRC's relations with East Germany (German Democratic Republic) see: Feege, Anja (1995): *Die DDR und China 1949–1990: Politik – Wirtschaft – Kultur*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- 3 The General Administration of Press and Publication is the government's administrative agency responsible for drafting and enforcing China's prior restraint regulations, as well as for screening books discussing 'important topics.' The GAPP has the legal authority to screen, censor, and ban any print, electronic, or internet publication in China.
- 4 This episode was globally recalled when Mo Yan received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2012 as he, a member of the China Writers' Association and one of the official delegation in Frankfurt, who not only gave the keynote speech there, but also left the room.
- 5 The Excellence Initiative aims to strengthen some selected universities more than others in order to raise their international visibility. The initiative, however, mainly focuses on individual projects, graduate schools or research clusters, and is therefore not necessarily an indication of university wide excellence.
- 6 Since the article was published, the author told a German journalist, he was denied a visa for China (Kolbe 2012).
- 7 It is correct that *Hauptquartier* has a strong militaristic connotation that reminds a native speaker immediately of Hitler's *Führerhauptquartier*, or Führer Headquarters in English. However, this tendentious translation, which assumingly deliberately plays with the connotation of German history, undermines the overall argument; more so because the Chinese *zongbu* can be translated not only into *headquarters* (*Hauptquartier*), but also, more neutrally, into *centre*, *general office* or *main office*.
- 8 Based on my personal notes.
- 9 Interestingly enough a sinologist at the University of Bonn told me that his university in the early years of this initiative originally was thinking about to establish a Confucius Institute there as well but the idea was overruled after the Chinese embassy noted that there should only be one institute in each German federal state and the first one was in the making already in Düsseldorf (I-G11).
- 10 Statements with a similar intention can be found in relation to Australian CIs as well. When Charles Darwin University announced that it would establish a CI, the day was not only describes as 'red-letter day' in the press release, but it also quotes Northern Territory Chief Minister Paul Henderson as saying: 'Securing a Confucius Institute in Darwin is a landmark step in bilateral relations between China and the Northern Territory' (Charles Darwin University online, 2011).
- 11 The professor is teaching at Ruhr University Bochum which, as just outlined, according to the Confucius Institute Düsseldorf also applied to Hanban in order to establish a Confucius Institute.

- 12 The Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation is Taiwan's most well-known foundation for international scholarly exchange, named after the son of Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi).
- 13 One German CI notes a similar issue that came up in Australia, namely the fact that initial funds from China did not arrive for several months 'which brought in somewhat inconvenience for the day-to-day work' (CCIRM 2008: 241).
- 14 Of course, it is theoretically thinkable that this may provide Institutes in the Eurozone with more money at some point.
- 15 Information obtained informally from another Institute, however, suggest that it might be a question of negotiation and that it is apparently also possible that Hanban would pay for the locally hired managing director.
- 16 In this text, Duan Yi (2008: 51), a former staff member of Hanban in charge of Confucius Institutes in Europe, says:

The lessons and instruction of Confucius Institutes includes all-round introduction into contemporary China's economy, politics, culture and education [and] the institute's teachings can also bear reference to those in-depth questions. [Therefore] to a certain extent one can say that Confucius Institutes inevitable move closer to the battle front line of theoretical work. This requires the formation of a set of legitimate explanations for those aspects and this in turn requires the teachers of Confucius Institutes to have a [relative to 'ordinary Chinese'] higher ideological level/higher level of thoughts (*sixiang shuiping*) and theoretical attainment/literacy (*lilun suyang*). Thus [through teaching all aspects of contemporary China by such teachers] the world can understand the real China, can relate to the Chinese development model and China's cultural spirit and can [eventually] benefit from it.

- 17 A related problem is the fact that German local teachers do not have any teaching certificates and so they cannot work in local education administration (CICRM 2011: 198). And even though Hanban is asked to help these teachers to get such certificates, the origins of this problem emerges not in Beijing or with Hanban, but in Germany where teachers have to have a so called Staatsexamen (Germany's government licensing examination which teachers need to work in their profession) and teaching Chinese was not included and this situation only changes recently in some states of Germany.
- 18 In 2008 in Düsseldorf for example suggested the creation of 'CI worldwide magazines' (CICRM 2008: 199). Although decision-making processes within Hanban remain unknown, but in March 2009 the first issue of a Chinese-English magazine called *Confucius Institute* was published and in mid-2010 another seven bilingual versions were published. In 2014, the Confucius Institute in Leipzig started to publish the German edition of the *Confucius Institute* magazine.
- 19 Once again this is a classification adopted by the institutes themselves. Sometimes, however, people in charge are not totally sure about this separation either. As one interviewee phrased it in a rhetorical question: 'Take a calligraphy course, for example, is this a language course or is this a cultural course?' (I-G2).
- 20 Just to have a rough idea in this regard, following randomly picked prices of language courses from the websites of some German institutes in 2012: Hamburg offered a 12 week long course 'Chinese for Students' with 48 teaching units for €144. A course 'Travel Chinese' with 10 teaching hours costed €75 (the reduced price is either €56 or €25). Heidelberg offered basic Chinese courses with 22 teaching units for €154 (reduced €110), mid-level courses with 27 teaching units for €189 or €135 and a basic course for kids with 38 teaching units for €266. The Confucius Institute in Leipzig offered various courses over 12 weeks with 24 teaching units for €144, reduced for €96 or 'Chinese language and culture for the young at heart' over eight weeks with 16 teaching units for €64.
- 21 Opinions on this matter differ partly through CIs in Germany, which also depends on the place of the Institute and it may be easier for the CI in Berlin to find lecturers than

the CI in Leipzig. Leipzig for example therefore initiated a lecture series called 'The young view towards China' in which young scholars (mainly recently graduated) present their research findings and this idea was picked up by other institutes as well.

- 22 According to its mission statement the Tibet Initiative is a non-partisan, non-religious, and non-profit organisation, fighting for the Tibetan people's right to self-determination and the protection of their human rights. The Initiative works to influence the People's Republic of China through nonviolent means to put an end to arbitrary arrests, torture, and political and cultural oppression in Tibet.

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9 Confucius Institutes

The real vs. the correct China

The rationale for this study was to investigate Confucius Institutes as the most prominent and most controversial instrument of China's public diplomacy. As I have illustrated in this book, there are two cardinal aspects determining these Institutes: First, their structural configuration, which has multiple implications not only for individual Institutes and their partners involved, but more generally for the Chinese conduct of public diplomacy. Second, the political system they are representing, which also has various implications for how Confucius Institutes perform their function as an instrument of China's public diplomacy. The aim of this final chapter is to put the pieces of the preceding chapters together and to link the two cardinal aspects to the overall arguments, namely that Confucius Institutes have to be understood in the context of China's broader foreign policy objectives; that they are an instrument of Chinese public diplomacy and not crude propaganda or espionage¹; and that they, however, are not introducing the real China, but that they tend to present a politically correct version of China to the world.

The unique structure of Confucius Institutes: engaging local stakeholders

In relation to the actual structure, Australian and German case studies confirm earlier assessments as they show that Confucius Institutes in these two developed countries are organised as joint ventures between a Chinese institution (mainly universities) and a foreign organisation (also mainly universities). In this setting international partners first of all provide the facilities and rooms for the Institute; they provide local staff, normally paid by the host university (either because people already work there or the university has a budget for them); and international partners contribute to the project funding of Confucius Institutes, intended to be on a 1:1 basis. The Chinese side provides international partners with start-up funding of about US\$100,000 for the first years, and also with teaching materials. Official reports of Hanban sending Chinese teachers and directors cannot be totally confirmed by the case studies, as different Institutes in Australia and Germany did not have a team of people dispatched from China at the time of the interviews between 2009 and 2012. Furthermore, Hanban

provides the other half of the programme funds; but, as outlined, in 2010/2011 it was the first time that not all requested project funds were approved by headquarters. While the stream of money, as explained, can be seen as a way to direct the programmes of CI, the case studies indicate that these budget cuts were not so much a case of preventing certain topics, but were much more due to financial considerations and limitations.

For a comprehensive understanding of the CI project, a number of other aspects are of crucial importance. First, one can detect opposing ideas about how Confucius Institutes are formed. On the one hand there is Hanban emphasising a reactive approach, in the sense that international partners apply to establish a Confucius Institute. It seems obvious why Hanban would emphasise this reactive approach, namely in order not to raise any fears about potential Chinese cultural invasion, which may come along with the growing number of Confucius Institutes. On the other hand there are voices indicating that Hanban follows a much more proactive approach and decides where to set up Confucius Institutes. Although this might not be a world shaking matter at first glance, it is of relevance for the study of these Institutes as the latter view would confirm fears (real or alleged) of a Chinese cultural invasion.

The case studies illustrate that both approaches are practised in reality, as either international partners or China (be it through Hanban, a local consulate or Chinese universities) take the initiative to establish a Confucius Institute. The Hanban point of view is backed by the fact that in 2014 more than 200 institutions in some 70 countries were applying for a CI (Liu Y. 2014). Another finding from the case studies also hints at the officially proclaimed reactive approach, namely the fact that various Confucius Institutes are set-up and serried geographically. In Australia, this is the case with the metropolitan areas of Brisbane and Melbourne, which have three Institutes each, and in Germany, in the Ruhr area, where there are Institutes in Düsseldorf and Duisburg. This method admittedly does not convey the impression of an elaborate strategy, which would be useful as such a concentration of Institutes – that can also be found in other countries – intensifies the competition in the region.

Case studies furthermore indicate that in the early days Hanban gave the impression to international partners that there would only be a limited number of Institutes in their respective countries or regions. This was possibly the case because either Hanban wanted to limit the number in order to make Confucius Institutes something exclusive or Hanban was not sure whether the concept would be successful and a limited number of Institutes would have been a kind of reassurance in this regard. However, in the course of time, Hanban changed – or had to change – this approach as more and more international partners were applying to establish a Confucius Institute. This, as the case studies have demonstrated, was especially unsatisfying for some of the early established CIs as they thought they would have such an exclusive position and that they could spread their services beyond their home cities.

The argument that Hanban strategically picks countries cannot be denied either because within the decision-making process, which is in Hanban's hands,

headquarters has the possibility of selecting and preferring certain applicants. In this context, it is hard to ignore the unequal distribution of Confucius Institutes around the world. Whereas there are, for example, 149 Confucius Institutes and 153 Confucius Classrooms in Europe, there are 37 CIs and 10 CCs on the African continent as at the end of 2013 (Hanban 2013). Although these numbers seem to confirm the assumption of selective decision-making towards strategically important destinations, it has to be kept in mind – and the case studies revealed this clearly – that setting up a Confucius Institute requires a substantial financial and infrastructural contribution from the international partner's side, which is easier to fulfil in developed countries.

The most noteworthy feature of Confucius Institutes, as I have argued throughout the book, is the inbuilt engagement of local stakeholders and their expertise. As outlined in Chapter 3, a number of scholars have discussed how best to engage local expertise in order to conduct public diplomacy. Taken together and squaring with the findings from the case studies, there are several interrelated advantages for China in engaging local expertise.

One fundamental advantage is the relative cost-effectiveness of the approach. According to Xu Lin, this cooperative model guarantees that Confucius Institutes are an instrument that helps the Chinese government obtain huge effects with the least amount of money (quoted in Liu H. 2008: 33). While the official idea is the equal sharing of costs, the case studies partially show a different picture. One Australian director noted very frankly that she thought there were more advantages for the Chinese side because 'the Hanban is gaining a lot of very, very high profile universities and this is really a great marketing tool for the Chinese government' (I-A7). Overall, this interview partner is of the opinion that 'international universities are pretty much more into the CIs than the Hanban, because the Hanban is only giving a little bit of funding' (ibid.). While this may not be the case with every individual CI, especially in developing countries, there seems to be a trend in this regard.

Without giving concrete numbers Xu Lin confirmed this at the Confucius Institute Conference in 2011. Asked by a Chinese journalist about Hanban's investment in 2011, she noted that 'foreign investments notably exceeded Chinese input'² which for Xu showed that 'the demand from abroad to learn Chinese is real and foreign countries do not only set up Confucius Institutes to get money from China.'³ Interestingly enough, Xu asked Chinese journalists not to be too explicit about this imbalance in the benefit to China for fear that the Chinese government would think there was no longer a need to fund Confucius Institutes. In her 2014 work report Xu Lin (2015a: 12) noted that the amount of foreign-partner side cash expenditure, personnel, teaching facilities and utilities cost totalled US\$443 million and the total amount of Chinese expenditure was US\$295 million. She further noted that the overall contribution ratio between the Chinese and the foreign side in 2014 was 1 : 1.5, which confirms the tendency of increasing foreign engagement as indicated by the case studies.

Next to the money, as the case studies have illustrated, local stakeholders have profound local knowledge that is helpful for almost any aspect of the work

of Confucius Institutes, ranging from knowing the host university, public bodies for any kind of necessary administrative and bureaucratic matters such as handling resident permits for dispatched staff, knowing local sponsors and knowing local audience. This knowledge of the local population is of particular importance, as it helps in developing a programme adjusted to local circumstances and expectations. In the case of Confucius Institutes this means that, in an ideal setting (that is where CIs have both local and Chinese dispatched directors who work well together) both parties will work together to create the actual programme for the individual Confucius Institute. In this regard, the Chinese part may have a certain idea about how to best represent Chinese culture and the international part would have an idea of whether or not the representation would work for the local audience. One could also assume that the international part may want to test the boundaries and touch on controversial topics while the Chinese part would know how far the boundaries could be pushed.

This, as various interviewees have confirmed, requires a constant exchange of thoughts and ideas. Overall it makes the Confucius Institutes a 'rather trust-intensive' undertaking, as a representative from a European Confucius Institute puts it. According to him, one of the most challenging things is 'designing content when cultural tastes are poles apart and talks about striving to find some compromise [can be] the hardest task one can face in intercultural cooperation' (quoted in Hellkötter *et al.* 2011: 201). In this regard my case studies show a mixed picture. Some interviewees suggested that setting up a programme in such an intercultural context may be an uphill battle; others made it clear that the individual Institute's programme is benefiting from those different inputs.

Another advantage for China is that the engagement of international stakeholders clearly raises the credibility for the whole project. Recalling the issue of source credibility discussed in Chapter 3, the engagement of local stakeholders theoretically helps to distance the Institutes from the Chinese state as there is a rather long detour from the Chinese government to the foreign end-user via Hanban and the Chinese and international partners. This is even more true, as most international partners are universities which not only emphasise and uphold their separation from and independence of the state, but are normally suspicious towards governments as such.

This freethinking spirit of universities potentially raises the credibility even further. In this context a Chinese interviewee with profound knowledge on the topic told me that the reason why China decided to set up Confucius Institutes in this joint venture manner was first an uncertainty at the beginning how this whole project would work and second, 'China didn't want Confucius Institutes to be seen as a communist thing' (I-C6). This intention makes even more sense when taking into account that Confucius Institutes lack the detachment from the government, which is crucial for Western cultural institutions abroad. In this setting, the joint venture structure helps to balance this disadvantage, as the case studies indicate. The counterargument here of course is that the target audience knows about the structural configuration. However, the initial idea to engage foreign non-state actors in China's conduct of public diplomacy is strategically smart.

Yet another advantage has so far gone totally unnoticed in the debates over the Institutes. By setting up Confucius Institutes in cooperation with local organisations, China not only builds on a pre-existing infrastructure and benefits from the reputation of its host institutions, but setting up its cultural outposts in this way also allows China to establish as many Institutes as it can. This may sound rather unimportant, but when keeping in mind that the Chinese government is still restrictive in terms of letting foreign countries establish their own cultural institutes in China this fact appears in a different light. Until now the political principle has followed a strict reciprocity, reflected in the rule 'one country, one cultural institute' (Kahn-Ackermann quoted in Ammelburg 2008: 17). This has led to the situation where, for example, Germany's Goethe Institute has one office in Beijing and its Shanghai branch is formally and officially named The Department of Culture and Education of the General Consulate of the Federal Republic of Germany Shanghai.⁴ China avoids these self-imposed limitations because Confucius Institutes are, as formally registered associations in Germany and in Australia, a formal part of the host universities. This makes them, formally, a local institution, which enables China to establish more than one cultural institute in a country, without impinging official cultural treaties and agreements.

A last advantage for the Chinese side is that Chinese dispatched staff can broaden their horizons and return to China with new ideas and concepts. This advantage was mentioned by Xu Lin, who said dispatching staff might help to develop Chinese culture. In general, it was argued by a number of interviewees, especially from international host organisations, that Confucius Institutes represent a learning process for Chinese affiliated organisations that may eventually have a triggering effect on the higher education system in the People's Republic. Local CI staff thus sees the structure as a means to influence, to a certain degree, the Chinese side.

There are, however, also disadvantages for China. Regarding individual Chinese universities involved in the CI endeavour the biggest disadvantage is that of human resources issues, especially for universities which run several CIs. Asked about how Chinese universities handled this situation, two representatives from one of the most prestigious universities in the country, with more than 10 Confucius Institutes around the world, not only told me that they shared the opinion of their international partners that there were too many Institutes, but they also noted that their university recently rejected requests from Hanban to open yet another Institute because of lack of human resources (I-C9).

More broadly speaking, one may argue that due to the joint venture structure China cannot easily do what it otherwise would do if there was not an international partner. Confucius Institutes, in this regard, do not work in the same way as the Chinese Culture Centre in Berlin for example, which is solely organised and operated by China's Ministry of Education. As the case studies have illustrated, there is more flexibility and more local input which has influence on the content and programmes of Confucius Institutes. However, as the case studies have also made clear, there are limitations in terms of what can be done

and such limitations in activities can be seen as the biggest disadvantage for international partners, as a number of my interviewees have admitted.

Because Confucius Institutes are cooperation projects between Chinese and international partners, the question is: what advantages are there for international partners? The simple and reasonable answer here is that they are looking for opportunities to benefit their host university. In this regard, my case studies revealed three broad reasons for international partners: they assume(d) Confucius Institutes would earn money, projects with China would earn prestige and moreover it is assumed that Confucius Institutes would benefit the hosting university in practical terms.

While these reasons, as indicated by a number of interviewees, were a trigger for international institutions to apply, especially in the earlier years, the case studies reveal that not all of these reasons do really hold up to scrutiny. First of all, international partners do not earn much money through Confucius Institutes; they are not the cash cows some assumed them to be, mainly because international partners have to invest as well, be it in cash or through in kind support in the form of rooms and working facilities, in order to sustain the facility. And this support from international partners, as statements of different interviewees indicate, exceeds the Chinese subsidies which was eventually confirmed by Xu Lin in her above quoted 2014 work report.

Another misconception concerns the aspect of prestige. First of all, opening a Confucius Institutes is not anything special anymore as the astonishing growth rate in the last 10 years indicates. It is not the exclusive club that international partners may have had in mind at the very beginning and which seemingly still is an argument used by less well-known international partners to justify attempts to establish a Confucius Institute. Second, even if it is the case that international cooperation in general advance the standing and repute of higher education institutions, whether the Confucius Institute project in particular earns such prestige is rather questionable. As my case studies suggest more often than not, international CI host organisations find themselves confronted with a rather sceptical public, especially published, opinion about their relationship to an undemocratic political regime, as well as the limitations in the programme. Whether those assumptions are correct or not does not matter, for the host institution, such debates are not helpful to their image and prestige.

The benefits for international partners therefore can best be described in terms of practical support for host universities and support for the broader public interested in China to know more about the country. One advantage mentioned throughout the interviews was access, or greater access, to Chinese universities and the Chinese education system. This aspect gets a more strategic dimension when considering that an increasing number of universities from outside of China are establishing a presence in China, which becomes an increasingly important market in the higher education sector.

The practical benefits at home include supporting the host university in general and/or the Chinese/Sinology department in particular, either to arrange workshops or conferences by providing funding or logistics or to support the

teaching activities at Chinese departments with more teachers and/or teaching materials, or to enable the teaching of Chinese altogether which is of crucial importance for a number of universities around the world without any China related departments. In this regard the benefits of having a CI may differ considerably from university to university: at place where no Chinese courses were offered before, the Confucius Institute will be seen as a much more profound benefit compared to universities with an established department of Chinese Studies/Sinology. At some universities with established departments one can also detect a rather sceptical perception from within, either that China scholars looking down on what CIs do in the sense that scholars do proper academic work related to China whereas CIs only reproduce cultural clichés or because some China scholars are suspicious and think that Confucius Institutes are in competition with them or simply that they spread communist propaganda.

The political dimension of Confucius Institutes

The issue of the sceptical perception is closely related to the second cardinal aspect determining Confucius Institutes, namely the political system these Institutes represent. As the analysis has shown, China views public diplomacy as an invaluable tool of its foreign policy in order to improve international perceptions of the country by telling its story to the world. In this context, one can note the rather conflicted and divided presence of China, which led William Callahan (2010), by identifying China's identity dilemma oscillating between positive and negative feelings, to describe China as a 'pessoptimist nation'.

In the context of this study this means that on the one hand we see an internationally active China which is increasingly confident and more assertive in its behaviour on the global stage. On the other hand, however, China is very much concerned about its global image, made clear through one headline in the party newspaper *Global Times* which asked in 2010 'How can we make the world like us?' Fairly open and self-critical, the paper noted that while 'China continues to exert a more confident image, it is also meeting some resistance from the world, even from its old friends' and concludes 'that China is facing a challenge to improve its image'. One of China's most important means coping with this image issue is through its public diplomacy which, according to Zhao Qizheng (2007) should be characterised by a self-confident approach, illustrated in his statement: 'China should not only listen, but talk back.'

As outlined in the conceptual discussion, public diplomacy, as in any form of diplomacy, eventually serves national interests. In my understanding, the case of China exemplifies this aspect distinctively as public diplomacy in China is very much understood in the context of national development. The analysis shows that it serves idealistic purposes, but more so it serves functional national interests. Not only is the international arena seen as a highly contested setting in the struggle for hearts and minds, but public diplomacy is seen as a means of safeguarding and promoting national interests by increasing China's status and making its voice heard globally. Public diplomacy is seen as a means for

introducing the ‘real China’ to the world, thus it is about telling China’s story to the world. This guiding principle which seemingly does focus less on the more idealistic notions of exchange, encounter and engagement put forward in the Western debates on public diplomacy, can be explained by China’s view of a rather sceptical global public opinion. In order to counter those sceptical opinions, China employs a number of instruments and initiatives similar to other countries, including media outlets, exchange programmes and the globe-spanning Confucius Institutes.

Interestingly enough, a common reaction from people in charge of Confucius Institutes is the negation of any (foreign) political dimension for Confucius Institutes. As outlined before, one Australian director told me that he does not care ‘two figs about politics’ and his ‘only interest is that the Institute works’ (I-A1), while a German director declared that Confucius Institutes are totally apolitical and do ‘not press any political point. We are interested in Chinese culture – nothing else’ (quoted in Goll 2010). This argument was made strongly by Xu Lin in her concluding remarks at the 9th Confucius Institute Conference in Xiamen in December 2014 when she said:

I would like to make it clear that the Confucius Institute is independent from politics. We are not the political product of the Chinese government; rather we are an institution supported by the Chinese government and the Chinese people for the promotion of Chinese language and culture. Some say that culture is inseparable from politics, but I disagree.

(Xu L. 2015b: 69)

While it is understandable that different people (not all of them, though) in charge of Confucius Institutes argue in this way, I bring forward the argument that Confucius Institutes as an instrument of China’s public diplomacy have – next to their official task to introduce Chinese language and culture – also broader foreign policy related aims, namely to support the overall development of China by creating a global favourable environment and to let people know about the country. The very fact that public diplomacy and its instruments is meant to support political goals is not a criticism as such,⁵ but has to be kept in mind in the context of Confucius Institutes.

The political dimension, first and foremost, becomes obvious with regards to the goal of Confucius Institutes after which these Institutes, according to their constitution, devote themselves to construct a Harmonious World. The plain reference to the construction of a Harmonious World clearly links CIs to China’s strategic narratives and foreign policy goals. A closer reading of Xi Jinping’s and Li Keqiang’s congratulatory letters on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the CIs in late September 2014 also illustrates the fact that they should be understood in the context of China’s broader foreign affairs. For Xi, the Institutes are a ‘symbol for China’s efforts toward world peace and international cooperation’ (Liu Y. 2014), which is clearly an allusion to both the slogans of Peaceful Rise/Development and Harmonious World. Xi also encourages CIs ‘to

push forward the advancement of human civilizations and people's heart-to-heart exchange, to jointly create a more beautiful tomorrow' (ibid.). Similarly, Li Keqiang notes that enhancing 'exchanges and learning between various cultures and to strengthen the understanding among peoples of different countries are important approaches to push forward the advancement of civilization and the progress of society' (Liu Y. 2014). He also calls upon CIs to continue the promotion 'of mutual understanding and friendship between Chinese people and citizens of other countries', to deepen cultural exchange and to 'make even greater contributions to enhancing civilization diversity and the harmonious advancement of peoples in the world' (ibid.).

These statements from the very heart of government not only clarify what the Chinese leadership wishes Confucius Institutes to do in the future, but also clearly point to the overall strategic narrative according to which China wants to contribute to a peaceful and harmonious global order. Moreover, it is worth highlighting the recurring theme that CIs should contribute to the understanding between peoples and nations, or as Vice Premier Liu Yandong (2014) puts it in her speech in celebration of the tenth CI anniversary: CIs should continue to 'help more foreigners to understand China'. While it is obvious that a cultural organisation abroad is devoted to helping foreign nationals learn more about its country's language and culture, in the case of CIs this also relates to a deeper underlying and more subtle narrative, namely that foreigners do not know enough about China, do not understand China and thus have a false impression of China, which ultimately results in China having a negative image in many parts of the world.

Another indicator for the political dimension concerns the fact that Confucius Institutes have an impressively high standing within the Chinese top leadership. This is illustrated in the fact that all nine members of the 17th Central Politburo Standing Committee of the CCP – the most powerful people in the country – and at least four out of seven members of the current 18th Central Politburo Standing Committee visited at least one Confucius Institute somewhere around the world during their tenure. Furthermore, the annual Confucius Institute Conferences clearly illustrate that CIs are in fact closely related to China's politics and foreign policy. Vice Premier Liu Yandong normally attends the conference, as did her predecessor Chen Zhili, and in her keynote speech at the 9th Confucius Institute Conference in December 2014 Liu clearly outlined the political implications of the work of CIs. She linked the Institutes to the two 'centennial goals' of the Chinese people, namely to double the 2010 GDP and people's income and finish the building of a society of initial prosperity in all respects by 2020, as well as to the attempts to realise 'the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation', which is, as outlined before, the latest catchphrase of Chinese politics. Another political hint, maybe minor but nevertheless telling, was that all delegates at the 2014 Confucius Institute Conference in Xiamen were invited to a presentation of the dance drama 'The Dream of the Maritime Silk Road.'⁶

A fourth indicator – the adherence to the One-China policy – is in my understanding interesting for two reasons. First, there is the fact that Confucius

Institutes and their foreign partners are required to adhere to this policy just as any entity that wants to engage with official China has to acknowledge this One-China policy. As the case studies have shown there are some frictions about the issue of Taiwan. In my understanding, however, the case in point here is a slightly different one, which leads to the perception of Confucius Institutes and how Hanban handles it. From the information I have gathered, it seems that Hanban must have realised this reference might raise eyebrows abroad. The statement was made in the so called ‘Guidelines to set up Overseas Confucius Institutes (Draft)’ (Hanban 2008; see also Han, F 2006), which stipulates that:

Overseas Confucius Institutes shall abide to the ‘one China’ policy, shall safeguard the independence and unity of the People’s Republic of China, they should comply with the laws and regulations of the host country and should accept the supervision of the government of the host country, and they should not participate in any political related, religious related or race related activities in the host country.

The current Hanban/Confucius Institute website, both in Chinese and English, does not mention the One-China policy anymore and even recent internal Hanban documents do not ask foreign partners to acknowledge this policy. At first sight it might seem to be a rather minor semantic makeover to skip the reference to the one-China policy, especially as this by no means absolves foreign partners from acknowledging this policy, which is a fundamental principle of the PRC’s foreign policy. Nevertheless I hold the view that this semantic has significance, especially in the context of China’s communication style with the world. It is yet another example of how China takes into consideration unease abroad (assumed or real) with certain terms and phrases such as ‘propaganda’, especially in the West. But in terms of image cultivation and charming people abroad, the crux is that these changes are just that, semantic makeovers which do not include a change in attitude.

Confucius Institutes and the introduction to China

The political dimension of Confucius Institutes in my understanding also comes forward with regards to the contents and topics these Institutes address, and do not address. This aspect is closely linked to the occasionally heated debate about whether Confucius Institutes are a propaganda arm of the CCP or not. The following section therefore summarises the contents provided by CIs.

Introducing Chinese language

According to Hanban’s official statements, the core business and the fundamental reason why China started the Confucius Institute project was to promote the teaching of the Chinese language. The official narrative is that international institutions approached the Chinese side and asked for help in promoting the

teaching of Chinese as a foreign language and to satisfy the growing demand in that field of education.

The increase in language courses and registered students in Confucius Institutes can be seen as one indicator of this growing demand. According to Hanban figures,⁷ in 2007 CIs offered 1,200 languages courses for some 46,000 registered students. In 2013, CIs offered 40,000 Chinese classes of various kinds for 850,000 students and in 2014 the Institutes had 1.11 million students worldwide. While these are impressive numbers, they have to put into perspective as the number of language courses does not give any indication about how many people actually participated and finished courses, but only how many registered. Taking the reported 40,000 courses for 2013 and proportioning them with the reported 1,086 Confucius Institutes and Classrooms for 2013, shows that, on average, every Confucius side in 2013 held almost 37 language courses, which seems a rather high number compared with the findings from the case studies of Confucius Institutes in Australia and Germany. This is even more so when looking at the number of registered students. Taking the numbers from 2014 this would mean that every Confucius side around the world on average had 837 registered students in 2014.

Another number indicates the growing interest in Chinese language: the number of people taking Chinese language tests. According to Hanban's statistics the number has increased constantly over the years and reached 5.42 million people worldwide in 2014, of which 62 per cent (about 3.36 million) were students at Confucius Institutes. However, once again these numbers are only partly informative as they do not indicate the level at which people participated, and nor do they show how people performed at that level.

Without focusing here on the pedagogical dimension of second language learning in general and teaching Chinese as a foreign language in particular, I bring forward the argument that Confucius Institutes are a place for initial contact and provide an *introduction* to the Chinese language rather than training for someone who wants to become *Sinophone*, which is understood to be the ability to develop a fluency and facility to operate in Chinese-language contexts comparable to one's own mother tongue, which for Edward McDonald (2011) not only means learning Chinese but becoming Chinese. From what the case studies have revealed in terms of practical issues, it is reasonable to argue that Confucius Institutes provide a starting point for contacting with the Chinese language. At this stage of their evolution, they do not have the means (and probably not even the mandate) to help people to become a *Sinophone* as understood by McDonald.

It is against this background that I challenge the arguments of Churchman (2011) and Penny (2012) who claim that the limited language curriculum provided by Confucius Institutes, which excludes various dialects and the traditional writing system, leads to 'semi-literacy in Chinese' (Churchman 2011). Although it is correct that Confucius Institutes teach only Standard Chinese, and one also can question the political dimension behind this (although it is not really surprising), the assumption that Confucius Institutes provide the means to become

fluent in Chinese or to enable students of Confucius Institutes 'to be able to read *The Analects*' (Penny 2012: 156) misinterprets what Confucius Institutes actually do on the ground and what they can achieve in light of the described practical issues they face.

Furthermore, it is not only a question of what level of language proficiency learners at Confucius Institutes can really reach, but also a question of what they *want* to achieve. As mentioned, one of the main target audiences of Confucius Institutes is the general public with no prior knowledge of China. As the case studies have illustrated, the general public is likely to only attend one or two courses, out of curiosity or just for fun. This finding is of particular interest for at least two reasons: first, it reveals a business problem for CIs as a recognisable portion of the audience is not willing to pay for language courses for a longer term; second, it exemplifies that CI visitors are an active and self-determined audience that not only has power over its content consumption, but also uses the offering provided by CIs based on needs and goals that are defined by the audience itself.

Closely related to the core business of introducing Chinese language are some of the most severe practical problems Confucius Institutes are facing. One fundamental issue concerns teachers at Confucius Institutes, especially those dispatched from China. First of all, there is a growing demand of teachers to fill the ever growing number of Institutes, a fact confirmed throughout the CIs I analysed. Interestingly, official numbers obtained from Hanban show a surprisingly different picture. Accordingly in 2012 there were about 20,000 full-time and part-time faculty and staff members in CIs of whom about 30 per cent (about 6,000) were dispatched by Hanban. One year later there were 28,670 full-time and part-time teachers of which Hanban dispatched 14,400 directors, teachers and volunteers; and in 2014 CIs had 33,745 full-time and part-time Chinese and foreign teachers of whom 15,500 were dispatched from China.

If one takes the numbers of operating Confucius Institutes and Classrooms, and proportions them with the numbers of dispatched teachers from China, this would mean that every Confucius side abroad could have drawn on three teachers from China in 2012, on 13 teachers in 2013 and on 11 teachers in 2014, on average. Using the overall numbers of teachers for this calculation, the situation appears even more relaxed as the average would have been roughly 21 teachers in 2012, an astonishing 26 teachers in 2013 and about 25 teachers in 2014. Comparing these numbers with the case study findings, they appear somewhat unrealistic, given the described issue of teacher shortage on ground. This issue becomes even more severe when taking into account that Australia and Germany are rather popular destinations for dispatched staff. In certain parts of Africa, for example, living conditions are very harsh and may discourage people to go there (I-C7; I-SA3).

The second teacher related issue, which Hanban articulates frequently, confirmed by the case study of Germany and echoed by one interviewee in the Czech Republic (I-CR), is the shortage of teachers who are proficient in local languages. The third teacher related issue concerns the teaching quality of

teachers and inadequate teaching methods. This problem is frequently discussed by Hanban and was confirmed by both interview partners in Australia and Germany.

One countermeasure to address the teacher issues is the increasing attempts to train local teachers which can be observed in a number of Confucius Institutes around the world. Another attempt to address the teacher issue is through the establishment of a Volunteer Chinese Teacher Programme, which, however, is not without its weaknesses. The teachers for this scheme are primarily recruited and selected from professional teachers, as well as postgraduate students and graduates who have majored in disciplines such as Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, Chinese Linguistics and Literature, Foreign Languages, Education, History, Philosophy, etc. After training, the volunteers will be dispatched to teach overseas, normally for one year. Although the overall idea is appealing, it raises questions of quality of the teachers and the language courses more generally; it would seem at least partially questionable that a trained historian could be so easily turned into a language teacher.

In the course of my research I came across other human resources related issues that provide further insights into the inner workings of Confucius Institutes, such as the quality and responsibilities of Confucius Institutes directors, the question of selection processes for Chinese and international directors and issues of cooperation between Chinese and international staff. Furthermore, it has been noted several times that Hanban should keep in mind the personal career planning of Chinese directors and that the post of a CI director should help to boost and not hamper these people's careers, which, in turn, would then make it easier to find people willing to go abroad.

Another issue regularly mentioned by Hanban, and which is partly confirmed by the case studies, is the problem of insufficient supply of tailor made teaching materials which Hanban is, similarly as with the teacher issues, trying to address by encouraging CIs to develop local teaching materials. By the end of 2014, teaching materials in 54 languages were developed by local Confucius Institutes and localised materials in another 27 languages were in the making (Xu L. 2015a: 13). As the case studies have revealed, there are different opinions among people in charge of Confucius Institutes about the quality of teaching materials sent from China. Whereas some highlight a change for the better in recent years, others are more cautious and still see weak spots, especially in terms of different pedagogical and methodological approaches to foreign language teaching. Another issue apparent in Germany is that, especially in the early years, teaching materials sent from Hanban were only available in English and were, therefore, not usable throughout all courses.

While Confucius Institute 'insiders' would critique teaching materials for practical-pedagogical reasons, 'outsiders' with ideological concerns would critique them for political reasons. Critics have accused Confucius Institutes of spreading propaganda about, among other things, the origins of the Korean War. A now deleted video on the Confucius Institute Online platform introduced 'The War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea' (Roberston 2012). This video

stated that the ‘United States manipulated the UN Security Council to pass a resolution to organise a UN Command consisting mainly of U.S. troops to enlarge the aggression against Korea’ and that the United States ‘tried to seize the whole peninsula’ (ibid.). While critics in the US, such as the Secretary of the Korean War Veterans Association, described this as ‘strictly propaganda’, this interpretation does present China’s official narrative about that war, which can be found in various texts and documents. In 2010, *China Daily*, for example, published an article referring to ‘veterans of the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea’ who ‘fought with North Korea against US aggression’ (Yan J. 2010).

While this debate concerns one particular piece of online material, the question about improper influence also points to the question of which textbooks are used by CIs. One of the commonly used textbooks in the Institutes – and undergraduate Chinese degrees courses generally – is the *New Practical Chinese Reader*, which is published by Hanban (Fallon, pending 2015). In her analysis of teaching materials in the context of Teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language, Fallon shows that textbooks of the 2000s ‘represent Chinese people in a positive light’ and explore only ‘very little social tensions’ (ibid.). Compared with textbooks of the 1990s, current textbooks ‘appear more sanitized’ as they show ‘only a small amount of the unfortunate or undesirable in society.’ This is echoed by Hubbert (2014: 335) who ascertains the ‘purposefully apolitical nature’ of teaching materials. In this regard, however, it is also important to recall that Confucius Institutes are free to use local teaching materials as well. Having said that, I also obtained unconfirmed information about a German Confucius Institute that wanted to order text books from a German publisher that included two maps of China, one according to the Western understanding, therefore excluding Taiwan, and another one reflecting the Chinese understanding, where the island of Taiwan was related to the state territory of the People’s Republic. According this unverified information, the Chinese director at this Institute obtained that this text book was not purchased.

Closely related to the teaching materials are the classroom practices that Hubbert investigated at a CI classroom in the United States. Hubbert (2014: 334) notes: ‘Whenever politically laden topics emerged from classroom discussions’, it was observable that ‘teachers quickly refocused students on language acquisition and cultural activities.’ This is in accordance with what teachers told me at South African Confucius Institutes when I asked them how they would handle sensitive issues in class. Teachers told me that during a short training course in Beijing they were advised either to highlight their limited knowledge about a topic or to ignore the topic and to ‘talk about other stuff’ (I-SA2; see also Stambach 2014). Hubbert (2014: 342), however, also observed that some teachers would ignore Hanban teaching guidelines, would use locally-published text books and that teacher’s stories about contemporary life in China ‘proved more effective as a generator of soft power in the CI classroom than official curriculum materials or apolitical classroom discussions.’

Introducing Chinese culture

Next to language teaching the second principal aspect of Confucius Institute activities is to provide opportunities for people to learn about Chinese culture, which is mainly done through cultural events such as exhibitions, film screenings or concerts, the celebration of traditional Chinese festivals or courses about Tai Chi, Qigong, paper cutting, calligraphy, Chinese tea ceremonies or Chinese cuisine. The latest visitor figures available are from 2013 when 1,086 Confucius sides around the world held 20,000 cultural activities with 9.2 million visitors and participants. According to these numbers each Confucius side hosted on average about 18 cultural events, and each of these events had 460 participants on average. In this regard, the case studies present a slightly different picture as the Institutes under investigation normally held more small scale events. The salient point here is the very fact, that the Hanban numbers (which actually come into being through reports from the individual Institutes) include *everything* that happens at a Confucius Institute, from the aforementioned activities, to opening celebrations, from open days, birthday celebrations of Confucius Institutes to activities in the host city, such as Long Nights of the Sciences, where Confucius Institutes are one of numerous institutions open to the public.⁸ Second, as the case studies have also shown, activities and events free of charge are a particular magnet for visitors, which are why the numbers of participants of cultural activities by far outnumber figures in language courses. Events free of charge normally include lectures, presentations, exhibitions or film screenings.

A third revealing finding is a certain ambiguity amongst a number of people in charge of Confucius Institutes concerning the question of what Chinese culture actually is, and there is also a certain insinuated devaluation of the cultural contents provided by CIs. This self-conception was exemplified by Xu Lin, who noted that ‘Confucius Institutes are not only teaching students to say “hello”, brew tea, or sing Chinese songs, but attempt to convey Chinese profound cultures to the world’ (quoted in Luo W. 2012), and even more so in different statements of foreigners engaged in Confucius Institutes. Overall, there is a certain tendency amongst representatives from international host organisations to devalue cultural content that is presented in Confucius Institutes and to criticise the Chinese approach to focus on traditional culture in this regard. According to one European director, ‘the tastes and demands of a foreign public and Hanban officials can be quite different’. Whereas the Chinese ‘tend to like song and dance shows that we might find rather kitschy and unrepresentative of real Chinese culture’, Westerners prefer ‘contemporary Chinese art’ which in turn ‘might be more popular with us than in Chinese official circles (quoted in Hellkötter *et al.* 2011: 202).

Assuming that Westerners probably relate contemporary Chinese art with people like Ai Weiwei it should not come as a big surprise that the demands of foreigners differ from those of Chinese officials, and that Hanban, and thereby official China, favours calligraphy courses over contemporary cultural manifestations. I would say though that there is no reason for limiting Chinese culture to this kind of art that some of my interviewees assumingly have in mind when

talking about Chinese culture. This rather elitist – and anti-Williamsian – understanding of culture devalues more popular aspects of it that nevertheless provides a good access to China and its people. In this regard, Chinese food can be seen as a universal cultural transmitter, for example.

However, it is true that certain aspects of Chinese culture highlighted by Hanban appears rather stereotyped and kitschy, and it is also correct to scrutinise the noticeably selective illustration of Chinese culture when Confucius Institutes focus only on these specific components. That it is indeed possible for Confucius Institutes to provide a wide range of cultural activities and content, including more contemporary aspects, is illustrated in the case of the German CIs that invited Chinese punk rock bands, or the Confucius Institute in Sydney that hosted the before mentioned discussion with Chinese director Chen Kaige and a lecture by Chinese writer Yan Lianke in 2011, who also talked at the Confucius Institute Bremen in Germany in 2014. Furthermore, the CI in Düsseldorf invited poet Bei Dao⁹ in 2007 who also participated in a panel discussion co-organised by the Confucius Institute at New York's Columbia University in February 2015.¹⁰ It is therefore important to note that Confucius Institutes have a certain space which prompts some observers to argue that Confucius Institutes are 'the most open-minded institution China has ever had' (Liu H 2008: 31), not least because some CIs 'ran events at which poets, writers and thinkers who were banned in China were able to speak' (Brown 2013: 162). In this setting, as this study argues, a crucial role is assigned to the people in charge of individual Institutes as it very much depends on them what is happening at Confucius Institutes and what is not happening there.

Introducing China: sensitive issues and controversial topics

The fact that it is up to people in the Institutes what eventually happens there is best exemplified in relation to the most contested aspect of Confucius Institutes by far, namely the question how sensitive issues are handled and what is actually happening at CIs and so on.

As pointed out earlier the only (rather broad) guidelines outlining the radius of operation for Confucius Institutes are provided in the General Principles of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes, which state that Confucius Institutes 'shall abide by the laws and regulations of the countries in which they are located, respect local cultural and educational traditions and social customs, and they shall not contravene concerning the laws and regulations of China' and 'shall not involve or participate in any activities that are not consistent with the missions of Confucius Institutes.' Against this background I make the point based on my case study findings that it is, to a large extent, up to the people in charge of Confucius Institutes to use the provided scope of action to the best of their abilities and some use it in a more progressive manner, while others prefer a conservative approach.

Generally, there is a tendency to stay on the safe side of the fence by not engaging with sensitive topics. With regard to this, one argument heard across

numerous CIs is illustrated in a statement by the head of an Australian Institute. He concedes that sensitive topics, such as Falun Gong, Taiwan, Tibet or Tiananmen Square protests could cause problems if they came up in class, saying: 'Look, there are topics that are best not to engage in [but] there are so many other topics to discuss' (quoted in Norrie 2011). This is actually a statement I heard frequently throughout my research and it indicates that people in charge of Confucius Institutes are aware of the contradictoriness of their work.

While it is absolutely true that there are a lot of other topics to discuss, and Confucius Institutes do this, as the case studies in Australia and Germany reveal, those sensitive topics are omnipresent in media reports about China. And it is, in my understanding, precisely this contrast which illustrates the CI dilemma best: those topics that are probably most familiar to the CI target audience as they regularly appear in the media, are normally not dealt with in the Institutes themselves.

However, in cases when Confucius Institutes do not shy away from controversial, or assumed controversial, topics, things may just as easily backfire, as a Tibet related event organised by the Confucius Institute at the University of Sydney illustrates. In August 2012, this CI presented a public lecture which discussed, among other things, the selection process of the Dalai Lama and alternative candidates for reincarnation as Dalai Lama.¹¹ The lecture was given by Zhang Yun from the Chinese Centre for Tibetan Studies in Beijing. Before the lecture was held, the CI came under attack from Australian supporters of the Dalai Lama for 'presenting a lecture on Tibet by a Chinese academic who is a staunch critic of the Dalai Lama', which prompted the critics to describe the event as propaganda (Callick 2012). In response, a spokesperson for the Confucius Institute said: 'We were very concerned that there might be some controversy: we understand that the subject is quite sensitive, so we have tried to make this lecture as non-political as possible, to make it purely academic.' She furthermore said that Zhang 'had been asked to focus his remarks on the history of Tibetan Buddhism and of the Dalai Lamas before Chinese control was established in 1959' (ibid.).

Since the Confucius Institute at the University of Sydney was not available for a statement,¹² it is not possible to shed light on how the event was planned. It can be said, however, that the CI in Sydney possibly discounted and misperceived the potential for public reaction towards this event. Furthermore, it sounds somewhat odd trying to give a non-political lecture on 'The Selection of the Dalai Lama and his Political, Religious and Social influence in Tibet' given that the selection process of the 11th Panchen Lama, the second-highest spiritual leader in Tibetan Buddhism, in the mid-1990s led to a dispute between the Chinese government and the current Dalai Lama, which eventually resulted in two competing candidates, and the successor question for the 14th Dalai Lama is seen as a battleground between Beijing and the Dalai Lama himself.

Another case of handling sensitive issues in an unfitting manner was reported from Tel Aviv. In 2008, a Sinologist at Tel Aviv University 'peremptorily closed a Falun Gong art exhibition at [the university] without having seen the exhibit' (Jensen 2012: 293). Students filed a suit against him, and one year later a local

judge dealing with the issue announced that Tel Aviv University had ‘violated freedom of expression and succumbed to pressure from the Chinese embassy’ (ibid.). Without having further information on this particular case, it is not entirely clear whether the local Chinese embassy actively intervened or whether this was a case of pre-emptive obedience, but either way it illustrates a difficulty for Confucius Institutes. During the course of my research, I came across two similar rumours of lectures in Germany (one on Tibet and one on media freedom in China) that presented rather one-dimensional arguments and had the ensuing discussion partly cut back by the organisers. But as I did not attend these lectures and the organisers would not comment when approached, it is hard to judge.

However, my case studies also illustrate that Confucius Institutes can approach those sensitive issues, but it seemingly depends on the individuals on ground how to handle these. One director of a European Confucius Institutes, who is also Chair of China Studies at the CI host university, noted that she once received a call from Hanban because she had talked about the Tiananmen demonstrations 1989 in a lecture on China’s contemporary history. After the lecture a ‘rather patriotic’ Chinese teacher informed Hanban and ‘this was the only time they ever contacted me and said that it would be problematic and we should maybe better not talk about this’ (I-UK2). When asked about her reaction she said: ‘If I cannot mention Tiananmen in the context of contemporary history, I cannot talk about contemporary history at all. This just does not work, nobody would buy this here and we would only lose our reputation’ (I-UK2). She also said it was clear what had happened internally, because as soon as the teacher reported the event, ‘Hanban had to react and so they called me. By calling me and explaining their point of view they reacted on it, and this was it, and they never contacted me again in this regard.’

Another lecture illustrates that it is possible to discuss delicate and sensitive issues in a CI setting. In September 2012, the Confucius Institute in Leipzig held ‘China Days Leipzig’ (Konfuzius-Institut Leipzig 2012) in the context of China’s official Culture Year in Germany. The programme included artistic performances, a Chinese tea garden and a series of public panel discussions, all presented under the headline ‘Tea Garden, Art and Controversies’. Possibly the most controversial discussion dealt with the ‘Culture of Remembrance and Politics of History in Germany and China’ and the panellists agreed that accounting for past and bygone crimes was only possible when the rulers who committed those crimes were no longer in power.¹³ Taking into consideration that this discussion took place in the context of China’s official cultural year in Germany and was organised by the Confucius Institute, it was a noteworthy event, which illustrates how local stakeholders can use the space within the loosely defined guidelines to partly shape and affect the programmes of Confucius Institutes.

Increasing academic engagement of Confucius Institutes

Another frequent reproach is that Confucius Institutes are a threat to the principles of academic freedom (Sahlins 2015). And while some of the presented

evidence in this regard appear partly exaggerated, it is hard to ignore this criticism since July 2014. As noted before, back then Xu Lin ordered pages torn out from the main conference programme of a major European Sinology association conference in Portugal to remove any reference to Taiwan's Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation which was, among Hanban, one of the sponsors. The reason for this kind of censorship was apparently concern that the publicity for Taiwan institutions could cast doubt on China's claim to Taiwan. The association president issued a statement calling the 'interference' in the activities of an independent academic organisation 'totally unacceptable' (Greatrex 2014). This was just what critics and parts of the media were waiting for and it was not surprising that headlines in Western media adopted critical, sometimes hostile language in reporting and commenting on this news (Rawnsley 2014). As Rawnsley fittingly commented:

At a time when the role of Confucius Institutes – long celebrated as a shining example of China's public and cultural diplomacy – is being scrutinised closely and debated across the world [...] Xu Lin could not have picked a worse time to assert her imaginary authority.

(Ibid.)

Whereas the debates about the 'Portugal incident' and the handling of sensitive issues are well known, another potentially more critical development only took place in recent years and has not yet gained much attention in the CI-debates: Hanban's endeavours to engage in academic work. Although I did not come across in the case studies (or hear of) any Confucius Institute that is engaged in scholarship, in the sense that Confucius Institute staff conducted academic research, mainly simple because of lack of human resources and time available, there is evidence of a tendency for Confucius Institutes to head in the direction of becoming a facilitator of academic research, mainly through funding or logistics.

As the case studies reveal, Confucius Institute increasingly focus on training local Chinese teachers or providing support for academic training. Furthermore, CIs set up Chinese courses at universities which are either supplement offerings or even incorporated into the university credit system. According to Hanban statistics, by the end of 2014 a total of 282 universities hosting Confucius Institutes have included the courses offered by CIs into their course credit system (Xu L. 2015a). This is a development that, in my opinion, needs further critical investigation in the future, as several Confucius Institutes have plans to engage in comprehensive academic teaching. The salient point here is that it is one thing to introduce language courses for people who take them out of curiosity for a few weeks, but it is quite another thing to offer credit bearing courses for a full-fledged university degree programme.

This move towards more academic engagement was also mentioned by Xu Lin in late 2011 when I asked about the future plans for Confucius Institutes. She said that at universities with no department of Chinese Studies or Sinology,

CIs should offer credit courses or should establish Chinese as a university degree (I-C4). The overall development of Confucius Institutes for the next ten years in this regard, according to Xu, should focus on both teaching Chinese language and Chinese culture as well as getting into advanced academic work. Right now, Xu noted, China Studies and Sinology at foreign universities do not have money 'so we make plans for new Sinology research where we give money to high-class academics so they can do their research' (I-C4).

This strategic goal also found its way into the official 'Development Plan of Confucius Institutes' for the coming years. Listed as one of the key projects of the Confucius Institute Headquarters is the 'New Sinology and China Studies Research Scheme' with the aim to: '[s]ponsor young and middle-aged academics with a strong background in Sinology and China Studies [...] to conduct research on traditional and contemporary China and cross-cultural academic exchange' (Confucius Institute Headquarter, n.d.14). According to this plan, the academics from around the world are also 'encouraged to engage in research in China, give lectures or publish articles and books, so as to shape a new generation of sinologists' (ibid.).

In November 2012, Hanban announced plans for a 'Confucius China Study Plan'. The plan, according to Xu Lin, 'aims to support young scholars from around the world to enhance the level of academic research and foster a new generation of young sinologist and experts in China studies' (quoted in Luo W. 2012). It was reported that Hanban will award a total of about RMB50 million (roughly US\$8million) to support students who want to pursue a PhD degree in Chinese universities or pursue joint degree programmes between international and Chinese universities, to support short-term exchanges for international visiting scholars, to provide funds for international conferences and in the form of publication grants. In 2014, 260 PhD students and young scholars from 50 countries were sponsored to do China related research or to pursue doctorate degrees in China. The overall purpose of this programme is rather ambitious, as Xu Lin made clear: 'Through this program, we hope to nurture or help to nurture academic-centered students, the next generation sinologists' (Luo W. 2012).

While the decision to fund China related research can basically be welcomed, it is also a development which has a different dimension to that of teaching Chinese language and culture to the interested public. In my opinion it is a much more critical approach to support academic research about contemporary China with money that eventually comes from the Chinese government than introducing Chinese tea culture or calligraphy to an interested public as this plan hints to the principle question of how independent scholars can actually conduct their Hanban funded research in China. This, of course, is not only a critical question in relation to China because external funding may become an issue anywhere as it always may pose the question of to what extent academia would accept the call for money, given the potential criticism of 'he who pays the piper, calls the tune.'

Confucius Institutes: the real China vs. the correct China

In order to judge Confucius Institutes, it is helpful to recall their aims: on the one hand there is their officially proclaimed task to introduce Chinese language and culture; on the other hand, as an instrument of public diplomacy, they also have a more far-reaching function, namely to contribute to China's foreign policy objectives.

Referring to the officially articulated aim to teach Chinese language and culture, I argue that Confucius Institutes have been successful, as can be seen by the growing number of Institutes, the long list of international organisations applying to set-up a CI, as well as the growing numbers of visitors and students. While this growth rate (and sheer number of Institutes) may prompt opponents to argue in favour of the cultural invasion idea, I share the opinion that if 'outcomes are measured solely in terms of quantitative leaps [...] the achievements of the CI project are very remarkable' (Lo and Pan 2014: 12). I do, however, see Confucius Institutes more as an instrument to *introduce* language and culture and not so much as a place to access profound knowledge, due to the various outlined practical reasons but also due to political considerations. Confucius Institutes in my understanding are normally a place of first contact with China – no more, but also nothing less than that.

With regards to the broader public diplomacy aims of shaping China's image, introducing the real China and communicating China's benign global intensions, I would describe the results as rather mixed. As this study has shown, there are topics that are off-limits as they are regarded as sensitive for the Chinese authorities. Confucius Institutes are normally reserved or are silent when it comes to those touchy topics, or when approached, they are normally (but also not always) dealt with in a rather one-sided way. Even with regards to the presentation of culture one may argue that although contemporary forms of cultural expression are presented, the emphasis in many CIs is on the traditional aspects of culture which may appear rather stereotyped. And this selectiveness tends to proceed, as Hubbert (2014) and Fallon (2015) show in their work, in the classrooms of Confucius Institutes.

It is against this background that I challenge the pronouncement that Confucius Institutes, as an important tool of China's public diplomacy, introduce the *real* China to the world, but that they tend to present a politically correct version of China to the world. And this includes a tendency to refer to official Communist Party concepts and slogans. A case in point here is the before mentioned clear reference to the Harmonious World slogan and the fact that Confucius Institutes recently started to take up the Chinese Dream, the latest political slogan put forward by Xi Jinping: In late 2014 Liu Yandong referred to the Chinese Dream in her keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 9th Confucius Institute Conference and according to Xu Lin 'the Confucius Institute is a bridge that links the China [*sic*] Dream and the world dream' (21cbh.com 2014). Furthermore, various versions of the language competition Chinese Bridge in 2013 and 2014 were held under the theme 'My Chinese Dream' or 'My China Dream' and in 2014 at least two CIs held China Dream-related workshops.¹⁴

In my understanding, these facts illustrate that Confucius Institutes' ability to contribute to China's overall public diplomacy is hampered which would require presenting a comprehensive picture of China, rather than a 'correct version' of China. This, however, is not so much a flaw of the Institutes themselves, but the authoritarian political system behind them and the broader credibility problems that China's overall public diplomacy is facing in relation to China's domestic affairs and its international behaviour. On the one hand, it is 'the political and social issues that undermine China's [...] credibility' (Rawnsley 2013), referring here to China's human rights record, its treatment of dissidents and critical journalists and its behaviour towards Tibet, Xinjiang and, most recently, Hong Kong.

But in addition to this, China's international behaviour also contributes to the perception gap between how China wants to be seen and how the world actually sees it. According to Miskimmon *et al.* (2013: 114) the fundamental problem is that a narrative

must appear consistent with events as they are known by the narrative's audience [and] any disjuncture between narrative claims about how the world is, and direct experience of the world [...] can lead to charges of hypocrisy being leveled against the narrator.

(Ibid.)

In the case of China and its CIs, this perception gap is obvious: while China wants to project the narrative of a peacefully developing country that aims to construct a Harmonious World, the global audience mainly perceives it as the big guy in the crowd who actually pushes others around and stands in their way. Again, whether this perception is true or not does not matter. What remains true though is the very fact that words have to be followed by actions in order to earn credibility. Therefore, it does not matter how many Confucius Institutes promote the Chinese language and Chinese culture across the globe, and it does not matter how well they do so; as long as the Chinese government continues to arrest human rights lawyers, censor the media and bullies its East Asian neighbours, all efforts by Confucius Institutes to promote China's image can only hit a wall.

These facts and the reported negative episodes may prompt critics to describe Confucius Institutes as propaganda instruments of the CCP. While I do not neglect those, I argue that it is necessary to look at CI activities in the whole. These negative episodes attract, quite normally, the attention of the media, but they do not tell the whole story of what is happening day in and day out at CIs across the world. The assessment of Confucius Institutes in this regard is first determined by how the term propaganda is understood and second by the broader issue that, to borrow from Barr (2011), the reservations about CIs often say as much about those who have them as they say about the Institutes themselves. As a consequence, it might eventually be a matter of opinion whether to understand Confucius Institutes as agents of crude state-directed propaganda or as instruments of more benign public diplomacy.

In conclusion, I want to return to the view of Jan Melissen (2005: 18) who argues that public diplomacy is ‘similar to propaganda in that it tries to persuade people what to think, but it is fundamentally different in the sense that public diplomacy also listens to what people have to say.’ Unlike propaganda, public diplomacy is not one-way messaging, but, as Rhonda Zaharna has argued, cooperative message-creation (Zaharna 2014). This brings us back to the unique joint venture structure of Confucius Institutes which actually enables this cooperative message-creation to an unprecedented degree. Interestingly enough, it is precisely this unique joint venture structure of Confucius Institutes that is used by both proponents and critics to make their respective arguments in relation to the propaganda issue. While advocates, mainly foreigners engaged in Confucius Institutes, note that this structural element prevents Confucius Institutes from being a mere propaganda tool because international partners have a vital say in decision making, detractors say it is precisely because of this structure and the resulting proximity to the Chinese government, that opens the door for undermining academic freedom and spreading communist propaganda.

Based on my case study findings I assess the cooperative manner towards designing and realising projects and programmes as generally positive and argue that this structure contributes to the overall value of Confucius Institutes. In this regard, it can also be said that Hanban exercises only limited interference in the affairs of CIs, which can be understood as requiring a remarkable amount of trust. However, Hanban also has means to guide or supervise the Institutes. This concerns not so much ‘sporadic well-meant hints to celebrate spring festival’ (I-G7) or ‘suggestions’ to broadcast the celebration parade of the 60th anniversary of the PRC’s founding back in 2009, which local CI staff normally just ignored (I-G3; I-UK1); Hanban has two ways of supervising CIs: by the deployment of Chinese staff and by means of financial support for projects, meaning that projects that appeal to Hanban have a better chance of getting funds.

Furthermore, Hanban organises various workshops for CI-staff, for example training workshops for foreign directors of Confucius Institutes. And the selection of topics presented there indicates that Hanban wants to present Beijing’s official point of view on certain topics to its foreign directors. When asked about what he was told in the session on Chinese territory and culture, one foreign director told me that the lecture of course noted that Taiwan and Tibet are part of China (I-SA1; Hartig 2013). The question, then, of course is how foreign directors use these information and how and if they incorporate them into their programmes back home.

Confucius Institutes – Quo Vadis?

Overall, this study contends that the structural configuration of Confucius Institutes, which is manifested in their joint venture structure, indicates that China follows a pragmatic and strategically smart approach towards public diplomacy,

characterised by the strategic engagement of local stakeholders. The ‘smartness’, in my understanding, concerns the practical implications in the sense that this cooperative mode of operation enables China to introduce its culture and language in a cost effective way; it helps China to raise the reputation of its cultural outposts; and it helps China to set up as many branches as it wants in a relatively short period of time. In this regard I contend that by utilising the current global fascination with the Chinese language and Chinese culture, the Chinese government has found interested and willing international partners to co-finance the Confucius Institutes and thus partially fund China’s public diplomacy. The ‘pragmatism’ lies in the fact that China, with this unique structural set-up, allows and enables foreign partners to participate and, thereby, partly affect the PRC’s public diplomacy, which, as in any form of diplomacy, eventually serves national interests. The question, however, remains why do international partners engage in a scheme which ultimately is part of China’s public diplomacy? Recognising and acknowledging the outlined practical advantages in the context of global higher education cooperation but at the same time recalling the necessary financial commitment and the rather hostile attitude from parts of the public, one cannot escape the feeling that international partners are eager to ride the China wave and therefore may tend to turn a blind eye to the partially manageable outcomes.

Summing up the findings from the case studies, I am of the opinion that the overall setting benefits China more than it does the international partners. This, in my opinion, is not a criticism as Confucius Institutes were the brain-child of China and it is quite natural for China to look for its benefits. Overall, I bring forward the argument that the principle idea of Confucius Institutes – to involve foreign individuals and organisations – points to a more fundamental Chinese approach: the willingness to engage and cooperate with foreigners – and thereby to cede influence, to a certain extent – in order to pursue national interests. As argued before, this approach shows striking parallels to China’s decision to push its economic development after the turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s. In the late twentieth century, China opted for cooperation with foreigners in order to rebuild its economy. In the early twenty-first century, China is opting for cooperation with foreigners in order to promote its language and culture and to shape its global image. The problem, however, is that although the approach is strategically smart, it does not (yet) have the same success, at least with regards to China’s image.

While this structure potentially presents unique possibilities for the conduct of public diplomacy, there are, as this study also shows, several practical constrictions limiting the reach and value of these Institutes. First, there are differences between the initial idea of cooperation and the eventual realisation on the ground. This mainly concerns the insight that not all Confucius Institutes actually practise the cooperative model in a comprehensive way, as not all of them have dispatched staff from China or, in a number of cases, the financial endowment does not reflect a real and equal cooperation. One so far unknown issue that the case studies illustrate is the fact that Hanban approves the programme

budget only on a year-to-year basis, which makes it very difficult to plan more comprehensive projects with a long lead-in time. Second, this study has also clarified that the cooperation, as in any form of cooperation, is not without its weaknesses and problems. These concern, alongside the aforementioned issues of teaching materials, staffing and funding, include different working and teaching styles and sometimes conflicting notions of what 'China' is and how it should be presented to foreigners.

One of the most interesting aspects in this regard is how this tussle between the still growing number of Institutes and the apparent problems in the system will be handled by China, which is still concerned more with quantity than quality. Interestingly enough, Xu Lin herself admitted back in 2011 that when Hanban decides which applicant can have a Confucius Institute, 'the question is not whether foreign partners meet the selection criteria, but it is much more the case that we struggle to meet them in terms of resources and teachers' (I-C4).

In this regard, international partners have called for Hanban to focus more on existing Confucius Institutes than opening new ones, which seems crucial for sustainable development. In this context a number of interviewees, some more directly and outspoken and others more indirectly and subtle, hold the view that there are too many Confucius Institutes and that probably not all of them will survive, because there is no need for so many Institutes. And while some people in charge of CIs are of the opinion that simply the best Institutes will survive, others argue in favour of a system of evaluation conducted by the local Chinese embassies.

However, there has been no recognisable indication of consolidation; rather, the contrary, as of early 2015, new Institutes were still being opened around the world. But, clearly, because of the variety of practical issues, there will have to be a shift towards quality which may come with a stricter process of selection and in the long run possibly certain Institutes will disappear as it is unlikely that all existing Confucius Institutes will be able to conduct quality programmes. If such a shift takes place, it will be interesting to see how it is managed (and explained) by Hanban.

This study opens the door to more in-depth discussion of Confucius Institutes in the context of China's public diplomacy. Nevertheless, it has barely scratched the surface, and a number of issues could become subject of further research.

First, the geographical focus could be shifted to other countries and continents. A worthwhile subject matter would be the African continent, as it is assumed that local circumstances would put Confucius Institutes in a different position than in developed countries. On the one hand, over the whole continent, not even a handful of Sinology or China Studies departments exist at universities, and on the other hand, China-African relations are currently one of the most interesting global connections. It might also be interesting to learn more about the situation in Latin America as governments, the business community and academia 'seem thoroughly unprepared' for the challenges of coping with China (Shambaugh 2013: 112).

Second, while this study mainly focused on international stakeholders, it would be interesting to study what the Chinese side thinks of Confucius Institutes. A number of Chinese universities not only operate more than one Confucius Institute, but even have established own Confucius Institute Affairs Office, as did for example, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Peking University or Renmin University in Beijing.

Third, a wider issue concerns impact and outcomes. Studies of visitors and students of Confucius Institutes could not only consider the question of why people go there more comprehensively, but also how Confucius Institutes' contents is perceived by the audience. This question could be discussed in relation to the overall goals of China's engagement with foreign publics and its efforts in image management. Furthermore, this topic could be analysed in a comparative manner as it may be the case that the audience for Confucius Institutes in different countries experience programmes differently.

Notes

- 1 It is, admittedly, hard if not impossible, to detect whether CIs would spy on campuses and it has to be noted that a few years ago, Confucius Institutes in Germany were mentioned in the annual report of one regional, state level, domestic intelligence agency. The annual report of the Lower Saxony intelligence agency, in 2010, stated under the sub-headline 'company cooperation/university twinning' that various cooperation projects between local and Chinese universities took place and Confucius Institutes were listed as one such project (Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Inneres und Sport 2010: 231). Although the report does not say anything about whether Confucius Institutes are involved in any kind of intelligence related work, that they are explicitly mentioned is interesting. In the final stages of finishing the manuscript, Bloomberg released a story which reported about a Chinese-born US citizen who was a professor at a US university where he also ran the Confucius Institute and who was fired for accusations of espionage. But not, as one may assume, spying for China, but alleged for the FBI using the CI as a springboard for activities in China. The story also notes that the FBI in 2009 was looking at the possibility of CIs spying for China, but decided it lacked grounds for full investigation (Golden 2015).
- 2 Based on my personal notes.
- 3 The later released official Hanban report for 2011 notes that in 2011, 'the total funds provided by both Hanban and its foreign partners (the ratio of both sides' financial input approximately remains at 1 to 1) were US\$275 million' (Hanban 2011: 13).
- 4 This rather odd situation becomes even more obvious when looking at the website, which is not only designed in the layout as all the other Goethe Institute websites but which also shows the Goethe Institute logo in prominent position (www.goethe.de/ins/cn/sha/deindex.htm). The British Council, according to its website is working in four cities in mainland China: 'In Beijing we operate as the Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy. In Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing we operate as the Cultural and Education Section of the British Consulates-General' (www.britishcouncil.cn/en/about).
- 5 Organisations such as the British Council or Germany's Goethe Institute, although acting independently, are also working for their governments and their government's foreign policy. The British Council notes in its Corporate Plan for 2011–2015 that it seeks 'to make a unique and significant contribution to the government's vision of a distinctive British foreign policy' (Davidson 2011: 2). And the mission statement of Germany's Goethe Institute not only notes that it is 'acting on behalf of the Federal

- Republic of Germany', but furthermore that Goethe 'promotes various issues of foreign cultural and educational policy' (Goethe Institute 2012b).
- 6 The 'New Silk Road' theme refers to China's global economic cooperation area and vision under Xi Jinping, which should bring new opportunities and a new future to China and every country along the road.
 - 7 The statistical figures come from the annual Hanban Reports available on the Hanban website and I also obtained different statistics during a visit to the CI Headquarters in March 2013. It has to be noted, however, that some of the numbers and figures mentioned in the reports and obtained from the Headquarters are at times not completely identical.
 - 8 The Long Night of the Sciences has become an established form of public relations activities in Germany in which scientific organisations hold lectures and demonstrations in order to present themselves to the general public.
 - 9 Bei Dao has been banned in China after 1989 until 2003 when a slightly censored survey of his oeuvre was published in China.
 - 10 I thank Kerry Brown for pointing that out to me.
 - 11 As I personally did not attend the lecture the following remarks are solely based on secondary sources.
 - 12 My original interview partner at this Confucius Institute left the institute months before the event and therefore would not comment, while current staff were not available after several attempts.
 - 13 Based on my personal notes.
 - 14 The Confucius Institute at Aalborg University, Denmark, co-hosted an international workshop to discuss the 'Chinese Dream as the new political slogan of the Chinese government' while the Griffith Tourism Confucius Institute in Brisbane held the 'G20 First East-West Dialogue on Tourism and the Chinese Dream'.

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Appendix

List of interviewees

Appendix A1.1

<i>Interview number</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Date of interview</i>
I-C1	Xinhua News Agency	Vice President	15 May 2009
I-C2	Publishing house affiliated to a Chinese university	Reader	11 March 2011
I-C3	Chinese university	Professor and research fellow	11 December 2011
I-C4	Hanban	Director General	13 December 2011
I-C5	n/a	Former Chinese ambassador to Germany	10 June 2012
I-C6	Chinese university	Professor	12 June 2012
I-C7	Hanban	Director Confucius Institute Affairs Division I	27 March 2013
I-C8	Tsinghua University	Director of Centre for Chinese Statecraft and Public Diplomacy Studies	25 March 2013
I-C9	Chinese university	Staff at Confucius Institute office	2 April 2013

Appendix A1.2

<i>Interview number</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Date of interview</i>
I-A1	Australian CI	Director of CI	10 November 2010
I-A2	Australian CI	Director of CI	4 April 2011
I-A3	Australian CI	Managing director of CI	20 April 2011
I-A4	Australian CI	Director of CI	23 April 2011
I-A5	Australian CI	Director of CI	29 April 2011
I-A6	Australian CI	Director of CI	2 May 2011
I-A7	Australian CI	Director of CI	12 May 2011
I-A8	Australian CI	Director of CI	30 November 2011
I-A9	Monash University	Professor of Asian Languages and Studies	13 November 2012

Appendix A1.3

<i>Interview number</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Date(s) of interview(s)</i>
IG-1	German CI	Director	6 October 2009, 11 May 2010
IG-2	German CI	Director	7 October 2009, 16 January 2012
IG-3	German CI	Manager	9 October 2009, 30 June 2011, 12 January 2012
IG-4	German university	Professor of Sinology	23 October 2009
IG-5	German CI	Director	26 October 2009
IG-6	German CI	Manager	27 October 2009
IG-7	German CI	Managing director	30 October 2009, 13 December 2011
IG-8	German CI	Director	4 November 2009
IG-9	German CI	Manager	3 December 2009, 5 April 2011
IG-10	German CI	Managing director	8 August 2011
IG-11	German university	Professor of Sinology	8 September 2011
IG-12	Chinese embassy	Education department	16 January 2012

Appendix A1.4

<i>Interview number</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Date of interview</i>
I-UK1	UK CI	Director	18 June 2011
I-UK2	UK CI	Director	16 September 2011, 14 December 2011
I-CR	Czech CI	Director	18 October 2011
I-NZ	New Zealand CI	Director	14 December 2011
I-SA1	South African CI	Director	8 November 2012, 28 October 2013, 7 December 2014
I-SA2	South African CI	Teacher	9 October 2013
I-SA3	South African CI	Director	15 October 2013, 27 September 2014

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