



CHINA'S CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES:

AN INQUIRY BY

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

A Report of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission

February 2019

www.conservativehumanrights.com

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¹ Cover image courtesy of *In the Name of Confucius*, a documentary film released in 2017:
<http://inthenameofconfuciusmovie.com/>

About the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission:

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission is a body established to highlight international human rights concerns, and thereby inform, advise and enhance the party's foreign policy. Freedom and human dignity should be at the heart of foreign policy and the Commission aims to ensure that the importance of fundamental human rights is kept high on the political agenda.

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission was established by the then Shadow Foreign Secretary in 2005 with Sir Gary Streeter MP as the founding Chairman. The Commission is currently chaired by Fiona Bruce MP, and since its creation the Commission's chairs have included the Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP, the Rt Hon Sir Tony Baldry (former MP) and Robert Buckland QC MP.

Current members of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission involved in this particular inquiry and report on China's Confucius Institutes include: Fiona Bruce MP, Maria Caulfield MP, Baroness Hodgson, Charles Tannock MEP, David Burrowes and Benedict Rogers.

Executive Summary

“Ostensibly Confucius Institutes are benign goodwill gestures from the Chinese government, aimed at teaching Chinese language and culture. In fact, the Chinese government has sought to use these courses as a pretext for a more subversive political agenda overseen by the Chinese government.” – Rachelle Peterson, Policy Director, National Association of Scholars

“Confucius Institutes were established ... as part of the Chinese Communist Party’s intensifying propaganda drive overseas. They are strategically located in various foreign universities, allowing the Chinese authorities to gain a foot-hold for the exercise of control ... The Confucius Institute is an extension of the Chinese education system, directly controlled by the state and having the same ideological and propaganda roles as schools and universities in China.” – Dr Tao Zhang, Nottingham Trent University

“I know the pressure and the fear ... No one deserves that. I hope Confucius Institutes can be closed, so that teachers can teach Chinese language freely, so students can learn about the real China and Chinese culture, not the Chinese communists’ culture.” – former Confucius Institute teacher Sonia Zhao

Confucius Institutes are “an important part of China’s overseas propaganda set-up” – Li Changchun, head of propaganda for the Chinese Communist Party

Confucius Institutes are promoted as educational centres teaching Chinese language and culture – a Chinese equivalent of the British Council, American Centres, Goethe Institutes or the Alliance Francaise.

According to the Confucius Institute’s Annual Development Report 2017, by the end of 2017, there are 525 Confucius Institutes and 1,113 Confucius Classrooms in 146 countries (regions), and China has the aim of establishing 1,000 Confucius Institutes by 2020.² The Confucius Institute’s programme has 46,200 teachers, 1.7 million students of all kinds and 621,000 online registered students. In 2016, their [budget was \\$314 million](#), and from 2006-2016 China spent \$2.17 billion on Confucius Institutes.³

In Britain, there are at least 29 Confucius Institutes, the second largest number in the world after the United States, attached to major universities such as Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Cardiff and University College London. There are also 148 Confucius 'classrooms' in schools around the United Kingdom, according to the Hanban website.⁴ In an op-ed for the [Times Higher Education Supplement](#) in 2015, the President of Imperial College, Alice Gast, expressed her wish for the UK's universities to be "China's best partners in the West".⁵

² Hanban website: http://www.hanban.org/confuciousinstitutes/node_10961.htm

³ Hanban Annual Development Report (2006-2017) - <http://www.hanban.org/report/index.html>

⁴ http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm

⁵ Alice Gast, “UK universities are already China’s best partners in the West,” Times Higher Education Supplement, 20 October 2015 - <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/uk-universities-are-already-chinas-best-partners-west#survey-answer>

The [UK ranks first among European countries](#) in welcoming this Chinese influence – a point celebrated in China's state media as marking a "Confucius revolution".⁶

While on the surface Confucius Institutes could be compared with the British Council or other western cultural and educational centres, there are two distinctive differences.

Firstly, unlike their western counterparts, they are embedded within universities around the world. As Dr Terence Russell of the University of Manitoba told the Commission, "many nations seek to promote their native cultures and political agendas abroad. However, only the Chinese government has targeted universities as the preferred location for their influence project."

Secondly, many experts allege that freedom of expression and academic freedom is limited, even suppressed, in Confucius Institutes. There is growing concern that Confucius Institutes are an arm of Chinese 'soft power' and propaganda, aimed at promoting the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s propaganda and stifling its critics around the world.

Rachelle Peterson, Policy Director of the US-based National Association of Scholars, told the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, "Ostensibly Confucius Institutes are benign goodwill gestures from the Chinese government, aimed at teaching Chinese language and culture. In fact, the Chinese government has sought to use these courses as a pretext for a more subversive political agenda overseen by the Chinese government."

Dr Tao Zhang, Senior Lecturer in International Media and Communications in the School of Arts and Humanities at Nottingham Trent University, confirms this. She told the Commission: "Confucius Institutes were established in 2004 as part of the Chinese Communist Party's intensifying propaganda drive overseas. They are strategically located in various foreign universities, allowing the Chinese authorities to gain a foot-hold for the exercise of control over the study of China and the Chinese language. From its organization and funding to textbooks and staff, the Confucius Institute is an extension of the Chinese education system, directly controlled by the state and having the same ideological and propaganda roles as schools and universities in China."

Confucius Institutes are directly controlled, funded and staffed by an agency of the Chinese government's Ministry of Education, the Office of Chinese Language Council International, known as the 'Hanban'.⁷ According to the Confucius Institute's Constitution and by-laws, the Confucius Institute headquarters is governed by the Council, and the chair, vice chairs, and executive members of the Council are appointed by the State Council of the People's Republic of China (PRC).⁸ The current chair of the Council is Ms Sun Chunlan, a member of the Chinese Communist

⁶ Benedict Rogers, "In The Name Of Confucius: How China Is Invading Western Universities With Communist Propaganda," Huffington Post, 11 January 2017: <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/ben/in-the-name-of-confucius- b 14104430.html>

⁷ Hanban website: http://www.hanban.org/confuciousinstitutes/node_10961.htm

⁸ Constitution and By-law of the Confucius Institutes, clause 13, http://english.hanban.org/node_7880.htm

Party Politbureau, a Vice Premier of the PRC, and a former chair of the CCP's United Front Work Department.⁹ According to Rachele Peterson in her submission to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission: "The Hanban is overseen by Chinese Language Council International, which comprised representatives of twelve state agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, and the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (which handles propaganda). In March 2018, when President Xi Jinping oversaw a major government reorganization, some of these agencies were merged or moved to the Chinese Communist Party, and the current state of this council is unclear. However, its makeup as of March indicates the Chinese government's interest in using Confucius Institutes for political purposes."

The Hanban approves course materials and events hosted by Confucius Institutes, and evaluates the teachers. This means, according to Rachele Peterson in her evidence to our inquiry, that Confucius Institutes are "closely tied to the Chinese government". Indeed, in 2007 the then head of propaganda for the Chinese Communist Party, Li Changchun, described Confucius Institutes as "an important part of China's overseas propaganda set-up".¹⁰ In 2010, Xu Lin, the director-general of the Hanban, said that: "Confucius Institutes, as many people are asking, are an important part of the soft power. Because we want to expand our (Chinese communist party's) influences, we do not deny (this statement). We agree."¹¹ In the same year, Liu Yunshan, Minister of Propaganda, said: "Overseas propaganda should be 'comprehensive, multi-level and wide-ranging With regard to key issues that influence our sovereignty and safety, we should actively carry out international propaganda battles against issues such as Tibet, Xinjiang, Taiwan, Human Rights, and Falun Gong. Our strategy is to proactively take our culture abroad... We should do well in establishing and operating overseas cultural centers and Confucius Institutes".¹² The President of China at the time, Hu Jintao, endorsed Confucius Institutes as a way "to cultivate and prepare a group (or army) of people to make sure the CCP will be in power in the future in China, and make sure we will increase our CCP influence around the world."¹³

Li Changchun was quoted on Hanban website in 2012 when inspecting the Confucius Institute headquarters: "The Confucius Institute is a major measure for our education going out since the 16th National Congress of the (Chinese Communist) Party... If we say that since the 16th National Congress of the (Chinese Communist) Party we have strengthened our international discourse

⁹ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_Chunlan

¹⁰ The PRC government website (Chinese): http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2007-04/24/content_594800.htm

¹¹ This quote was cited from a video produced by the Hong Kong based Phoenix TV that was posted on Hanban website, but the page has since been taken down. It is referenced in the film *In the Name of Confucius*.

¹² As quoted here: <https://apjif.org/-Marshall-Sahlins/4220/article.pdf>

¹³ According to English translation of a speech by Hu Jintao received by the Commission, with original version available online here – 18 February 2010: <http://www.aboluowang.com/2010/0218/157682.html>

power and advanced our soft power, then the Confucius Institute under the Ministry of Education has made important contributions to enhancing our cultural soft power.”¹⁴

For these reasons the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission decided to hold an inquiry into China’s Confucius Institutes, as part of our wider and ongoing work on China. This inquiry follows previous inquiries the Commission has conducted in the past three years on human rights in China¹⁵ and on forced organ harvesting in China.¹⁶ The Commission hosted a screening of the documentary film *In the Name of Confucius*,¹⁷ which focuses on Confucius Institutes in Canada but raises issues applicable worldwide. The screening was followed by a panel discussion with four leading experts. The Commission also published a Call for Evidence¹⁸ and invited written submissions.

This inquiry asked the fundamental question: Are Confucius Institutes a benign and even positive presence, enhancing better understanding and cooperation with China, or a negative influence, threatening and restricting freedom of expression and academic freedom? Our conclusion is that on balance, given the evidence we have received, and while the teaching of Chinese language and culture should be welcomed and encouraged, Confucius Institutes as they are currently constituted threaten academic freedom and freedom of expression in universities around the world and represent an endeavour by the Chinese Communist Party to spread its propaganda and suppress its critics beyond its borders. This conclusion is consistent with similar conclusions reached by the United States Congress, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and by intelligence agencies in Canada and Belgium. It is important to note that the CIA released a report detailing China’s influence in the United States, including in academic institutions, in March 2018. According to the *Washington Free Beacon*, “the CIA cautions against efforts by the Chinese Communist Party to stipulate funding to universities and policy institutes in exchange for academic censorship.”¹⁹ The CIA has reportedly stated that: “The CCP provides ‘strings-attached’ funding to academic institutions and think tanks to deter research that casts it in a negative light. It has used this tactic to reward pro-China viewpoints and coerce Western academic publications and conferences to self-censor.”²⁰ The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) told

¹⁴ http://chinese.cn/college/newsexpress/article/2012-11/28/content_473552.htm

¹⁵ Conservative Party Human Rights Commission report, “The Darkest Moment: The Crackdown on Human Rights in China 2013-2016”:

http://conservativehumanrights.com/reports/submissions/CPHRC_China_Human_Rights_Report_Final.pdf

¹⁶ Conservative Party Human Rights Commission report on forced organ harvesting in China:

http://conservativehumanrights.com/reports/CPHRC_ORGAN_HARVESTING_REPORT.pdf

¹⁷ In the Name of Confucius: the documentary - <http://inthenameofconfuciusmovie.com/>

¹⁸ Conservative Party Human Rights Commission Inquiry on Confucius Institutes - Call for Evidence:

http://conservativehumanrights.com/news/2018/CPHRC_Confucius_Institutes_Call_for_Evidence.pdf

¹⁹ The Washington Free Beacon, “CIA Warns of Extensive Chinese Operation to Infiltrate American Institutions,” by Natalie Johnson, 7 March 2018: <https://freebeacon.com/national-security/cia-warns-extensive-chinese-operation-infiltrate-american-institutions/>

²⁰ Ibid.,

the Senate Intelligence Committee in February 2018 that the FBI is investigating Confucius Institutes.²¹

Furthermore, the United States Congress passed the John McCain 2019 National Defense Authorization Act which included a provision barring any university in the United States from using Pentagon resources for any programme involving Confucius Institutes in US colleges, schools and universities.²² In a separate move, in March 2018 Senator Marco Rubio and Congressman Joe Wilson introduced the Foreign Influence Transparency Act, aimed, in the words of Senator Rubio, at bringing “greater transparency to the activities of foreign governments operating in the United States”. The legislation will strengthen requirements for colleges and universities to disclose sources of foreign funding and, as Senator Rubio said, “close loopholes in current law so that entities like Confucius Institutes, operating in more than 100 American higher education institutions ... would be required to register with the Department of Justice as foreign agents of the Chinese government.”²³ According to a report in University World News, the legislation would also require colleges and universities “to disclose the text of any contracts that pertain to gifts that are disclosed to the Department of Education” and will result in increased pressure on academic institutions to “re-examine their partnerships with Confucius Institutes and whether they are allowing undue Chinese government influence on campus”.²⁴ The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission urges the United Kingdom to consider similar measures.

This report is a summary of the evidence received by the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission. The submissions received by the Commission are published in full on our website, www.conservativehumanrights.com.

²¹ Ibid.,

²² The Washington Post, “Pentagon barred from funding Confucius Institutes on American campuses,” by Josh Rogin, 14 August 2018: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2018/08/14/pentagon-barred-from-funding-confucius-institutes-on-american-campuses/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.20bb8436669a

²³ “Congressman Joe Wilson (R-SC) and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) introduce the Foreign Influence Transparency Act,” 21 March 2018 - <https://joewilson.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congressman-joe-wilson-r-sc-and-senator-marco-rubio-r-fl-introduce-the>

²⁴ University World News, “Push for transparency on campus Confucius Institutes,” by Brendan O’Malley, 30 March 2018: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2018033017555620>

Scope of the Inquiry

On 2 March 2018, the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission published a Call for Evidence for an inquiry into China's Confucius Institutes. Our call for evidence invited submissions from any individual or institution who wished to contribute, and we genuinely sought to examine with an open mind to what extent Confucius Institutes give China influence in academic institutions around the world, and what the implications of such influence are. We sought evidence as to the extent to which Confucius Institutes are a positive influence, providing resources for Chinese language and culture, and to what extent they may restrict or threaten freedom of expression, critical thinking and democratic values. We noted and examined with interest the reasons for the decision taken by some educational institutions in different parts of the world to terminate relationships with Confucius Institutes. An increasing number of educational institutions around the world have cut their links with Confucius Institutes, including the University of Chicago and the Toronto District School Board.

In June 2018, the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission held a screening of the documentary film *In the Name of Confucius*, which provides a detailed assessment of Confucius Institutes in Canada. The screening was followed by a panel discussion where we heard from the film maker Doris Liu, who researched and produced the documentary, as well as Dr Eva Pils, Professor of Law at The Dickson Poon School of Law at King's College, London, Dr Tao Zhang, lecturer at Nottingham Trent University and Isabel Hilton, Editor of China Dialogue.

The Commission also received written submissions from almost twenty individuals and organisations including: Rachelle Peterson, Policy Director of the National Association of Scholars; Professor Marshall Sahlins of the University of Chicago; Professor Christopher Hughes of the London School of Economics; Professor Clive Hamilton of Charles Sturt University in Canberra; Dr Terence Russell of the University of Manitoba; Heriot Watt University; Free Tibet; Tibet Society; Canadian Friends of Tibet; Students for a Free Tibet International; American journalist Daniel Golden; Canadian human rights lawyer David Matas; retired British diplomat Roger Garside; Spanish teacher Fernando Romeo, founder of 'Stop Confucius Institute'; British child and adolescent psychotherapist Olivia Raw; Polish activist Hanna Shen; and Sonia Zhao, a former employee of the Confucius Institute at McMaster University.

In addition, the Commission studied the report by the National Association of Scholars titled *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education*,²⁵ the report by Professor Marshall Sahlins titled *Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware*,²⁶ the report by Professor Christopher Hughes at the London School of Economics titled *Confucius Institutes*

²⁵ National Association of Scholars, "Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education," https://www.nas.org/images/documents/confucius_institutes/NAS_confuciusInstitutes.pdf

²⁶ Professor Marshall Sahlins, "Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware" - <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/C/bo20637267.html>

and the university: distinguishing the political mission from the cultural,²⁷ and the report by the USC Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School, titled *Confucius Institutes and the Globalisation of China's Soft Power*,²⁸ as well as *The Debate Over Confucius Institutes* published in *China File* on 23 June 2014.²⁹ The Commission also notes the statements by the American Association of University Professors, calling for a review of Confucius Institutes,³⁰ the report by Jonas Parelo-Plesner for the Hudson Institute, titled *The Chinese Communist Party's Foreign Interference Operations: How the U.S. and Other Democracies Should Respond*, published 20 June 2018,³¹ and the work of Professor Clive Hamilton in his book *Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia*.³²

Confucius Institutes were invited to attend the film screening and contribute to the inquiry but to our knowledge they did not take up the invitation. However, two days after the screening the Chinese Ambassador to the UK, Liu Xiaoming, published an article in the *Daily Telegraph* rejecting "false accusations" about Confucius Institutes.³³

²⁷ Professor Christopher Hughes, "Confucius Institutes and the university: distinguishing the political mission from the cultural" - <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/60790/>

²⁸ USC Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School, "Confucius Institutes and the Globalisation of China's Soft Power" - [https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u25044/Confucius%20Institutes%20v2%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u25044/Confucius%20Institutes%20v2%20(1).pdf)

²⁹ ChinaFile, "The Debate Over Confucius Institutes" - <http://www.chinafile.com/conversation/debate-over-confucius-institutes>

³⁰ American Association of University Professors, "On Partnerships with Foreign Governments: The Case of Confucius Institutes," June 2014 - <https://www.aaup.org/report/confucius-institutes>

³¹ Jonas Parelo-Plesner, "The Chinese Communist Party's Foreign Interference Operations: How the US and Other Democracies should respond", Hudson Institute, 20 June 2018 - <https://www.hudson.org/research/14409-the-chinese-communist-party-s-foreign-interference-operations-how-the-u-s-and-other-democracies-should-respond>

³² Clive Hamilton, "Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia," 2018 - https://www.amazon.co.uk/Silent-Invasion-Chinas-influence-Australia/dp/1743794800/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1542491111&sr=8-1&keywords=clive+hamilton+silent+invasion

³³ Liu Xiaoming, "Confucius is key to China-UK relations. False accusations shouldn't distract from that," 7 June 2018 - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/06/07/confucius-key-china-uk-friendship-false-accusations-shouldnt/>

Summary of Evidence

Without exception, every submission received by the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, and the oral evidence we heard during the panel discussion following the screening of *In the Name of Confucius*, point to serious concerns about the presence of Confucius Institutes in universities in the United Kingdom and around the world in the following major regards:

- Threats to academic and intellectual freedom
- Transparency over funding and employment arrangements
- Discrimination in employment
- Providing a platform for the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda

In particular, there is a total suppression of discussion in Confucius Institutes of three key 'sensitive' topics: Tiananmen, Tibet and Taiwan.

According to Rachelle Peterson in her evidence to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, at New Jersey City University in 2016 the Chinese director of the Confucius Institute, Yin Xiuli, told her that if a student asked about the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, she would "show a picture and point out the beautiful architecture". Yin added: "We don't touch" issues such as Taiwan, Tibet and Falun Gong.

In 2014, according to Rachelle Peterson in her submission to the Commission, at a European Association for Chinese Studies conference in Portugal, which a Confucius Institute affiliate co-sponsored, the director-general of Hanban, Xu Lin, confiscated all the printed programmes and ordered the pages advertising the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, a Taiwanese co-sponsor of the conference, and an advertisement for the Taiwan National Central Library's book exhibit, to be torn out.

Similarly, Isabel Hilton told the Commission during our hearing that in 2014 she had contributed to a book which, as she subsequently later learned, was sponsored by a Confucius Institute. In her original draft, she had described the work of Chinese dissident Wu Lihong in environmental activism, including his documentation of the chemical contamination of Lake Tai. When it was published, all mention of his work, and of his subsequent arrest, had been edited out.

In 2013, a Canadian opera virtuoso, Thomas Glenn, who was introduced as a Confucius Institute student, joined a Chinese opera star in a duet during an annual variety show staged on China Central Television to mark the Chinese New Year. He learned the song in a programme called 'I Sing Beijing' sponsored by Hanban, and he was invited to sing in the variety show by the Confucius Institute. However, he did not know the meaning of the song. It turned out to be from an opera promoted during the Cultural Revolution by Mao Zedong's wife Jiang Qing, and included lyrics such as "the Party gives me wisdom, gives me courage". Thomas Glenn said: "To be perfectly honest I'm largely ignorant of the social context in which this comes into play."³⁴

³⁴ Marshall Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware*, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2015, p. 25

Confucius Institutes in different institutions around the world are believed to have wielded their influence to prevent events which China dislikes from proceeding. The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission was informed of the following examples during the course of our inquiry: in 2008 it was reported that Tel Aviv University closed a student art display on the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in China, under pressure from a dean who feared harming the university's Confucius Institute;³⁵ similarly, in 2009, North Carolina University withdrew an invitation to the Dalai Lama, under pressure from its Confucius Institute,³⁶ in 2013, Sydney University, afraid to jeopardise its Confucius Institute, moved an event with the Dalai Lama off-campus, forbade the organisers from using the university's logo and demanded that the organisers prevent media coverage and turn away pro-Tibet activists.³⁷ In 2018, references to experiences in Taiwan were removed from the biographical notes of American journalist Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, when she was invited to deliver the keynote speech and receive an award in Savannah State University in the United States. The event was sponsored by the Confucius Institute and the director of the Confucius Institute had insisted on removing references to Taiwan.³⁸

The documentary *In the Name of Confucius*, which our Commission screened in Parliament in June 2018, had difficulties finding venues for screenings in some parts of the world, due to influence by the Chinese Communist Party. In Sydney, Australia, local organisers failed to secure a theatre after local cinemas refused to host it due to fears of a backlash from China, according to the film maker Doris Liu in her evidence to our Commission. A screening was eventually held in the New South Wales Parliament after rejections by cinemas. A screening in Melbourne, Australia was forced to change venue due to Chinese consular pressure,³⁹ and a screening in Auckland, New Zealand⁴⁰ was cancelled. In November 2017 in Tokyo, the Chinese Embassy tried to put pressure on a venue, the Japan National Olympic Memorial Youth Centre, which was

³⁵ Rachele Peterson's submission to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, citing Marshall Sahlins, "Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware," Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2015, p.22

³⁶ Rachele Peterson's submission to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, citing Daniel Golden, 'China Says No Talking Tibet as Confucius Funds US Universities', Bloomberg News, November 1 2011: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2011-11-01/china-says-no-talking-tibet-as-confucius-funds-u-s-universities>

³⁷ Rachele Peterson's submission to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, citing "Sydney University Criticised for Blocking Dalai Lama Visit," The Guardian, 18 April 2013: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/18/sydney-university-dalai-lama>

³⁸ Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, "How China Managed to Play Censor at a Conference on US soil," Foreign Policy, 9 May 2018 - <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/09/how-china-managed-to-play-censor-at-a-conference-on-u-s-soil/>

³⁹ The Australian, "University Cancels screening of anti-Confucius Institute film," 24 September 2018 - <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/university-cancels-screening-of-anticonfucius-institute-film/news-story/c7487fba63b5b6bf5d7a9891cb0a7926>

The Epoch Times, "Australian University Cancelled Documentary Due to Chinese Consular Pressure, Documents Reveal" 3 December 2018 - https://www.theepochtimes.com/victoria-uni-cancelled-documentary-due-to-chinese-consular-pressure-documents-reveal_2729205.html

⁴⁰ Asia-Pacific Report, "Controversial 'Confucius' doco gets mixed response at NZ universities," 9 August 2018 - <https://asiapacificreport.nz/2018/08/09/controversial-confucius-doco-gets-mixed-response-at-nz-universities/>

hosting an annual human rights conference to cancel the event because the documentary was being screened, but the Japanese authorities refused to give in to pressure and the event took place.⁴¹

It was also reported to the Commission that Confucius Institutes are also in violation of the principles of non-discrimination in hiring practices. According to the National Association of Scholars' report, *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education*, Hanban eligibility criteria for Confucius Institute teachers has included the stipulation that potential employees have "no record of participation in Falun Gong and other illegal organisations and no criminal record."⁴² Following the case of McMaster University in Canada, described below, specific language regarding Falun Gong (a peaceful spiritual practice which is severely persecuted in China) was removed from the English version of the Hanban's website. But Rachelle Peterson told our Commission that: "Although language barring Falun Gong has disappeared from the English version of the Hanban's website, the fact that Falun Gong practitioners remain persecuted in China suggests that the ban has not actually been lifted." Since Falun Gong is banned by the Chinese Communist Party, it is likely that the prohibition on employing Falun Gong practitioners remains, even though Falun Gong is technically neither "illegal" nor an "organization". It is also possible, given the crackdown on Christians, Tibetan Buddhists and Uyghur Muslims in China, that employees who are Christian, Tibetan Buddhists or Muslim could face the same discrimination.

Sonia Zhao, a Chinese teacher who is also a Falun Gong practitioner, was employed by the Hanban and sent to the Confucius Institute in McMaster University in Canada. Ms Zhao gave evidence to our inquiry and described first-hand her experience. "Before I came to Canada, we had a three-month training organised by the headquarters of Confucius Institutes in Beijing," she told the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission. "In the training, we had experienced teachers and professionals who shared with us about their experiences when teaching abroad ... We were told to tell the students there is only one China, Taiwan is part of China; we were told to tell the students Tibet is part of China, they can't be independent; we were told not to talk about issues like Taiwan and Tibet, and if the students ask us about these issues, we should change the topic ... We also had to sign a contract. In the contract it says that 'we can't be Falun Gong practitioners and we can't participate in any Falun Gong related events and activities'. This contract takes effect in all Confucius Institutes in all countries. This contract shows discrimination against teachers' personal beliefs and this is how they violated freedom of belief worldwide." The violations of freedom of conscience which arise from Confucius Institutes are, Sonia Zhao

⁴¹ In the Name of Confucius, "Despite China pressure, In the Name of Confucius sees a successful screening in Tokyo, Japan," 23 November 2017 - <http://inthenameofconfuciusmovie.com/despite-china-pressure-in-the-name-of-confucius-saw-a-successful-screening-in-tokyo-japan-video/>

⁴² See original archived web-page on the Hanban website - https://web.archive.org/web/20100711103511/http://english.hanban.org/node_9806.htm, also referenced by the National Association of Scholars, "Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education," https://www.nas.org/images/documents/confucius_institutes/NAS_confuciusInstitutes.pdf

says, happening worldwide. “I know the pressure and the fear, as I had them. No one deserves that. I hope Confucius Institutes can be closed, so that teachers can teach Chinese language freely, so students can learn about the real China and Chinese culture, not the Chinese communists’ culture.”

In 2011, Sonia Zhao alerted McMaster University that she had felt forced to sign a contract with Hanban that banned Falun Gong practice, because she was afraid that if she acknowledged that she herself was a Falun Gong practitioner she would be punished. Her mother had been imprisoned for two years for practising Falun Gong. As a result, after she had filed a complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, McMaster University terminated its relationship with the Hanban and closed its Confucius Institute. According to Doris Liu in her evidence to the Commission, McMaster University spent a year negotiating with Hanban to remove the discriminatory clause but when Hanban refused to do so, the university decided to close its Confucius Institute.

Rachelle Peterson detailed in her submission to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission concerns about the “extreme secrecy” of Confucius Institutes, which give “the impression that ... Confucius Institutes have something to hide”. According to Doris Liu, in her evidence to the Commission, all Confucius Institutes agreements have a confidentiality clause which requires that the agreements cannot be viewed by anyone other than the signatories.

Concerns have also been expressed about the possible role of Confucius Institutes in espionage; concerns outlined by the CIA are referenced in the Executive Summary to this report. In February 2018, Christopher Wray, director of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), told the United States Senate that he was “watching warily” and in some cases had taken “investigative steps”.⁴³ A new report to the US Congress highlights concerns over China’s aggression.⁴⁴ Canadian Security Intelligence Services have published a report on China that includes concerns about Confucius Institutes.⁴⁵

Michel Juneau-Katsuya, former chief of Asia-Pacific for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), said that Confucius Institutes are not “philanthropic”. Instead, “they are part of a strategy.

⁴³ The Washington Post, “Waking Up to China’s infiltration of American colleges,” by Josh Rogin, 18 February 2018 - https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/waking-up-to-chinas-infiltration-of-american-colleges/2018/02/18/99d3bee8-13f7-11e8-9570-29c9830535e5_story.html?utm_term=.a996c08b317b

⁴⁴ “US ‘might lose war to China or Russia, report to Congress says’, by Jon Sharman, The Independent, 17 November 2018: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-war-china-who-win-russia-national-defence-strategy-congress-report-donald-trump-a8636866.html> (and see: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/providing-for-the-common-defense.pdf>)

⁴⁵ Canadian Security Intelligence Services, “The Security Dimensions of an Influential China” - https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/CHINA_POST_CONFERENCE_E_SOURCE.pdf

And they are funded and run by organisations that are linked to Chinese intelligence services.” Confucius Institutes, he concludes, “represent a clear and undeniable menace to our society”.⁴⁶

Retired British diplomat and China expert Roger Garside concludes in his submission to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission that “academic freedom is inherently compromised by permitting a state agency controlled by the Communist Party of China to establish a teaching operation in any school or university.”

⁴⁶ Michael Juneau-Katsuya, evidence to the Toronto District School Board, October 1 2014 (as submitted to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission)

Conclusions

“The question of which values are being promoted by the Confucius Institutes is what is important for universities in democratic societies,” writes Professor Christopher Hughes in *Confucius Institutes and the university: distinguishing the political mission from the cultural*.⁴⁷ “If guarding and cultivating ideals that are seen as necessary for democracy to work, such as freedom of thought and expression, models of citizenship, and advances in civil society, are critical, it is inappropriate for them to host and lend legitimacy to organisations that promote the values of China’s one-party state, even when these are presented as ‘publicity’ for China’s ‘national conditions’.” There is, he adds, a “big difference” between organising an academic conference with a Chinese university, or working with academics in China, and “allowing an institution that has the mission of promoting the values and interests of the CCP to have a long-term base on campus.”

When the London School of Economics opened a Confucius Institute in 2006, according to Professor Hughes, “Chinese students revealed ... that they were disappointed to arrive at a foreign university only to discover that their own government had established an organisation on campus that made it feel as though they were still under the kind of surveillance that they had to live with in China. In the words of one student, ‘The Confucius Institute, to me, functions like the closed circulation television and has the potential to scare away my critical thinking by constantly reminding me: ‘we are watching you and behave yourself’’. The onus should be on host universities to find out how representative such views might be, paying special attention to vulnerable groups, such as advocates of political reform in China, Tibetans and Uighurs, followers of Falun Gong, advocates of Taiwanese independence and democracy advocates from Hong Kong, and whether such views are shared by local students.”⁴⁸

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission notes that a number of universities around the world have terminated contracts and closed Confucius Institutes. In total, at least 27 universities and one school board have cut ties with Confucius Institutes, resulting in 25 closures of Confucius Institutes,⁴⁹ one cancellation and 16 rejections. These include Sweden’s Stockholm University, Karlstad University and Blekinge Institute of Technology, Germany’s Stuttgart Media University and University of Hohenheim, Denmark’s Copenhagen Business School, France’s University of Lyon, Toulouse 1 University Capitole, and West Paris Nanterre La Defense University, Canada’s McMaster University, and, in the United States, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Chicago, Pfeiffer University, Tulane University, the University of North Florida, the University of West Florida, the University of South Florida, the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, Texas A&M University System, Prairie View A&M University,

⁴⁷ Professor Christopher Hughes, “Confucius Institutes and the university: distinguishing the political mission from the cultural” - <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/60790/>

⁴⁸ Ibid.,

⁴⁹ See <http://inthenameofconfuciusmovie.com/cutting-ties-with-confucius-institutes/>
https://www.nas.org/articles/how_many_confucius_institutes_are_in_the_united_states

University of Iowa, North Carolina State University, the University of Michigan, University of Massachusetts Boston, and the University of Rhode Island, all of which have announced the closure of their Confucius Institutes, and the Toronto District School Board in Canada, which cancelled its contract. The University of British Columbia and the University of Manitoba in Canada, and Dickinson State University in the United States reversed their decision to open a Confucius Institute. The Education Department of New South Wales in Australia is currently reviewing the Confucius Institute programmes in 13 schools in the state.⁵⁰

Dr Terence Russell of the University of Manitoba explained in his submission to our inquiry why he and others worked to prevent the establishment of a Confucius Institute at his university in Winnipeg, Canada. “There were four major points upon which we argued that the Confucius Institute was the wrong choice for our university: the administration’s motivation, academic integrity, human rights and shared values, and co-optation of university integrity,” Dr Russell argued. “Universities in the Western world operate under the principle of academic freedom. It is believed that the free and unlimited circulation of information and ideas, combined with vigorous, informed debate, is the most reliable means of advancing human understanding. The government of China does not share those principles in practice. The Confucius Institutes model, by its very nature, operates contrary to the principles of academic freedom. Rather than being chosen through standard faculty hiring practices that emphasise academic competence, the Confucius Institute instructors supplied by partner organisations in China must demonstrate political reliability as well as pedagogical ability. The curriculum taught is usually determined by the central Confucius Institute office in Beijing. Issues considered sensitive by the Beijing government are not open for discussion. Confucius Institutes must operate in accordance with Chinese laws, as well as local laws. This means that many subjects related to China’s history and politics may not be mentioned. Since 2013, the so-called ‘Seven Don’t Mentions’ policy for Chinese universities further makes explicit a list of general topics that may not be mentioned by university instructors. These include universal values, press freedom, civil society and the historical mistakes of the Communist Party. In fact, there is clear evidence that the Confucius Institutes are designed to function as part of China’s overall propaganda efforts abroad.”

Heriot-Watt University told the Commission in its submission, “as a global power with increasing influence in business, the need to understand and appreciate China and Chinese culture has never been greater, to challenge preconceptions and lack of awareness, to bridge the cultural gap to make those business and enterprise links successful.” This is absolutely correct and the Commission agrees entirely. It is of course essential to engage with China constructively, through trade, cultural and academic exchange and political dialogue. Few would refute that. However, we should do so without surrendering or compromising our values, or allowing the Chinese Communist Party to dictate the terms of engagement. Dr Russell says, “we must interact with

⁵⁰ “Confucius language and culture programs face axe in schools,” The Australian, 12 June 2018: <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/education/confucius-language-and-culture-programs-face-axe-in-schools/news-story/ddb06905a9289d92accc879a378bf5e8>

China in an informed way, on our own terms, and while maintaining our core values. We must realise that the present Chinese government is an authoritarian one-party, quasi-police state. It is not China. China, its cultural tradition and its people, is infinitely greater than the Beijing government. To be seduced by the prestige and perceived financial benefits of cooperating with Beijing; to allow the Chinese government to co-opt the legitimacy of our universities; not only compromises the moral and intellectual integrity that we have worked so hard to maintain, it is a travesty, and an insult to the people and cultural legacy of China.”

Rachelle Peterson claimed in her submission to our inquiry that: “the Chinese government has succeeded in suborning significant portions of higher education by way of Confucius Institutes. There is a threat not only to the integrity of our institutions today, but more importantly for the future of higher education and the future of all free countries.”

Recommendations

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission believes that the question of the presence of Confucius Institutes in British universities requires immediate and urgent attention. We therefore call on Her Majesty's Government to consider this report and respond to the concerns outlined, and we recommend the following steps:

1. A review of all current agreements between British universities, schools and other educational institutions and Confucius Institutes;
2. A suspension of further agreements between British universities and educational institutions and Confucius Institutions until such a review has reported;
3. A full and thorough study of all recent reports on Confucius Institutes, including the National Association of Scholars titled *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education*; the report by Professor Marshall Sahlins titled *Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware*; the report by the USC Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School, titled *Confucius Institutes and the Globalisation of China's Soft Power*; Clive Hamilton's new book *Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia*; the documentary film, *In the Name of Confucius*; and other sources referenced in this report and beyond;
4. An investigation into whether British educational institutions, including universities and schools, with Confucius Institutes and classrooms, are involved in discrimination and violate the Equality Act 2010 in their hiring processes;
5. An investigation into whether Confucius Institutes are being used to monitor and intimidate students and/or teachers in the United Kingdom;
6. An investigation into claims that Confucius Institutes impede freedom of expression and academic thought in discussions – particularly in regard to the Tiananmen massacre, Tibet and Taiwan – in order to prevent censorship and protect freedom of expression;
7. A requirement that all colleges, schools and universities require their administrations to present details of their proposed association with Confucius Institutes to the faculty as a whole before signing an agreement;
8. Legislation to require transparency from Confucius Institutes (and all foreign donors) to universities, colleges, schools and other educational institutions in Britain with which they agree contracts and to ensure that foreign institutions are not able to hold undue influence, whether political, ideological or religious, on the curriculum and teaching practices of British institutions;
9. A review of all visas for Confucius Institute teachers, to assess their activities and ensure that the visas are consistent with their original purpose and are lawful and have not exceeded parameters;
10. A requirement that, where Confucius Institutes provide teaching in Chinese history or culture, a truly independent, holistic, balanced, and comprehensive curriculum is adopted, to allow for discussion of a diversity of topics, including Tibet, Taiwan and the Tiananmen massacre.