

Cross-cultural Exchange and Communication Pathways of the Iron Man Spirit Within the Belt and Road Initiative

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ABSTRACT

As global market competition intensifies, a nation's comprehensive strength is no longer measured solely by traditional hard power; soft power has become equally critical. With a history spanning over 5,000 years, China possesses a profound cultural heritage that embodies the wisdom of its ancestors and continues to enrich this land. The Iron Man Spirit, a model of cultural ethos in the new era, has inspired generations of Chinese people. It plays a vital role in inheriting and promoting Chinese culture while showcasing the nation's distinct character. Its dissemination serves as a bridge for cross-cultural exchange and mutual understanding, contributing Chinese wisdom to global cultural diversity. Against this backdrop, and based on the Belt and Road Initiative, this study explores pathways for the cross-cultural exchange and communication of the Iron Man Spirit. It aims to strengthen national cultural confidence, elevate China's international standing, and help the world better understand China's cultural heritage and spiritual landscape.

Keywords: *The Belt and Road Initiative, the Iron Man Spirit, Cross-cultural exchange, Communication.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of upholding Marxism, adhering to socialism with Chinese characteristics, and maintaining the "Four-Sphere Confidence," among which cultural confidence is essential. As one of China's most valuable cultural legacies, the Iron Man Spirit carries profound significance in its dissemination. It promotes mutual understanding among cultures, offers the world a comprehensive and in-depth view of China's contemporary spiritual outlook, and presents a true, multidimensional image of the country. Enhancing cultural soft power is a central goal. Particularly within the smooth advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, cultural guidance serves as a core driver. The dissemination of the Iron Man Spirit in this context holds far-reaching implications, enabling the world to better understand and appreciate China.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE IRON MAN SPIRIT

The Iron Man Spirit embodies the noble beliefs and exceptional qualities of Wang Jinxi, a legendary figure in China's petroleum industry. It combines the resilience of the Chinese working class with the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation. The title "Iron Man" was bestowed upon oil worker Wang Jinxi by the public in the 1960s. This honor reflected not only personal praise but also broad recognition of the lofty spirit and outstanding character he represented. As a paragon of dedication, Wang Jinxi's deeds epitomize the spirit of Chinese oil workers, demonstrating deep patriotism and a commitment to national glory. In an era of limited information and resources, oil workers, armed with indomitable will and perseverance, collectively wrote a magnificent chapter in China's petroleum industry. The Iron Man Spirit emerged during the development of the Daqing Oil Field in the early years of the People's Republic, a time when petroleum resources were

urgently needed. Thousands of workers and demobilized soldiers devoted themselves to this cause. Wang Jinxi stood out as one of the most exemplary figures. Facing harsh living and working conditions, he led the 1205 drilling team to complete the first oil well of the Daqing campaign. This spirit—fearing no hardship, striving courageously, and dedicating oneself selflessly — has inspired countless individuals to contribute to the nation’s petroleum industry and beyond.

3. THE VALUE OF CROSS-CULTURAL DISSEMINATION OF THE IRON MAN SPIRIT UNDER THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

3.1 Living Up to the Core Socialist Values

The Core Socialist Values serve as a crucial benchmark for citizen conduct, calling for profound patriotic sentiment and active practice of values such as patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendliness. The Iron Man Spirit is intrinsically linked to these values. In the realm of cultural dissemination, it helps citizens understand the spirit’s profound connotations [1]. Through vivid promotional cases, citizens can appreciate the relentless efforts and struggles of those in the petroleum industry, experiencing the patriotism, resilience, courage, innovation, and pragmatism demonstrated by these role models. The Core Socialist Values also provide clear direction for national development, driving progress toward a prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and modern socialist country. Internationally, the spread of the Iron Man Spirit showcases the collective demeanor of Chinese citizens, highlighting the wisdom and unity of the people under the leadership of the Party and the government. This enhances China’s soft power and cultural influence, laying a solid foundation for global competition and cooperation, and injecting strong momentum into national modernization.

3.2 Advancing the Goal of Cultural Confidence

In an era of globalization, international exchanges are increasingly close. To demonstrate China’s stature as a major country and its unique cultural heritage, it is essential to integrate with social development realities, promote contemporary cultural elements, and allow culture to nurture the

people subtly. The Chinese nation, with its glorious history of over 5,000 years, boasts one of the world’s most profound cultural systems [2]. Throughout its long history, it has shown remarkable resilience and creativity. The Iron Man Spirit, forged in the early years of the PRC through struggle and dedication to national construction, embodies deep patriotism. Like a guiding light, it illuminates the path for the Chinese people, providing continuous spiritual strength and a foundation for upholding beliefs and pursuing lofty ideals. Through cross-cultural exchange, the Iron Man Spirit can showcase the hard work and patriotism of ordinary Chinese people, allowing global audiences to appreciate their qualities, understand the hardships behind China’s rise, and recognize the nation’s perseverance and steadfast faith. This enables more people to grasp the essence of the Chinese national spirit, thereby strengthening cultural confidence and promoting its sustained advancement.

3.3 Enhancing China’s International Influence

China’s comprehensive national strength continues to grow, and its international presence is becoming increasingly prominent. As a responsible major country, China adheres to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, actively participates in global affairs, and demonstrates humanitarian spirit and responsibility. In the report to the 20th National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping called for promoting common values such as peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom for all humanity, strengthening friendships among peoples, deepening mutual understanding, and addressing global challenges together[3]. To enhance China’s international influence, effective strategies for disseminating ideas are essential. Through diverse cultural communication channels, excellent traditional culture can be promoted, enabling people worldwide to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of China’s image. The dissemination of the Iron Man Spirit, using various translation techniques and exchanges, vividly showcases the selfless dedication, heroic struggle, and perseverance of laborers in the early years of the PRC. Leveraging its cultural depth and unique characteristics, it highlights China’s collectivist spirit and patriotic sentiment to the world, countering extremism and materialism, and spreading socialist collectivism and patriotism globally. This allows international audiences to re-recognize and re-understand China,

continuously elevating the country's international status and influence.

4. CHALLENGES POSED BY THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE TO CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

4.1 The Need to Refine the Deep-seated Cultural Values of Chinese Culture

The Belt and Road Initiative has won global acclaim for Chinese culture through international exchanges and cooperation. From a global perspective, China is now recognized as a peaceful, friendly, and responsible major country, enhancing trust and deepening understanding of Chinese culture. However, China must rationally acknowledge that there remains immense potential to be tapped and vast room for development in promoting its cultural values [4]. In the late 20th century, when China resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong, the wife of the British Prime Minister remarked that China had not yet become a true major power, citing the fact that Chinese television exports did not promote its culture and ideas to the world. Western countries view China as the "world's factory," focused on material production, while overlooking its contributions to spiritual culture and ideas. This cognitive discrepancy is closely related to China's insufficient cultural outreach. In times of peace, a country's cultural soft power far surpasses military and economic hard power, exerting a profound and lasting influence. Therefore, to allow global audiences to experience the breadth and depth of Chinese culture, China should refine and articulate its core socialist values, build distinctive cultural brands, and seek effective pathways for the international dissemination of its excellent traditional culture. Through effective measures, China can enhance the international community's understanding and recognition of its national culture, eliminate prejudices, and present a comprehensive, diverse, and open image to the world.

4.2 The Challenges Posed by Cultural Differences to Cross-cultural Communication

In cross-cultural communication, cultural differences present a significant challenge. The Belt and Road Initiative spans Asia, Europe, Africa, and other regions, connecting over 60 countries and more than 70 economic and trade cooperation

organizations, bringing benefits to over 4 billion people. The initiative not only links countries geographically but also convers diverse cultures and religions, painting a grand historical vision. It allows the economies, cultures, religions, and ways of life of various countries to showcase their rich diversity across vast territories. In 2015, at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, the General Secretary emphasized that civilizations are not ranked as superior or inferior, as each possesses immeasurable value. This perspective reflects how mutual learning and exchanges among civilizations can deepen international friendships, promote social progress, and safeguard world peace [5]. To ensure the smooth advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative and achieve connectivity, China must directly address the challenges posed by cultural differences, break down barriers in cross-cultural communication, and avoid potential difficulties. Therefore, it is crucial to deepen understanding and appreciation of cultures among countries along the route, enhance the quality of cross-cultural communication, facilitate smooth dialogue, prevent conflicts, and lay the foundation for a harmonious and coexistent international environment.

5. PATHWAYS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND DISSEMINATION OF THE IRON MAN SPIRIT UNDER THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

5.1 Interpreting the Cultural Connotation of the Iron Man Spirit in the New Era

Throughout Chinese history, every endeavor reflects the people's aspiration for national prosperity. These collective efforts form a powerful motivation, nurturing the people's spirit and laying the foundation for civilizational progress. To ensure sustainable development, the Chinese people must remain rooted in their cultural heritage, drawing strength and wisdom from it. As a spiritual anchor, a beacon of belief, and a link to historical legacy, Chinese culture should be deeply ingrained in every citizen, reflected in their words and actions, and demonstrated to the world through its unique charm [6]. Amid globalization, promoting China's outstanding traditional culture is urgent and stands as a primary task. Excellent traditional culture and spirit are pillars of national resilience and vitality. Without this foundation, the Chinese nation risks fading into obscurity globally. The Iron Man Spirit

is a quintessential representation of China's outstanding traditional culture and a jewel in the treasure house of the national spirit. Its excavation, inheritance, and promotion carry profound significance. The Chinese leadership has emphasized cultural confidence. Building on this, the Iron Man Spirit can be further explored, inherited, and promoted to comprehensively strengthen and demonstrate cultural confidence. In interpreting the Spirit in the new era, its core elements — patriotism, entrepreneurship, pragmatism, and dedication — can be integrated with the spirit of the times, showcasing the spiritual character and contemporary features of the nation and its people. For example, petroleum worker Wang Jinxi and his colleagues, facing severe oil shortages, embarked on the pioneering journey in the Daqing Oil Field. Braving extreme weather and overcoming difficulties, they built a strong foundation for the nation's petroleum industry with unwavering dedication. This spirit of striving against odds and embracing responsibilities epitomizes the Iron Man Spirit, standing as a monument within the nation's persistent character and guiding its moral steadfastness. It integrates the unique spiritual qualities of the Chinese people with the national ethos, becoming a powerful force inspiring future generations. In the new era, the Iron Man Spirit continues to thrive. For instance, in facing public health crises, technological innovation, and industrial upgrading, countless medical workers, volunteers, and scientists have stepped forward, continuously pushing boundaries and pursuing excellence, contributing significantly to national prosperity. Exploring the profound cultural meaning of the Iron Man Spirit and inheriting this legacy are crucial tasks. Its cultural significance must be deeply excavated, making it a guiding light for the people. In education, methods such as storytelling and practical activities centered on the Iron Man can help students understand and appreciate its values. In corporate culture, integrating the Iron Man Spirit as a key component of organizational values can motivate employees to strive for continuous improvement, enabling the spirit to chart new chapters in the new era.

5.2 Emphasizing the Development of Communication Teams to Showcase a New Outlook

To promote and disseminate the Iron Man Spirit, it is crucial to vividly recount its heroic deeds. A high-quality, professional team dedicated to spreading the Spirit is urgently needed. This team

should consist of interpreters with professional skills and a deep understanding of the Iron Man Spirit, who can elaborate on its core elements and moving stories. Therefore, efforts should be made to strengthen the team and enhance its capabilities, laying the groundwork for cross-cultural exchange and dissemination. First, solidify the foundation of cultural identity within the team. Cultural identity is a powerful support for national spirit and a source of national cohesion. It is rooted in the people's adherence to socialist core values and their consensus on moral norms [7]. In the new era, cultural confidence is a key component of soft power, while cultural identity is its cornerstone. Without cultural identity, the cultural foundation would be like a tree without roots, difficult to sustain. As part of China's excellent traditional culture, the Iron Man Spirit requires workers to possess strong cultural identity and firm cultural confidence when disseminating it under the Belt and Road Initiative. This is essential for promoting and carrying forward the Spirit, enhancing national cultural confidence, and fostering cultural prosperity. For example, systematic education and training can help communicators understand the historical background, cultural connotations, and value of the Iron Man Spirit. Thematic learning activities, expert interpretations, and field investigations can allow them to intuitively feel the Spirit's charm, providing fundamental support for team building. Second, enhance the international proficiency of the team's language skills. Although some Iron Man Memorial Halls have professional English interpretation teams, there is room for improvement in communication and interaction with foreign visitors. This is a common challenge. Chinese leaders have emphasized that telling China's stories well requires high comprehensive English abilities among communicators. Due to cultural differences, foreign visitors are often more interested in individual stories within the Iron Man Spirit than abstract interpretations. Values encouraged in Chinese culture may be perceived differently in Western cultures. Therefore, to help foreign visitors appreciate the Spirit, narratives should be tailored to their perspective, sharing emotionally resonant stories. To achieve this, language capabilities should be enhanced in multiple ways: Strengthening English language skills training to ensure solid listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation abilities. Offering courses on cross-cultural communication and cultures of English-speaking countries to improve understanding of cultural differences and avoid conflicts. Introducing reading literacy courses, such

as classic English literature and newspapers, to enhance language proficiency and cultural appreciation skills. These measures will broaden communicators' international perspective, enabling them to use language and expressions understandable to global audiences when explaining the Iron Man Spirit, ensuring effective communication and laying the groundwork for its dissemination [8].

5.3 Innovating the Content for International Dissemination of the Iron Man Spirit

To make the external dissemination of the Iron Man Spirit more engaging and rooted in the hearts of global audiences, its communication content should be innovated within the Belt and Road framework, aligning with modern information trends. Given the diverse and personalized information needs of global audiences, promotional materials must be meticulously refined. This involves deeply exploring the Spirit's core values and connotations to ensure effective conveyance of its essence and profound meaning, achieving emotional resonance. To realize this, detailed research on audiences from different countries and cultural backgrounds is necessary. For example, in-depth analysis of their historical and cultural contexts, ways of thinking, traditional narratives, and language expressions will help understand differences. This enables the development of communication strategies aligned with their psychological and cognitive frameworks, presenting the Iron Man Spirit in a relatable and impactful manner. Simultaneously, approachable and innovative communication methods should be introduced [9]. Using vivid and captivating language to interpret the Spirit's rich connotations can enhance its appeal in international communication, foster resonance, and deepen global audiences' understanding and recognition. This will also inspire identification and connection. Furthermore, mainstream artistic works should be fully utilized to showcase the Iron Man Spirit. Diverse media forms such as films, short videos, and music are dynamic, intuitive, and easily shareable. In communication, the Spirit should be skillfully integrated into these works, presented to international audiences in a lively and relatable way. This will spark interest and appreciation, laying a solid foundation for dissemination across Belt and Road countries and regions. Through such approaches, new vitality can be injected into the international dissemination of China's outstanding

traditional culture. The Iron Man Spirit, embodying valuable spiritual wealth with profound historical and contemporary relevance, can shine brightly across nations, contributing to a global community of shared future.

5.4 Building Urban Cultural Exchange Platforms

The "Belt and Road Cultural Development Action Plan (2016–2020)" proposes strengthening cultural exchange and cooperation among countries and regions along the route to ensure deep cultural integration. Its core objective is to optimize the layout of cultural exchanges by establishing direct communication and cooperation channels with cultural organizations in these areas. Guided by this initiative, China has established landmark cooperative organizations, such as the Silk Road International Library Alliance and the International Art Festival Alliance [10]. At the same time, key cultural exchange hubs such as national cultural centers, Confucius Institutes, and Confucius Classrooms have been set up in countries along the route, significantly accelerating the international dissemination of Chinese culture. Therefore, to achieve cross-cultural communication and promotion of the Iron Man Spirit, insights from these successful cases should be drawn upon, and focus shifted to deepening relations between Daqing and its sister cities. Daqing has established close international sister-city relationships with seven cities worldwide, providing an excellent opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and promotion of the Iron Man Spirit. This advantage can be leveraged to strengthen exchanges in political and economic fields and explore the role of people-to-people exchange platforms in supporting these areas. For example, diverse cultural exchange activities—such as cultural exchange weeks, conferences, and exhibitions—could be meticulously planned and organized. These activities would showcase the unique appeal of the Iron Man Spirit and China's outstanding traditional culture in multifaceted forms. Additionally, culturally distinctive tourism brands with strong regional characteristics could attract more visitors, allowing them to experience and understand the Spirit. Regularly hosting cultural forums with global scholars would help explore new areas and methods for exchange and cooperation. Through these activities, the Iron Man Spirit and its stories can be vividly and intuitively presented to the international community, enhancing foreign friends' understanding and

identification with the Spirit and Chinese culture. These efforts will promote deeper cultural exchanges between sister cities, foster mutual understanding, contribute wisdom to building a global community of shared future, and advance the prosperity of world cultures.

6. CONCLUSION

In summary, the Belt and Road Initiative provides a valuable opportunity and platform for China to engage with the world and for the world to better understand China. The Iron Man Spirit, as a concentrated reflection of the dedication of Chinese industrial workers, is indispensable in China's efforts to share its stories with the world. It is essential to integrate this spirit closely with cross-cultural exchange and communication, making it a significant window for showcasing China's image. By doing so, the world can gain a deeper appreciation, perception, and understanding of China's cultural heritage and spiritual ethos. This approach will facilitate effective cultural dissemination, enable China to share its stories and amplify its voice globally, and allow Chinese wisdom and solutions to shine brightly on the international stage.

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