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# Theoretical Characteristics of Contemporary Chinese Cultural Policy

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**Abstract:** Contemporary Chinese cultural policy, with its distinctive theoretical features, reflects a balanced integration of institutional guidance and public cultural needs. It emphasizes the coexistence of national leadership with people-centered cultural development, highlighting the importance of aligning governance with cultural participation. Furthermore, it promotes a dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation—preserving cultural heritage while fostering continuous renewal. Finally, it advocates for both national identity and global openness, maintaining cultural roots while actively engaging with global diversity.

**Keywords:** contemporary Chinese cultural policy; theoretical features; cultural subjectivity

## 1. Introduction

Modern Chinese cultural policy, informed by historical materialism and contemporary socio-political theory, addresses fundamental questions such as “what cultural values to uphold, what direction to pursue, and what goals to achieve” in the modernization of national cultural development [1]. The principle of “grasping the essence and applying it effectively” serves as a concise expression of its theoretical foundation, reflecting a deep understanding of the core values underlying current cultural strategies. On both theoretical and practical levels, this dual emphasis requires a comprehensive understanding of concepts such as cultural cohesion, collective memory, historical continuity, and responsiveness to societal change.

From a global perspective, the world is undergoing profound and accelerating transformations. On one hand, economic globalization has intensified international linkages, resulting in the convergence, exchange, and occasional conflict of diverse cultural traditions. Western cultural influence, supported by economic and technological advantages, plays a significant role in shaping global narratives through the dissemination of values, lifestyles, and media products. On the other hand, the cultural emergence of developing nations is contributing to a more pluralistic global landscape. Many countries are increasingly investing in the preservation and promotion of their indigenous cultures in an effort to enhance their international cultural visibility and competitiveness [2]. Amid this global cultural flux, a key challenge for China lies in preserving cultural integrity, strengthening national cultural identity, and enhancing the global reach and impact of Chinese cultural expressions.

With over 5,000 years of continuous development, Chinese civilization has accumulated a rich and profound cultural heritage, which serves as the foundational identity and spiritual core of the nation. However, the rapid pace of modernization presents a series of new challenges. The acceleration of industrialization, digitalization, and urban expansion has increasingly constrained the space for traditional cultural practices, placing many intangible cultural heritages—such as traditional craftsmanship and folk customs—at risk

Published: 23 July 2025



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of decline or disappearance [3]. Additionally, under the pressures of globalization, cultural identity among certain segments of the population has weakened, accompanied by a growing fascination with foreign cultural elements. In this context, how to safeguard, revitalize, and adapt traditional Chinese culture to align with contemporary society—while achieving creative transformation and innovation—has become a central task in national cultural development.

At present, China is undergoing a crucial phase of comprehensive national modernization, in which the strengthening of cultural capacity has also entered a new strategic stage. In recent years, policymakers have increasingly prioritized cultural development, leading to notable progress in both public cultural infrastructure and cultural industries. The cultural sector continues to expand in scale, cultural markets are growing in vibrancy, public cultural services are gradually improving, and overall cultural soft power is on the rise. Nevertheless, existing challenges remain when measured against the long-term goals of national modernization and the evolving spiritual and cultural needs of the population. For instance, the overall competitiveness of the cultural industry still requires improvement, the quality and innovation of cultural products need enhancement to better serve diverse public expectations, and the potential of cultural resources has not been fully realized. In this critical stage, a clear and coherent theoretical framework is essential to guide the advancement of cultural development—clarifying strategic direction, setting realistic objectives, and outlining key operational tasks [4].

## **2. Dialectical Unity of Governance and People-Centered Cultural Values**

The essential principle behind effective cultural governance lies in maintaining a consistent developmental direction and ensuring institutional coherence. A people-centered approach to culture, on the other hand, emphasizes prioritizing the interests and needs of the broader public, ensuring that cultural development serves the populace at large. These two elements—top-level cultural coordination and grassroots cultural orientation—are deeply interconnected. Governance provides strategic support and stability, while people-centered values inject vitality and relevance into cultural development. The two are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Theoretically, they function like two sides of the same coin, together forming a robust framework for cultural evolution. In practical application, they act as dual driving forces, jointly promoting innovation, inclusiveness, and sustainability in the cultural domain. This dialectical unity is a defining feature of contemporary Chinese cultural theory, reflecting a balance between structural leadership and societal participation.

Adhering to this core principle means maintaining a consistent and coherent guiding mechanism in cultural development, which is key to ensuring its healthy, inclusive, and progressive growth. Institutions play an essential role in setting direction, coordinating resources, and aligning development with public interest. Only through a stable and strategic framework can cultural work genuinely reflect public values, meet societal expectations, and advance along a consistent path. In this context, recent years have seen increased attention to areas such as digital governance, cultural data protection, interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences, and the preservation and creative transformation of traditional culture. Policy frameworks increasingly highlight the importance of consistent institutional guidance to support balanced and people-oriented cultural development [5].

Contemporary Chinese cultural theory places the public at the center of its developmental philosophy, emphasizing that the flourishing of culture ultimately depends on the participation, creativity, and evaluation of the people. It offers responses to fundamental questions that shape cultural systems in the modern era, such as “for whom is culture developed,” “who sustains it,” and “by whom should it be evaluated.” The cultural achievements of the Chinese people—built through generations of diligence, innovation, and collective effort—have created a legacy of harmony, resilience, and richness. Within

this theoretical approach, public participation is viewed not only as a goal but also as a source of dynamic cultural innovation. Research in philosophy and the social sciences is expected to stand up to the tests of practical relevance, societal resonance, and historical sustainability. Without public engagement, literary and artistic works risk becoming detached—rootless, uninspired, and lacking authenticity. This view underlines a deeper philosophical stance that culture is meaningful only when it is grounded in lived experience and shared public values.

### **3. Coordinated Evolution of Inheritance and Innovation**

“Upholding integrity” signifies not only maintaining a clear and correct direction but also steadfastly adhering to core principles and values. Innovation, in this context, represents the courage to introduce new ideas, implement novel practices, challenge outdated conventions, and explore new pathways. By firmly safeguarding foundational principles, it ensures that innovation remains purposeful and aligned with overarching cultural goals. Even amid complex and rapidly changing external environments, this approach preserves clarity of vision, unwavering commitment, and resilience against external pressures.

For example, cultural development emphasizes a people-centered philosophy that both inherits and revitalizes the ancient concept that “the people are the foundation of the nation; with a solid foundation comes peace and stability.” This traditional idea is reinterpreted with contemporary relevance to meet today’s societal needs. Similarly, the notion of a “community with a shared future for humanity” illustrates the enduring aspiration for global harmony and collective well-being, providing insightful perspectives and practical approaches toward fostering a more harmonious international order [6].

In recent years, China’s cultural policy has demonstrated significant theoretical insight and practical commitment in advancing cultural development for the new era, contributing valuable guidance toward building a robust cultural sector. This policy integrates foundational Marxist cultural theories with the rich heritage of traditional Chinese culture, promoting both ideological continuity and cultural innovation. It synthesizes longstanding cultural practices with contemporary social realities, aiming to make cultural theory more relevant, accessible, and grounded in the lived experiences of society.

This approach, sometimes characterized as a “dual synthesis,” combines the fundamental principles of Marxism with China’s specific historical conditions and cultural traditions. It exemplifies the sinicization, modernization, and popularization of cultural theory while highlighting the unique strengths and contemporary significance of Chinese culture. Guided by this synthesis, current cultural development focuses on harmonizing theory with practice, bridging tradition with modernity, and balancing national identity with global engagement—thereby providing renewed momentum for the prosperity and vitality of contemporary culture.

### **4. Interintegration of National and Global Characteristics**

The mutual integration of national identity and global characteristics plays a vital strategic role in promoting cultural diversity and harmonious coexistence, serving as an essential approach to preserving the plurality of world civilizations. National culture, with its deep-rooted heritage and distinctive features, forms a solid foundation for global recognition and respect. Meanwhile, globalization, characterized by a broad vision and inclusive mindset, stimulates the inherent developmental potential of national cultures, generating continuous waves of innovative vitality.

These cultural essences carry not only the long history and unique wisdom of the Chinese civilization but also provide substantial spiritual nourishment and a guiding mission for contemporary cultural development. Within the broader framework of modern cultural policy, the flourishing of culture is closely linked to national rejuvenation and social progress, becoming a fundamental force that profoundly influences sustained national development and the advancement of civilization.

In recent years, Chinese cultural diplomacy has emphasized the significance of international cultural exchange and mutual learning. It advocates that countries and ethnic groups engage with openness and inclusiveness, fostering shared values that benefit all humanity. This core philosophy offers meaningful insights and practical strategies for addressing the complex challenges of globalization and promoting the steady advancement of human civilization. Civilization becomes richer and more diverse through ongoing communication, interaction, and reciprocal learning. This perspective also supports the promotion of universal values and contributes to the evolution of global governance frameworks aimed at world peace and sustainable development. By providing constructive proposals and demonstrating responsible leadership, this approach reflects the commitment of a major global player to the well-being of the international community.

## **5. Practical Guidelines**

### *5.1. Establishing a Strong Ideological Foundation for Enhancing Cultural Confidence*

Cultural confidence is fundamentally rooted in a rational understanding and deep emotional connection that cultural participants develop through a comprehensive grasp of their own cultural structure, distinctive characteristics, and inherent strengths. Firstly, emphasis must be placed on the flourishing and development of literature and the arts. Clear directives have been issued to “raise the spiritual banner, build a strong spiritual pillar, and construct a spiritual home,” all of which highlight the essential role of literature and art in nourishing and guiding society. As urban landscapes rise higher, the spiritual edifice of the people should rise correspondingly, serving as an enduring symbol of national identity. Strengthening cultural confidence relies crucially on the nourishing power of literature and the arts.

With societal progress and increasing levels of civilization, the public’s demand for high-quality material and cultural life has grown stronger and more profound. Literature and art play an indispensable role in enhancing the spiritual vitality of the population, shaping national identity, and fostering positive social development. Therefore, creators in literature and art should proactively harness their creative agency—keenly capturing nuanced social changes and deeply engaging with the complex realities of people’s lives. The people have always been the profound source and inexhaustible driving force behind literary and artistic creation. Life itself embodies the people, and the people are the most vivid and authentic expression of life. Artists and writers must immerse themselves in everyday life, root their work in popular experience, and continually draw inspiration and strength from the masses. Only through such engagement can literature and art in China achieve greater diversity and flourishing development.

Secondly, accelerating the development of a system of philosophy and social sciences with national characteristics represents a major strategic priority. It has been recognized that every significant advancement in human society and civilization is inseparable from the transformation of knowledge and ideological guidance provided by philosophy and social sciences. In recent years, there has been a comprehensive emphasis on developing philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics, along with clear policy guidance. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen institutional leadership over these disciplines, enhance talent cultivation, and empower philosophy and social sciences to become a driving force for social progress and ideological leadership. Researchers in these fields are called upon to take responsibility boldly, proactively improving and advancing their disciplines on a solid academic foundation.

### *5.2. Contribution of Chinese Wisdom to the Development of Civilization*

Chinese civilization boasts a long and profound history, enriched by an extensive and diverse cultural heritage. With millennia of accumulation and an inclusive worldview, it has continuously absorbed and integrated the essence of various cultures with a grand

spirit of openness and tolerance. Far from decline, Chinese civilization has grown increasingly vibrant and dynamic through time. Its unique qualities provide a continuous source of strength for intercultural exchange and mutual learning globally, while also contributing distinctive wisdom and solutions that underscore the civilization's outstanding global significance.

Firstly, Chinese civilization actively advocates for equality and inclusiveness among human civilizations, recognizing these principles as indispensable foundations for global cultural exchange. Mutual respect, solidarity, and harmonious coexistence are essential for sustainable and healthy development of world cultures. Rooted deeply in this understanding, Chinese culture upholds respect and recognition for the diverse cultural achievements created by nations and ethnic groups worldwide. It firmly rejects confrontational cultural attitudes and promotes acceptance, understanding, and appreciation of other cultures with an equitable and tolerant approach. This reflects a responsible and enlightened commitment to peaceful development and progress, setting an example for harmonious coexistence in human society.

Secondly, Chinese culture plays a vital role in fostering the harmonious coexistence and prosperous development of global civilizations. Building on a foundation of respect for cultural diversity, it encourages communication and mutual learning among civilizations and fully supports the autonomous development paths of all ethnic groups. The universal values embedded in traditional Chinese culture have evolved and been exemplified through this process, demonstrating a rich historical foundation and a broad international perspective.

Moreover, strategic initiatives such as the "Belt and Road" framework, the promotion of shared human values, and proposals for global civilization cooperation reflect the deep engagement and positive contributions of Chinese civilization to intercultural exchange and mutual understanding. These efforts aim to advance the development and progress of the global community while highlighting the unique role of Chinese culture in fostering constructive dialogue and collaboration among world civilizations.

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