

Confucius Institutes in Thailand: a promising story of China's soft power?

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Research Backgrounds

- * The year of 2018: 475 CIs and 851 CCs in over 146 countries
- * Termination of CIs: US, Germany, France, Swiss etc
- * Southeast Asia: 37 CIs and 40 CCs in 9 countries
- * Thailand: 16 CIs and 21CCs

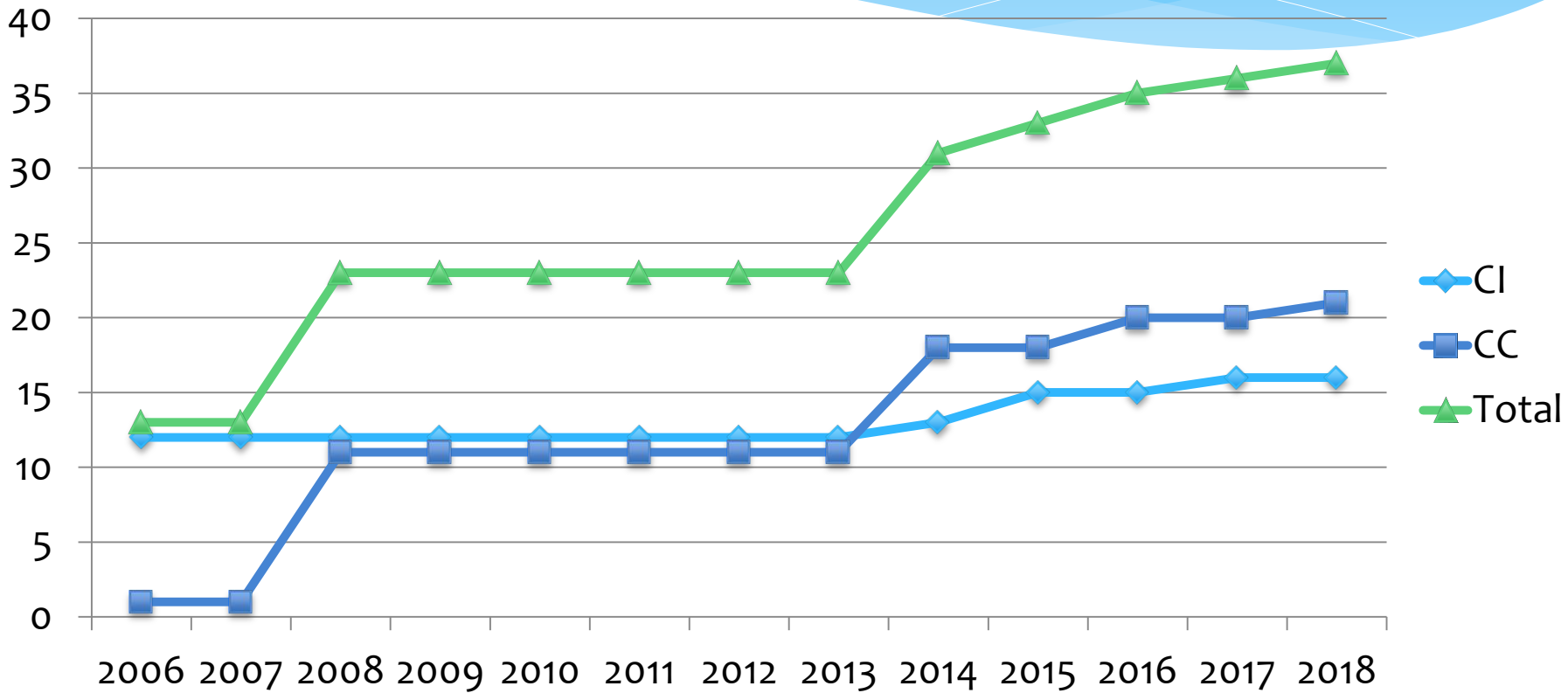
Research Questions

- * Why Thailand embraces Confucius Institutes?
- * How China applies different soft power approach in Thai context?
- * Is China's entrenchment in the Thai educational system really a soft power victory for Beijing?

Research Methods

- * On-site-investigating
- * Interviews and semi-structured interviews
- * Participation observations
- * Document analysis
- * Content analysis on more than 2000 events held in CIs of Thailand from 2006-2017 (database of Minzu University of China)

Figure of CI&CC's growth in Thailand



Findings from CIs of Thailand

- * Establishment: top-down approach
- * Management: central-planning style
- * Activities:
 - * Pragmatic language courses
 - * Biased emphasis of Chinese traditional culture
 - * Economic potentials (BRI)
 - * “China and Thailand are brothers”

Responses from Thailand

- * Royal family members and high-profile officials
- * Involved institutions and actors
- * Media outlets
- * Local society

Limitations

- * Concerns and wariness: high-level, involved actors, media, perceptions towards China
- * Problematic soft power approach: top-down and hierarchy, linkage with institutions, more assertive in diplomacy,

Conclusions

- * CI's successful entrenchment in Thailand education section
- * weakness of Chinese soft power: far from impacting policy