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RESEARCH ON THE STATUS QUO AND PROBLEMS OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES IN RUSSIA AND COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

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In 2005, the first Confucius Institute in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was established in Tashkent State Oriental Institute, Uzbekistan. By 2020, the Commonwealth of Independent States have been fully covered with 47 Confucius Institutes in total. In the context of the global “Chinese fever”, Confucius Institutes have been established and increased in number in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, playing an active role in spreading the Chinese language and Chinese culture. As a cultural bridge connecting China and the CIS countries, Confucius Institutes objectively promote people-to-people communication and have made a generous contribution to the cooperation. However, Confucius Institutes have also faced serious challenges in their development. This article mainly studies the research of Chinese scholars and their opinions on the establishment and development of Confucius Institutes in Russia and the CIS countries, and aims to provide relatively detailed information and helpful research directions for subsequent studies of Confucius Institutes in the CIS countries.

Keywords: Confucius Institute, Russia, CIS, cultural communication, public diplomacy.

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ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ СТАТУСА-КВО И ПРОБЛЕМ ИНСТИТУТОВ КОНФУЦИЯ В РОССИИ И СОДРУЖЕСТВА НЕЗАВИСИМЫХ ГОСУДАРСТВ

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В 2005 году в Ташкентском государственном институте востоковедения был создан первый Институт Конфуция в Содружестве Независимых Государств (СНГ). При непрерывном развитии к 2020 году Содружество Независимых государств полностью охвачено в общей сложности 47 Институтами Конфуция. В условиях глобальной «китайской лихорадки» в России и Содружестве Независимых Государств создаются и расширяются Институты Конфуция, играющие активную роль в распространении китайского языка и китайской культуры. Являясь культурным мостом, соединяющим Китай и страны СНГ, Институты Конфуция объективно способствуют межличностному общению и внесли щедрый вклад в это сотрудничество. Однако с развитием Институты Конфуция также столкнулись с большими проблемами. В данной статье в основном рассматриваются исследования китайских ученых и их мнения о создании и развитии Институты Конфуция в России и странах СНГ, а также ставится цель дать относительно подробную информацию и полезные направления исследований для последующих исследований Институты Конфуция в странах СНГ.

Ключевые слова: Институт Конфуция, Россия, СНГ, культурная коммуникация, публичная дипломатия.

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Introduction

In 2005, the first Confucius Institute in the Commonwealth of Independent States was established in Tashkent State Oriental Institute, Uzbekistan. The next year, Confucius Institutes were established one by one in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia. By 2020, the Commonwealth of Independent States have been fully covered with forty-seven Confucius Institutes in total. The statistics of the number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in various countries are shown in Table 1 below.

It can be seen from the table that among the CIS countries, Russia has the most Confucius Institutes which is superior to others. As one of the founding countries of the CIS, Belarus plays an essential role in the CIS, with the second-largest number of Confucius Institutes. Also, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are adjacent to China and are China's critical neighboring partners, and the number of Confucius Institutes within them is relatively large. Nevertheless, the focus of the Confucius Institutes in the CIS is still Russia.

As China's largest neighbor, Russia has an important strategic position. Since 2019, China and Russia have established the "China-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation in the New Era", and the cooperation between them has gone further. And that is the reason why Russia is the biggest partner of Confucius Institutes.

Table 1. The number of confucius institutes and classrooms in CIS countries¹

Country	Number of confucius institutes	Number of confucius classrooms	Sum of confucius institutes and confucius classrooms
Russia	19	4	23
Belarus	6	1	7
Kazakhstan	5	0	5
Kyrgyzstan	4	0	4
Azerbaijan	2	0	2
Tajikistan	2	0	2
Uzbekistan	2	0	2
Armenia	1	0	1
Moldova	1	0	1
Sum	42	5	47

As shown in Table 2, Confucius Institutes have the widest distribution in Russia. In 2006, the first Russian Confucius Institute was established at the Far Eastern State University. So far, 19 Confucius Institutes and 4 Confucius Classrooms have been operating in Russia. At the same time, among the 541 Confucius Institutes established in 162 countries around the world, the number of Confucius Institutes in Russia, the

¹ Sources: www.hanban.org/confuciousinstitutes

same as in German, ranks fourth (the top three of Confucius Institutes are the United States, the United Kingdom and South Korea).

After decades of development, the Confucius Institutes have played an active role in promoting overseas Chinese language teaching and Russian people's understanding of China. Contributing to the growth of Confucius Institutes, Chinese language promotion has come a long way in Russia. The Russian government tried to include Chinese in the national examination system in 2016. In 2019, Chinese officially became one of the five foreign languages selected for the Russian National Examination.

With the deepening of the Sino-Russian comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and the expansion of Sino-Russian trade, the Chinese language status in the Russian education system has been increasingly enhanced. However, at the same time, Confucius Institutes can no longer meet the growing need of Russian people to study the Chinese language and culture. The development of new media has also challenged the teaching mode, cultural communication, and media public relations capabilities of Confucius Institutes.

Table 2. Details about confucius institutes and classrooms in Russia²

Country	Confucius institutes details	Confucius classrooms details
Russia	Confucius institute at Far Eastern National University Confucius institute at Russian State University for the Humanities Confucius institute at Lomonosov Moscow State University Confucius institute at Saint-Petersburg State University Confucius institute at Irkutsk State University Confucius institute at Novosibirsk State University of Technology Confucius institute at Kazan State University Confucius institute at Blagoveshchensk National Pedagogical University Confucius institute at The Kalmyk State University Confucius institute at Tomsk State University Confucius institute at Buryat State University Confucius institute at Ural Federal University Confucius institute at Moscow State Linguistic University Confucius institute at Ryazan State University Confucius institute at Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University Confucius institute at Volgograd State Pedagogical University Confucius institute at Amur State University of Humanities and Pedagogy Confucius institute at Novosibirsk State University Confucius institute at Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University of V.P. Astafyev	Radio confucius classroom at RSVPU Confucius classroom at Moscow 1948 Middle School Confucius classroom at Perm No. 2 Gymnasia Confucius classroom at Private Institution Educational Organization of Supplementary Education <Confucius>

Purpose and Research Methods

The establishment of language interconnection between China and other countries includes “invite in” in other languages and “go out” in Chinese languages. The opening of Confucius Institutes in CIS countries belongs to the latter. As the relationship between China and the CIS countries has become closer, and

² Sources: www.hanban.org/confuciousinstitutes

the economy and trade have proliferated, the Confucius Institutes have also paid more attention to the CIS countries. However, due to the strategic focus and the geographical environment's influence, the emphasis within the CIS countries is not the same.

This paper mainly focuses on the establishment of Confucius Institutes in the CIS countries and the new opportunities and challenges that Confucius Institutes have faced during the developing period, especially in Russia. The aim of this study is to discuss the development of Confucius Institutes, and it is hoped that effective countermeasures and suggestions for the future function adjustment and influence enhancement of Confucius Institutes can be provided in the author's follow-up studies.

We comb all highly related Chinese academic writings about Confucius Institutes in Russia and CIS countries from 2005 to the present, which comprise twenty-six works from the CNKI Database in total. The methodological framework of the paper is based on literature compendium and the analysis takes a historical approach through the whole development of Confucius Institutes.

Discussion

Based on the prosperity and development of Confucius Institutes in Russia and the importance of Russia itself, more and more scholars in China are concerned about the development and establishment of Confucius Institutes in Russia. Their discussions can be summarized into the following five aspects: Confucius Institutes' function, communication perspective, case studies of Confucius Institutes, comparative studies of Confucius Institutes and Russian language centers, and the development difficulties and countermeasures of Confucius Institutes.

Firstly, the core function of Confucius Institutes in Russia is Chinese language teaching, and it has attracted widespread attention of Chinese scholars.

According to Li Yongming, the current distribution of Confucius Institutes in Russia cannot meet the growing demand for Chinese learning. Chinese teaching faces many problems in Russian colleges and universities, such as the shortage of teachers, outdated teaching materials (a considerable part of Taiwan's teaching materials), and hardware conditions like classrooms and teaching devices that need to be supplemented. Therefore, Confucius Institutes should use their platform to train local teachers, standardize Chinese teaching materials, and vigorously promote Russian Chinese teaching materials. In the future operation, Confucius Institutes should tap the potential of Russian cooperative universities, strengthen cooperation with local governments, and realize self-financing through Confucius Institute projects and teaching income³. Li Xiaoqin also puts forward her views on Chinese teaching in the Confucius Institutes in Russia. She points out similar and repetitious Chinese language lectures, unreasonable enrolling that leads to uneven levels of students, inadequate teacher training that cannot meet Chinese and Russian teachers' needs, the unfavorable geographical location that restricts development, and underutilized multimedia devices⁴. Zhao Li believes that local teachers' development in Russia is a significant factor affecting the Confucius Institutes' development. Russian teachers of Chinese are in good condition and have strong development potential, but there are many problems, including lack of a unified selection standard, a perfect training system and a standardized Chinese teaching evaluation system. Therefore, Confucius Institutes need to train local teachers with the national level model, and Chinese universities should also help Russian Universities establish Chinese teaching and teacher evaluation systems as soon as possible⁵. However, some scholars hold different views. They assume that the source of teachers at the Confucius Institutes in Russia largely depends on Chinese volunteers, and that is why they should pay attention to the work of Chinese volunteers in Russia and improve their service quality⁶. Some scholars stress that we

³ Li Yongxin. The present situation and Prospect of Confucius Institute in Russia [J]. *Siberian studies*, 2010, 37 (3): 49–52. 李永欣. 俄罗斯孔子学院的现状及前景展望[J]. *西伯利亚研究*, 2010, 37(3): 49–52.

⁴ Li Xiaoqin: Investigation on Chinese Language Teaching of Confucius Institute in Russia—Confucius Institute of Irkutsk State University, for Instance [D]. Xinjiang Normal University, 2011. 李晓琴: 俄罗斯孔子学院汉语教学现状调查与分析[D].新疆师范大学, 2011年.

⁵ Zhao Li: Native Chinese teachers of Russian Higher Investigation and Analysis [D]. Xinjiang Normal University, 2011. 赵莉: 俄罗斯高校本土汉语师资调查与分析[D].新疆师范大学, 2011年.

⁶ Shang Mingxia, Chang Ligu. Research on the volunteer service of Chinese teachers in Russia [J]. *Siberian Research*, 2012 (1): 35–37. 尚明霞, 常利国. 在俄罗斯的中国汉语教师志愿者服务研究[J]. *西伯利亚研究*, 2012 (1): 35–37.

should attach importance to teachers' professional development in the Confucius Institutes to mobilize teachers' enthusiasm for Chinese teaching, which can help enhance the teaching effect. They hope that the teachers of Confucius Institutes can become academic education talents with global vision, practical education talents with cross-cultural communication abilities, reflective international education talents with professional feelings, and innovative international education talents with independent development awareness⁷. Some scholars also assume that enhancing teachers' professional identity is the key to developing the Confucius Institutes' Chinese education⁸. In terms of the teacher training of Confucius Institutes in Russia, some scholars have proposed that: first, Chinese teachers dispatched by China should cooperate with the local school to carry out teacher training to form a good learning atmosphere from point to area; second, the content of local Chinese teacher training should be targeted and timely; finally, the Confucius Institutes should be fully used as a teaching platform to assist the Hanban to gradually establish and improve teacher training system of regional Confucius Institutes⁹. Some scholars affirm the multi-value of the Chinese language teaching work of Confucius Institutes. They summarize the value of Confucius Institutes into five aspects: the connection of platform, the promotion of cognition, the expansion of a function, the openness of way, and the diversity of benefits¹⁰.

Secondly, from communication perspective, Confucius Institutes objectively make effects as well as face challenges, which is also the focus of scholars' research.

For national cultural security, many countries are worried that the Chinese language and cultural communication of Confucius Institutes will threaten their own culture. Thus, the cultural protection, laws, regulations, and public opinion in these countries restrict Confucius Institutes' cultural communication space. Simultaneously, teachers' weak ability to introduce Chinese culture, fewer cultural courses, and undiversified form of dissemination also lead to the limited role of Confucius Institutes in the cultural promotion¹¹. Some scholars believe that the main reason for the international spread of Chinese in Russia is the economy. Therefore, we should make full use of economic factors to promote the spread of the Chinese language, give full play to the role of Confucius Institutes, provide talents for Sino-Russian economic and trade cooperation, seize the opportunities brought by the "one belt and one road" to the Chinese language communication to the fullest extent¹². Some scholars also think that the main body of Chinese cultural communication is still Chinese language teaching. Hence, they provide some concrete and feasible Chinese promotion strategies. For example, strengthening the strategic awareness of international promotion of Chinese (integrating the resources and disciplinary advantages of Chinese universities as well as opening up interdisciplinary barriers), expanding communication channels including increasing Sino-Russian exchange projects and enlarging the scale of Confucius Institutes, and training and selecting excellent Chinese teachers and volunteers¹³. Some scholars also debate that if Confucius Institutes want to spread Chinese culture to Russia and fulfill its cultural mission, it must be a "confidant" and "knowing the other". It means that, on the one hand, enhancing the cultivation of Chinese culture of Chinese ex-

⁷ Liu Yufeng, Wang Hongbo. Investigation and Reflection on Teaching Professional Development of International Education Talents in Russian Confucius Institutes [J]. *Journal of Jilin Education Institute*, 2016 (12). 刘玉凤, 王洪波. 俄罗斯孔子学院国际性教育人才教师专业发展情况调查与反思[J]. *吉林省教育学院学报*, 2016 (12).

⁸ Zheng Ying. Key and trend of professional development of Chinese teachers in the Confucius Institute in Russia [J]. *Asia Pacific Education*, 2016 (32): 145-145. 郑颖. 俄罗斯孔子学院汉语教师专业发展的关键与趋势[J]. *亚太教育*, 2016 (32): 145-145.

⁹ Zhao Li. Analysis of Russian Chinese teachers' current situation and Countermeasures under the background of "Chinese fever" [J]. *Overseas English*, 2010 (11): 393-394. 赵莉. "汉语热"背景下俄罗斯汉语师资的现状与对策分析[J]. *海外英语*, 2010 (11): 393-394.

¹⁰ Guan Yanqing, Qin maoshu. The multiple Chinese language teaching values in Confucius Institute: a case study of Chinese language teaching in Confucius Institute, Buryat State University, Russia [J]. *Journal of Tonghua Normal University*, 2019, 40 (01): 37-43. 关彦庆, 秦茂舒. 孔子学院汉语言文字工作的多元价值—以俄罗斯布里亚特国立大学孔子学院汉语言文字教学工作为例[J]. *通化师范学院学报*, 2019, 40 (01): 37-43.

¹¹ Han Lijun, Mu Dai. Dilemma and response of cultural communication of Confucius Institute: Taking Confucius Institute of Russian University as an example [J]. *People's forum*, 2016, no. 515 (11): 255-257. 韩丽君, 牟岱. 孔子学院文化传播的困境与应对—以俄罗斯大学的孔子学院为例[J]. *人民论坛*, 2016, No. 515 (11): 255-257.

¹² Li Baogui, Yu Fang. Research on the correlation between Russian Chinese communication and Sino Russian economic and trade cooperation [J]. *Journal of Liaoning University (PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES)*, 2019, 47 (03): 140-148. 李宝贵, 于芳. 俄罗斯汉语传播与中俄经贸合作相关性研究[J]. *辽宁大学学报(哲学社会科学版)*, 2019, 47 (03): 140-148.

¹³ Huang xiukun, Liu Fuhua. Research on international promotion strategy of Chinese in Russian cultural framework [J]. *Academic exploration*, 2013 (10): 150-152. 黄秀坤, 刘富华. 俄罗斯文化框架中汉语国际推广策略研究[J]. *学术探索*, 2013 (10): 150-152.

patriates and integrating Chinese philosophy into teaching is a must. On the other hand, it is better to increase the research on the Russian character, thinking mode, and cultural differences, to provide teaching methodology support for the cultural communication of Confucius Institutes¹⁴. In addition, some scholars learned from the Russian foreign language communication strategies and then put forward suggestions on the Confucius Institutes' cultural communication as follows. Firstly, relying on the national development strategy and optimizing the layout to promote foreign language communication. Secondly, attaching importance to foreign language policy's continuity and stability and ensuring the healthy development of the cause of language communication. Thirdly, enhancing cultural self-confidence and giving full play to the cultural diplomacy function of language communication institutions. Fourthly, strengthening the division of labor and cooperation, and building a powerful international communication system of Chinese¹⁵.

Thirdly, domestic scholars have done many case studies on the development of Confucius Institutes in Russia, which are mainly divided into two parts: case studies of a specific Confucius Institute and comparative studies of Confucius Institutes.

Tian Yingchun analyzes the teaching mode of Confucius Institute of Buryat State University in Russia from enrollment publicity form, teaching object, curriculum setting, and teachers' situation, and makes a horizontal comparative study with the Confucius Institute of Far East Federal University. At the same time, he puts forward some suggestions on developing curriculum and teaching methods between the Confucius Institutes in the non-Chinese cultural circle and the Confucius Institutes in the Chinese cultural circle¹⁶. Yalan, Wang Chanjuan, and Tangnur respectively survey the status of Confucius Institutes in Buryat State University, Novosibirsk State University of technology, and Siberian Federal University of Russia through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observation, and put forward suggestions and countermeasures for the problems faced in the development of these Confucius Institutes. According to Yalan, the main problems include the shortage of Chinese teachers, the inconsistency between students' learning motivation and the current curriculum type; the need for diversification of cultural activities; and the importance of teaching materials¹⁷.

Besides, Wang Chanjuan indicates that the legal status and extension development of Confucius Institutes were limited¹⁸. Tangnur points out the shortcomings of Chinese learners, such as the low rate of using Chinese in actual communication, the low quality of learning, and the significant difference in Chinese proficiency¹⁹. As for learners' motivation, Chen Wei assumes that they are mainly for academic and professional development. Additionally, he thinks Russian students have fully realized the importance of Chinese as a language tool²⁰. Furthermore, Zhang Xiaoguang, who was once the Chinese President of the Confucius Institute, has much experience establishing the Confucius Institute of Russian Far East National University. On the basis of his experience, he points out that there are too many Confucius Institute

¹⁴ Yan Guoqin. Current situation and strategy of cultural communication of the Confucius Institute in Russia [J]. Journal of Chongqing University of Arts and Science (SOCIAL SCIENCE EDITION), 2015 (3): 61–65. 颜国琴. 俄罗斯孔子学院文化传播现状与策略[J]. 重庆文理学院学报(社会科学版), 2015 (3): 61–65.

¹⁵ Li Baogui, Liu Jianing. The Enlightenment of Russian foreign language communication strategy on Chinese International Communication [J]. Journal of Beihua University (SOCIAL SCIENCE EDITION), 2016 (06): 16–22. 李宝贵, 刘家宁. 俄罗斯对外语言传播策略对汉语国际传播的启示[J]. 北华大学学报(社会科学版), 2016 (06): 16–22.

¹⁶ Tian Yingchun: Study of Teaching Model in Overseas Confucius Institute [D]. Shandong University, 2011. 田迎春: 海外孔子学院教学模式研究[D]. 山东大学, 2011.

¹⁷ Yalan: Current situation of Teaching Chinese in Confucius Institutes at BSU, Russia [D]. Shandong Normal University, 2013. 雅兰: 俄罗斯布里亚特国立大学孔子学院现状调查与分析[D]. 山东师范大学, 2013.

¹⁸ Wang Chanjuan. Reflections on the Confucius Institute's development strategies in the Russian Federation: A case study of the Confucius Institute of Novosibirsk State Technical University [J]. Journal of Yunnan Normal University (TCFL and research edition), 2016, V. 14; No. 78 (01): 7–13. 王婵娟. 俄罗斯孔子学院发展对策思考—以新西伯利亚国立技术大学孔子学院为例[J]. 云南师范大学学报(对外汉语教学与研究版), 2016, v. 14; No. 78 (01): 7–13.

¹⁹ Tangnur: Study of Chinese Teaching in Russian Federation of Siberia [D]. Xinjiang Normal University, 2017. 唐努尔: 俄罗斯西伯利亚联邦大学汉语教学现状调查[D]. 新疆师范大学, 2017.

²⁰ Chen Wei. A comparative study of Chinese learning motivation between ethnic minority college students and Russian University Students under the background of "one belt and one road": taking Xinjiang Education Institute bilingual college and Confucius College of Kazan Federal University as an example, [J]. Journal of Xinjiang Education Institute, 2017 (01): 29–33. 陈炜. “一带一路”背景下少数民族大学生和俄罗斯大学生汉语学习动机对比研究—以新疆教育学院双语学院和俄罗斯喀山联邦大学孔子学院学生为例[J]. 新疆教育学院学报, 2017 (01): 29–33.

projects, too strong Russian leadership as well as much waste of funds. And he proposes his suggestions on strengthening audit, financial transparency, and giving full play to the Chinese initiative president²¹.

Fourthly, the comparative study between Confucius Institute and Russian Center is also a research topic that scholars recently have paid close attention to.

Starting from the current situation of the development of Confucius Institute and Russian Center, focusing on the four aspects of operation mechanism, management mode, teaching mode, and cultural communication mode, Li Baogui makes a comparative analysis of the consistency and difference of the school running ideas of the language and cultural communication institutions in China and Russia. And then he proffers a development strategy of realizing the benign cultural interaction between Confucius Institute and Russian Center, which is to strengthen top-level design, to provide talents to support economic and trade cooperation, to promote people to people and cultural exchanges as a platform, and to enhance cultural interaction to achieve coordinated development²². On this basis, Chang Yishuo and others offer the guidance of Confucius Institute and the Russian Center on cultural communication. They conclude that international language promotion organizations have built a platform for their own culture's external communication. Language teaching and cultural exchange play an important role in the communication of their national language and culture, the construction of the national image, and the promotion of national influence²³.

Fifthly, at present, the difficulties faced by the development of the Confucius Institutes in Russia and its countermeasures are also a primary focus of Chinese scholars.

According to Chen Hui, the Confucius Institutes have developed rapidly in Russia with remarkable achievements. However, it gradually shows a series of problems in institutional independence, management mode, and cultural promotion in practice²⁴. Firstly, as an independent unit, the Confucius Institutes in Russia exist at all administrative levels of the cooperative university, and they generally overlap with the functions of the cooperative university's subordinate institutions. Given the embarrassment of the independent status of Confucius Institutes in Russia, many Confucius Institutes have essentially become the income generating units of universities. The income-generating phenomenon of Confucius Institutes in Russia is different from the positioning of the "non-profit organization" of Confucius Institutes, thus laying a crisis for their future development. Secondly, Confucius Institutes altogether emphasize "cooperation" in organization, operation, and management, one of which is "one dean from each side of the cooperation". However, in the process of standardized management and practical operation of the Confucius Institutes in Russia, the Chinese president's identity cannot be legally guaranteed by laws and regulations or systems. Finally, the Russian and Chinese sides have different opinions on planning and holding cultural activities in practice. The Russian side believes that there should be no cultural activities beyond the purpose and task of assisting in teaching. Moreover, the Confucius Institutes' funds to hold cultural activities are also facing the dilemma of paying "high" taxes. For the sustainable development of the Confucius Institutes in Russia, Sun Jie also comes up with his suggestions. He believes that the Confucius Institutes should adopt four major development strategies: circular, characteristic, innovative, and diversified²⁵. That is, to reuse teaching materials, teaching equipment and train teaching staff; to set up main culture courses with Chinese characteristics; to implement innovative strategies for teaching materials and cultural com-

²¹ Zhang Xiaoguang. Experience and challenges in the construction of Confucius Institute at Russian Far East National University [J]. *World education information*, 2013 (16): 62–64. 张晓光. 俄罗斯远东国立大学孔子学院建设的经验与挑战[J]. *世界教育信息*, 2013 (16): 62–64.

²² Li Baogui. Confucius Institute and Russian Center in cultural interaction: a comparative study of school running ideas [J]. *Journal of Northwest Normal University: Social Sciences Edition*, 2017 (1): 121–127, 7 pages in total. 李宝贵. 文化互动中的孔子学院与俄语中心:办学理念的比较研究[J]. *西北师大学报: 社会科学版*, 2017 (1): 121–127, 共7页.

²³ Li Baogui. Confucius Institute and Russian Center in cultural interaction: a comparative study of school running ideas [J]. *Journal of Northwest Normal University: Social Sciences Edition*, 2017 (1): 121–127, 7 pages in total. 李宝贵. 文化互动中的孔子学院与俄语中心:办学理念的比较研究[J]. *西北师大学报: 社会科学版*, 2017 (1): 121–127, 共7页.

²⁴ Chen Hui. Rethinking the future development of the Russian Confucius Institute under the "The Belt and Road Initiative" framework – Taking the data of a Confucius school in central Russia as an example [J]. *Journal of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies*, 2018, 29 (06): 138–143. 陈辉. “一带一路”框架下俄罗斯孔子学院未来发展再思考—以俄中部一家孔子学院数据为例[J]. *广东外语外贸大学学报*, 2018, 29 (06): 138–143.

²⁵ Sun Jie. Sustainable development strategy research of Confucius Institute in Russia [J]. *Curriculum education research*, 2012 (29): 9–9. 孙杰. 俄孔子学院可持续性发展策略研究[J]. *课程教育研究*, 2012 (29): 9–9.

munication; and to give full play to the diversified role of Confucius Institutes, including the establishment of Consultation Center for Russian and Chinese Affairs, News Communication Base, International Conference Center, and Foundation.

Also, there are a few studies that think Confucius Institutes have had an impact on Sino-Russian relations. For example, Geng Haitian believes that the rise of “Confucian fever” in Russian Confucius Institutes has positive impact on Sino-Russian relations in-depth development. At the intergovernmental level, it is helpful for China and Russia’s high-level leaders to eliminate ideological differences, enhance mutual understanding, communication and exchange, promote the healthy and in-depth development of China Russia’s comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination. In the academic and educational circles between the two countries, it is helpful to strengthen the dialogue between Russian Orthodox civilization and Chinese Confucian civilization, to deepen mutual understanding and shared progress, to contribute to the development of cultural and educational cooperation between the two countries. In terms of non-governmental exchanges, it will help the people of China and Russia eliminate misunderstandings among different religions and cultures, respect each other’s local customs, enhance non-governmental exchanges and expand in-depth exchanges in the fields of non-governmental economy, trade, culture, education, sports, and tourism²⁶.

Conclusion and Implications

At present, China’s academic circles have recognized the importance of studying Confucius Institutes in CIS, but there are still many deficiencies. First, Chinese scholars generally pay more attention to the specific teaching work and cultural promotion activities of Confucius Institutes while paying less attention to the external development environment of Confucius Institutes in CIS. Secondly, domestic research on the establishment and development of Confucius Institutes in CIS countries is mainly a case study, and there is little research on the overall growth. Therefore, the specific and joint problems and challenges faced by Confucius Institutes are not clear, which leads to the lack of methodologies as to how to deal with them in the future. Moreover, Chinese scholars have not researched the functions and role that the Confucius Institutes can play in the cultural exchanges among China and CIS countries, especially between China and Russia. With the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative and the development of Sino-Russian relations in the new era, as well as the deepening and expansion of the folk exchanges between the two countries, Confucius Institutes will play a role in providing language support, promoting cultural exchanges and widespread feelings.

Besides, compared with the domestic micro research on the development of Confucius Institutes, scholars mainly focus on China’s export of foreign culture, the security threat of Confucius Institutes to their own culture, and the development of Confucius Institutes’ network. This also shows that Chinese scholars lack elaborating the functions and working mechanism of Confucius Institute, which leads to some cognitive deviation and misunderstanding of Confucius Institutes by foreign media, which should be of interest to domestic scholars in the future. Moreover, when it comes to research methods, the study on Russian Confucius Institutes in domestic and foreign academic circles is based on different perspectives, such as using the perspective of communication to analyze the problems faced by Chinese culture in Russia, or the perspective of cultural soft power to analyze the role of Confucius Institutes in enhancing China’s soft power. There are still some quantitative studies in the existing literature. By investigating 16 Confucius Institutes, including those in Russia, some scholars have found that the dissemination effects of Chinese culture in different cultural circles, especially in Confucian and non-Confucian cultural circles, are quite different. For non-Confucian cultural countries, China’s material culture should go out first, while behavior and spiritual culture can be temporarily suspended²⁷.

²⁶ Geng Haitian. On the influence of the rise of "Confucianism craze" in Russian Confucius Institute on Sino Russian relations [J]. New Silk Road, 2016 (11): 91. 耿海天. 浅议俄罗斯孔子学院兴起的“儒学热”对中俄关系的影响[J]. 新丝路, 2016 (11): 91.

²⁷ Wu Ying. A study on the effect of Chinese culture on external communication: a survey of 16 Confucius Institutes in five countries [J]. Zhejiang Social Sciences, 2012 (4): 144-151. 吴瑛. 中国文化对外传播效果研究-对5国16所孔子学院的调查[J]. 浙江社会科学, 2012 (4): 144-151.

In general, different perspectives and different research objects of existing literature help enrich the research on the development of Russian Confucius Institutes. However, the narrative and descriptive analysis lack an empirical basis, field investigation, and follow-up study on the Russian Confucius Institutes' development. Therefore, the follow-up research on the Confucius Institutes in Russia still has a broad development space regarding perspective and data analysis.

While in practice, unlike previous challenges, the current COVID-19 pandemic has made the development of Confucius Institutes in the Commonwealth of Independent States more difficult. Due to the epidemic's impact, many local students cannot attend classes at the school as usual, and the Confucius Institutes' teaching cannot be conducted in the usual manner. Additionally, the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to the prohibition of large-scale gatherings, so some traditional activities with Chinese characteristics of the Confucius Institutes cannot be held, which significantly impacts the enrollment of the Confucius Institutes and the spread of Chinese culture. Finally, to ensure safety, the selection, training, and dispatch of Chinese teachers and volunteers in the Confucius Institutes are suspended from March 1, 2020. This has made the situation of Confucius Institutes, already in short supply of teachers and human resources, even worse.

However, this epidemic has also promoted the reform of Confucius Institutes to a certain extent and has ushered in new opportunities in the Internet age. During the epidemic, to provide convenience for Chinese language learners and Chinese teachers, the online Confucius Institute established by the Confucius Institutes launched free online premium courses, mainly including Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) standard courses for the Chinese Proficiency Test, Chinese traditional culture, and international Chinese teacher training. The core curriculum allows people to use their time at home to learn Chinese. Moreover, the recording and dissemination of online courses have objectively alleviated the pressure of the shortage of teaching materials and teachers of Confucius Institutes and have provided Chinese learners with alternatives. With the large-scale and systematic development of online courses, Confucius Institutes may play a better role in Chinese teaching and cultural communication.

The building of language connectivity between the Confucius Institutes and the CIS countries cannot be separated from the friendly cooperation between countries in politics, economy, and diplomacy. As a window to showcase Chinese culture, the Confucius Institutes still have some unsatisfactory aspects in the development of the CIS, and they need continuous improvement in practice. However, as a cultural bridge connecting China and the CIS countries, the Confucius Institutes objectively promote people-to-people communication and have made a generous contribution to the cooperation.

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