China’s public diplomacy in ASEAN countries started as part of strategic partnership both at the regional and bilateral levels since the mid-2000s. Focusing on Confucius Institute (CI) as one of the earliest means of China’s public diplomacy, this article aims to make a comparative review of establishing processes of CIs and examines features of the CI program, functions of the CI networking, and perceptions of the youth of host universities and local societies. Based on the empirical surveys, this article argues that China’s public diplomacy through CIs in the ASEAN countries is an institutional building process to develop young human resources with Mandarin proficiency, to promote business relations, and to disseminate China’s official ideas through CIs’ public forums to the extent that the CIs’ network has been utilized to promote the conceptual synergy of “One Belt One Road” “Maritime Silk Road in the 21st Century” with ASEAN Connectivity. In conclusion, this article argues that due to a wide gap particularly in terms of social pluralism and open access to multiple sources of information in the region, the rapid growth of China’s public diplomacy through CIs will have a double-edged effect, conducive to promoting relations with China and a centrifugal force to the ASEAN Centrality in the decade to come.
public diplomacy, it is one of the earliest and essential tools of China’s “soft power” projection in the ASEAN countries. What is remarkable is not the curriculum per se of CI on the campus, but their social and diplomatic functions in the domestic and transnational contexts. In this respect, “power” which is relational in nature depends on social and economic structure of the host societies and their relations with China.

Third, this paper discusses the prospect of China–ASEAN relations from the aspect of multiple functions of CI as part of China’s public diplomacy. The younger generations in ASEAN countries have more or less positive attitudes toward China, and China is the major trade partner of ASEAN. If young people’s mobility and networks with China become more dominant rather than their horizontal networks among ASEAN countries, the nature of future ASEAN Community is likely to be affected. In this sense, the prospect of mutual exchanges in China–ASEAN relations is a crucial agenda both for China and for an ASEAN Community 2025.

The existing rich literature on China’s public diplomacy can be roughly divided into the following three categories: the first category is studies primarily focusing on norms, concepts, diversity of actors, and the policy process within China. The second category primarily discusses whether or not China’s “soft power” through public diplomacy can work well in its external relations, and the third category of studies focuses on empirical studies of CI as a tool of China’s public diplomacy.

As for the first category of studies, Aoyama classified China’s public diplomacy after the early 2000s into the period of “assertive public diplomacy” to protect “Chinese interests abroad” and the period of “offensive public diplomacy” after 2012. Aoyama states, however, that China does not exercise soft power, primarily because China is still searching for its own core political concepts which are fluctuating among universal norms, Marxism–Leninism, and Chinese traditional concepts. D’Hooghe, on the other hand, discusses the role of one party system in expanding public diplomacy in response to domestic social changes due to rapid economic growth. Furthermore, Lai argues that even though China has introduced new initiatives such as CIs, China’s cultural diplomacy has limitations due to “its economic resources and defects in its political system.”

Though some Southeast Asian political leaders mention that China can provide a development model as part of China’s soft power, Pilling denies this, arguing that “China has little to offer” and is weak in exercising soft power to other countries. Similarly, Nakai critically argues that the major characteristic of China’s public diplomacy is a combination of pursuit of national interests by using its organizational and traditional capacity of propaganda through advanced communication tools. Furthermore, Nakai points out that China’s official culture is less capable of impressing others with positive images.

Agenda of China’s public diplomacy began to be more clearly conceptualized after 2008 when Minister of Culture categorized external cultural activities into four

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1 China has become the largest trade partner of ASEAN countries since 2009. ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2016/2017, https://www.aseanstats.org/ebooks/ebook-publication-by-year/ (accessed June 20, 2018).
2 Aoyama, Gendai Chugoku no Gaiko, 438.
3 Aoyama, Chugoku no Ajia Gaiko, 450. Aoyama and Amako, Chotaikoku Chugoku, 163–165.
4 D’Hooghe, “Public Diplomacy,” 88–105. Idem, The Rise. Idem, “The Expansion,” 19–35.
5 Lai, “China’s Cultural Diplomacy,” 83.
6 Pilling, “Why China’s Charm Offensive.”
7 Nakai, “Chugoku,” 14.
8 Ibid.
categories: (1) cultural diplomacy, (2) cultural exchange, (3) propaganda, and (4) cultural trade. This is relevant to the development of the ASEAN–China Plan of Action 2005–2010, because it encompassed all of the above points. In this sense, it was the initial stage of China’s assertive public diplomacy (the mid-2000s), the phenomenon Kurlantzick labels as China’s “charm offensive” in Southeast Asia.

Concerning the second category of studies focusing on China’s soft power, scholars based in Western countries are mostly critical about that. On the other hand, Li Mingjiang argues that the real concern is how the resources of power are used, thus soft power lies in the “soft use of power” to increase a state’s attraction, persuasiveness, and appeal. At the same time, case studies on how various Chinese actors such as the CCTV International and Huawei use Chinese soft power were discussed. What is important is that such new expansion of China’s public diplomacy is taken as the lubricant for China’s rise, and accordingly as a shift from old type of external propaganda to a new phase of public diplomacy. In this way, the cultural factor is selectively utilized as a source of national cohesion and for promoting Chinese good images in the world since the early 2000s when China launched the Go Global strategy.

As for the third category of studies, focusing on CIs as a tool of China’s public diplomacy, many empirical studies have been published, most of which critically discuss the operation and roles of CIs at universities in the US, Europe, and Australia. There are criticisms of the CI project as a “Trojan Horse,” “academic malware,” or “a type of impression management.” Recently, based on a comparative study of CIs in Australia and Germany, Hartig argued that the CIs are “not introducing the real China, but that they tend to present a politically correct version of China to the world.” There are studies focusing on the cases of Australia and discuss a role of CI for projecting China’s soft power.

Compared with those studies above, empirical studies on CIs in ASEAN countries are few, but several studies were already published. Thung clarifies the process of establishment and management of CI at Al Azhar University (UAI) in Jakarta. Theo and Leung survey the social tensions and aspirations in the building process of CIs at Hasanuddin University and Maranatha Christian University. Hsiao and Yang (2014) compare a difference of the social background in Cambodia and Myanmar and argue that while there is an increasing number of Mandarin Learning Stations in Cambodia, there is no CI but two Confucius Classrooms only are open due to a lack of the government endorsement. Their comparative study clarifies that the attitudes of political leaders are crucial in accepting China’s public diplomacy through CI. As for

9 Zhang, “Taito Suru,” 18–37.
10 Kurlantzick, Charm Offensive.
11 Nye, “The Limits,” and Shambaugh, “U.S.-China,” 85–127.
12 Li, “Soft Power,” 7.
13 Wang ed., Soft Power.
14 Wang, “Public Diplomacy,” 257–73.
15 Sahlins, Confucius Institutes; Barr, Who’s Afraid of China?; and Yan and Hsiao “Confucius Institutes.”
16 Hartig, Chinese Public Diplomacy, 165.
17 Yang, “Soft Power,” 235–45.
18 Thung, “Confucius Institute,” 148–82.
19 Theo and Leung, “China’s Confucius Institute in Indonesia,” 530.
20 Hsiao and Yang, “Confucius Institutes.”
the case of Thailand, Non’s paper on Chang Mai CI succinctly provides an overall picture of the Chinese influence through CIs in Thailand.21

As briefly reviewed above, China’s public diplomacy in ASEAN countries has been studied specifically on a singular or two cases of CIs. Studies at the national and regional levels are not yet provided, to the best of this author’s knowledge. There must be reasons, however, why China’s soft power was not taken as a new and attractive topic in cases of Southeast Asia. It is primarily because Chinese culture has been embedded in local Chinese communities for centuries, thus it is difficult to clarify how well Chinese culture is accepted at present due to China’s public diplomacy per se. Moreover, because of the rise of economic power, China attracts attention of the young people as one of their future career options, thus it is unclear whether and to what extent the popularity of Chinese language study is the effect of China’s soft power. In this sense, as Thung correctly says, we must “carefully avoid to mix a growing popularity of China and studying Chinese with achievement of CI.”22

Based on such brief review of related literature, this paper intends to show a more holistic framework of the current dynamism of China’s public diplomacy in the ASEAN countries and aims to discuss how CIs as the state investment of China are established, managed, and received in ASEAN societies, particularly by younger generations, primarily referring to the cases in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and the Philippines. And it aims to discuss the prospect and challenges of the ASEAN countries with regard to China’s public diplomacy in the coming decade.

2 Regional framework of China’s public diplomacy in ASEAN countries

Though the ASEAN–China summit meeting started since 1997, it was shortly after China formally launched the “Go Global Strategy” in 2000 that China started to take active initiatives toward ASEAN. In November 2002, China and ASEAN signed the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation. This paved the way for a series of negotiations during the 2000s, which resulted in establishing the ASEAN–China FTA. During this period, there was a significant development in China’s public diplomacy toward the ASEAN countries.

On October 7, 2003 the 9th ASEAN Summit meeting adopted the Declaration of ASEAN Concord (Bali Concord II). It officially declared to establish an ASEAN Community by 2020, which was later moved forward to 2015. Next day, the Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity was signed. Interestingly, it consists of the similar pillars with the ASEAN Concord II, namely Political and Security Cooperation, Economic Cooperation, and Social Cooperation, in addition to Regional and International Cooperation. At the same time, the first Plan of Action (2005–2010) to implement this joint declaration was adopted. In this Plan of Action, the third pillar referred to cooperation agendas in various sociocultural sectors such as human resources development, people-to-people exchanges, environmental issues, and media cooperation. In this way, when ASEAN declared the ASEAN Concord II in 2003, China launched the strategic partnership with

21 Non, “The Embracing of China’s Soft Power,” 294.
22 Thung, “Confucius Institute,” 170.
ASEAN at the same time, reflecting almost all of the ASEAN Concord II agenda. Since then, in order to materialize the partnership relations, China and ASEAN further signed the second Plan of Action (2011–2015) and the third Plan of Action (2016–2020). The activities in the plans have been mostly funded by ASEAN–China Cooperation Fund (ACCF) which is funded by China.\(^{23}\) The composition of the major contents has not much changed throughout the first and third Plans of Action as Table 1 shows.

As Table 1 shows, almost all the major agenda of public diplomacy such as Education, Culture, Local Government, People-to-People Exchanges, and Media are listed up in the Plans of Action from 2005. This shows China’s public diplomacy to ASEAN started as part of comprehensive framework in a collective platform, primarily funded by China. It is comprehensive in the sense that the plans contain all-dimensio nal and multilevel activities. It is strategic in the sense that the plans set long-term goals. As a consequence, specifically in the section of educational cooperation it aims to promote “teaching of each other’s language in China and ASEAN Member countries and encourage more students to study in each other’s universities.”\(^{24}\) Concerning Youth Exchanges, various agendas were proposed such as exchanges of volunteers in medical service and language teaching, establishing an ASEAN–China Young Entrepreneurs Forum and ASEAN–China Youth Festival of Culture and Arts. Furthermore, on media cooperation it provided nine points of agendas to strengthen media cooperation and exchanges of journalists. In short, essential agendas for public diplomacy were all listed up, particularly focusing on the youth, exchanges at the higher education, and establishing various forums as the top priorities.

It is generally after this first plan of actions (2005–2019) was adopted in 2003 that specific programs of China’s public diplomacy started actively, both toward ASEAN collectively and with the Member States bilaterally. At the regional level, in November

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Table 1. Plans of Action to implement the joint declaration of ASEAN and China on strategic partnership for peace and prosperity.

| The first Plan of Action (2005–2010) | The second Plan of Action (2011–2015) | The third Plan of Action (2016–2020) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Political and Security Cooperation | 1. Political and Security Cooperation | 1. Political and Security Cooperation |
| 2. Economic Cooperation              | 2. Economic Cooperation              | 2. Economic Cooperation              |
| 3. Functional Cooperation            | 3. Social and Cultural Cooperation   | 3. Social and Cultural Cooperation   |
| 3.1. Public Health cooperation       | 3.1. Public Health                   | 3.1. Public Health                   |
| 3.2. Science and Technology          | 3.2. Science and Technology          | 3.1. Public Health                   |
| 3.3. Education                       | 3.3. Education                      | 3.2. Education                      |
| 3.4. Culture                         | 3.4. Culture                        | 3.3. Culture                        |
| 3.5. Labour and Social Security      | 3.5. Human Resource and Social Security | 3.4. Human Resource and Social Protection |
| 3.6. Human Resources Development     | 3.6. Poverty Reduction               | 3.5. Poverty Reduction               |
| 3.7. Local Government Cooperation & People-to-People Exchanges | 3.7. Environmental Cooperation | 3.6. Environment                     |
| 3.8. Environmental Cooperation       | 3.8. Cooperation in Media            | 3.7. Media                          |
| 3.9. Media Cooperation               | 3.9. Cooperation in Disaster         | 3.8. Disaster Management             |
| 3.10. Local Government Cooperation & People-to-People Exchanges | Management | 3.9. Local Government Cooperation & People-to-People Exchanges |

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on the ASEAN website: http://asean.org/.

\(^{23}\) For the first Plan of Action, China agreed to contribute US$ 5 million to the ACCF, while other sector-based funds such as the ASEAN–China Public Health Cooperation Fund were established separately.

\(^{24}\) 2005–2010 Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on ASEAN–China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, adopted in Bali, Indonesia on October 8, 2003.
2004 Premier Wen Jiabao made nine proposals to strengthen political, economic, and cultural relations with ASEAN and in 2005 a memorandum of cultural exchanges was signed between China and ASEAN.

The ASEAN–China EXPO (CAEXPO) was one of the earliest diplomatic efforts of China’s public diplomacy toward ASEAN as a whole. It has been held every year since 2004 in Nanning. The theme of the 14th CAEXPO held in September 2017 was “Building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.” As it shows, CAEXPO is hosted by China for promoting business relations with ASEAN and in this context cultural cooperation is included every year. Apart from business-related activities, there is always the last section related to cultural exchanges and sports programs in CAEXPO. It was during this first 5 years, bilateral negotiations with individual governments started, including the preparatory meetings on the agenda of establishing CIIs, as is briefly shown later.

Then, in October 2009, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed to establish the ASEAN–China Centre (ACC), which was inaugurated at the 14th ASEAN–China Summit in November 2011 in Bali. It has been held annually since. ACC is an intergovernmental organization which aims to promote ASEAN–China cooperation in trade, investment, tourism, education, and culture. The Secretary General of ACC has four divisions: General Affairs & Coordination, Trade & Investment, Education, Culture, & Tourism, and Information & Public Relations. As such, China’s public diplomacy toward ASEAN has started its full scale since the second Five-Year Plan, and as represented in the Secretary General of ACC, it started with two major objectives: (1) promoting trade and investment and (2) promoting educational and cultural exchanges. The regular functions of ACC are financially borne by China for the 90% and ASEAN Member States for the rest.25

While the basic strategy is to promote cooperation in each agenda in Table 1, as to the category of Education, the priority was to promote student mobility and the provision of Chinese government scholarships to ASEAN countries, including the Double 100,000 Students Mobility Program for the second and third plans above. It includes promoting youth exchange and Chinese language courses including technical and vocational institutions. In terms of the higher education, the ASEAN–China Rectors’ Conference started funded by the ACC since 2012. Its purpose is to strengthen academic cooperation between universities in ASEAN and China and to provide policy recommendations related to the Plan of Action and the ASEAN Connectivity. At the 4th conference held in July 2015 in Singapore, during the Q&A period what was mainly addressed was “the supporting role of universities and teaching of Mandarin which become more popular in ASEAN countries.”26

When the MOU of ACC was revised in August 2017, Foreign Minister Wang proposed seven principles, for instance to formulate a 2030 Vision for China–ASEAN Strategic Partnership as a blueprint to guide future relations, to synergize the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC), and to further expand the scope and dimension for bilateral cooperation. This effort to

25Memorandum of Understanding on Establishing the ASEAN–CHINA CENTRE, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-08/06/c_136503909.htm (accessed August 20, 2018).
26Report of the Fourth ASEAN–China Rectors’ Conference “Bringing New Strategic Thinking to University Collaboration: Challenges for ASEAN-China Partnership” July 28–29, 2015, National University of Singapore. http://www.aunsec.org/pdf/PolicyRecommendations/02%20Report%20of%20the%204th%20ASEAN%20China%20Rectors%20Conference.pdf (accessed June 20, 2017).
synergize the BRI and ASEAN Connectivity has become actively visible through CIs as is shown later. Here, it is noted that China’s public diplomacy to ASEAN has been accelerated in a comprehensive and institutional way.

Then, at the bilateral level, such comprehensive arrangements have been signed (see Table 2). Based on the Plans of Action above, the bilateral agreements cover wide-ranging agendas. In case of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement, it covers wide-ranging areas such as defense and security cooperation, economic and trade cooperation, science technology cooperation, public diplomacy, and social cultural cooperation. On each area, a regular ministerial dialogue has been established. It means that China’s public diplomacy is embedded as part of such all-dimensional cooperative arrangements with ASEAN Member States since the mid-2000s.

### 3 China’s public diplomacy through CI program and networking in ASEAN countries

Based on the regional framework above, Office of Chinese Language Council International (hereafter, Hanban) started bilateral negotiations first with the Ministry concerned, then after having an approval from the Ministry, a negotiation with a host university started to sign an MOU. In this way, Hanban took an initiative to establish CI. It was not always a top-down style only, however. In some cases, the process of opening CI took a more open and interactive style, asking assistance from various social actors. It depended on the context of the host society.

There are four types of commitment of the host governments related to the opening process of CI. The first type is that Hanban has almost free contact to universities through its own direct or indirect connections, notifying the plan to the Ministry concerned, such as the cases of Thailand and the Philippines. The case of CI at Nanyang Technological University, which has unique programs, can be also included in this type. The second type is that the Ministry concerned had more active commitments in opening CI at the initial stage. In case of Indonesia, the Ministry arranged meetings with Hanban and universities which might be interested in opening CI, while formal or informal educational institutions were getting active in opening Mandarin courses at the local level since the early 2000s. After CI opened, however, the management is left to the universities concerned. The third type is that the government of the host country is entirely committed to the establishment of CI, such as the cases of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Among them, Hanban’s dominant initiative is far more visible in the cases of Cambodia and Laos. Particularly, the website of Confucius Institute at Royal Academy of Cambodia (CIRAC) in Cambodia

| Country       | Year | Agreement                                                   |
|---------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Indonesia     | 2005 | Strategic partnership, Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2013) |
| Vietnam       | 2008 | Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative partnership               |
| Laos          | 2009 | Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation           |
| Cambodia      | 2006 | Comprehensive Partnership, Strategic Partnership (2010)       |
| Myanmar       | 2011 | Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership               |
| Thailand      | 2012 | Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership               |
| Malaysia      | 2013 | Comprehensive Strategic Partnership                           |
| Singapore     | 2015 | All-Round Cooperative Partnership                             |

Source: Author’s own elaboration.
is written in Chinese only and there is no Khmer or English version. Apparently, it seems to target the Chinese audience. As for the fourth type, the government is not active in accepting CI, such as Myanmar and Brunei, though there are two Confucius Classrooms managed by ethnic Chinese locals in Myanmar since February 2008.

Concerning the first three types above, it is common that the primary purpose of the host universities is promoting the Mandarin study program for their students. This is discussed more in detail in the following section. On the other hand, for developing comprehensive relations with ASEAN Member states, CI has multipurpose missions. At least there are several visible features in this respect. These features are also discussed in the following section more in detail. Thus, it suffices to say here about the major types only.

First, there is a clear intention to develop CIs’ relations with public institutions through providing the Mandarin courses for a pragmatic purpose. It is common for the CI volunteers in ASEAN countries to teach Mandarin for the government officials or staff of public institutions, in addition to the work of the CI for the host university. This kind of work can be included as part of the CI network.

Second, by organizing CIs’ annual conferences and preliminary events for the Chinese bridge, CI has been developing a network with young professionals at the local, national, and international levels. Such events are widely open not only to the CI-host university but to other university students.

Third, academic forums organized by CIs’ network with national academic associations often reflect the key concepts which China intends to disseminate in its diplomacy, for instance, a concept of “harmonious society” during the first Five-Year Plan of Action, “people-to-people exchanges,” “Connectivity” since the early 2000s, and “One Belt One Road” or “Maritime Silk Road” since the mid-2010s, as is mentioned later. Moreover, in the ASEAN states, there are four Chinese Cultural Centers in Thailand, Singapore, Laos, and Cambodia. All of such multiple functions can be part of the CI network system, which is transnational and institutional in a loosely but multilayered way.

Based on this categorization, after a brief review of establishing process of CIs, the features of CI program and networking are examined below.

3.1 The establishment of the CI

It was after the first Five-Year Plan was adopted between ASEAN and China that China’s public diplomacy fully started in the ASEAN countries. Opening CI was one of the earliest means, and its process had its own features as follows.

3.1.1 Thailand and the Philippines: a warm welcome to Hanban

Since China started the Volunteer Chinese Teacher Program in 2004, in terms of number of CIs and “volunteer” teachers funded by Handan, China’s public diplomacy is most active in Thailand among the ASEAN countries, followed by Indonesia (as shown in Table 3). There are a couple of specific factors that facilitated CIs in Thailand, in addition to the government’s intention to promote economic relations with China.

One factor was a role of the Thai royal family member. When Hanban offered a proposal to Chulalongkorn University and Thammasat University, both turned it down due to a concern that it might restrict academic freedom. However, in case of Chulalongkorn University China tried again through Princess Sirindhorn who is an
| Country | University Name | Inauguration date | Partner university in China |
|---------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| (Singapore) | Nanyang Technological University* | August 01, 2005 | Shandong University |
| (the Philippines) | Ateneo de Manila University, Manila | October 03, 2006 | Sun Yat-Sen University |
| | Bulacan State University, Malolos | February 28, 2009 | Northwest University |
| | Angeles University Foundation, Angeles | November 10, 2009 | Fujian Normal University |
| | University of the Philippines, Quezon City | December 07, 2014 | Xiamen University |
| (Thailand) | Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok | March 26, 2007 | Peking University |
| | Kasetsart University, Bangkok | October 01, 2006 | Huagiao University |
| | Khon Kaen University, Kohn Kaen | August 01, 2006 | Southwest University |
| | Mae Fah Luang University, Chiang Rai | November 07, 2006 | Xiamen University |
| | Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai | December 18, 2006 | Yunnan Normal University |
| | Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla | December 29, 2006 | Guangxi Normal University |
| | Mahasarakham University, Maha Sarakham | December 20, 2006 | Guangxi University for Nationalities |
| | Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University, Bangkok | December 19, 2006 | Tianjin Normal University |
| | Suan Dusit University at Suphanburi, Suphan | December 27, 2006 | Guangxi University |
| | Betong Municipality, Betong | December 28, 2006 | Chongqing University |
| | Burapha University, Chonbar | September 15, 2009 | Wenzhou University, Wenzhou Medical University |
| | Assumption University, Bangkok | September 18, 2014 | Tianjin University of Science & Technology |
| | Maritime Silk Road CI, Dharukij Pundit University, Bangkok | June 24, 2015 | Tianjin Normal University |
| | Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, Bangkok | October 22, 2016 | Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine |
| | Maritime Silk Road CI, Phranakhon Rajabhat University, Bangkok | July 01, 2015 | Dali University |
| (Cambodia) | Royal Academy of Cambodia, Phnom-Penh | December 01, 2009 | Jiujiang University |
| (Lao PDR) | National University of Laos, Vientiane | March 23, 2010 | Guangxi University for Nationalities |
| | Souphanouvong University, Luang prabang | July 14, 2018 | Kunming University of Science and Technology |
| (Malaysia) | University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur | March 01, 2010 | Beijing Foreign Studies University |
| | SEG University, Kota Damansara | November, 20 2015 | Hainan Normal University |
| | Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) | March 22, 2017 (MOU signed) | Yunnan University |
| (Indonesia) | University of Al Azhar Indonesia (UAI), Jakarta | November 09, 2011 | Fujian Normal University |
| | Malang State University(UM), Malang | March 14, 2010 | Guangxi Normal University |
| | Maranatha Christian University(UKM), Bandung | January 11, 2011 | Hebei Normal University |
| | Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), Surabaya | May 19, 2011 | Central China Normal University |
| | Tanjungpura University (UNTAN), Pontianak | November 26, 2011 | Guangxi University for Nationalities |
| | Hasanuddin University(UHNAS), Makassar | February 22, 2011 | Nanchang University |
| (Vietnam) | Hanoi University, Hanoi | December 27, 2014 | Guangxi Normal University |

*aChina opened the China Cultural Centre in Singapore at Nanyang Technological University in November 2015.

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on the Hanban website and other sources.
alumna of the University and well known to have a keen interest in Chinese culture. Eventually the CI was established, having Peking University as its partner in China (as shown in Table 3).

The other factor is a role of prominent social leaders. Particularly it was unique of Thai society that a well-known Buddhist monk in Bangkok played a crucial role in establishing Maritime Silk Road CI at Dhurakij Pundit University (DPU) in June 2015. There were 27 educational institutions including DPU which joined this CI. At its opening ceremony, he appreciated Xi Jing Ping’s idea of “One Belt One Road” strategy (Hanban). Another unique factor is a municipality, not a university, which established CI. It is the CI of Betong Municipality, which is the southernmost small town on the border with Malaysia. When it was opened in December 2006, Chinese “volunteers” were teaching the Chinese language and traditional culture at the local schools, but soon they started to teach to the general public as well. As Table 3 shows, the government has been always supportive to Hanban in this way.

In the case of the Philippines, educational and cultural interactions with China were scant mostly during the 2000s. The turning point was October 29, 2009 when the two countries signed the Joint Action Plan for Strategic Cooperation when Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visited the Philippines. Since then, a number of action plans were signed including Chinese scholarships and the agreement between the People’s Television Network Inc. and the China Central Television. It is important to note that the two governments signed educational and cultural cooperation together with media cooperation through which China can provide its better images and favorable discourses.

Nevertheless, the Philippine government did not take any further initiative, thus Hanban took an initiative in opening CIs and arranging them to provide Mandarin courses to public institutions as well. For instance, the CI of the Angels University Foundation (AUS) offers the course to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Bureau of Immigration, Bureau of Customs, and the National Library of the Philippines. Particularly, during the period of former Director General of Foreign Service Institute, which is a training and research section of the Department of Foreign Affairs, CI-AUF provided the Mandarin courses of levels 1–3 all free of charge.28

Though the establishment of CI was at first opposed by some sectors, particularly from the Linguistic Department of the UP-Diliman, in December 2014 the agreement was signed to open CI at the University of the Philippines (UP) at Diliman. The Chief Executive of Hanban delivered a speech that the long-term objective is “promoting exchanges of students and academics in various fields, and to promote social and economic research that encourage deep understanding of modern China, specifically, China’s One Belt and One Road initiative.”30 As is discussed later again, since the mid-2010s “One Belt One Road” has become frequently mentioned in CI-related official events. In this agreement, it is more explicitly mentioned that CI has become an important means to pursue its One Belt One Road or BRI.

27 “The first ‘Confucius Institute of Maritime Silk Road’ established in Thailand,” Hanban News, http://english.hanban.org/article/2015-07/06/content_608534.htm (accessed August 20, 2018).
28 Interview by Maria Anna Rowena Luz G. Layador with Director of the CI-Angels University Foundation, December 2, 2015, Angeles City, Pampanga.
29 Layador, “Soft Power and Chinese Cultural Diplomacy to the Philippines,” 12–13.
30 UP Date Diliman, https://upd.edu.ph/confucius-institute-takes-root-at-up (accessed August 20, 2018).
3.1.2 Indonesia and Malaysia: cautiously positive about Hanban

In the case of Indonesia, the government’s initiative was more evident than the two cases above at the initial stage. Though some universities had actually opened Chinese language courses much earlier, such as University of Indonesia since 1950 and Darma Persada University (private) since 1986, it was President Abdurrahman Wahid who changed the policy on Chinese culture. Shortly after he was inaugurated as President in late October 1999, he made an official visit to China and soon he lifted the 1967 ban of the use of Mandarin and Chinese Culture by Presidential Decree in January 2000. In November 2001, an agreement for cultural cooperation was signed when Premier Zhu Rongji visited Indonesia. Since then, there emerged private universities which tried to establish Mandarin courses and exchange programs with universities in China, apart from the government’s coordination for establishing CIs. Also, informal Mandarin schools were established. Thus, in Indonesia, there emerged dynamism at three levels: (1) government, (2) universities, and (3) societal level.

Therefore, the Ministry of National Education started to coordinate Mandarin schools in order to provide institutions to take the Hanyu Suiping Kaoshi (HSK) in major cities. Accordingly, the Coordinating Board of Mandarin Education (BKPBM) was established in 2004 in cities such as Bandung, Yogyakarta, Pontianak, Medan, later Banda Aceh in 2012. It is a private institution having its own networks with universities in China, such as Huaqiao University and Jinan University since around 2005. Their main purpose is to provide training to become Mandarin teachers and prepare for HSK.

On the other hand, at the formal level a declaration of a strategic partnership was signed on April 25, 2005 in Jakarta when President Hu Jintao visited Indonesia. One of the agreements signed at that time was an arrangement concerning Chinese language instruction, and when President Yudhoyono visited Beijing in July 2005, he signed an arrangement concerning Chinese language institutions.

After this agreement was signed, the Indonesian Ministry of National Education organized consortium on Mandarin education, which was financed by Hanban. Chinese language experts and representatives from universities were invited to the consortium. University of Indonesia also attended but declined to establish CI. It was primarily because they were afraid if it might be misunderstood as an institution to spread “cultural penetration” of China or an institution to teach Confucianism. Accordingly, the Ministry asked Hanban to reconsider the name and Hanban agreed to change the name from CI to Pusat Bahasa Mandarin (Mandarin Language Centre) for Indonesian CIs (for the sake of consistency, “CI” is used hereafter). Through this

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31 After this decree, in January 2001 Confucianism was granted a status as a religion and Chinese New Year was made a holiday for those concerned by the decree of the Minister of Religion. In April 2002, Chinese New Year was made a national holiday by presidential decree, which came into effect in 2003. In 2006, Confucianism was added to the list of religions on the identity card.

32 Badan Koordinasi Pendidikan Bahasa Mandarin.

33 Handayani, “RI, China Seal Economic and Defense Deals.”

34 The name of Ministry of National Education (1999–2011) was changed to Ministry of Education and Culture since 2011. Under the Joko Widodo presidency, Directorate General on Higher Education (DIKTI) was separated and merged into the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education.

35 Interview by Shuto with Prof. Natalia Soebagio at University of Indonesia (Depok), August 7, 2014.
process, six universities agreed to establish CI, and an arrangement to establish CIs was signed between the two governments in November 2008. Then, MOUs to establish CI were signed bilaterally between Hanban and each host University.

Regarding a partner university in China, as UAI already started a cooperation program with Fujian Normal University (FNU) in 2004 and they had regularly sent a dozen of undergraduate students to FNU for 3 months since 2005, Hanban agreed to UAI’s keeping the relations with FNU after CI opened at UAI. For other five universities, Hanban arranged a partner university for each. In addition, Hanban suggested the three of them to set up a formal Mandarin study program when they open CI at their own universities. Thus, eventually the Mandarin Study program started in State Universities in Surabaya, Malang, and Makassar. In this way, the Ministry coordinated the procedure and Hanban took the initiative in establishing CIs in Indonesia, apparently considering geo-strategic purposes, though the final decision to establish CI was left to each university. While there is no CI in Sumatra so far, there are several BKPBM offices and they have actively expanding exchange programs with universities in China.

Almost at the same period, the similar discussion was going on in Malaysia concerning the name of the CI. It was Hanban that approached the University of Malaya, apparently with consent of the Malaysian Ministry of Education in advance. The University requested Hanban to modify the name because they were afraid that the name “Confucius Institute” might be misunderstood as a religious institute teaching Confucianism on the campus. Hanban agreed to change the name to “Kong Zi Institute for the Teaching of Chinese Language (Kongzi Hanyu Xueyuan) or KIUM.” It opened in 2009 and its partner institution in China is Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU). The founder of the Malay Language program in BFSU is said to have “very good relationship with many high-level civil servants and politicians in Malaysia.”

When it was launched in November 2009 by Chinese Vice Premier, Li Keqiang, he noted that the opening of Kong Zi Institute is another achievement of cultural and educational exchanges between China and Malaysia. Kong Zi Institute looks like a normal school building, if there were no logo mark at the entrance. Inside, there are colorful pictures hanging on wall, selectively telling the official narrative of relations with China from the ancient times to the present time. One of the pictures is the Zheng He (Cheng Ho)’s voyages and Malacca-Ming Dynasty relations. The primary target and responsibility of KIUM is to teach Mandarin to non-Chinese citizens, particularly the Malays, as ethnic Chinese Malaysians hardly need to attend the Mandarin courses, according to Ngu Ik Tien and Chow Bing Ngeow from the University of Malaya.

This does not mean, however, Malaysia is not active in promoting cultural exchanges with China. On the contrary, since the 2000s the cultural exchange programs have become widely active between local state leaders who wish to welcome investment from China, such as programs between Pahang state and Guangxi province or Malacca and Guangdong province. In case of Malacca, the narrative of Zheng He of the Ming

36 Apart from this coordination process, Hanban tried to set up the Confucius Institute through its personal connections. Though an agreement was signed between Hanban and Bina Terampil Insan Persada School (BTIP) on September 28, 2007, it was closed.
37 Interview by Shuto with Anita L.A. Amron, Head of Chinese literature Program at UAI, August 10, 2011.
38 Ngu and Ngeow, “China’s Public Diplomacy in Malaysia,” 7.
39 Kong Zi Institute at University of Malaya, http://kongzium.edu.my/main/about-us/ (accessed August 20, 2018).
dynasty during the fifteenth century is a token of the long historical ties with China. In March 2017, another MOU was signed between Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) and Yunnan University in Kunming. The two universities aim to become the hub for promoting Chinese language learning and cultural exchange between Sarawak and Yunnan.⁴⁰ Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, faced the South China Sea and Kunming already signed to build sister city relations in December 2011.

Not only at the provincial level, there are many other cultural, educational, and business groups at the federal and local levels in Malaysia. In this sense, for Malaysia and Singapore as well, establishing CI is a token of keeping positive relations with China, because realistically they have many other dimensions of cultural exchanges with China at various levels.

### 3.1.3 Cambodia: the dominance of Hanban

In the case of Cambodia, in November 2002 China declared that all the overdue debts of Cambodia to China would be exempted and that China would strengthen economic cooperation. Since then, every year China signed agreements to provide financial assistance and in April 2006 the Comprehensive Partnership for Cooperation was signed (as shown in Table 2). Another important factor for Cambodia in pursuing closer relations with China is its potential tensions with powerful neighbors, Thailand and Vietnam, which Cambodia cannot match alone. Thus, from the Cambodian government’s perspective, it was fortunate that by receiving a great deal of grants/ aids, technical assistance from China, they could reduce tension with its neighbors at the same time.⁴¹

The agreement of establishing the CIRAC was signed in August 2009, and it was inaugurated in December 2009. Royal Academy of Cambodia is a special unit directly under supervision of Council of Ministers of Cambodia, not the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia. They started with only five students in a single office in 2009. Nevertheless, CIRAC kept opening new branches at various institutions and provinces. As a result, the number of students has grown to around 200 in 2010, 600 by 2012, reached 3000 in 2013 when CIRAC opened a branch at military school, and it reached around 10,000 in 2015 when a new branch opened in Battambang province.⁴²

As is shown above, the governments provided the platform of establishing CIs, though the level of their commitment varied, depending on the domestic situations. Considering that China is the largest trade partner of ASEAN and anticipating significance of the ASEAN–China cooperation, they need to produce more human resources with Chinese proficiency both at the public and at the private sectors and need to keep good diplomatic relations with China.

### 3.2 Activities of the CI program

As the CI has multiple functions, they can be divided into two levels: (1) the CI program and (2) the CI networking. The CI program comprises two types of activities:

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⁴⁰“UNIMAS Signs MOU with Yunnan University for the Establishment of Confucius Institute,” March 22, 2017. 
http://www.news.unimas.my/eventdetail/3618/11/-?pop=1&tmpl=component (accessed August 20, 2018).

⁴¹Soputhy, “China’s Public Diplomacy in Cambodia,” 14.

⁴²Interview by Touch Soputhy with the Head of CIRAC, June 17, 2016, Phnom Penh.
(1) teaching Mandarin Chinese and traditional culture on the campus and (2) teaching Mandarin Chinese to the public agencies, Chinese corporations, or even the general public. CIs’ Chinese directors are actively committed in establishing Mandarin courses in other universities/schools in the adjacent areas and organizing national or international events incessantly. This kind of externalization, institutionalization, and transnational networks building is defined here as the “CI networking.” Chinese directors are in charge of supervising both types of activities. It seems the achievement of the CI networking is important for the Chinese directors to be appreciated by Hanban.

The CI program generally consists of four aspects: (1) Mandarin Chinese program, (2) Chinese cultural program, (3) academic program, and (4) HSK examination. First, the academic program includes making the syllabi of their own courses which are usually open to other university students and advising the department of Chinese studies of the host university. The teaching materials are provided by Hanban and used with minor modification by individual CIs so as to meet the local historical contexts. The “volunteers” teach or help professors teach the courses of Mandarin and Chinese culture of the host university and guide traditional Chinese cultural performance.

Concerning the management of CI program, in case of UAI, Head of Chinese department said they have a regular meeting with the CI staff and the cooperation is going well. Not all Chinese directors have regular meetings, however. The management cost paid by Hanban for each CI is in principle the same amount. In case of Indonesia, as of 2014 it was 1.5 billion rupiah/year, while in Thailand, the initial amount is US$ 100,000 as of 2017, though there was an exceptional case when Hanban paid for a construction cost of a language and cultural center for a CI in Thailand (Non 2016: 291). The host university pays for all the costs related to accommodations and all basic equipment for teaching as specified in the Addendum of Arrangement.

According to the Indonesian professors of UAI, one of the most attractive things for the undergraduate students throughout the CI program is the Study trip to China, either Short Study Trip usually for 3 months or Summer Camp for 2 weeks. These study trips are based at the partner universities in China and all the costs except air fare to China are financed by Hanban. The extracurricular activities on Chinese cultural performance are popular, too. The Chinese volunteers teach traditional culture such as Chinese art, Tai Chi, Chinese cuisine, Chinese songs, and calligraphy practices. This author has seen dozens of Chinese calligraphy presentations, writing in four Chinese characters, “I love China,” attached on the wall in the room. The Indonesian director of the Mandarin Study program in Surabaya stressed an importance of learning Mandarin because China has become an economic superpower and Chinese language has become a world language. There was a case that in classrooms maps of China were attached on the wall, and the South China Sea within the Nine-Dash Line was colored as Chinese territory.

Indeed, CIs share the special events such as the Chinese New Year, Autumn Full Moon festival, and anniversaries of CIs. However, as is well known, political issues such as Tibet and Falun Gong have never been discussed at CI-related events. Indonesian CI

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43 Interview by Shuto with Sri Sesanti Mulyaningrum, Head of Chinese Department, UAI, August 26, 2016, Jakarta.
44 Interview by Shuto with Anita L.A. Amron, Head of Chinese Literature Program at UAI, August 11, 2014.
45 Interview by T. Hasegawa with M. Mintowati, Director of the Mandarin Education Program, UNESA, September 19, 2015, Surabaya.
directors said that this is because the CI is meant for a “strictly educational purpose.” To prepare for such cultural events there are cases that some CI students contact local ethnic Chinese associations, to ask for help of costumes or photos related to the topic. In Makassar, students of CI-UNHAS often work together with the local ethnic Chinese associations such as Zheng He Foundation.46

Moreover, a team of cultural mission comes from any one of the six partner universities in China every year. The Chinese universities select three priorities for cultural missions: cultural performances, lectures, and exhibition on Chinese culture. Their cultural performance includes Beijing classical opera, Chinese songs, music, calligraphy, and martial arts, but there is so far no attention to contemporary TV dramas or movies. This means the cultural exchange does not touch on any political issues of contemporary China. Nevertheless, this kind of transnational cultural exchanges of students has been institutionalized through CIs.

The other merit of studying at CI is the Hanban scholarship. For application, the recommendation letter of CI is basically prioritized, thus usually “all applicants” from CI-UAI and other three CIs have obtained scholarships from Hanban. Apparently, it is a merit of studying at CI for getting the Hanban scholarship. From CI-UNESA, the numbers of Hanban scholarship awardees for studying in China, either for one or two semesters, were 20 students in 2013, 30 in 2014, while 10 in 2015 due to “an exceptional reason,” and most of them were non-Chinese Indonesians,47 while from UNTAN, the numbers were 8 in 2012, 10 in 2013, 12 in 2014, and 20 in 2015,48 and approximately half of them were from UNTAN. From CI-UM in Malang, there were 17 awardees of the Hanban scholarship to study at Guangxi Normal University for one semester, including several students from Brawidjaya University. Application is open to students from other universities but they must get a recommendation letter from CI. It is noteworthy that out of the 20 awardees from UNTAN in Pontianak, only 2 were ethnic Chinese Indonesians. This means a new era has already started in learning Mandarin Chinese in Indonesia.

As for the number of volunteers in addition to one Chinese director, there were nine volunteers at UAI,49 seven at CI-UNTAN, four in UNESA, as of September 2015, and five for CI-UM in Malang as of November 2017.50 Most of them are in their twenties, either new graduates or still graduate students. The term of work as a Chinese language volunteer is usually 1 year, but it can be extended up to 3 years.

What is remarkably new is that among the Indonesian teachers of Mandarin, there are those who have recently obtained permanent positions at the Mandarin Study program after getting a degree in China with the Hanban scholarship. In Pontianak, too, there are several Indonesian teachers of Mandarin, who studied in China and already returned to teach Mandarin in Pontianak. Within the past several years only, a new phenomenon has already emerged that Indonesians who returned from universities in China have started teaching Mandarin and Chinese Culture to train human resources who have proficiency in Mandarin Chinese.

46 Theo and Leung, “China’s Confucius Institute,” 9.
47 Interview by T. Hasegawa with A. Mustofa, Director of CI-UNESA, September 18, 2015, Surabaya.
48 Interview by T. Hasegawa with the Indonesian Director of CI-UNTAN, September 7, 2015, Pontianak.
49 Interview by Shuto with a Chinese volunteer at CI-UAI, August 24, 2015, Jakarta.
50 Interview by Shuto with Yazid Basthomiby, Director, Office of International Affairs, CI-UM, November 29, 2017, Malang.
3.3 Networking activities

By holding regular conferences or special ceremonies, CIs have become useful channels of China’s public diplomacy in its relations with ASEAN since the early 2010s. In addition to the Annual Confucius Institute Conference which has been held since 2006, the Joint Conference of Confucius Institutes in Asia was held in Singapore in 2010 for the CIs in East and Southeast Asia. In May 2014, an Asian Conference of Confucius Institutes was held at UAI, in which 170 representatives from 85 CIs attended. Such international meetings produce a new type of “networked structure” of the top-down approaches in CI management,

Moreover, the “Chinese Bridge” including its preliminary competitions provides a motivation of CIs activities. For instance, in 2015 when the first and second winners for the finals of the 14th “Chinese Bridge” were awarded, the cultural counselor of the Chinese embassy in Indonesia praised their “quite remarkable Chinese proficiency” and noted that the China–Indonesia relations were “at its historical best with ever increasing and active development.”

3.3.1 Teaching Mandarin and Chinese culture for public institutions

CIs in the ASEAN countries are providing Mandarin courses to government officials, other state universities, and public institutions. For instance, CIs of Chulalongkorn University, Maritime Silk Road at DPU, Kasetsart University are providing Mandarin courses to civil servants of various ministries. The main attendants of Kong Zi Institute’s program of University of Malaya are the Malay civil servants and students including military students from the academies run by Malaysian Defense Ministry. In addition, the Chinese volunteers go to teach the Mandarin programs in other public institutions such as Universiti Sains Malaysia, National Defence University of Malaysia, and Universiti Malaysia Sabah. The CI-UP Diliman signed an MOU with the Bureau of Immigration in October 2017 to offer a Mandarin course for the immigration officers.

Similarly, CIs in Indonesia used to send the Chinese volunteers to teach the Mandarin courses outside the campus. Since 2016, however, they provide intensive courses on the campus for civil servants who need the communication skills in Mandarin. In Surabaya, the Chinese volunteers used to go to teach civil servants such as police officers, Immigration officers, Navy, pilots, flight attendants, and medical doctors. CI-Maranatha, too, used to send the Chinese volunteers to teach at schools, other universities, civil servants, and private institutions. CI-UNTAN in Pontianak used to send the Chinese volunteers to teach Mandarin at two joint ventures of Chinese and Indonesian companies, for 1 month each.

The case of Cambodia is far more centralized in the structure of teaching Mandarin through CI. To meet various ministries’ need to learn Mandarin, in July 2017 a Mandarin Center was established in the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Phnom Pen to teach Mandarin to officials and soldiers of the Armed Forces, because the weapons and equipment are mostly imported from China and they need to communicate with Chinese

51 http://www.asean-china-center.org/english/2010-06/27/c_13389459.htm (accessed June 10, 2018).
52 Flew and Hartig, “Confucius Institutes and the Network,” 13.
53 Hanban News, http://english.hanban.org/article/2015-06/10/content_603625.htm (accessed June 20, 2018).
54 Theo and Leung, “China’s Confucius Institute,” 11.
55 Interview by T. Hasegawa at CI-UNTAN, September 7, 2015, Pontianak.
military officials. In addition, as of December 2017, CIRAC has sent 60 volunteers from Handan to the “classrooms” at high schools and private companies. It means Khmer students, not ethnic Chinese Cambodians, are increasingly interested in studying Mandarin. The major purpose of CIRAC is to increase employment of the young people by promoting the communication skills in Chinese and basic knowledge about Chinese cultural events in particular.

### 3.3.2 Externalization of the CI program

CI tends to externalize its Mandarin program to other institutions. For instance, CI in UNESA has created new Chinese courses for students from two other universities in Surabaya. There are 20–30 students in a class, and the total number of students from these two other universities exceeds 300–340. CI in UNHAS in Makassar has been active in promoting establishment of Confucius Classroom in the Islamic school in Makassar and setting up the first Chinese Tourist Training Center in October 2017 for Udayana University in Bali. Due to such achievement, UNHAS was awarded an Individual Performance Excellence Award at the 11th Confucius Institute Conference in December 2016.

Another case is diversification, rather than externalization, of CI functions as seen in CIRAC. It has divisions for Cambodian History and Culture Promotion, Norodom Sihanouk Research Center, and Public Forum on Cambodian–Chinese Relations, in addition to the teaching of Mandarin. For the culture promotion, CIRAC is closely working with the Cambodia–China Friendship Radio which is the first Khmer-language broadcast established in December 2008. The programs are made in Beijing and aired at the studio in Phnom Penh. CIRAC regularly publishes brochures explaining the meanings of Chinese cultural events such as Chinese New Year, Full Moon Ceremony, and Ancestors Spiritual Worship. Moreover, CIRAC aims to open CI branch office in every province during the Five-Year Plan (2016–2021) and intends to send thousands of Cambodian students to China. For that purpose, CIRAC provides two scholarships: one is a nondegree scholarship program during 6–12 months for a Mandarin teachers’ training program for 20 students per year, and the other is degree scholarships for BA, MA, and PhD programs.

### 3.3.3 Publicity activities and public forums

When Chinese top leaders intend to impress its people-to-people exchanges to the public, they tend to visit CI or talk to CI students in the welcome ceremonies. For instance, when then Premier Weng Jibao visited Jakarta in April 2011, he visited UAI and praised its curriculum as “integrating Islamic doctrine with modern science.” When then Vice President Xi Jinping visited the CI at Chulalongkorn University in December 2011, the auditorium was full and he praised the important role of Chulalongkorn University in spreading the Chinese language and culture, and he said

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56 Reddick and Cindy, “In Cambodia’s Chinese-Language Schools.”
57 Ibid.
58 Interview by T. Hasegawa with Ali Mustofa, CI Director, CI-UNESA, September 18, 2015, Surabaya.
59 Antara News, https://makassar.antaranews.com/berita/79286/unhas-raih-penghargaan-di-tiongkok (accessed July 30, 2018).
60 People’s Daily Online April 30, 2011 http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/90883/7366418.html (accessed July 30, 2016).
China and Thailand are kith and kin.”\textsuperscript{61} For almost 1 year after Xi’s visit in Jakarta in October 2013, there were dozens of large photo panels attached on both sides of the wall toward the entrance of the CI-UAI, showing UAI students greeting him in the welcome reception. Apparently, CI has this kind of publicity function.

The other aspect of publicity is related to the BRI. Since the 17th ASEAN–China summit in December 2014 when ASEAN leaders appreciated “China’s initiative to work together toward building the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century,” many CIs have held public seminars titled “One Belt, One Road.” For instance, when CI at SEGi University (private) held the public forum in celebrating its second Anniversary in November 2015, the topic was “Belt and Road Initiative: The Future is NOW!” which the Chinese embassy expressed the support.\textsuperscript{62} More explicitly, CI of Maritime Silk Road at DPU declares its purpose is to respond to China’s One Belt One Road strategy. They already sent 16 graduates as the first batch to their partner university, Tianjin Normal University, in October 2016 to join the vocational training program in Tianjin for 3 years.

Moreover, the Annual CI Conference in December 2016 featured CIs’ positive role in the “Belt and Road” Initiative. Chinese Vice Premier Liu Yandong stated China would “further promote the localization of CIs, and its integration with the ‘Belt and Road’ initiative.”\textsuperscript{63} The CI at Maranatha Christian University held the third “Spirit of Bandung Forum” in May 2017 jointly initiated by Hebei Normal University, and its topic was “One Belt of Partnership, One Road in Actions.”\textsuperscript{64} Furthermore, the topics of Public Forum on Cambodian–Chinese Relations, which has been held every year since 2010, were “Ancient Silk Road and Silk Road in the 21st Century” in 2015 and “One Belt One Road, China–Cambodia Friendship Relations” in 2017. In the latter forum, 260 students and invited guests from Yunnan University, Renmin University of China, and Jiujiang Xueyuan attended.\textsuperscript{65}

Similarly, the Thai government tries to link its long-term economic model, “Thailand 4.0,” to its relations with China. In March 2018 when CI of Mae Fah Luang University co-organized the seminar titled “Strategies Engagement of the Confucius Institutes in Thailand under Thailand 4.0,” with the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the meeting addressed that “the good communication with China will support the Thailand 4.0 policy.”\textsuperscript{66} Another interesting aspect of close cooperation in joint projects in the cases of Thailand is related to Chinese traditional medicine. At the China Cultural Center in Bangkok, the Maritime Silk Road International Tour was held in December 2017 and an expert of Traditional Chinese Medicine gave lecture there, though this paper cannot go any further here. It suffices to say here that CIs in Thailand and Malaysia are active in collaboration with academic associations both at the local and at the national levels.

\textsuperscript{61}Embassy of China in Thailand, “Xi Jinping Visits Confucius Institute at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand,” December 24, 2011. http://dk.china-embassy.org/eng/TourChina/t891076.htm (accessed July 30, 2018).
\textsuperscript{62}https://www.segi.edu.my/news/confucius-institute-cultural-forum-belt-road-initiatives-the-future-is-now SEGi University (accessed July 30, 2018).
\textsuperscript{63}“Confucius Institutes Lauded in Promoting ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,” Xinhua, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-12/12/content_27640662.htm (accessed July 30, 2018).
\textsuperscript{64}Hanban News, “The Pusat Bahasa Mandarin at Universitas Kristen Maranatha Holds the 3rd Spirit of Bandung Forum,” http://english.hanban.org/article/2017-06-09/content_689107.htm (accessed August 10, 2018).
\textsuperscript{65}CIRAC, http://cirac.kh.chinesecio.com/en/node/2757 (accessed August 10, 2018).
\textsuperscript{66}“The Strategies Engagement of the Confucius Institutes in Thailand under Thailand 4.0 Policy,” http://en.mfu.ac.th/en-news/en-news-detail/detail/News/1577.html (accessed August 10, 2018).
At the same time, at the higher level, the China–ASEAN Education Information Network and Hanban organized a summer camp for ASEAN youth, which was held in Guizhou Minzu University, featuring more than 300 teachers and students from 15 CIs from nine ASEAN countries as part of the 2017 China–ASEAN Education Cooperation Week.

4 Benefits and perceptions of the host universities and local societies

For the host universities, visible benefits of CIs are financial and material supports for the programs and the scholarships provided by Hanban. Materials provided by Hanban are textbooks and other “learning materials inclusive of audiovisual, multimedia, and online programs” for the CI, in addition to the initial money for management. The governments, as discussed already, generally support the university to establish CI, based on the ASEAN–China strategic partnership. In this sense, particularly in Thailand, the case of Thammasat University which declined the offer from Hanban was exceptional.

Its immediate benefits are clear in the two points. One is the payment and prospect of career development for younger educated people. On a job advertisement web which is managed by the Non-Chinese Mandarin Teachers‘ Association of Indonesia (IKATGUMA), to those who can work as interpreters in Chinese the minimum payment is $340–410, to those who have Chinese and English proficiency around $545 is offered, while the minimum wage for civil service is approximately US$ 82. In Cambodia, people in a factory usually get paid “around $200–300 a month. But if they speak Chinese, they get $400–500 a month.” The other benefit is economic growth which is associated with promoting closer relations with China in various sectors mentioned in the ASEAN–China strategic partnership.

On the other hand, there are critical comments on CI. Some Indonesian professors wonder why almost all Chinese volunteers are young, either newly graduated or graduate students. They suspect if China merely seeks jobs for such young educated people by sending them abroad to teach Chinese language and culture, in order to keep domestic social order safe and fulfill the strategic plan to make the Chinese as a global language. Some Thai professors say the same comment from a pragmatic aspect. They doubt if the existence of CIs really benefits Thailand, because Thai CIs are established in universities which already have Departments of Chinese language and literature. Thus, some universities are providing similar Chinese courses both at the Department and at the CI on the same campus. Moreover, as an increasing number of Chinese students study in Thai universities, they are more advantageous in getting jobs which need Mandarin proficiency. These voices, however, are seldom heard in the public space where China is not considered as a threat, but an opportunity.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to attribute this positive image to China’s public diplomacy alone, through CIs in particular, because there are three aspects to be considered as follows.

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67Hanban News “Chinese Bridge Summer Camp for ASEAN Youth in China Kicks Off,” http://english.hanban.org/article/2017-08/02/content_695246.htm (accessed August 10, 2018).
68In the case of CI at Assumption University, 3000 textbooks were distributed. (www.ci.au.edu/index.php/about) (accessed August 10, 2018).
69Ikatan Guru Mandarin (IKATGUMA) Non-Tionghua Indonesia. https://ar-ar.facebook.com (accessed July 30, 2018).
70See note 56.
71Siripetch, “Chinese Cultural Diplomacy through Confucius Institutes in Thailand,” 17–19. See also Non, op.cit., 292.
4.1 Scholarship

The top three ASEAN countries sending students studying in China as of 2016 are Thailand (23,044: 28.3%), Indonesia (14,714: 18.1%), and Vietnam (10,639: 13.1%), while the top three ASEAN countries receiving Chinese students are Singapore (78,747: 63.1%), Thailand (32,040: 25.7%), and Malaysia (11,718: 9.4%).\textsuperscript{72} From this data alone, the rapid increase in Indonesian students next to Thailand is remarkable. However, considering that as of 2014, out of 13,689 students who were studying in China only 489 of them were awarded the scholarships from the Chinese government,\textsuperscript{73} the majority of them are in China with other scholarships such as those from provincial governments or private foundations or they may be for self-funding short-term study. The more they have plural options of scholarships, the less attractive the younger generation might feel about the CI’s scholarship. As a matter of fact, during the first year of the CI-UNSEA in 2011, 17 students applied for the scholarship of Hanban and all were accepted, but 4 of them got scholarships from a local private foundation, thus they withdrew from the CI scholarship.

On the other hand, many Vietnamese students are studying in China, while the CI’s work in Hanoi is new and invisible. This is mainly because China provides 36 scholarships for Vietnamese students as of 2018, thus Vietnam has already developed its network without much relying on the CI’s scholarship. Other than the CI Scholarship, Provincial governments and Scholarships from universities are available for them, and they are English programs for higher education in Chinese universities.

4.2 Social perceptions of CIs

How CIs are perceived by host societies in ASEAN countries generally depends on the following three levels: level of institutional acceptance of CI, level of social assimilation of ethnic Chinese societies, and level of an open access to plural sources of information. Concerning the level institutional acceptance of CI, Thailand and Cambodia are the highest. The case of Thailand, it is related to the level of assimilation of ethnic Chinese. It is so high that President Xi expressed Thai relations with China as “blood linkage.” Compared with Thailand, other countries have different backgrounds; Malaysia has spent decades to overcome the ethnic divide. Indonesia has greatly changed since the early 2000s in its openness and major political parties and business groups welcomed the development of closer relations with China.\textsuperscript{74}

However, there still remain deep-rooted difficulties which could be easily mobilized as was seen in the mass protests against the previous Chinese-descent Christian Governor of Jakarta, who was widely accepted as an efficient administrator but sentenced to 2 years in prison in May 2017 for blasphemy against Islam.Partly because of such difficulties, apparently Hanban cautiously avoided having close relations with local Chinese organizations, particularly those with explicit appeal of Chinese identity. As a consequence, some ethnic Chinese foundations

\textsuperscript{72}ASEAN–China Centre, 22.
\textsuperscript{73}http://id.china-embassy.org/eng/wjhy/t1290366.htm (accessed August 10, 2018).
\textsuperscript{74}Tjhin, “The Chinese Indonesians’ Role”, 338–339.
which specify Confucianism as their identity complained that the CI does not teach Confucianism but simply makes use of the name of Confucianism only.\textsuperscript{75}

In a sense, establishing CI was a good opportunity for ethnic Chinese business leaders to provide a bridge between the younger generation and local ethnic Chinese societies. As Hanban did not pay for the construction cost of a building for CI, host universities approached ethnic Chinese business leaders to ask for financial assistance in Indonesia. Those business leaders who financially contributed to the opening of CI shared a similar idea. One of them, Eddie Lembong recollected his intention in assisting UAI for collecting a donation said that “it was not entirely philanthropic” but “indigenous Indonesians need to learn about China.”\textsuperscript{76} Similarly, in Makassar the Zheng He Foundation generously contributed to renovate UNHAS’s old building for the CI and the leader of the Zheng He Foundation said that even though his shops have been destroyed several times, because of such personal experience he appreciated a role of higher education of UNHAS to provide a better understanding of China.\textsuperscript{77} It means that prominent ethnic Chinese leaders tried to improve local people’s images of China by utilizing their financial resources, apart from China’s public diplomacy through Hanban.

In April 2018, with regard to impacts of educational experience, there happened an interesting case. When a university president made remarks that “Indonesian students studying in China will acquire a communist ideology” after returning from an invited trip to China, immediately critical comments were sent to the internet site by those who are studying or have studied in China. They flatly denied it and claimed that the education they experienced in China was not for communist ideology. Eventually the newspaper, Republika, canceled the remarks and apologized.\textsuperscript{78} This case shows that they were talking about different aspects of China; and obviously there has emerged a new type of highly educated young Indonesians who speak about their individual study experience in China positively, while the rector may have sensed another aspect that universities in China are under the one-party control.

In this way, there is an increasing number of young people who studied in China with the scholarships of China and have got a job at academic institutions in the ASEAN countries. Their experience is likely to contribute toward development of education or training. For that purpose, however, an open access to plural sources of information is crucial. Then they can compare the contents through public diplomacy with many other information sources available and credibility will matter most for public diplomacy. If this level is extremely divided among the countries in the region, it will remain to be an impediment to people-to-people relations in the decades to come.

4.3 The prospect for the regional network

Since the ASEAN–China Summit in 2014, China explicitly intends to promote synergy between the MPAC 2025 and the China’s BRI. The concept of Connectivity of MPAC is

\textsuperscript{75}Interviews by T. Hasegawa with Sutadi, Head of the Pontianak Office of MATAKIN (Majelis Tinggi Agama Konfuchu Indonesia) [High Council on Confucianism] and with Sukandi Talok, Head of the Bhakti Suci Foundation, September 8, 2015, Pontianak.

\textsuperscript{76}Thung, “Confucius Institute,” 189.

\textsuperscript{77}Theo and Leung, “China’s Confucius Institute,” 9.

\textsuperscript{78}https://www.republika.co.id/berita/pendidikan/dunia-kampus/18/04/01/p6h8j0396-di-cina-pelajar-indonesia-dapat-pelajaran-ideologi-komunis (accessed July 30, 2018).
partly overlapped with China’s infrastructure building strategy. Immediately ASEAN countries joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and positively accepted China’s generous offers. At the same time, the CIs’ network has been utilized to promote the conceptual synergy of these ideas. Though such trends of enthusiastic welcome are now being partly reconsidered, there is no way of excluding China from the regional order which MPAC envisages. For that purpose, Thailand and Indonesia, considering the widely positive attitude and the cautiously but rapidly positive attitudes toward China, respectively as shown earlier, will be the key players as to how the mainland and maritime connectivity of ASEAN is materialized in the future.

As the administration of President Joko Widodo highlights “the Indonesian Global Maritime Fulcrum,” Beijing tries to converge it with the 21st Maritime Silk Road strategy. There is a dilemma for Indonesia between having Chinese assistance for infrastructure building and difficulties such as illegal fishing and territorial concern.\(^{79}\) Moreover, according to the ISEAS survey in 2017, only 41% of the respondents consider that “the rise of China will have a positive impact on Indonesia.”\(^{80}\) When they are asked how important certain countries are for Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan are the highest in this order, while Australia, Thailand, and China were lower and less likely to be perceived as important.\(^{81}\) There remains a distance between the maritime and mainland key players.

Another problem is that in the name of “mutual benefit” the more the interactions increase between China and ASEAN, the more nature of their relations becomes asymmetrical. In the dimension of people-to-people exchanges and students’ exchanges as well, it is asymmetrical. Thus, what matters is how to keep collaboration with China without losing the goals of MPAC in the coming decade.

5 Conclusion

China’s public diplomacy through CIs in the ASEAN countries has the following multiple features. First, it is an institutional building process at the regional, national, and local levels in order to develop human resources who have proficiency in Mandarin Chinese and knowledge of Chinese cultural events. This process is actually part of more comprehensive and multidimensional dynamism of ASEAN–China relations since the mid-2000s. China’s public diplomacy through cultural and educational exchanges is going on together with agendas for promotion of tourism, trade, and investment which are coordinated at the ACC before the ministerial meetings. China’s public diplomacy including CIs is part of this institutional dynamism.

Second, through CIs’ programs, an increasing number of cultural exchanges between China and ASEAN countries are held quite regularly. In this sense, through the CI network, new patterns of people-to-people exchanges have been institutionalized for a short-term study camp, a long-term study with the CI scholarship, and collaboration with academic forums.

Third, China provides the Mandarin courses to various public institutions for civil servants or military officers, who need the communication skills to fulfill their own

\(^{79}\) Pradhan, “China’s Maritime Silk Route,” 8–11.

\(^{80}\) Fossati et al., *The Indonesia National Survey*, 40–1.

\(^{81}\) *Ibid.*
work. Throughout the teaching process, politically sensitive issues are avoided but China’s claims and discourses on selective issues are tacitly contained or presented.

Fourth, the CI network has been utilized as a new channel to disseminate China’s official ideas related to regional order for the future. Since 2014 a number of public forums organized by CIs together with their partner universities in China and academic associations or business groups have featured the topics on One Belt One Road, Maritime Silk Road in the 21st Century, and BRI. This frequency represents new trends and a role of the CI network in the ASEAN–China relations.

How such new trends of China’s public diplomacy are perceived in the ASEAN countries depends on the levels of social acceptance and pluralism in their own societies, while it is generally accepted positively in a hope for pragmatic expectations. Due to a wide gap of social pluralism and open access to multiple sources of information in the region, the rapid growth of China’s public diplomacy through CIs will have a double-edged effect for ASEAN; conducive to promoting relations with China and a centrifugal force to the ASEAN Centrality in the decade to come. It will become a tough challenge for an ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

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