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RUSSIA'S RYSSKIY MIR AND CHINA'S CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE

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Abstract
Today, many countries are making frantic efforts to see that their languages and culture are saved, protected, and spread beyond their territories. These prompted countries like Russia to create the Russkiy Mir (Russian World), and China, the Confucius Institute, France, Alliance Française, Britain, British Council, Germany, Goethe Institute, and Italy, Società Dante Alighieri, to mention just a few. These institutes usually exist within and outside their countries of origin and are run in and financed in different ways. Presently, some of these institutes are having issues with their host countries, especially on how they are run. Most common among these institutes is the Confucius Institute. Criticisms of the Institute include administrative concerns about finance, academic viability, legal issues, industrial and military espionage and undermining Taiwanese influence and many more. Based on these, there have been organized opposition to the establishment of the Institute in many universities like the Confucius Institute at the University of Melbourne, Manitoba, Stockholm, and Chicago and many others. On the other hand, the Russkiy Mir has not been opposed or criticized in the countries they exist. Based on these oppositions as well as support from some host countries, this paper critically examines the modus operandi of these two Institutes with a view to ascertaining the authenticity or otherwise, of the criticisms of especially, the Confucius Institute.
Key Words: Russkiy Mir, Confucius Institute, Russian Idea, Criticism of Confucius Institute.

1. History of the Russkiy Mir and the Russian Idea

The name, Rysskiy Mir literally means Russian World. It is the social totality associated with Russian culture; it comprises both the Russian diaspora and the Russian culture together with its influence in the World (Tishkov, 2008). According to Tiido (2015), the concept is based on the notion of "Russianness", and both are ambiguous.

Historically, one of the earliest use of the term "Russian World" is attributed to the Great Prince, Ziaslav 1 of Kiev in the 11th century in his praise of Pope Clement 1, "with gratitude to that faithful slave who increased the talent of his master-not only in Rome, but everywhere; both in Kherson and the Russian World" (Marlene, 2015).

In the Russian Empire, the idea of the Russian World was of conservative nationalistic type. According to Nikonov (2008), Nyacheslav Nikonov, chairman of the Russkiy Mir Foundation remarked that the Russian World did not reach beyond Russia proper. He lamented that all these times $\frac{1}{7th}$of the World population lived in the Russian empire while now the ratio is $\frac{1}{50}$..

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many attempts have been made to resurrect the concept in the Post-Soviet Russia. Most notable of such efforts is that of some major authors amongst whom are: Pyotr Schedrovitsky, Yefim Osttrovsky, Valery Tishkov, Vitaly Skrinnik, Tatyana Poloskova and Natalya, Narochmitskaya. Since Russia emerged from the Soviet Union as a still significantly multiethnic and multicultural country, for the "Russian idea" to be unifying, it could not be ethnocentric, as it was in the doctrine Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality of the late Russian Empire.

In the analysis of Schedrovitsky (2000) in 2000, he presented the main ideas of the "Russian World" concept in the article "Russian World and Transnational Russian characteristic" among the central ones of which was the Russian language.

Another of such remarkable attempts was Russia's President Vladimir Putin's visit to the Arkaim site of the Sintashta culture in 2005. During the visit, Putin met in person with the Chief archaeologist, Gennady Zdanovich. The visit was widely circulated by the Russian media and they presented Arkaim as the "homeland of the majority of contemporary people in Asia, and partly Europe". Nationalists called Arkaim the "city of Russian glory" and the "most ancient Slavic-Aryan town". Zdanovich reportedly presented Arkaim to the president as a "possible national idea of Russia", a new idea of civilization which Shmirelman calls the "Russian idea".

The Russkiy Mir Foundation was created by the Russian President, Vladimir Putin in 2007 as a government-sponsored organization aimed at promoting the Russian language worldwide and "forming the Russian World as a global project", co-operating with the Russian orthodox church in promoting values that challenge the western cultural traditional (Kudors 2010). The foundation was modeled after similar culture promotion agencies such as the British Council and the Goethe Institute.

As expected, the creation of the Russkiy Mir has come up with different interpretations. Some observers see the promotion of the Russian World concept as an element of the revanchist idea of the restoration of Russia or its influence back to the borders of the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire (Nirenburg, 2015), while others described the concept as an instrument for projecting Russian soft-power. For example, in Ukraine, the promotion of the Russian World has become strongly associated with the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. According to Pavel Tikhomirov, the Assistant Editor of Russkaya Liniya, the Russian World for politicized Ukrainians, whose number constantly increases, nowadays in "simply 'neo-Sovietism' masked by

new names". He reconciled that with the conflation of the Russian World and the Soviet Union with Russian society itself (Goble, 2018).

1.2 The Russian Orthodox Church and the Russkiy Mir

In the account of Rap (2015), on November 2009, at the third Russian World Assembly, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow defined the Russkiy Mir as the common civilizational space founded on three pillars: (Eastern)Orthodox, Russian culture and especially the language and the common historical memory and connected with its common vision on the further social development.

Russkiy Mir is an ideology promoted by many in the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church. According to Antiochenus (2018), this ideology, concocted as a reaction to the loss of Russian control of the Soviet Union, seek to assert a spiritual and cultural unify of the peoples descended from the Kievan Rus, persuadably under Russian leadership. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow also shares this ideology for the Russian Orthodox Church, the Russkiy Mir is also "a spiritual concept, a reminder that through the baptism of Rus, God consecrated these people to the task of "building a Holy Rus" (Petro, 2015).

1.3 Funding of the Russkiy Mir

The assets of the Russkiy Mir Foundation come from the Federal budget, voluntary property contributions and donations, and other legal resources. Apart from the staff of the Foundation, recruitment is usually done by host institutes or universities without impute or intervention of the Foundation. In other words, the only financial involvement of the host institutes is payment of emoluments of the staff of the institutes. It is the responsibility of the staff to oversee the smooth running of the Russkiy Mir Cabinet and make sure that the equipment, comprising of books and other teaching materials are taken care of. The host institute, however, could for the convenience of the students using this equipment embark on minor repairs when necessary.

The host institutes or universities give regular report on the functioning of the cabinet and make possible requests for more equipment. The staff of the host institutes are usually invited on conferences and workshops in Russia by the Foundation.

For the Russkiy Mir Foundation, the supplied equipment should be well utilized for the benefit of people and students studying Russian language and culture. And for the institute or university that hosts the Foundation, the privilege of hosting it and the benefits of the cabinet is everything.

In Nigeria, presently, the Russkiy Mir Cabinet is available at the University of Lagos only. It was established in 2011 in the Faculty of Arts of the University. The opening ceremony in September

2011 attracted the Russian Ambassador in Nigeria and high personnel of the Embassy and the Deputy Vice Chancellor of the university with other university`s administration. Apart from Nigeria, the Russkiy Mir has its cabinet at the Russian Embassy in Benin Republic. There has been cordial relationship between the two cabinets in West African sub-region, and since the University of Lagos has been benefiting from it with more or less no contributions, there has never been any criticism of a sort.

The Foundation`s Board of Trustees consist of prominent Russian academics, cultural figures, and distinguished civil servants, and it is chaired by Lyudmila Verbitskaya, a Rector of St. Petersburg State University and Chair of International Association of Russian Language and Literature Teachers (MAPRYAL).

2. China's Confucius Institute: History, Aim and Structure

According to Penn (2014), Confucius Institute is a public educational organization under the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, whose stated aim is to promote Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese teaching internationally, and facilitate cultural exchange. And Jakhar (2019) says, according to China, its Confucius Institute is a bridge reinforcing friendship between it and the World. While Tsung and Crusickshank (2011) add that Confucius Institutes promote and teach Chinese culture and language around the World. They develop Chinese language, courses, train teachers, hold the HSK Examination (Chinese proficiency test), host cultural and artiste presentations, and provide information about contemporary China. They added that the director of the Confucius Institute programme, Xu Lin, state that Confucius Institutes were started to cater to the sudden uptick in interest of Chinese language around the World.

The Confucius Institute programme began in 2004 and is overseen by Hanban (officially the office of Chinese Language Council International). The Institutes operates in co-operation with local affiliate colleges and universities around the World, and financing is shared between Hanban and the host institutions. The related Confucius classroom program partners with local secondary schools or school districts to provide teachers and institutional materials (Chen, Wang and Cai, 2010). Again, Jakhar (2019) adds that the first Confucius Institute opened in 2004 in South Korea, and according to official data there were 548 Confucius Institutes around the World by the end of last year, as well as 1,193 Confucius classrooms based in primary and secondary schools. He goes

further to say that the Confucius Institutes are joint ventures between the host university or school, a partner University in China, and Hanban, a controversial agency under China's education ministry. It overseas Confucius Institutes operation and provides partial finding, staff and other support.

Apart from academic goals, the Confucius Institutes perform other non-academic goals. Lio Changchun, the 5th highest-ranking member of the Politburo Standing Committee was quoted in *The Economist* as saying that the Confucius Institute were "an important part of China's overseas propaganda set up.

Burton-Bradley (2019) says that while the cover of the Confucius Institute is primarily language and cultural training, they fit into a large framework of scores, of other things they are doing in foreign countries, including spying in Australia; which is massive. In view of this, many foreign scholars have characterized the Confucius Institute programme as an exercise in soft power, expanding China's economic, cultural, and diplomatic reach through the promotion of Chinese language and culture, while others have suggested a possible role in intelligence collection (De Pirrebourg and Juneau-Katsuya 2009).

The Confucius Institute is fashioned in line with the Portugal's *Institute Camoes*, France's *Alliance Française*, Britain's, *British Council*, Spain's *Instituto Cervantes*, Germany's *Goethe Institute* and the Italy's *Società Dante Alighieri*-several of them named for an iconic cultural figure identified with that country, as Confucius is identified with China. The Confucius Institute is named after the noted Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479 BC). This naming is widely accepted but not without early squabbles and conflicts; as throughout the 20th century, leaders of China's Communist Party (CPC) criticized and denounced Confucius as the personification of China's feudal traditions.

Outside of China, Confucius in a generally recognizable symbol of Chinese culture, removed from the negative association of other prominent Chinese figures such as Chairman Mao Zedong (The Economist, 2011). In support of the choice of the naming, a *China Post* article reported in 2014 that certainly, China would have made little headway if it had named these Mao Institutes, or even Deng Xiaoping Institutes. But by borrowing the name Confucius, it created a brand that was instantly recognized as a symbol of Chinese culture, radically different from the image of the Communist Party (China Post, 2014).

2.1 Global Spread and Funding of the Confucius Institute

As indicated earlier, as at 2019, there are 530 Confucius Institute around the globe, and Hanban aims at establishing 1,000 of the institutes globally by 2020. But according to Burton-Bradly (2019), there are currently 548 Confucius Institutes and 568 Confucius classrooms in primary and high schools Worldwide, with 14 institutes on Australian University campus and 37 classrooms in schools across several Australian states. And Simon (2010) further adds that hundreds more have opened since in dozens of countries around the World, with the highest concentration of the Institutes in the United States, Japan and South Korea.

The Confucius Institute are joint ventures between the host university or school, a partner University in China and Hanban, an agency under China's education ministry. Hanban is a non-profit government organization, though it is connected with the Ministry of Education and has close ties to a number of senior Communist Party officials. In giving more clue about Hanban, the constitution and Bye-Laws of the Confucius Institute informs that the Confucius Institute headquarters in Beijing established the guidelines which the separate Confucius Institute Worldwide follows. The headquarters is governed by a council with fifteen members, tens of them are directors of overseas institutes. The institutes themselves are individually managed under the leadership of their own board of directors, which should include members of the host institution. According to Acker (2016), the current chair of the Confucius Institute Headquarters council is Liu Yandong, a Chinese vice premier and member of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo who formerly headed the United Front Work Development. Other leaders of the council are similarly drawn from the Communist Party and central government agencies, such as the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, and the state council information office (also known as the office of overseas propaganda).

Each institute is responsible for drawing up and managing their own budget, which is subject to approval by the headquarters. The Confucius Institute Headquarters provides various restrictions on how their funds may be used, including ear making funds for specific purposes. Institutes in the United States are generally provided with $100,000 annually from Haban, with the local university required to match funding (Haban-News, 2012).

Apart from funding, Hanban overseas Confucius Institute operations, provide staff and other support. The Hanban website stated that Chinese language instructors should be aged between 22 to 60, physical and mental health, no record of participation in Falun Gong and other illegal

organizations, and no criminal record. In other words, in many of universities and schools, the employers of teachers and other staff is the Chinese government and not the University or school. And again, Confucius Institutes teach simplified Chinese characters which are standard in Mainland China rather than the traditional Chinese characters used in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Confucius Institutes provide a sanitized view of Chinese society which avoids contentious topics like human rights abuses and Tibet (Power, 2019).

2.2 Controversies and the Confucius Institute

The rapidity of the expansion of the Chinese Institutes as soon as they started has been the subject of much controversy. In the opinion of Starr (2009), criticisms of the institutes have included administrative concerns about finance, academic viability, legal issues, and relations with the Chinese partner university, as well as broader concerns about improper influence over teaching and research, industrial and military espionage, surveillance of Chinese abroad, and undermining Taiwanese influence.

Although Chinese authorities have been cautious not to have Confucius Institute act as direct promoters of the party's political viewpoints, some still believe that the Institutes function in this direction. According to the Economist (2017), officials say that one important goal of the Institutes is to influence other countries' view of China. And *Taipei Times* (2011) added that Peng Ming-min, a Taiwan independence activist and politician, claims that colleges and universities where a Confucius Institute is established have to sign a contract in which they declare their support for Beijing "One China" policy. As a result, both Taiwan and Tibet became taboo at the institutes. In the same vein, Jakhar (2019) posits that open to the general public, Confucius Institutes promote the Chinese language but also run classes in culture, from calligraphy and cooking, to Tai chi. They sponsor educational exchange and hold public events and lectures.

Citing Jakhar (2019), critics say that the Confucius Institute rules essentially mean topics like Tibet, Taiwan and Tiananmen are considered off-limits, and that they are platforms for an authoritarian party that is fundamentally hostile to liberal ideas like free speech and free inquiry to propagate a state-approved narrative. And since the Communist Party of China doesn't have a free press or rule of law to check into use of power, it is no surprise there have been strong indications that Confucius Institute are used for inappropriate covert activities like intelligence gathering and facilitation military research. On his own Burton-Bradley (2019) adds that while the cover of the Confucius Institute is primarily languages and cultural training, they fit into a large framework of

scores of other things they are doing in foreign countries, including in Australia; things like spying, which is massive and we know most of it is coming from China. He continued by saying that when anyone wants to have any kind of public discussion (on human rights or Tibet or Taiwan) a lot of the instigators for counter-reaction to that, and the shouting down of anyone who wants to talk, come from people associated with these Confucius Institutes.

In authenticating these controversies in the Confucius Institute, and article in *The New York Times* quotes Arthur Waldron, a professor of international relations at the University of Pennsylvania, saying that the key issue is academic independence. One you have a Confucius Institute on campus, you have a second source of opinions and authority that is ultimately answerable to the Chinese communist party and which is not subject to scholarly reviews. While Burton-Bradley (2019) argue that the activities of Confucius Institutes were part of a wider pattern of activity where China sought to ensure governments, students, academics, expat Chinese communities and business followed a Beijing-determined narrative. And that they complain vociferously when anyone on campus says anything about, Taiwan or Tibet, the latest estimates that suggest a million plus Uyghurs are being held in essentially concentration campus. Again, the Hanban website says all institutes must abide by the Confucius Institute's constitution, and not participate in activities that are inconsistent with their "missions".

Consequent upon all these criticism and controversies, there has been organized opposition to the establishment of a Confucius Institute at the University of Melbourne, University of Manitoba, Stockholm University, University of Chicago and many others. More significantly, according to Bradshaw and Freeze (2013), some universities that hosted Confucius Institutes decided to terminate their contracts. These included, Japan's Osaka Sangyo University in 2010, Canadas McMaster University and Universite de Sherbrooke and France's University of Lyon in 2013, the University of Chicago, Pennsylvanian State University, and the Toronto Distinct School Board in 2014, the German Stuttgart Media University and University of Hohenheim in 2015 and Vrije Universiteit Brussel in 2019. Also, in late August 2016, the New South Wales announced it was scrapping programs run by the Confucius Institute in its schools altogether. Protesters at the University of Queensland (UQ) also demanded the closure of Confucius Institute there, particularly after pro-China students clashed with students rallying in support of the Hong Kong protests.

Still on protest against the Confucius Institute, in October 2013, a university of Chicago Professor, Marshall Sahhins published an extensive investigative article criticizing the Confucius Institutes and the Universities hosting them. Later, more than 100 faculty members signed a protest against the Confucius Institute at the University of Chicago. Consequently, in September 2014, the University suspended its negotiation for renewal of the agreement with Hanban. Two months later, the Canadian Association of University Teachers urged Canadian Universities and colleges to end ties with the Confucius Institute (Chicago News 2014). On a wider perspective, *The Telegraph* (London 2014) informs that in June 2014, the American Association of University Professors issued a statement urging American Universities to cease their collaboration with the Confucius Institute unless the universities can have unilateral control of the academia affairs, that the teachers in Confucius Institutes can have the same academic freedom enjoyed by other university faculty members and that the agreements between universities and Confucius Institute are available to the community.

In the mist of all these criticism and controversies, China has come out to say that its Confucius Institute is a bridge reinforcing friendship. In reacting to the findings of an eight-month United States Senate sub-committee final report into the activities of the Confucius Institute on United State campuses, which indicted the Institutes by saying that far from being independent centers of learning, promoting language classes and Chinese history, the centers were tightly controlled arms of the Chinese Government, China responded by calling the findings "baseless accusations" and an attempts politicize that institutes which provide academic learning centers for cultural exchange, partnerships and language lessons.

3 Russkiy Mir and the Host Countries

The case of the Russkiy Mir is totally different because its *Modus Operandi* is not the same as that of the Confucius Institute. The Russkiy Mir Foundation is a joint project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science and it is supported by both public and private funds. The essence of the Mir is to promote understanding and peace in the world by supporting, enhancing and encouraging the appreciation of Russian language, heritage and culture.

Also, and unlike the Confucius Institutes which establishes department or units in universities and schools, the Russkiy Mir operates Russkiy Mir Cabinets. The cabinet of Russkiy Mir is a target programme of the Mir's Foundation aimed at creating favorable conditions abroad for individual

access to the civilizational foundations and contemporary realities of the Russkiy Mir through independent familiarization of users with elements of Russia's structural culture and the improvement of language skills.

The cabinets are organized and adapted in accordance with the specific needs of the hosting organizations, including specially selected collection of language learning textbooks and literature as well as informational materials and audio-visual presentations about modern Russia, its culture and history. They are organized and designed to fit the configuration of the space allocated by the hosting organizations. Such Cabinets have been organized in various configurations at schools, libraries, universities, cultural centers, kindergartens. in many parts of the world.

The Russkiy Mir Foundation supports the creation of Cabinet via the provision of a contract-based donation to the hosting organization. This process begins with an official request from the potential host organizations to the Foundation, indicating the materials requested for the formation of the Russkiy Mir Cabinet. If the Foundation approves the organizations request the two parties sign a donation agreement, which specified in detail the material provided by the foundations free of charges. In turn, the host organization is obliged to use the materials for educational purposes with the aim of popularizing the Russian language and supporting intercultural dialogue.

With this, the few notable critics of the program are that some consider the promotion of the Russkiy Mir concepts as an element of the revanchist idea of the restoration of the Russia or its influence back to the borders of the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire. And yet, other observes described the concept as an instrument for projecting Russian soft power and in Ukraine, the promotion or the Russkiy Mir has become strongly associated with the Russian military intervention in the country. For the leadership of the Russia Orthodox church, the ideology of the Ruskkiy Mir is concocted as a reaction of the loss of Russian control over Ukraine and Belarus after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and an effort to assert a spiritual and cultural unity of the peoples, descended from the Kievan Rus, presumably under Russian leadership.

4 Conclusion

From their histories, aims, structure as well as relationships with their host countries, there is no doubt that the Russkiy Mir and the Chinese Confucius Institutes appear to have the same purpose; but are run differently by different agencies and organizations.

While the Russkiy Mir is entirely for academic purpose, the Confucius Institute has both academic and non-academic goals because it is also an important part of China's overseas propaganda set-up. Also, there are some elements of political interest in the running of the Chinese Institutes. Apart from the fact that the current chair of the Confucius Institute Headquarters Council is Liu Yandon, a Chinese Vice Premier and a member of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo, other leaders of the council are similarly drawn from the Communist Party and central government agencies. Thus, Hanban, apart from overseeing the running, financing and supervision of the Institutes, is involved in recruitment of staff and other sundry checks.

On the other hand, the assets of the Russkiy Mir Foundation come from the Federal budget, voluntary property contributions and donations, and other legal resources. Apart from the staff of the foundation, recruitment is usually done by host institutes or universities without input or intervention of the Foundation.

Apart from Ukraine where the usage and study of Russian language and culture are facing opposition because of the Russian invasion of the Crimean Peninsula; with the result that in Ukraine, the Russkir Mir concept is seen as an instrument for projecting Russian soft-power, there are no obvious criticisms or conflicts with the host countries where the Russkiy Mir Institutes are established.

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