

A Brief Analysis of the Main Contents of Mao Zedong's Cultural Security Construction in New China and Contemporary Insights

— Commemorating the 130th Anniversary of Mao Zedong's Birth

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Abstract: In the early days of the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong, with the perspective of a proletarian revolutionary and strategist, systematically expounded his thoughts on national cultural security, forming a scientific theoretical system. This paper elaborates on the main contents of Mao Zedong's ideology regarding the construction of cultural security in New China, revealing its outstanding contributions to the country's development and providing some insights for contemporary China, which is currently undergoing cultural rejuvenation. In conclusion, a profound understanding of the essence of Mao Zedong's cultural security construction holds significant practical and guiding significance.

Keywords: Cultural security construction, Mao Zedong, New China

1. Introduction

On November 8, 2021, the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was convened in Beijing. During the session, Xi Jinping highly praised Mao Zedong Thought, stating that "Mao Zedong Thought is the creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism in China, a proven theoretical principle and experiential summary regarding the correct path for China's revolution and construction. It marks the first historic leap in the sinicization of Marxism." [1] Mao Zedong Thought is rich in content, with the ideology of national cultural security construction being an essential component. While Mao Zedong did not directly use the term "cultural security" in his writings and discourses, through his leadership in the great practice of socialist revolution and construction, he repeatedly emphasized viewpoints on safeguarding national security. This has resulted in the formation of a scientific theoretical system, showcasing Mao Zedong's great spirit as a leader of the Party and the nation in safeguarding national security.

2. Main Contents of Mao Zedong's Cultural Security Construction in New China

After the establishment of New China, the Party faced numerous serious issues in cultural construction. On one hand, Western imperialists not only resorted to armed interventions and political isolation against our country but also attempted to infiltrate through capitalist ideologies. On the other hand, the remnants of the domestic reactionary forces of the Kuomintang were unwilling to accept their failure. They continuously incited and collected intelligence, spreading rumors of "restoring China." The urgency of cultural security construction became apparent. In response, Party leaders led by Mao Zedong conducted a series of efforts nationwide to address cultural security issues, giving rise to Mao Zedong's ideology on national cultural security. The main aspects of this ideology include:

2.1. Launching the "Three-Anti," "Five-Anti," and Rectification Campaigns

In the early years of the founding of the People's Republic, facing attacks from within and outside the Party, as well as domestically and internationally, the Party's governance environment became complex. Many weak-willed Communist Party members were influenced and embarked on the path of corruption and degeneration. In response to this phenomenon, Mao Zedong proposed the "Three-Anti" and "Five-Anti" campaigns from 1951 to 1952. These movements opposed the illegal activities of unscrupulous capitalists seeking excessive profits. They also targeted the corruption, waste, and bureaucratism within government agencies under the corrosive influence of the bourgeoisie, addressing the serious issues of corruption and moral decay among officials. In 1957, as the socialist transformation was essentially completed and the period of socialist construction was about to begin, Mao Zedong initiated the Rectification Campaign. This movement elevated the Marxist ideological level of the entire Party and changed the Party's internal style. The Rectification Campaign rectified bad habits such as bureaucratism and commandism within Party organizations, ensuring the combat effectiveness of the Party. The "Three-Anti," "Five-Anti," and Rectification Campaigns protected the newly established people's regime. In the field of social thought and culture, they cleared away outdated ideologies, values, and cultural imprints among the masses, laying a solid foundation for the Party's cultural security construction. This, in turn, safeguarded the security of the country's cultural ideology.

2.2. Formulating Scientific Principles for Mass Cultural Construction with a National Character

Mao Zedong believed that combating imperialist persecution and preserving a culture with distinct national characteristics, fostering Chinese national pride and independence, constitutes "national" culture. He advocated that the masses must integrate the characteristics of Marxism with those of the nation, asserting that culture cannot be subjectively and formulaically applied but must bear national forms or features. He opposed any feudal and superstitious ideas, advocating for "scientific" cultural theories, asserting that theories must align with facts, objectivity, and truth, corresponding to the actual circumstances. Reflecting on China's five thousand years of culture, the majority of it is feudal, containing many positive aspects but also undesirable elements. Therefore, dealing with feudal culture requires a specific and dialectical analysis. The "mass" culture can embody the thoughts and emotions of the people. Mao Zedong believed that the people are the best creators of culture. Transforming the old parts of culture and incorporating new content with a people-oriented flavor turns it into revolutionary, service-oriented culture. Additionally, "national" culture emphasizes promoting the excellent traditional Chinese culture. This action plays a fundamental role in cultural security construction, contributing to the robust and sustainable development of the cultural industry. This is because traditional Chinese culture serves as the profound soil and foundation for rebuilding cultural confidence and a valuable spiritual source for constructing advanced socialist culture. In

summary, Mao Zedong's principle of "constructing a scientific, mass, national culture" makes culture more national, scientific, and people-oriented. It consolidates the broad consensus of values among the people, enhances the robust cultural confidence of our nation, and fundamentally ensures the cultural security of the country.

2.3. Upholding the Direction of Cultural Development in Service of the People and Socialism

Before the establishment of New China, our country's culture largely consisted of mutual exchanges among a few intellectuals, with minimal direct communication with the general population. As a result, the overall number of intellectuals was low, and the illiteracy rate was high. After the founding of New China, Mao Zedong emphasized repeatedly the pivotal role of the people in socialist cultural construction. He believed that the people are both the masters of literature and the subjects for whom culture serves. He stressed the need to highlight the people's central role in culture, correctly understand and manage the relationship between popularization and elevation in culture, and prioritize the popularization of culture among the masses. Under Mao Zedong's guidance, grassroots folk art flourished, with people actively participating in artistic creation. Various literacy schools were established throughout society, engaging in efforts to eradicate illiteracy and other educational activities. Artists began to understand and depict the spirits of workers, peasants, and soldiers, and socialist literary works began to showcase the new face of the people. Numerous outstanding literary and artistic works emerged, portraying the new achievements of socialist construction, propagating the heroic figures in revolutionary struggles and construction efforts, and praising the new socialist trends. During this period, culture took on a more popular character, opening its doors to the masses, breaking the monopoly on culture by a few rulers and intellectual elites. It is evident that firmly adhering to the direction of "serving two purposes" in cultural construction, relying closely on the people, reflecting the people's spiritual life, can prevent cultural development from deviating from reality, the masses, and the socialist direction. This approach helps prevent cultural infiltration by Western capitalism and ensures cultural security.

2.4. Implementing the Cultural Security Strategy of "Applying the Past to the Present, Utilizing Foreign Strengths for Chinese Purposes, and Innovating by Discarding the Old"

After the establishment of New China, how to properly handle the relationship between ancient and modern cultures and between Chinese and foreign cultures in the field of cultural construction has always been an important topic for the Party and the country. Mao Zedong believed that the ancient culture of the Chinese nation is profound and brilliant. In the current era of cultural construction, it cannot be ignored. Only by rooting in the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, exploring its rich heritage, and infusing it with new connotations and vitality based on the times can it be selectively inherited and carried forward. This allows traditional culture to shine with new brilliance in the new era, referred to as "applying the past to the present." Furthermore, facing the cultures of other nations, one should adopt an objective and rational attitude for learning and drawing inspiration. Regardless of the culture, it is essential to recognize both its positive, progressive, and innovative aspects, as well as its stagnant, conservative, and outdated aspects. Therefore, one should maintain a rational attitude and reasonably absorb the excellent parts for the development of New China's culture, known as "utilizing foreign strengths for Chinese purposes." In addressing the development of culture in New China, Mao Zedong also emphasized the principle of "letting a hundred flowers bloom and promoting innovation by discarding the old." This principle encourages the diversity of cultural development in New China and promotes the innovative development of Chinese traditional culture under new conditions. These cultural construction principles overturned the mistaken views of some

literary and artistic creators who blindly advocated foreign culture and denigrated Chinese culture. They also refuted the viewpoints opposing the absorption of excellent traditional Chinese culture, establishing a cultural system of innovation and utilizing external strengths. These actions not only demonstrate Mao Zedong's dialectical materialist spirit as a Marxist but also provide policy guarantees for the healthy and prosperous development of New China's culture, resisting the infiltration of foreign capitalist ideological influences.

2.5. Cultivating Builders and Successors of Socialist Cultural Construction

The quality of cultivating socialist cultural builders and successors is crucial to the development of socialist cultural endeavors and determines the party's security in the field of ideology and culture. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the central government swiftly took control of cultural and educational institutions, achieving the transformation of the old educational system. This involved introducing Marxist theory courses and reforming the teaching methods that did not align with the requirements of socialist economic and political development. Furthermore, there was an expansion of engineering disciplines, fundamentally altering the previous imbalance where there were more arts and science majors and fewer engineering majors, especially in heavy industry. Secondly, addressing the high illiteracy rate in new China, Mao Zedong proposed launching literacy campaigns to promote widespread cultural education. Subsequently, the literacy campaigns gained momentum, with literacy schools and participating individuals visible throughout the country, fostering a culture of learning. During this period, China's basic education also experienced rapid development, with the enrollment rate for school-age children in 1952 doubling compared to 1949. Mao Zedong's strategy of nurturing socialist cultural builders and successors contributed to the development of the party's socialist cultural endeavors, cultivating numerous outstanding teams of workers. This strategy played a fundamental role in safeguarding the country's cultural security.

3. Mao Zedong's Outstanding Contributions to the Cultural Security Construction of New China

Under the leadership and command of the Party Central Committee with Mao Zedong at its core, New China successfully achieved the restoration of the national economy and the reconstruction of social order through three years of practical exploration. Mao Zedong's ideology on cultural security construction also yielded positive results in practice, laying the foundation for the national security cause of New China. His contributions are prominently reflected in the following aspects:

3.1. Consolidating the Leading Position of Marxism in the Field of Ideology and Culture

The struggle of ideologies has never ceased since the establishment of New China, and Mao Zedong once stated, "Marxism also developed in struggles." [2] After the founding of New China, on one hand, Mao Zedong actively advocated for the "Three-Anti," "Five-Anti," and Rectification Campaigns to address undesirable behaviors in society. This prevented the corruption of the working class and state personnel in political ideology, rectified social misconduct, and consolidated the cultural political power of the ruling party. On the other hand, he vigorously promoted the scientific theories of Marxism-Leninism nationwide, emphasizing the scientific nature of cultural development and the attitude of seeking truth from facts. This armed the people with ideological knowledge. The concepts of "cultural development in service of the people and socialism" and "constructing a national, scientific, mass culture" had a profound and widespread impact on society, deeply ingraining in people's hearts. These ideas vividly demonstrated the humanistic nature of Marxism, emphasized the people's role as the masters in national construction, showcased the essential differences between socialist and capitalist cultures, accelerated the dissemination of Marxist cultural views, and indirectly

played a crucial role in consolidating the leading position of Marxism in the field of ideology and culture.

3.2. Resisting the Erosion of Western Capitalist Ideology

In the process of cultural construction, how to handle the relationship between China and the West has always been a pressing issue. Mao Zedong proposed the principle of “utilizing foreign strengths for Chinese purposes,” putting an end to the long-debated notions of “complete Westernization” and the imperialist vision of “peaceful evolution.” At that time, to achieve the goal of “peaceful evolution,” Western imperialist governments continuously utilized various forms such as newspapers, radio, etc., to promote the equality and democracy of Western capitalist production relations, publicize the ideological concepts and political methods of Western capitalist production relations, attack and negate Marxism, and smear the Communist Party of China (CPC) and its people’s democratic dictatorship. Mao Zedong’s cultural construction principle of “utilizing foreign strengths for Chinese purposes” guided the people at that time to correctly handle the relationship between Chinese and Western cultures. This made the cultural development of New China more comprehensive and scientific, as Mao Zedong pointed out in a 1956 discussion with music workers: “In modern culture, foreign countries are ahead of us, and we must acknowledge this fact.” [3] When dealing with foreign cultures, a dialectical attitude must be maintained — neither fully absorbing nor entirely discarding. This pragmatic approach, in line with dialectical materialism, effectively resisted the infiltration of Western capitalist culture. At the same time, Mao Zedong emphasized that cultural construction should “apply the past to the present,” highlighting the importance of exploring China’s traditional excellent culture. He emphasized the need to acknowledge the essence and shortcomings within traditional culture, treating them differently. Using excellent traditional culture as the raw material and nutrient for New China’s cultural construction, continuously absorbing, inheriting, creating, and transforming it, strengthened cultural confidence and consciously resisted the infiltration of Western capitalist culture.

3.3. Resisting the Threats of Various Negative Ideologies and Cultures Internally

The People’s Democratic Dictatorship in New China was still in its initial stages, and the institutional systems in politics, economy, culture, and military were not yet perfected. Accompanying the newly established people’s democratic political power were remnants of old cultural ideologies rooted in the previous system. These outdated ideas were constantly influencing the general public, posing significant threats to national cultural security and economic development. After the founding of New China, remnants of feudal superstitions, activities promoting ethnic division, criminal forces, materialism, individualism, and other values inherited from the old society persisted, severely hindering social development. Mao Zedong proposed movements such as the “Three-Anti,” “Five-Anti,” and “Rectification” campaigns to provide serious education on the negative ideologies prevalent among some party members and cadres. This rectified the improper work styles in the leadership, eliminating the spread of improper tendencies from top to bottom. Additionally, serious feudal and superstitious thoughts still existed in society at that time. Coupled with the fact that the majority of the population was illiterate when New China was established, most people lacked the ability to independently judge advanced and backward cultures. They were highly susceptible to the influence of negative cultures. Mao Zedong advocated the establishment of a “scientific culture,” clarifying the scientific characteristics that advanced cultures should possess. This set a standard for cultural construction, which, when implemented, helped eradicate backward thoughts like feudal superstitions that confined people’s minds. It aimed to enhance the aesthetic sense of the people,

cultivate correct values, and empower them with the ability to resist various threats from negative ideologies.

4. Mao Zedong's Contemporary Insights on Cultural Construction in New China

Within the entire Mao Zedong ideological system, the concept of national cultural security has consistently held a crucial position. It represents a valuable outcome derived from the explorations of the first generation of our party's leadership collective during the early stages of the country's founding, contributing significantly to guiding the contemporary cultural security construction in our country.

4.1. Logical Starting Point: Strengthening Cultural Crisis Awareness, Significantly Valuing Cultural Security Issues

As the saying goes, "To destroy a country, one must first obliterate its history; to exterminate a clan, one must first erase its culture." [4] The cultural security of a nation is a crucial guarantee for its sustainable development. From the very beginning of the founding of the country, Mao Zedong attached great importance to cultural security issues. Because a weakened crisis awareness results in a slowed response to counteract cultural infringement, all efforts in cultural security construction should commence with strengthening cultural crisis awareness. In today's society, the rapid development of internet technology has accelerated the exchange of various ideologies and cultures worldwide. This makes it easier for capitalist countries in the West to infiltrate our country culturally. For example, capitalist countries spread their entertainment products such as movies, music, and TV shows to China through massive cultural exports, influencing the aesthetic and values of Chinese audiences. Additionally, the education systems of these capitalist countries are often more advanced, attracting numerous Chinese students to study abroad. These students receive education and cultural influences from these countries, bringing back a mix of positive and negative cultural elements to China, thus contributing to the dissemination of undesirable foreign cultures. In recent years, capitalist countries have employed more diversified means of cultural infiltration, transitioning from overt, open, and easily detectable methods to concealed, clever, and less easily discernible cultural infiltration. In response, we must place high importance on cultural security, establish cultural crisis awareness, recognize the current international and domestic environment for cultural security, prioritize the cultivation of cultural security awareness among university students, address issues related to online cultural security, enhance the supervision and management of media communication, and strengthen nationwide cultural security education.

4.2. Ultimate Aim: Fully Utilizing the Role of Cultural Security in the Overall National Security Concept

In "On New Democracy," Mao Zedong emphasized the dialectical relationship between culture, politics, and economics. Therefore, cultural security is of utmost importance and has a certain impact on both economic and political security. Since the 18th National Congress of the Party, the Central Committee has attached great importance to national security work, establishing the Central National Security Commission and proposing the overall national security concept, clarifying the national security strategic principles, and providing an overall deployment. The 19th National Congress of the Party report pointed out that the overall national security concept should "take military, scientific, technological, cultural, and social security as safeguards," [5] with cultural security being an indispensable component. Currently, cultural construction is closely related to the quality of the nation. Cultural construction can promote the improvement of citizens' moral levels, drive the formation of a sound social order, and foster the emergence and maturity of ideas related to fairness

and justice. Moreover, cultural security is of great significance for protecting cultural diversity and avoiding cultural conflicts. With the continuous acceleration of globalization, exchanges and collisions between different cultures have become more frequent. Protecting cultural security can facilitate harmonious coexistence among diverse cultures. At the same time, safeguarding cultural security helps enhance people's sense of identity and pride in their own culture, thereby promoting social cohesion and national unity. Therefore, cultural security construction is of great significance, and efforts should be made to ensure cultural security and fully leverage its role in the overall national security concept.

4.3. Core Approach: Constructing a Socialist Ideology with Strong Cohesion and Attraction

The direction and development path of a country's culture are largely determined by its ideology. In the early days of the founding of New China, Mao Zedong attempted to strengthen the construction of ideology through the unity of Marxist study, research, and propaganda. Successfully, under the historical conditions of revitalization, he established the correct ideological banner for the newly established regime. Currently, ideological construction remains the core approach to cultural security. Based on Mao Zedong's construction experience, the Communist Party of China needs to firmly grasp the leadership of ideological work. It should adhere to implementing the guiding ideology of Marxism in all aspects of propaganda management, extending it to theoretical and public opinion work, literature and culture, internal and external propaganda, online and offline publicity, and various cultural propaganda fronts. Additionally, efforts should be made to further consolidate and develop various major ideological and public opinion constructions in the new era. For significant historical and political issues, daring to take responsibility, being brave in managing, and actively dealing with ideological positions are essential. Emphasis should be placed on distinguishing major political principles and important scientific concepts, resolutely opposing and suppressing any erroneous ideas. Secondly, to construct a comprehensive media communication system effectively, we need to, while unwaveringly maintaining the party's leadership over the media, seize the rare opportunity brought by the digital revolution in communication. We should fully utilize the achievements of the information technology revolution, accelerate the construction of an integrated and comprehensive media communication system, promote media convergence development, and ensure that mainstream media generate significant promotional power, driving force, social influence, and credibility. Achieving unity online and offline will make the positive energy of society stronger and the main melody more vibrant.

4.4. Key Measures: Fully Explore, Elaborate, and Promote Outstanding Traditional Culture

General Secretary Xi Jinping, in his attendance at the Cultural Inheritance and Development Symposium, pointed out, "Chinese outstanding traditional culture has many important elements, jointly shaping the prominent characteristics of Chinese civilization." [6] The rich wisdom embedded in Chinese traditional culture over the millennia serves as nourishment for contemporary cultural construction and is a spiritual guarantee for the nation's vitality and continuity. Therefore, we should attach importance to fully exploring, elaborating, and promoting outstanding traditional culture, making better use of the principle of "applying the past to the present." In the protection of traditional culture, emphasis should be placed on safeguarding ethnic languages, scripts, cultural customs, and cultural heritage. Particularly, attention should be given to local and endangered ethnic cultures, as they hold tremendous value in enhancing the cohesion and centripetal force of the Chinese nation, and in strengthening people's cultural identity. Simultaneously, the advantages and uniqueness of Chinese culture should be preserved. Chinese civilization carries distinct characteristics that have accumulated over the five thousand years of its existence, representing the unique charm of Chinese

civilization. The development of cultural undertakings and creative work should focus on protecting and promoting outstanding traditional Chinese culture, avoiding editing or distorting Chinese culture to cater to the “appetite” of capital. There should be no dissemination of ideas that weaken people’s identification with their own culture. It is crucial to constantly uphold the bottom line of cultural communication carriers.

5. Conclusion

In summary, Mao Zedong’s ideology on cultural security construction in New China bears a unique imprint of its time. Through arduous exploration in the practice of cultural construction in New China, it made outstanding contributions to cultural security construction and played an important enlightening role in the current national cultural security construction. Since the reform and opening up, the Communist Party of China has led the people with a pragmatic attitude, achieving significant results in cultural security construction. However, it has also encountered many challenging issues. Mao Zedong’s ideology on cultural security construction helps us better address the problems and contradictions encountered in the process, effectively eliminate the drawbacks and obstacles that affect development, and contribute to the smooth realization of the “Chinese Dream of Great Rejuvenation.”

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