

## RISE OF CHINA AND SPREAD OF MANDARIN IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Sunny Ifeanyi Odinye & Ifeoma Ezinne Odinye

Email: ifeanyiodinye@gmail.com

ifeomaodinye@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

China, the world's oldest continuous civilization, has undergone an astonishing transformation in a brief span of recent history. China is really moving the world in many aspects. China has registered a real GDP growth of more than 2000%, it has some \$2mtrillion in foreign reserves, China's military power (land, sea, and air) is growing at around 12% annually, its non-financial overseas direct investment is currently in excess of \$330 billion, and other achievements. China's rise can be seen as a quintessentially political process – through which the ruling Communist Party has sought to shore up its legitimacy after the Cultural Revolution irreversibly changed the nation and caused three crises of ideological belief, faith in the CPC, and confidence in the future. This paper highlights the rise of China and the spread of Mandarin in 21<sup>st</sup> century. The paper is divided into seven sections: introduction, brief history of China, rise of China, Mandarin Chinese, Mandarin in 21<sup>st</sup> century, Confucius Institutes around the world, and Conclusion.

### INTRODUCTION

The word “China” is derived from *Cin*, a Persian name for China popularized in medieval Europe by the account of 13<sup>th</sup>-century Venetian explorer Marco Polo. The Persian word, *Cin*, is derived from Sanskrit word *Cina*, which was used as a name for China as early as AD 150. The first recorded use in English dates back to 1555. China is called “*Zhongguo*” in Chinese, literally meaning “middle kingdom”. China, officially the People's Republic of China (PRC), is the world most populous country, with a population of over 1.3 billion. Covering approximately 9.6 million square kilometers, China is second-largest country by land area, and the third- or fourth-largest in total area, depending on the definition of total area.

It is a single-party state governed by the Communist Party of China. China has 22 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 directly controlled municipalities (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Chongqing), and 2 mostly self-governing special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macau). Beijing is the capital of China. There is controversy over Taiwan, though China sees it as its 23<sup>rd</sup> province but it is governed by separate political entity, Republic of Taiwan. The current president of China, Hu Jintao, was elected on 15 March, 2003. As the President is legally China's head of state, he is responsible for China's image. Since 1993, the President has also been the General Secretary of the Communist Party who is generally responsible for establishing general policy and direction of the state and leaves responsibility for the implementation details to the Premier of the People's Republic of China, the head of government. The incumbent Premier of the People's Republic of China is Wen Jiabao, elected on 16 March, 2003. The Premier is the highest administrative position in the Government of the People's Republic of

China. The Premier is responsible for organizing and administering the Chinese civil bureaucracy. This includes overseeing the various ministers, departments, commissions and statutory agencies and announcing their candidacies to the National People's Congress for Vice-Premiers, State Councillors and ministry offices.

Chinese people celebrate October 1 as a National Day in honor of the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. China has 56 recognized ethnic groups but 91.6% of Chinese people are from Han ethnic group. The non-Han population includes 55 ethnic minorities, of which are listed according to the population (from largest to smallest) Zhuang, Hui, Manchu, Uyghur, Miao, Yi, Tujia, Tibet, Mongol, Dong, Bouyei, Yao, Bai, Korean, Hani, Li, Kazakh, Dai, She, Lisu, Dongxiang, Gelao, Lahu, Va, Sui, Nakhi, Qiang, Tu, Mulao, Xibe, Kyrgyz, Jingpo, Daur, Salar, Blang, Maonan, Tajik, Pumi, Achang, Nu, Ewenki, Gin, Jino, De'ang, Bonan, Russian, Yugur, Uzbek, Monba, Oroqen, Derung, Hezhen, Gaoshan, Lhoba, Tatar. China has many languages but adopts only one language as standard language, Mandarin, which is also called "*Putonghua*".

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF CHINA**

China has a long recorded history which dates back to 1600BC. Among the elements that characterize Chinese history are the consistent rise and fall dynasties, intermittent aggression from northern aliens, varying degrees of openness to the outside world, Cultural Revolution, invasions from other countries, opium war and the rest. Chinese history can be summarized in four parts: pre-history, ancient era, imperial era, and modern era. What is now China was inhabited by *Homo erectus* more than a million years ago (Zhu et al, 2003).

The early history of China is obscured by the lack of written documents from this period, coupled with the existence of later accounts that attempted to describe events that had occurred several centuries previously. In a sense, the problem stems from centuries of introspection on the part of the Chinese people, which has blurred the distinction between fact and fiction in regards to this early history. The Xia Dynasty of China (from c. 2100 to c. 1600 BC) is the first dynasty to be described in ancient historical records such as Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian* and *Bamboo Annals*.

Historians often refer to the period from Qin Dynasty to the end of Qing Dynasty as Imperial China. The Qin Dynasty is well known for beginning the Great Wall of China, which was later augmented and enhanced during the Ming Dynasty. The major contributions of the Qin include the concept of a centralized government, the unification of the legal code, development of the written language, measurement, and currency of China after the tribulations of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods. The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) was the last imperial dynasty in China. Founded by the Manchus, it was the second non-Han Chinese dynasty. The Manchus were formerly known as Jurchen, residing in the northeastern part of the Ming territory outside the Great Wall. The early 1900s saw increasing civil disorder in China. The Xinhai Revolution in 1911 overthrew the Qing's imperial rule.

A revolutionary military uprising, the Wuchang Uprising, began on October 1911, in Wuhan. The Republic of China was formed in Nanjing on 12 March 1912. Sun Yat-sen was made the President of Republic of China. In the 1920s, Sun Yat-sen established a revolutionary base in south China, and set out to unite the fragmented nation. After Sun's death in 1925, Chiang Kai-shek, seized control of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party or KMT) and succeeded in bringing most of south and central China under its rule in a military campaign known as the Northern Expedition (1926-1927). The power tussle ended in a civil war known as Chinese Civil War in 1949 with Kuomintang (KMT) pulling out of the mainland, with the government relocating from Nanjing to Taipei and maintaining control only over a few islands. The Communist Party of China was left in control of mainland China. Mao Zedong, on 1 October 1949, proclaimed the People's Republic of China. Henceforth, China here stands for People's Republic of China.

## RISE OF CHINA

There was a debate that took place in Toronto featuring Niall Ferguson and David Daokui Li versus Fareed Zakaria and Henry Kissenger, titled "21<sup>st</sup> Century belongs to China". The following is the argument from Niall Ferguson,

"I believe the 21<sup>st</sup> century will belong to China because most have belonged to China. The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were the exceptions. Eighteen of the last 20 centuries saw China as, by some margin, the largest economy in the world. Let me begin with some demographics and economics: China is more than a continent. A fifth of humanity lives there. It's four times the size of Canada. If China were organized like Europe it would have to be divided up into 90 nation states. Today there are 11 cities in China with a population of more than six million. There's only one in Europe and that's London. There are 11 European Union states with populations of less than six million. In just 30 years China's economy has grown by a factor of very nearly ten and the IMF recently projected that it will be the largest economy in the world in just five years time. It's has already taken over the United States as a manufacturer and as the world's biggest automobile market. The 21<sup>st</sup> century will be China's because an overweight, over-leveraged, over-sexed America, not to mention a dysfunctional Europe, are on the slide."

Napoleon Banaparte was a French military and political leader who rose to prominence during the latter stages of the French Revolution and its associated wars in Europe. As Napoleon 1, he was Emperor of the French from 1804-1815. He was born on August 15, 1769 and died on May 5, 1821. Napoleon's famous remark about China: "There lies a sleeping giant. Let him sleep! For when he wakes he will move the world" has come to pass. China is really moving the world in many aspects. China has registered a real GDP growth of more than 2000%, it has some \$2mtrillion in foreign reserves, China's military power (land, sea, and air) is growing at around 12% annually, its non-financial overseas direct investment is currently in excess of \$330 billion, and other achievements.

Richard Nixon was the 37<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, serving from 1969-1974. He is the only United States president to resign the office. He had previously served as a United States representative member and senator from California and as the 36<sup>th</sup> vice president of the United States from 1953-1961. Nixon was born on January 9, 1913 and died on April 22, 1994. Four decades ago, he made this remark on China: “Well you can just stop and think of what would happen if anybody with a decent system of government got control of that mainland (China). Good God, there would be no power in the world that would even...I mean, you put 800 million Chinese to work under a decent system and they will be the leaders of the world”. This prophecy is true in today’s China.

Let see another prophesy but this time from a living American renowned scholar on China. According to Professor Richard Baum,

“China – the world’s oldest continuous civilization – has undergone an astonishing transformation in a brief span of recent history. Since the collapse of its once-glorious empire in 1911, China has seen decades of epic turmoil and upheavals, emerging in the new century as both an authoritarian megastate and an economic powerhouse, poised to become an imposing global force. By current estimates, the People’s Republic is set to outpace the United States economically in the coming decades and to rival or surpass it militarily, making China the richest, most powerful nation on earth”.

The secret of the rise of China is summarized by Ming Xia, “China’s rise can be seen as a quintessentially political process – through which the ruling Communist Party has sought to shore up its legitimacy after the Cultural Revolution irreversibly changed the nation and caused three crises of ideological belief, faith in the CPC, and confidence in the future. As the Party realized that the performance-based legitimacy was the only hope for prolonging its rule, economic development became the highest politics. Consequentially, the success of economic development would have to cause political implications – the external ones carefully monitored and evaluated by China’s neighbors and the only superpower of the world – the United States”.

The good news is that China’s success and growth should benefit the global economy. The country is increasingly a driver of demand growth in a world that can no longer rely on overextended governments and battered American consumers. The trickle down success can be seen in growing exports in Australia, South America and Africa and China’s investment in industries from natural resources, oil and mining to energy and minerals. China’s growth has triggered job creation and a healthier consumer appetite, within the countries where they do business (Schwarzman, 2010).

## **MANDARIN CHINESE**

Mandarin is a group of related varieties or dialects spoken across most of northern and southwestern China. Because most Mandarin dialects are found in the north, the group is also referred to, particularly among Chinese speakers, as the “northern dialect(s)”, called in Chinese

“*Beifanghua*”. A northeastern-dialect speaker and a southwestern-dialect speaker can hardly communicate except through the standard language, mainly because of the differences in tone. The Standard Chinese, which is also referred to as “Mandarin”, (*Putonghua* in Chinese), is the official language of the People’s Republic of China and Republic of China, and one of the four official languages of Singapore. It is also used in Malaysia, Philippines and United States. It is one of the working languages of United Nations. It is also one of the most frequently used varieties of Chinese among Chinese diaspora communities internationally. Mandarin has nearly a billion speakers.

In everyday English, “Mandarin” refers to standard Chinese, which is often called simply “Chinese”. The Standard Chinese is based on the particular Mandarin dialect spoken in Beijing, with some lexical and syntactic influence from other Mandarin dialects. Chinese speakers refer to the modern standard language as *Putonghua* (common language) on the Mainland; *Guoyu* (national language) in Taiwan or *Huayu* (Chinese language) in Malaysia and Singapore. Mandarin is now used in education, the media, and formal situations in both the People’s Republic of China (Mainland) and Republic of China (Taiwan). This standard Chinese can now be spoken intelligibly by most young people in Mainland and Taiwan, with various regional accents. The written forms of Standard Chinese are Simplified characters, used in Mainland, Malaysia and Singapore and Traditional characters, used in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau.

## MANDARIN IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Jim Rogers, of Worth Magazine said, “If the 19<sup>th</sup> century belonged to Britain, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the United States, then the 21<sup>st</sup> century will surely belong to China. My advice: make sure your kids learn Chinese”. Warren Buffett, who ranked the world’s wealthiest person in 2008 and the third wealthiest person in 2011, is an American business magnate, investor and philanthropist. He is widely considered the most successful investor of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He once said, “The 19<sup>th</sup> century belonged to England, the 20<sup>th</sup> century belonged to the U.S., and the 21<sup>st</sup> century belongs to China. Invest accordingly”.

In today’s increasingly close international interaction, language as mankind’s most significant tool for communication plays an irreplaceable important role in international exchanges. In the past, people made great effort to learn Latin, French and English according to their time of influence and importance, but now Chinese language (Mandarin) has become a new growing choice for many people around the world. ‘Chinese fever’ is still catching many people around the world judging by the growing number of people learning Chinese. It is estimated that more than 40 million foreigners outside China, though Hanban claims 100 million, are learning Chinese language.

With the rapid growth of China’s economy, China plays a major and an important role in the world affair. China’s international status has improved, thus many people around the world come to China to do business, travel, study and live. Because of this people have interest to study Chinese language in China and outside China. To meet the demand of people who want to study Chinese language, Confucius Institute was born.

## CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES AROUND THE WORLD

The Confucius Institutes are sponsored by Hanban, an organization affiliated with China's ministry of Education, and are similar in aim to other government-sponsored cultural outreach programs like British Council, Alliance Francaise, Goethe Institut and Instituto Cervante of Britain, France, Germany and Spain respectively. Unlike these organizations, however, Confucius Institutes do not claim to be independent from their government and they operate within established universities, colleges, and secondary schools around the world, providing funds, teachers and educational materials. Actually, the institutes operate in co-operation with local host universities and colleges around the world, and financing is shared between Hanban (Office of Chinese Language Council International) and the host institutions. There are Confucius Classrooms around the world. Confucius Classrooms are branches of Confucius Institute so to say. They operate under Confucius Institutes in their localities.

According to the website of Hanban ([www.hanban.org](http://www.hanban.org)), "Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters, as a public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, is committed to providing Chinese language and cultural teaching resources and services worldwide, it goes all out in meeting the demands of foreign Chinese learners and contributing to the development of multiculturalism and the building of a harmonious world. There are three major functions of Hanban: to make policies and development plans for promoting Chinese language internationally; to support Chinese language programs at educational institutions of various types and levels in other countries; and to draft international Chinese teaching standards and develop and promote Chinese language teaching materials".

The conception and birth of Confucius Institute was in the middle and ending of 2004 respectively. After establishing a pilot institute in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, June 2004, the first Confucius Institute was opened in Seoul, South Korea on 21 November, 2004. In April 2007 the first research-based Confucius Institute was opened in Japan, at Waseda University. Hundreds of Confucius Institutes have been opened in many countries around the world with highest number in the United States, Japan, and South Korea. As of December 2012, there are more than 400 Confucius Institutes in 108 countries and regions, and more than 500 Confucius Classrooms – with more than 600,000 registered students – across the globe, according to Confucius Institute Headquarters in Beijing. In addition, 70 of the world's top 200 universities have opened their own Confucius Institutes. There are still more than 400 universities in 76 countries waiting on the candidate list for Confucius Institutes. The China's Ministry of Education estimates 100 million people around the world may be learning Chinese language by 2010 and the number will increase in years to come. Hanban aims to establish 1,000 Confucius Institutes by 2020.

The official reason given for the propagation of Confucius Institutes is that they promote interest in and appreciation for Chinese culture and language abroad; proliferation of Confucius Institutes is often mentioned against the background of a larger effort to increase China's cultural 'soft power' worldwide. The logic of the foundation of Confucius Institutes is that encouraging non-Chinese to understand more about China and Chinese will lead them to develop more positive attitudes towards China itself. Other significant nation-states (France, Britain, Germany and Japan) have been funding similar projects for decades. The difference between the new

Confucius Institutes and other state-backed institutions such as the Goethe Institute and Alliance Francaise is that Confucius Institutes are founded within pre-existing international educational institutions; consequently there is a widely-held suspicion that these institutes are aimed less at fostering interest in China and Chinese culture itself, and more at ensuring that such interest is guided along lines approved of by the Chinese party-state (Churchman, 2012).

The rapid expansion of Confucius Institutes has led to criticisms and a backlash, especially in the United States and Western countries. Li Changchun, the 5<sup>th</sup>-highest-ranking member of the Politburo Standing Committee, was quoted in *The Economist* saying that the Confucius Institutes were “important part of China’s overseas propaganda set-up”- a statement that has been hijacked by critics and enemies of China as evidence of China’s hidden and politicized mission. Many foreign scholars have criticized China’s move in establishing Confucius Institutes around the world and characterized Confucius Institute as an exercise in ‘soft power’, expanding China’s economic, cultural and diplomatic outreach through the establishment of Confucius Institutes and promotion of Chinese language and culture. *The Economist* notes that China “has been careful not to encourage these language centers (Confucius Institutes) to act as overt purveyors of the party’s political viewpoints, and little suggests they are doing so...but officials do say that an important goal is to give the world a ‘correct’ understanding of China”. A *New York Times* article quotes Arthur Waldron, a professor of international relations at the University of Pennsylvania, that the key issue is academic independence. He says, “once 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 review”.

In defence of the criticisms on the establishment of Confucius Institutes and promotion of Chinese language and culture around the world, Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom, Liu Xiaoming, said at a recent Edinburgh gathering for the European Confucius Institutes that some people are not comfortable to see the rapid growth of Confucius Institutes. He went further to say that some people criticize Confucius Institute for being a tool of China’s ‘national propaganda’, labeling Mandarin as ‘ideological infiltration’. For the critics of Confucius Institutes, we suggest they listen to Chris Reardon, a China expert at the University of New Hampshire, “Confucius Institute is a tool of the Chinese government and Communist Party to promote China’s interest abroad. It is up to the foreign host institution to institute safeguards and oversight”.

## CONCLUSION

The rise of China is good news to many people and equally bad news to others. The rise of China has brought progress and opportunities to many people and countries around the world. China is a trade partner with most nations. China’s growth is seen even in her active participation in the United Nations and aids or loan to other nations. China will occupy economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because of the rise of China, Chinese language (Mandarin) will continue to spread around the world. China is not imposing her language to other people or nations rather other people or nations are willing to learn Chinese language in order to communicate with Chinese people freely.

There will always be naysayers and critics. There are those who say learning Chinese is not important and useful. To them we recommend there is wisdom in preparing for possible changes in the future. Besides, learning a foreign language and experiencing a foreign culture can be life changing; learning a foreign language is good training for students; learning at least one foreign language is an established practice and basic to education in most countries around the world. The benefits in the job market are obvious. Additionally, it just makes good sense. People respect and want to do business with those who can converse with them in their own language. This is certainly true with Chinese. The choice is yours.

## REFERENCES

- Branigan, T. (2012). Chinese ambassador attacks 'cold war' fears over Confucius Institutes. *The Guardian UK*, June 15, 2012. Retrieved December 6, 2012, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/15/confucius-institutes-universities-chinese-ambassador>
- Carlson, B. (2012). Confucius Institute: Education bonus or wily Trojan Horse? *Globalpost* June 3, 2012. Retrieved December 6, 2012, from <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/china/120601/confucius-institute>
- Churchman, M. (2011). Confucius Institutes and Controlling Chinese Languages. *China Heritage Quarterly*, June 2011. Retrieved December 5, 2012, from [http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=026\\_confucius.inc&issue=026](http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=026_confucius.inc&issue=026)
- Erard, M. (2006). The Mandarin Offensive: Inside Beijing's global campaign to make Chinese The number one language in the world. *WIRED Magazine*, Issue 14.04- April, 2006. Retrieved December 10, 2012, from <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.04/mandarin.html>
- Gries, P.H. (2004). *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Guttenplan, D.D. (2012). Critics Worry About Influence of Chinese Institutes on U.S. Campuses. *New York Times*, March 4, 2012.
- Lampton, D.M. (2001). *Same Bed, Different Dreams: Managing U.S.-China Relations: 1989-2000*. Berkeley, CA: California University Press.
- Pakistan Defence Forum (2011). 21<sup>st</sup> Century belongs to China. Debate by Niall Ferguson and David Daokui Li (Pro) versus Fareed Zakaria and Henry Kissinger (Con). Retrieved December 5, 2012, from <http://www.defence.pk/forums/world-affairs/119526-21st-century-belongs-china.html#ixzz26hytKahR>
- Schmidt, P. (2010b). At U.S. Colleges, Chinese-Financed Centers Prompt Worries About



Academic Freedom. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Schwarzman, S. (2010). The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Belongs to Asia. The University of Hong Kong's Edward K.Y. Chen Distinguished Lecture Series held on October 18, 2010 at the university Loke Yew Hall. Retrieved December 6, 2012, from [http:// www.fbe.hku.hk/News/FBELectureInsight/File/EdwardChen\\_DistinguishedLecture.pdf](http://www.fbe.hku.hk/News/FBELectureInsight/File/EdwardChen_DistinguishedLecture.pdf)

Saletta, C. (2009). Why the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Belongs to China. Published online by Fool on February 3, 2009. Retrieved December 6, 2012, from [http:// www.fool.com/investing/international/2009/02/03/why-the-21st-century-belongs-to-china.aspx](http://www.fool.com/investing/international/2009/02/03/why-the-21st-century-belongs-to-china.aspx)

Sutter, R.G. (2005). *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

The Economist (2009). A message from Confucius: New ways of projecting soft power. (Dated: 22-10-2009).

The Economist (2011). China's Confucius Institutes: Rectification of statues. (Dated: 20-01- 2011)

Xia, M. (no date). "China Threat" or a "Peaceful Rise of China"? *The New York Times*. Retrieved December 6, 2012, from [http:// www.nytimes.com/ref/college/coll-china-politics-007.html](http://www.nytimes.com/ref/college/coll-china-politics-007.html)

Zhu, R. et al (2003). Magnetostratigraphic dating of early humans in China. *Earth Science Review*. 61 (3-4): 191-361