

Challenges and Pathways for Deepening China's Cultural System Reform in the New Era

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Abstract: Over the past century, the Communist Party of China has deepened its cultural system reform through four periods: the New Democratic period, the socialist revolution and construction period, the reform, opening up, and socialist modernization period, and the period from the 18th National Congress of the Party to the present. Entering a new era, while significant achievements have been made in cultural system reform, it still faces challenges such as ideological work being impacted by globalization, insufficient optimization of cultural service and product supply mechanisms, comprehensive network governance facing information technology challenges, and the cultural international dissemination system and effectiveness needing improvement. Therefore, efforts should be made to deepen the exploration of cultural system reform paths from aspects such as continuously improving the responsibility system for ideological work, optimizing cultural service and cultural product supply mechanisms, perfecting the comprehensive network governance mechanism, and building a diverse and coexisting cultural international exchange system.

Keywords: New era; Deepening culture system reform; Challenges; Exploration of the path

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1. Introduction

In the *Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reforms and Promoting Chinese-style Modernization*, passed at the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, it elaborately expounds on the major tasks of deepening the cultural system and mechanism reform, as well as the paths and specific measures to be followed to achieve these tasks. In this article, the difficulties and challenges are expounded on, which the Communist Party of China was facing in deepening cultural system reform over the past century, and innovative strategies for deepening cultural system reform are explored^[1].

2. Challenges in deepening cultural system reform in the new era

The deepening of the cultural and institutional reforms of the Communist Party of China over the past century

has gone through four periods: the New Democratic Era (1921–1949), the Socialist Revolution and Construction Period (1949–1978), the Reform and Socialist Modernization Construction Period (1978–2012), and the period since the 18th National Congress of the Party (2012–present). Entering the new era, although the deepening of the cultural system and mechanism reforms has achieved remarkable results, it still faces multiple challenges and obstacles.

2.1. The impact of globalization on ideological work

The President of the CCP pointed out: “Ideological work is an extremely important task for the Party.” Therefore, people “must firmly hold the leadership, management, and decision-making power of ideological work in our own hands. At no time can it be handed over to others; otherwise, we will make irreparable historical mistakes.” At the political level, ideology determines the direction of a country’s development and its rise and fall; at the social level, ideology affects the harmony and stability of society, thereby influencing the long-term stability of the country; at the individual level, ideology influences an individual’s world view, life view, and value system, thereby affecting the political direction of the country ^[2]. Under the tide of globalization, the global political and economic landscape is complex and volatile. The infiltration of hostile forces into the country’s ideological and cultural fields is becoming increasingly rampant. Various forms of “Westernization and division”, “peaceful evolution”, and “color revolution” are emerging one after another. “Black swan” and “grey rhino” events may occur at any time, and ideological work is facing multiple challenges. Firstly, Western developed countries have infiltrated capitalist values through economic cooperation and cultural dissemination, attempting to weaken the influence of socialist ideology. Secondly, the Internet technology has accelerated the dissemination of diverse ideas, leading to the fragmentation of social values and the erosion of the cohesion function of the mainstream ideology. Moreover, the market monopoly of multinational enterprises may be accompanied by the implicit implantation of consumer culture and lifestyle concepts, indirectly undermining the identification with local culture. Therefore, in the context of globalization, ideological struggles have evolved into a deep-level contest of comprehensive national strength. This requires people to safeguard cultural security through institutional improvement and international dialogue, thereby providing a solid guarantee for the political security and regime security of the country ^[3].

2.2. Inadequate mechanism for optimizing cultural service and product supply

Currently, although the total supply of cultural services and products in the country has achieved significant optimization and growth, there are still structural contradictions. First, the structure of supply entities is unbalanced, with insufficient effective supply. Currently, the supply of cultural services in the country shows a significant feature of “state advancement and private retreat.” This is mainly due to the fact that state-owned institutions are constrained by the system, resulting in insufficient innovation motivation for their products, while private cultural enterprises face the “glass door” phenomenon, and there are deficiencies in the proximity of cultural products to the people ^[4]. Second, there is an imbalance in the matching of supply and demand, and the distribution of public cultural services is unbalanced. A large number of consumers believe that the existing cultural products lack individual tags. Among young people, most express a willingness to pay a premium for customized cultural services. There is an oversupply of traditional culture supply, while there is a large gap in the supply of emerging business models, such as immersive experiences and national trend IPs. The per capita area of cultural facilities in first-tier cities is more than that in county areas. Third, the digital conversion rate is low. Under the background of the Digital China strategy, the process of digitalization of cultural resources is significantly

lagging behind. The construction of smart service platforms places a heavy emphasis on hardware investment, while neglecting content operation; it places a heavy emphasis on platform establishment, while neglecting data interconnection; it places a heavy emphasis on technology display, while neglecting user experience ^[5]. Fourth, the supply system faces financing difficulties and insufficient capital support, which hinders the expansion of cultural enterprises and limits the potential release of the cultural industry in terms of technological innovation and market expansion, further exacerbating the challenges faced by the cultural industry in resource allocation, project advancement, and market competitiveness improvement. Therefore, effectively solving financing problems and enhancing the cultural industry's capital attraction are important issues that need to be urgently addressed at present ^[6].

2.3. Comprehensive network governance faces challenges from information technology

With the rapid development of information technology, comprehensive network governance is facing unprecedented technical challenges, which have increased the difficulty of network culture governance ^[7]. Firstly, the widespread application of artificial intelligence technology has led to an exponential growth in network content production and dissemination, making it more difficult to identify false information. Secondly, the anonymous nature of blockchain technology provides a concealed space for network culture crimes, and the usage rate of cryptocurrencies on the dark web has reached 78%, increasing the difficulty of tracking network culture financial crimes. Thirdly, the popularization of 5G and the Internet of Things has led to a sharp increase in the number of connected devices, and device security vulnerabilities may be exploited on a large scale, forming distributed network attacks. Fourthly, algorithm recommendation technology's personalized push has exacerbated the "information cocoon" effect, with the cognitive disconnection between different groups increasing by 35 percentage points compared to 2020, affecting network public opinion and the balance of ideological ecology. Fifthly, the development of cutting-edge technologies such as quantum computing has made existing encryption systems vulnerable to being cracked, threatening the security of key information infrastructure ^[8]. These technological advancements not only promote the development of network culture space but also pose higher requirements for comprehensive network culture governance, and it is urgent to establish an innovative response mechanism that integrates technical governance and legal regulation.

2.4. The need for an improved cultural international communication system and its effectiveness

At present, there are still significant shortcomings in the current system and the efficiency of China's cultural international dissemination. These shortcomings mainly manifest in three aspects: First, the structure of the dissemination entities is unbalanced. Official institutions account for a large proportion, while the participation of private organizations, enterprises, and other market entities is insufficient, resulting in serious homogeneity in the dissemination of content. Second, the integration of dissemination channels is insufficient, lagging behind the average level of countries like the United States, Japan, and South Korea, and the multi-platform linkage effect is weak. Third, there is a "cultural discount" phenomenon in content innovation. Overseas audiences believe that the understanding threshold of traditional Chinese culture is too high, while modern cultural products lack distinctive identification. In terms of effectiveness assessment, currently, no scientific dissemination effect monitoring system has been established, and few external cultural projects have set quantitative evaluation indicators. Fourth, the issue of regional dissemination imbalance is particularly prominent ^[9]. The cultural penetration index

towards countries along the “Belt and Road” is much lower than that of European and American countries. These structural deficiencies have led to a low input-output ratio of cultural international dissemination in China. It is urgent to adopt measures such as establishing a collaborative mechanism of multiple entities, innovating cross-cultural narrative methods, and improving the effectiveness assessment system to comprehensively enhance the systematicness and effectiveness of cultural international dissemination.

3. Exploration of the path for deepening cultural system reform in the new era

The implementation strategies for deepening the cultural system reform in the new era are of vital importance. In the face of the difficulties and challenges during the reform process, people need to actively innovate and respond. Only in this way can people establish a complete modern Chinese cultural market, meet the increasingly growing spiritual and cultural needs of the people, enhance the country’s cultural soft power, promote Chinese culture to go global, and provide solid cultural support for the comprehensive construction of a modern China.

3.1. Strengthening the party’s leadership over culture and continuously improving the responsibility system for ideological work

Firmly grasping cultural leadership and continuously improving the responsibility system for ideological work are the fundamental tasks of the Party’s propaganda and ideological work in the new era of China ^[10]. The current international situation is complex and volatile, and the domestic tasks of reform, development, and stability are arduous and heavy. People must adhere to the guidance of the Thought of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era, deepen the research on the Sinicization of Marxism, build a Chinese academic discourse system with distinct characteristics, fully implement the responsibility system for ideological work, and effectively safeguard the national ideological security. First, strengthen the primary responsibility of the Party committee (Party group), establish a responsibility list for ideological work, clearly define the “dual responsibilities” of all levels of leading cadres, establish a mechanism for the coordinated development of economy and ideology, and prevent “black swan” events. Second, improve the analysis and assessment mechanism, conduct regular risk screenings in the ideological field, implement a dynamic monitoring and early warning system for ideological security, and establish a contingency plan for major public opinion warnings and responses. Thirdly, innovate working methods and approaches, utilize new media technologies to enhance the ability of public opinion guidance, and innovate the theoretical dissemination model of “two microblogs and one terminal.” Fourthly, improve the assessment and accountability mechanism, and incorporate ideological work into the contents of inspections, patrols, and cadre evaluations. Fifthly, strengthen team building, cultivate and bring up an ideological work team with a strong political stance and high professional skills. Through the systematic implementation of these measures, a responsibility system covering all aspects horizontally and throughout the entire hierarchy will be established. This will not only consolidate the guiding position of Marxism but also adapt to the changes in the communication landscape, ensuring that the responsibility system for ideological work is implemented effectively and providing a strong ideological guarantee and powerful spiritual strength for the comprehensive construction of a socialist modernized country ^[11].

3.2. Adhering to the people-centered philosophy and optimizing the mechanism for providing cultural services and cultural products

At present, there are structural contradictions in the supply mechanism of cultural services and cultural products

in the country. It is urgent to carry out structural reforms and establish an intelligent supply-demand matching system, and adopt innovative measures to address these current contradictions ^[12]. First, a cultural consumption big data platform should be established. By integrating data sources such as ticketing systems and e-commerce platforms, real-time monitoring of regional cultural consumption hotspots can be achieved, and content production demand predictions based on AI algorithms can be made. Second, an “order-based” supply reform should be implemented. The “you-order, I-perform” model should be adopted in museums, theaters, and other venues, enabling online voting for performance programs and VR preview for cultural exhibitions. Third, to meet the high-quality demands of the people for spiritual and cultural life, diverse and high-quality cultural products and services should be provided, in addition to traditional books, newspapers, etc. More products and services with high-tech elements and cultural value-added should be provided. Through these measures, a fundamental transformation from “the government providing dishes” to “the people ordering dishes” in cultural services can be truly realized. Fourth, resource allocation should be optimized, and the construction of the public cultural service system should be promoted. Key emphasis should be placed on strengthening the construction of grassroots cultural facilities, promoting the standardization and equalization development of public cultural services, ensuring that county-level cultural centers, libraries, etc., reach the maximum standards, and expanding the coverage rate of village-level comprehensive cultural service centers. Fifth, the application of digital technology should be strengthened. Through digital technology, a cultural digital resource library should be constructed, cultural resources should be integrated for utilization, and digital platforms such as smart museums, libraries, and service stations should be created, enabling the public to obtain diversified cultural services more conveniently. Secondly, a digital heritage project should be constructed, strengthening digital protection of cultural relics, using technologies such as laser scanning and multi-spectral imaging, establishing a traceable digital collection blockchain system, IP transformation bases, etc. ^[13].

3.3. Establishing a systemic thinking approach and improving the comprehensive governance mechanism for the network

In the face of the complex international and domestic situations, the cultural industry, cultural services, and cultural consumption patterns are undergoing profound changes. The application and promotion of technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, 5G, the Internet of Things, and algorithm recommendation not only promote the deep integration and innovation within the cultural industry, but also accelerate the optimization and upgrading of the cultural industry structure ^[14]. However, with the rapid development of science and technology, network comprehensive governance is facing unprecedented challenges. It is necessary to establish systematic thinking and improve the mechanism of network comprehensive governance. First, people need to deepen the reform of the network management system. Strengthen the core position of the Party’s leadership, implement the responsibility system for network ideology, establish a multi-party co-governance pattern of “Party committee leadership, government management, enterprises fulfilling responsibilities, social supervision, and netizens’ self-discipline”, highlight the coordinating function of the cyber information department, and form a cross-departmental governance synergy. Second, people need to promote the integrated management of news publicity and online public opinion. People should integrate the functions of online content construction and management, establish a unified command system, improve the mechanism for guiding online public opinion, strengthen the dissemination of mainstream values, build a risk prevention and control system, establish a rapid refutation mechanism for erroneous ideas, enhance the ability to clear harmful information, and improve the level of cross-

border public opinion struggles. Thirdly, efforts should be made to strengthen the legal construction in the online space. The legal framework for the internet domain should be continuously improved in a dynamic manner. Special regulations, such as the “Regulations on the Governance of Internet Information Content”, should be fully implemented. A complete enforcement mechanism covering “monitoring — early warning — handling” should be established. Fourth, people need to establish a long-term mechanism for governing the network ecosystem through innovation. By leveraging big data and AI technologies, people will build an intelligent supervision platform. People will also strengthen the main responsibilities of internet platforms, enhance the research and development of content review technologies, establish a hierarchical and categorized management system, and improve the reward system for reporting illegal online activities. Fifth, people need to establish a sound protection system for minors’ online activities. Develop specific protection regulations, clearly define the responsibilities of all parties, build a three-in-one protection network involving “family, school and society”, strengthen online literacy education, optimize content filtering mechanisms, improve anti-addiction systems, establish channels for resolving minors’ online rights and interests, implement safeguard measures, strengthen the construction of internet talent teams, establish an evaluation mechanism for governance effectiveness, and promote international cooperation in internet governance ^[15].

3.4. Implementing the global civilization initiative and building a diversified and symbiotic international cultural exchange system

The current practice of the global civilization initiative requires the establishment of a more efficient international cultural exchange system. In terms of the reconfiguration of the international communication landscape, efforts should focus on national strategic goals, optimize the media resource matrix, promote the transformation of mainstream media into global new media, and create comprehensive media brand projects with international influence. Through the establishment of a multi-dimensional evaluation system, a discourse system in line with China’s national conditions should be developed, an international communication narrative system based on universal values of humanity should be constructed, and precise communication strategies should be adopted to eliminate cultural barriers. In the construction of the Chinese discourse system, it is necessary to deeply explore the essence of China’s excellent traditional culture and extract the characteristic cultural symbols of China. At the same time, one should actively participate in global issue discussions and adopt innovative expression methods, such as data and case studies, to form a Chinese expression that combines profound ideological depth with warm emotional temperature. The construction of the implementation mechanism for the global civilization initiative requires the establishment of a multi-dimensional social recognition system. Through cultural activities and academic discussions, it promotes mutual learning among civilizations and utilizes digital technology to expand communication channels. At the same time, the immigration and exit management policies should be optimized, visa facilitation promoted, international cooperation in the education field strengthened, and a two-way interactive pattern of “going out” and “bringing in” formed. This systematic project is advanced through the coordinated promotion of three dimensions: the reconfiguration of the communication pattern, the innovation of the discourse system, and the improvement of the implementation mechanism. The aim is to enhance China’s cultural soft power and international discourse power, and contribute Chinese wisdom to promoting the exchange and mutual learning of human civilizations.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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