

# The Cultural Viewpoint of the Communist Party of China Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China

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## Abstract

Cultural viewpoint is an important part of the development concept of the Communist Party of China(CPC), and also the reflection of its ruling idea and ideology in the cultural field. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China(PRC) in 1949, the CPC's cultural viewpoint has undergone three historical evolutions, namely, the initial construction of the socialist cultural viewpoint, the gradual formation of the socialist cultural viewpoint with Chinese characteristics, and the in-depth advancement of the socialist cultural viewpoint with Chinese characteristics in the new era. The internal logic of the evolution of these three cultural viewpoints is mainly embodied in the theoretical logic of continuous Sinicization of Marxism, the formal logic that is both consistent and keeps pace with the times, and the practical logic that centering on the broad masses of the people.

## Keywords

the Communist Party of China; cultural viewpoint; historical evolution; internal logic.

## 1. Introduction

Culture is the soul of a nation. Since the birth of the CPC, it has attached great importance to the dissemination of Marxist scientific thought, and has accumulated rich cultural development experience in the process of Sinicization of Marxism. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the CPC, as a ruling party, was able to carry out the task of transforming and rebuilding Chinese society and culture, and to inject elements such as ideology and value orientation in line with its own development requirements into cultural development. Reviewing the evolution of the CPC's cultural viewpoint since the founding of the PRC, it is not difficult to find that each evolution is synchronized with the development of the country and society, and reflected the reality of the country's development concept in the cultural field. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the scientific connotation, historical evolution and internal logic of the CPC's cultural viewpoint is of great significance for a profound understanding and accurate grasp of China's cultural development path.

## 2. The Scientific Connotation of the CPC's Cultural Viewpoint

According to the traditional view, "culture" is the sum of the material and spiritual wealth created by human beings in the process of social and historical development. This view only expounds the natural attributes of culture, but does not reveals any other attributes of culture. As the product of human social communication activities, culture is deeply stamped with the imprint of human activities. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the essential attribute of culture and explore its inherent value.

Mao Zedong explained the relationship between culture, economy and politics from the perspective of three basic factors of social existence. He believed that "A certain culture (regarded as a culture of ideology) is the reflection of the politics and economy of a certain society, which also exerts great influence on the politics and economy of a certain society. The

economy is the foundation and the politics is the concentrated expression of the economy”[1]. This analysis reveals not only the essence of culture, but also the basic attributes of culture. The basic attribute of culture includes four aspects. First, the social attribute of culture. Culture is the product of society and a social phenomenon that appears only after the formation of human society. It corresponds to the political and economic forms of the society and serves them as well as reflecting them. Second, the national attribute of culture. What is said here “a certain society” refers to a particular country, nation and social form. As culture is always produced and developed in specific national societies, different societies can give birth to and exhibit different types of culture, and form cultural achievements with their own national and regional characteristics, reflecting the national attributes of culture. Third, the class attribute of culture. According to the viewpoint of Marxist theory, the economic foundation determines the superstructure, so the culture based on the social economy is a reflection of the economy, and the nature of class society determines that culture also has class attribute.

Therefore, the construction of the CPC's cultural viewpoint is based on the scientific judgment of cultural attribute. First, the social attribute of culture determines that cultural development must be in line with the level of economic and political development, rather than being too advanced or lagging behind the level of economic and political development, and the relationship among them should be well handled. Second, the national attribute of culture determines that cultural development must reflect the characteristics of the nation, and build the culture needed in each period on the basis of adhering to the excellent culture of the nation, and persist in developing and innovating the culture through inheritance. Third, the class attribute of culture determines that cultural development must adhere to the leadership of the proletariat and develop an advanced culture with the nature of the proletariat and in line with the interests of the broad masses, instead of taking culture as a tool for minority rulers to maintain their own rule.

In general, the CPC's cultural viewpoint is a scientific understanding and systematic induction of all human social activities and their products, which are based on correctly clarifying the relationship among economy, politics and culture. Besides, it is a spiritual weapon to guide the CPC and the general public to correctly understand and reform the world, which embodies the value of the proletarian position and orientation of service for people, and the sum of scientific concepts that keep pace with the times as well.

### **3. The Historical Evolution of the CPC's Cultural Viewpoint Since the Founding of the PRC**

From the initial construction of the socialist cultural viewpoint, to the formation and development of the socialist cultural viewpoint with Chinese characteristics, and then to the innovation and improvement of the socialist cultural viewpoint with Chinese characteristics in the new era. Cultural viewpoints at each stage are concluded and explored in accordance with the development of the times and the requirements of practice. They are closely related to the Chinese people's thought of arduous struggle, the practice of reform and innovation, and the mission of great revival. They are theoretical summaries of the CPC's development at stages of revolution, construction, and reform.

#### **3.1. Transformation and Starting: The Initial Construction of Socialist Cultural Viewpoint**

After the founding of the PRC, the CPC was not only faced with the restoration of economic, political and social order, but also the transformation and reconstruction of culture. While vigorously developing the productive forces and raising the level of economic development, the CPC attached great importance to cultural development. In the construction of socialist culture,

it mainly includes the critical inheritance of Chinese traditional culture, the scientific development of new democratic culture.

### **3.1.1. The Critical Inheritance of Chinese Traditional Culture**

Chinese traditional culture is the product of thousands of years of Chinese society, which contains both essence and dregs. Therefore, we must adopt a critical attitude towards it. The CPC's inheritance of traditional culture is not simply copying, but the creative transformation and innovative development. The CPC is the faithful successor of the excellent traditional Chinese culture. It absorbs and inherits the excellent and reasonable contents, and rejects the dross contents, thus creating cultural thoughts that reflect social requirements and conform to the development of the times. There are some thoughts in traditional culture that meet the requirements of the times, such as the social ideal of "The whole world as one community", the responsible spirit of "Everyone is responsible for the rise and fall of the world", the philosophy of life of "Do as you would be done by others", the virtues of "Benevolence, Righteousness, Propriety, Wisdom, Loyalty", etc. They are all the precious spiritual wealth of the Chinese people and nation.

In the construction of socialist cultural viewpoint, The CPC's cultural viewpoint has paid great attention to the relationship between traditional culture and the spirit of the times, and summed up in practice "Seeking truth from facts", "The mass line" and other ideological theories in line with China's reality, which to a large extent enriched the connotation of the cultural viewpoint of the CPC. "Only by maintaining and developing their own national cultural characteristics, can we truly stand on our own in the world"[2].

### **3.1.2. The Scientific Development of New Democratic Culture**

Many principles and guidelines in the new democratic culture provide an important reference for the CPC to construct socialist culture. The development of the new democratic culture is mainly carried out from the three aspects of nationality, scientificity and popularity. The nationality of culture lies in how to deal with the relationship between Chinese culture and foreign culture. Both Chinese culture and Western culture contain essence and dross. The CPC proposes to inherit and develop the excellent traditional Chinese culture on the basis of the national characteristics, and at the same time critically absorb the foreign culture. Mao Zedong pointed out that "Inheriting China's past thoughts and accepting foreign thoughts do not mean copying them unconditionally, but adopting them according to specific conditions so as to make them suitable to China's reality"[3].

The scientificity of culture refers to the scientific culture with the proletarian nature established by grasping the scientific principles, adhering to the scientific standpoint and using the scientific methods. "It is opposed to all feudal and superstitious thoughts, advocates seeking truth from facts, objective truth, and the consistency of theory and practice"[1]. The feudal culture in the traditional Chinese society was the political representative of the landlord class, and a set of ideology and culture with the feudal ethics as the core was established to maintain its own rule, which forced the masses to remain stupid and ignorant for a long time. Therefore, in the process of developing socialist culture, the CPC has aimed to promote democracy and science, opposed autocracy and superstition, arousing the minds of the masses of the oppressed, and enable them to fight for their rights so as to achieve all-round individual liberation.

The popularity of culture means to develop a socialist culture that conforms to the interests of the majority of people and is supported by the masses, and to resolutely abandon the feudal culture dominated by a few who oppress and exploit the majority of people. In order to make culture popular and supported by the people, the development of culture must draw sufficient nutrients from them.

Only by dealing well with the problems of nationality, scientificity and popularity in the process of cultural development, can we construct socialist culture in line with the actual requirements of our country and better play the role of culture in serving socialism and the people.

### **3.2. Breakthrough and Reconstruction: The Gradual Formation of Socialist Cultural Viewpoint with Chinese Characteristics**

After 1978, China gradually entered the stage of development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. During this period, the CPC's cultural thoughts mainly included that the construction of advanced culture promoted the formation of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics, and the strategy of cultural power enhanced the competitiveness of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics.

#### **3.2.1. The Construction of Advanced Culture has Promoted the Formation of Socialist Culture with Chinese Characteristics**

After the reform and opening up, with the intense cultural competition among countries, it has become the consensus of all countries in the world to pay attention to the construction of spiritual civilization and the development of advanced culture. Deng Xiaoping attached great importance to the development of spiritual civilization, emphasized the synchronous development of material civilization and spiritual civilization, and made a systematic explanation of the connotation of spiritual civilization. "The so-called spiritual civilization, not only refers to the education, science, culture, but also the communist ideology, ideals, beliefs, ethics, discipline, the revolution's position and principles, the relationship between people like comrades, and so on"[4]. Enter the new century, Jiang Zemin has expounded the important thought of "Three Represents" for the first time, clearly stating that the CPC always represents the way forward for China's advanced culture, highlighting the important role of advanced culture in national construction in the new century. In November 2002, at the 16th National Congress of the CPC, Jiang Zemin pointed out that "To develop advanced culture in contemporary China is to develop a national, scientific and popular socialist culture oriented towards modernization, the world and the future"[5]. These judgments explained the importance of developing advanced culture and point out a series of important guidelines and principles for developing it, which means that the CPC's cultural viewpoint has made new theoretical achievements in the 21st century, and socialist cultural thought with Chinese characteristics has made new progress.

#### **3.2.2. The Strategy of Cultural Power has Enhanced the Competitiveness of Socialist Culture with Chinese Characteristics**

In the new century, culture has increasingly become an important factor affecting the competition of comprehensive national strength. Economic globalization has deepened exchanges among countries, and at the same time, some cultural fields of our country are also impacted by foreign cultures. Therefore, we must vigorously develop China's cultural undertakings and cultural industries, build a socialist culture power, improve China's cultural competitiveness. The CPC Central Committee with Hu Jintao as the core has put forward a series of thoughts and strategies on cultural development, which has promoted the maturation and improvement of the CPC's cultural viewpoint. In 2006, the Sixth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee pointed out that we must firmly grasp the direction of advanced socialist culture, carry forward the excellent national cultural traditions, and lay a solid ideological and moral foundation for the people of all our ethnic groups to work together.[6] In 2007, at the 17th National Congress of the CPC, Hu Jintao pointed out, "We should adhere to the direction of advancing socialist culture, bring about a new upsurge in socialist cultural construction, stimulate the cultural creativity of the whole nation, and enhance the country's cultural soft power"[7]. At the Sixth Plenary Session of the 17th CPC Central Committee in 2011, the policy of building a socialist culture power was finally established. In this period, building a socialist

culture power has become the cultural strategy of China's development, which is a theoretical breakthrough for the CPC to combine the international cultural development situation with China's actual national conditions, and has become the core element of the CPC's cultural viewpoint.

### **3.3. Exploration and Innovation: The Deepening of Socialist Cultural Viewpoint with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era**

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the Party has continued to promote the construction of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics in the new era, creatively put forward the concept of "Cultural confidence", analyzed the specific connotation of "Socialist core values", and emphasized the important position of ideological work in the construction of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics. This is a crucial choice that the CPC has made in the field of culture based on the historical position of the new era, and combined with the actual needs of China's current development.

#### **3.3.1. Cultivate Excellent Chinese Culture with a High Degree of Cultural Confidence**

"Cultural confidence is a more fundamental and lasting force in the development of a country or a nation"[8]. Cultural confidence is a higher requirement and goal put forward by the CPC for the cultural thought of socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the new era. "Without a high degree of cultural confidence and cultural prosperity, there will be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation"[8]. From the preliminary explanation of the necessity of cultural confidence, to the analysis of the reasons why Chinese culture can be confident, and then to the path selection of how Chinese culture can realize confidence, the basic theoretical framework of cultural confidence is systematically and completely outlined. On the one hand, the CPC's viewpoint of cultural confidence derives from the excellent traditional Chinese culture. Over the past five thousand years, it has crystallized the wisdom of the Chinese people and accumulated the deepest spiritual pursuit of the Chinese nation, and constantly integrated into the new era with the progress of society. On the other hand, the red revolutionary culture and the advanced socialist culture born in the process of the Party's revolution, construction and reform, which are also important parts of the cultural confidence of the Party and the people. These cultural treasures have given new content to the socialist cultural viewpoint with Chinese characteristics and laid a solid foundation for our cultural development under new historical conditions.

#### **3.3.2. Use Socialist Core Values to Demonstrate the Spiritual Pursuit of the Chinese Nation**

Socialist core values are the cornerstone of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics in the new era. They embody the character of keeping pace with the times and are in line with the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The CPC has pay more attention to the cultivation and promotion of socialist core values. In October 2014, Xi Jinping stressed at the forum on literature and art work that "We should vigorously promote and practice socialist core values in the whole society, and make it become the common value pursuit of all people, the unique spiritual pillar of the Chinese people, and the internalized code of conduct for the common people"[9]. Since then, through various forms of propaganda activities, the Party has gradually integrated the socialist core values into the people's ideological life and become the value code to regulate people's standards of behavior. In 2017, the report to the 19th National Congress of the CPC elaborated on the fundamental goal and basic path of carrying forward and cultivating socialist core values, and made unified arrangements for this fundamental project from the three dimensions of the country, the main body and the foundation, as well as wrote this cultural thought into the Constitution of the CPC. The core values of 24 characters reflect the value goals at the national level, the value orientation at the social level, and the value norms

at the individual level. It plays an irreplaceable role in strengthening the national cultural soft power.

#### **4. The Inherent Logic of the CPC's Cultural Viewpoint Since the PRC**

The CPC's cultural viewpoint is a cultural theory and ideological line of instructive significance formed in the economic and social development, and its generation and development contain rich internal logic. Firstly, it contains the theoretical logic of continuous Sinicization of Marxism. Secondly, it demonstrates the formal logic that is both consistent and keeps pace with the times. Thirdly, it's based on the practical logic that centering on the broad masses of the people, etc. Scientific understanding of the internal logic of the development of cultural viewpoint is of great significance for us to grasp the direction of cultural development in the new era, and to develop the socialist cultural undertakings with Chinese characteristics.

##### **4.1. It Contains the Theoretical Logic of Continuous Sinicization of Marxism**

Marxist cultural viewpoint is a scientific guide for the CPC's cultural construction, and has played a guiding role in building a socialist cultural power and developing cultural undertakings for a long time. The CPC has explored many cultural thoughts with Chinese characteristics, taking the Marxist cultural viewpoint as the starting point and combining the reality of different stages of China's development. Therefore, its evolution can be regarded as the continuous sinicization process of Marxist cultural viewpoint in essence. As Mao Zedong once said, "Talking about Marxism without Chinese characteristics is only abstract and empty Marxism. Therefore, to make Marxism concrete in China and to apply it according to Chinese character, has become an urgent problem for our Party to solve"[1]. In the process of cultural construction, the CPC has put forward a series of cultural thoughts such as "Building socialist spiritual civilization", "Building socialist advanced culture" and "Socialist cultural power", which embodied the basic idea of using Marxist cultural viewpoint to formulate cultural policy in line with China's actual conditions. Since the 18th congress, on the basis of continuing to adhere to the Marxist cultural viewpoint, the CPC has summed up the experience and lessons of cultural construction for a long time. With the strategy of realizing the great rejuvenation of the "Chinese dream", we vigorously build a harmonious culture and ecological culture, constantly strengthen the reform of cultural system, so as to achieve new breakthroughs in the CPC's cultural viewpoint in the new historical position. The CPC's cultural viewpoint is a process of continuous development and improvement, it always adheres to the guiding position of Marxism in the field of ideology, and constantly endowing it with new features of the times while combining with the actual situation of the country.

##### **4.2. It Demonstrates the Formal Logic that is Both Inheritance and Keeps Pace with the Times**

The continuity of the ruling position and ideology of the CPC determines that it has the consistent characteristics in cultural policy. After the founding of the PRC, on the basis of the new democratic cultural viewpoint, the Chinese Communists with Mao Zedong as the core put forward the socialist cultural viewpoint, which laid the foundation of the cultural viewpoint of the CPC and became the basic principle for the development of China's cultural thought. Socialist cultural viewpoint is not only the reflection of socialist ideology in the cultural field, but also the reflection of socialist economy and politics, which embodies the essential characteristics and internal requirements of socialism. With China's socialism entering the stage of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the original socialist cultural thought can not fully meet the needs of the development of the times, we must carry out theoretical innovation in culture and thought. The cultural viewpoint in this stage is the theoretical result formed by persisting in the socialist cultural thought with Chinese characteristics, aiming at the existing

problems in the ideological field of our country at that time by continuous cultural innovation. Although it is not exactly the same as the original socialist cultural viewpoint in many aspects, it is consistent in basic connotation and principle. Entering the new era, the CPC has developed cultural thoughts with the characteristics and connotations of the new era. The core of these cultural thoughts is to constantly improve China's cultural industry, strengthen China's cultural power and cultural confidence, as so to enhance China's cultural soft power. Xi Jinping has also pointed out that the CPC should absorb nutrients from many thinkers such as Confucius, Sun Yat-sen, and be the inheritor and promoter of China's excellent traditional culture. At the same time, we should treat the cultures of other countries in a scientific way and arm ourselves with the fine ideological and cultural achievements created by mankind.

### 4.3. It's Based on the Practical Logic that Centering on the Broad Masses of the People

"For whom is a fundamental and principled question"[10]. Since its founding, the CPC has adhered to the principle of serving the people wholeheartedly and has throughout this principle into its practical actions. The masses are the subject of social practice. They give full play to their subjective initiative and creativity, and participate in the creation of spiritual and cultural wealth. After the founding of the PRC, the CPC, in order to better develop the culture popular with the masses and meet the requirements of the masses, organized a large number of Party members and intellectuals to go deep into the masses, rooted in the remote rural areas of the central and Western Regions. They led the masses in various forms of practical activities, which greatly enriched their spiritual and cultural lives. In practice, China has emerged many outstanding representatives of the masses such as Wang Jinxu, Deng Jiaxian and Yuan Longping, and produced cultural achievements with the characteristics of the times, such as *the Spirit of Lei Feng*, *the Spirit of Daqing*, *the spirit of "two bombs and one satellite"* and *the spirit of space flight*. As the product of the people's practice, these spiritual wealth in turn enriched the Party's cultural theory, promoted social progress, and became the realistic foundation and inexhaustible driving force for the formation of the socialist cultural viewpoint with Chinese characteristics. "Maintaining flesh-and-blood ties with the people has always been the foundation for the Chinese Communist Party to remain invincible"[11]. In the process of cultural development, the CPC pays attention to mobilizing the people's enthusiasm and initiative, and encourages them to participate in the socialist cultural practice activities, so as to provide the source of strength for the realization of the strategic goal of building a socialist cultural power.

## 5. Conclusion

Through the systematic analysis of the evolution process of the CPC's cultural viewpoint, this paper summarizes some characteristics and inherent logic in the development process of cultural thought, so as to provide some thinking for the future cultural development. Throughout the development of Chinese culture since the PRC, there is no denying that China's cultural thought has made great progress. But at the same time, we must admit that there is still a big gap between our cultural level and some developed countries in the world. In the future, we still have a long way to go before we can build a socialist cultural power and truly realize the cultural self-confidence of the whole nation.

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