

# *Rumination on Heroic Culture and Chinese National Image Building*

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**Abstract:** Hero culture is one of the constituent elements of national image, which is not only an important carrier of national image, but also an important means to shape national image. However, at present, hero culture also faces some real problems, which restrict the enhancement of China's national image. For this reason, we must strengthen the cultivation and application of hero culture, so as to attract and inspire people at home and abroad, make them know and understand China deeply and comprehensively, and promote the shaping of a good Chinese image.

## 1. Introduction

Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has been a great nation that reveres heroes and has produced many heroes. Countless heroes have made outstanding contributions to the historical development of the Chinese nation, and in the process have formed a heroic culture that remembers the history of the nation, sings heroic stories, highlights the image of China, inspires the people to advance and grows their strength. In the current context where countries are actively pursuing cultural strategies and vigorously strengthening their national image, China is also faced with the important task of using its cultural power to build a positive national image that matches its national strength and objective facts. Therefore, it is a question worth considering to clarify the connection between hero culture and national image, analyze the current problems faced in the process of using hero culture to shape national image, and think about how to effectively use hero culture to shape a positive image of China.

## 2. Heroic culture and national image

### 2.1 Definition definition

Hero culture refers to: "heroic characters as the basis, heroic values as the core of the concept system and value system, is about the concept of heroes, heroic behavior, heroic spirit, heroic merit, hero evaluation, hero heritage of the sum." [1] Specifically, the content of hero culture is diverse,

expressed as the advanced deeds of heroes, stories of their experiences, hero-centered related legends, plays, novels, songs, plays, films and other literary culture, as well as the admiration, reverence and other emotions and physical actions of people for heroes at that time or in later generations. It preserves the glorious memory of the nation, manifests the national spirit, and is an important material and window for knowing and understanding the inner image of a nation, a country and its people.

The image of the state refers to: "the general evaluation and identification of the state itself, its behavior, its activities and its results by the external and internal publics of the state. "[2] And the domestic public, especially the international community's perception and evaluation of a country's image is often based on the results of its geographical location, territory map, population size, natural appearance, economic volume and other obvious material existence, but such perception and evaluation can only be superficial, partial, and to some extent or under certain conditions even biased and wrong. This is because the audience is not only limited by the material, but is also more influenced by their subjective perception, emotional attitude and value orientation. Therefore, for the internal and external publics to form a more comprehensive perception and evaluation of a country, they need not only external material materials, but also internal spiritual materials, i.e. cultural attraction and inspiration.

## 2.2 The two links

Heroic culture is one of the constituent elements of the national image. The national image as a complex is composed of multiple elements. For example, Chen Jinlong et al. consider economic image, political image, cultural image, social image and ecological image as the main elements of national image [3]; Liu Jinnan et al. believe that political, economic, military, diplomatic, cultural, environmental, social, sports and national are the constituent elements of national image [4]; According to Guan Wenhua et al, the constitutive factors of national image are mainly material factors (the natural material basis of the country's existence and development and its material products), institutional factors (institutional norms and codes of conduct formed by people in their historical development) and spiritual factors (cultural products created by people in their historical development and the cultural psychology and values formed)[5]. From these scholars' discussions on the constitutive elements of national image, we can find a common point, that is, they all consider spiritual culture as one of the elements of national image, which reflects national image to a certain extent. Then, hero culture, as an important part of a country's spiritual culture, must also be one of the constitutive elements of national image.

Hero culture carries the national memory, conveys the Chinese story, and is an important carrier of China's national image. In the long history of the Chinese nation, heroes and heroines have emerged, including kings and generals, benevolent men and women, as well as common people, men and women. They are all representative figures of the people in the current era, witnessing and creating history, with their own glorious deeds, either fighting with the dangerous nature, brave and pioneering, or the mighty and unyielding, asking for the people's lives, or sacrificing their lives to serve the country, helping the building to fall, or teaching the people, the world, or helping the world, or helping the dying, or doing their best, silent dedication, or never forgetting the original intention, courageous mission. These heroic cultures, with heroic figures as the core, remember the

splendor of the Chinese nation, highlight the Chinese nation's pursuit of the values of loyalty, benevolence, righteousness, courage, wisdom and trust, and map and outline the multidimensional aspects of China's long history, heroes, solidarity and love, openness and progress.

Heroic culture has an edifying influence and is an effective means of shaping China's national image. The shaping of a positive national image must attach great importance to the role of culture and make good use of culture as an effective means, as the saying goes, "the soul of the country, culture to transform it, culture to cast it"[6]. The essence of culture is to "educate people with culture", to influence and educate others through the power of culture, to make them understand and believe in the culture, and then to develop positive emotional attitudes and value recognition of the country and the nation, and to form a positive and favorable image perception and evaluation. As Xi Jinping said: "Throughout the ages, the Chinese nation has had a position and influence in the world, not by the poor military, not by foreign expansion, but by the powerful appeal and attractiveness of Chinese culture. Our ancestors have long recognized that the distant people are not convinced, it is the cultivation of culture and virtue since the truth. Explain the Chinese national endowment, Chinese national characteristics, Chinese national spirit, to convince people with virtue and culture is one of the very important aspects." [7] In this day and age, cultural competition has become one of the main forms of competition among countries around the world, and countries have been strengthening their cultural construction, formulating cultural strategies, and also making full use of heroic culture, etc. to shape their national image. Taking the United States as an example, it has been more proactive and comprehensive in systematically pursuing its global cultural strategy since World War II, vigorously carrying out cultural exports and gradually establishing a position of cultural hegemony. Among them, the export of heroic culture is one of the important means of shaping the image of the United States. Under the cover of various American heroic stories, it shows the global public the strong economic, military and technological hard power of the United States, as well as the institutional, cultural and other soft power, and conveys the so-called universal values and ideology of the United States, successfully outlining a positive national image of positivity, wealth and strength, civilization and democracy, which subconsciously makes the global Many people in many countries are inclined to the United States in terms of emotions and values. Obviously, heroic culture can play an important role in national image building and national development. Then, how to make good use of China's hero culture to shape a positive image of China becomes an important task we face.

### **3. Realistic Problems Facing the Use of Heroic Culture to Shape China's National Image**

Since the 18th Party Congress, the Party Central Committee, with General Secretary Xi Jinping at its core, has attached great importance to the inheritance and promotion of hero culture, believing that heroes are the brightest coordinates of the nation, the most representative of the core connotations and values of national culture, and the representative of the national spirit and national image, stressing that "the heroes of the Chinese nation should be revered, recorded and portrayed in great detail, so that heroes can be carried forward in literature and art works and guide people to establish a correct view of history, nation, country and culture" [8]. This shows that the Party Central Committee has clearly recognized the significant role of heroic culture in national development and national image shaping. However, in practice the use of heroic culture in shaping China's national

image still faces some internal and external realities that hinder the enhancement of China's national image.

### **3.1 Insufficient inheritance and innovation of Chinese heroic culture**

The Chinese nation is a nation of heroes, with a rich and diverse heroic culture, a glorious history, and once the center of Asia, with a strong cultural radiance, these heroic figures representing the image and national memory of China are also known, sung and recognized by the world. However, after the modern era, with the weakening of the country, the invasion of the Western powers and many other reasons, the self-confidence of the Chinese people suffered a great blow, and in the process of learning from the West and reviving the country, some people even advocated "total westernization" at one time, and the Chinese heroic culture was to a certain extent caught in the margins, making it difficult to exert its influence outside China. The culture of Chinese heroes was to some extent marginalized and could hardly exert its influence outside China. After the founding of New China, all the Party Central Committees attached importance to cultivating and promoting hero culture, especially paying attention to shaping and propagating revolutionary heroes, heroes of labor, heroes of the masses, and models of the times, which added new contents and injected new vitality into Chinese hero culture, and to a certain extent enhanced the influence of Chinese hero culture. But this is largely confined to the domestic level, and international understanding of Chinese hero culture and Chinese image is still limited and superficial. An important reason for this current situation is our insufficient heritage and innovation of Chinese hero culture. Specifically: First, the lack of a comprehensive, systematic and scientific excavation of China's heroic culture in conjunction with the need for national image building. For a long time, we have lacked systematic planning for the excavation and sorting out of hero culture, and we do not know enough about which hero culture is typical of China's image and which hero culture should be focused on inheritance. Second, the modernization of Chinese heroic culture is not enough. The rich and colorful hero culture needs the necessary and appropriate modern carrier and form to present, need to grasp the people's psychology, into the times and people's lives, and the current modernity of our hero culture expression, cultural competitiveness transformation still needs to be strengthened. Third, the means and methods of communication of heroic culture are relatively single. In terms of subject, it is mostly disseminated unilaterally by China itself and unilaterally by the government, with insufficient social and other participation; in terms of means, it is mostly disseminated through traditional media, but not enough through new media; in terms of methods, it is mostly didactic and indoctrination, with a lack of story creation and artistry, and insufficient attractiveness and infectious power. These problems are obviously not conducive to the shaping of China's national image.

### **3.2 Weakness in the dissemination of Chinese hero culture**

In the world cultural market, the United States leads with a 43% share, followed by the European Union with 34%, while the most populous and historic Asia-Pacific region accounts for only 19%, with Japan accounting for 10%, Australia for 5%, and the remaining 4% belonging to other Asia-Pacific countries, including China. This indicates that China is currently in a relatively weak position in terms of foreign cultural communication and cultural competition, and is in a relatively

difficult position to promote Chinese culture and express the connotation of Chinese cultural values. For its own reasons, one is the lack of Chinese heroic cultural communication ability, which restricts the shaping of national image. Cultural communication is achieved mainly through three basic ways or channels, namely, material flow (cultural information is spread through the exchange of goods, such as commercial trade), human flow (cultural information is spread through the way of thinking and behavior patterns expressed in the process of great population migration and interaction and communication), and information flow (cultural information is spread through symbolic systems, such as books, newspapers, telecommunication, etc.).[9] Today, information flow is the most important communication channel, and the Internet is an important area of information exchange. At present, the core technology of China's Internet is restricted by the West, and the network information dissemination is in a disadvantageous position, coupled with the fact that China still lacks a certain number and certain influential international media or cultural media groups, which makes the dissemination of Chinese hero culture more limited in strength and breadth and restricts the public's perception and evaluation of China's image. Second, the communication effectiveness of China's heroic culture is not enough, which affects the effect of China's national image building. Communication effectiveness refers to the effective results of communication content on people's knowledge, emotions, attitudes and behaviors, and usually refers to the extent to which a communication activity achieves the intention or purpose of the communicator. The current Chinese heroic culture is often "self-imagined" in the process of communication, and does not sufficiently grasp the psychological needs and cultural differences of the world public, which makes it difficult for the international public to deeply understand the "Chinese voice" and has a negative impact on the effect of national image building.

### **3.3 Serious cultural infiltration by Western countries led by the United States**

China, as a socialist country, has many ideological and interest differences with the US-led Western countries. As China grows stronger, the U.S.-led West is uneasy, and the U.S. even sees China as its number one imaginary enemy and as a destroyer of the Western-dominated international order. For this reason, the U.S.-led Western world has never ceased to contain and suppress China, and cultural infiltration is one of the means. On the one hand, through its powerful economic, military and technological advantages, the U.S. makes full use of its information dissemination advantages and discourse hegemony to spread its culture and values to the world through educational exchanges, news and press, film and entertainment, and Internet media, etc., vigorously promoting the Western heroic culture and subconsciously making many people around the world incline toward and recognize the U.S. in terms of emotional attitudes and values. Among them, the impact on China is also evident. For example, international countries are more willing to accept and identify with American culture, and to some extent reject Chinese culture; some domestic youth also admire American heroic theme of film and television, and show positive emotional attitude towards many aspects of the United States. On the other hand, the U.S.-led Western countries are also committed to deconstructing China's heroic culture and discrediting and vilifying China. In recent years, in addition to vigorously promoting the "China threat theory" and the "China collapse theory," the U.S.-led Western countries have also launched a wave of "deconstructing heroes" against a group of heroic figures who emerged in modern Chinese history.

"By maliciously trimming historical facts and denying heroic deeds, they smear and vilify the heroes of China's modern revolution, with the intention of undermining China's national self-confidence, distorting China's national image, and misleading and interfering with the international public's perception and evaluation.

#### **4. Cultivating and applying hero culture to build a good national image of China**

A good national image has important influence and cohesive power, and is of great significance in promoting national development, gathering national strength, and enhancing comprehensive national power and international competitiveness. As an important carrier of a country's national memory and national image, the importance of heroic culture for national image is being recognized by more and more countries. For China, it is currently in a period of social transformation and a critical period for realizing the Chinese dream, and it is also a period of opportunity to enhance cultural influence and use the colorful and rich connotation of heroic culture to shape a good national image. Therefore, we should attach great importance to the role of hero culture, and continuously cultivate and apply it to enhance the understanding and recognition of Chinese culture by the public at home and abroad, thus improving and enhancing the national image of China.

##### **4.1 actively promote heroic culture, promote the development of heroic culture, enhance the attractiveness and appeal of heroic culture**

First, select Chinese hero culture to create hero stories that represent the country's image and enhance its appeal. Good and typical hero stories are important materials for shaping the country's image. China's heroic culture has a long history, is rich and diverse, and has both similarities with other countries' heroic cultures and its own unique personality. On the one hand, on the basis of comprehensive and systematic excavation and sorting of Chinese heroic culture, a number of heroic cultures are selected to best represent the country's image, and through these "focus on the image of China as a civilized power with deep historical heritage, pluralism and unity of various ethnic groups, cultural diversity and harmony, the image of a great oriental country with political clarity, economic development, cultural prosperity, social stability, people's unity and beautiful mountains and rivers, the image of a responsible power that adheres to peaceful development, promotes common development, upholds international justice and contributes to humanity"[10], as well as the image of a pioneering, open and aggressive country. On the other hand, we should pay attention to the modern transformation and contemporary expression of Chinese hero culture, enhance the "readability" and "understandability" of Chinese hero culture, so that it can attract the interest of the public, be understood and accepted by the public, and then generate positive emotional experience. This will help shape the image of China.

Secondly, to defend the culture of Chinese heroes, forcefully counter all kinds of distortion, scandalous hero image of words and actions. Hero culture is an important vehicle for shaping the image of the country, and to a large extent represents and demonstrates the image of the Chinese state. However, as mentioned above, there is a wave of "deconstruction of heroes" in the West, which smears and vilifies the heroes of China's modern revolution and their heroic deeds. This is essentially a kind of historical nihilism, with the malicious intention of "if you want to destroy your country, you must destroy its history", which greatly damages China's national image. In this regard,



we must fight back resolutely against all kinds of words and deeds that distort and vilify the image of China's heroes with sufficient evidence and facts, fight resolutely to rectify the origin and defend the resources of the country's image. At the same time, we should also take this opportunity to emphasize and promote Chinese hero culture to people at home and abroad, turn challenges into opportunities, focus on showing and telling China's hero stories, and guide people to correctly perceive and evaluate China through this hero culture.

Thirdly, learn from the heroic cultures of other countries and draw on the experiences of others for my own use. Xi Jinping pointed out that "civilizations exchange because of their diversity, learn from each other because of exchanges, and develop because of mutual appreciation." [11] Using heroic culture to shape national image is one of the common means used by countries around the world, and the United States and other Western countries are among the leaders, and have achieved remarkable results and accumulated rich experience. Take the United States as an example, it is good at shaping its own national image through American-style heroes and American hero stories. Every year, Hollywood produces a large number of heroic movies around the world, which not only gains huge economic benefits, but also promotes the powerful economic, technological and military power of the United States, subconsciously influencing the ideology of people in other countries, making them gradually accept American values and leading them to form the perception that the United States is powerful and invincible, and that the United States is superior in every way. American scholar John Yema pointed out in "The Americanization of the World" that "the real 'weapons' of the United States are the movie industry in Hollywood, the image design factories on Madison Avenue, and the production lines of Martel and Coca-Cola. American production and American-style films, costumes and 'insulting advertisements' became the global standard from Bu Dombra all the way to Vladivostok, and this was the most important factor in making the world more American than ever before." Therefore, in order to use hero culture to enhance China's national image, it is necessary to learn from the U.S. experience in shaping the country's image on the basis of adhering to cultural nationality, and to take the strengths of the other to make up for its weaknesses, so that China's hero culture can be more influential and effective in shaping the country's image.

#### **4.2 Enhance the power of communication of heroic culture and grasp the initiative of shaping China's national image**

How well the hero culture spreads has an important impact on the shaping of China's national image. As the saying goes, the power of communication determines the influence, and the right to speak determines the initiative. Telling the story of Chinese heroes and spreading the culture of Chinese heroes is one of the important ways to shape the image of China. Therefore, it is necessary to effectively enhance the communication power of Chinese hero culture and show a real, three-dimensional, comprehensive and positive China to the world.

Firstly, mobilize the power of the main body of communication, to achieve a large linkage of the main body of publicity. Promoting the culture of Chinese heroes and shaping a positive image of China is not a matter for a single person or part of the population, but the responsibility of all Chinese people. First, the Party and the government should attach great importance to the inheritance and dissemination of Chinese hero culture, implement an active and open cultural

strategy, integrate and strengthen Chinese media power, encourage and support the development of China's cultural industry, and mobilize all members to participate in the great cause of promoting hero culture and shaping the image of the country. Secondly, propaganda and cultural departments should make efforts to promote the industrialization and conglomerate development of Chinese media and Chinese culture, continuously make them bigger and stronger, and gradually build a number of media groups and cultural companies with international influence, so that they can be capable of spreading Chinese heroic culture and shaping China's image in international competition. Again, social enterprises such as information media and film and culture companies should have a high degree of patriotism and social responsibility, consciously promote Chinese hero culture while pursuing economic benefits, actively tell good Chinese hero stories abroad, convey the voice of China, and show a good image of China. Finally, the public should continue to learn and practice Chinese hero culture, demonstrate good overall quality in civil interaction and exchange, and shape a positive Chinese image. At the same time, attention should also be paid to uniting public figures or cultural media companies with certain influence in other countries and using their influence to shape China's image. In this way, fully mobilizing the enthusiasm and initiative of all subjects will be conducive to enhancing the power of heroic culture dissemination and improving the effectiveness of national image shaping.

Secondly, improve information dissemination technology and realize the great smoothness of the propaganda channels. In today's world, whether or not one has advanced information dissemination technology and smooth communication channels largely affects the shaping of a country's image. As mentioned above, the United States and other western countries can easily spread their culture and information to various countries by virtue of their advanced information communication technology and media tools, which can not only shape their own positive image, but also shape the image of other countries at will, while many developing countries, including China, are in a relatively disadvantaged position, and the passive information reception is often more than the external export, which is obviously a great challenge for China and other This is obviously unfavorable to the national image shaping of developing countries such as China. Therefore, in order to spread the heroic culture to shape China's national image, on the one hand, we should promote the development of science and technology, gradually master advanced information dissemination technology, and get rid of the situation of being restricted in some aspects, so that the Chinese heroic culture and the Chinese story can be spread quickly, smoothly and safely. On the other hand, we should strengthen innovation, develop and use various information dissemination platforms, both offline and online, official and unofficial, and build a three-dimensional and diversified information dissemination network with wide coverage and efficient dissemination, so as to enhance the strength and breadth of the output of Chinese hero culture.

Thirdly, improve the content and techniques of communication, and realize the organic integration of high-quality content and diversified forms. To use heroic culture to shape China's national image, we should pay attention to both the typicality and representativeness of the content and the plurality and applicability of the form. First of all, content is king, and the content of heroic culture chosen directly determines the image of the country presented. Therefore, when spreading Chinese hero culture, we should pay attention to research on domestic and foreign cultural markets, pay attention to domestic and foreign cultural psychology and value differences, and on this basis select hero culture that has both universal values and can highlight the expression of China's image.



Second, the form for the latter, the chosen form of expression largely affects the appeal of hero culture. As Xi Jinping said: "No way and means that can be accepted by others, the ideological can not be reflected, the propaganda and education activities can not be implemented, the ancient saying: 'words without text, and not far from the line', is the truth." [12] As for what specific form should be taken, should pay attention to: "First, the masses are happy to see, can show the ideological, not for the form and the form, the form; second is to have the masses, away from the form of the masses, is not conducive to mobilizing everyone's enthusiasm; third is to spend less money, more work, more economic benefits, copper coins thrown into the water should also have a few ringing; fourth is to To meet the taste of everyone, not to engage in the high and low." [13] However, it is also necessary to "adhere to our value system, adhere to our core values" [14].

## 5. Summary

"A nation without spiritual strength can hardly stand on its own feet, and a cause without cultural support can hardly last long." [15] Chinese hero culture not only inspires Chinese sons and daughters to strive for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, but also serves as an important vehicle and means to shape China's image, and is of great significance in enhancing China's influence. Although it still faces some realistic challenges, with the increasing strength of China's national power and the increasing strength, breadth and effectiveness of the dissemination of Chinese heroic culture, the positive and positive image of China will be increasingly full, and the world will understand and recognize China more.

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