

Overseas Chinese in People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges Between China and Europe: Roles and Countermeasures

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Abstract

In the modern international relations system, people-to-people and cultural exchanges have become the third driving force behind political and security cooperation, economic and trade cooperation to promote the development of state-to-state relations. In recent years, important progress has been made in China-EU political and economic relations. However, there are still many shortcomings in people-to-people and cultural exchanges which need to be strengthened. The overseas Chinese are characterized by universality, duality, closeness, integration and permanence, and can play a unique role in China-EU people-to-people and cultural exchanges. All parties need to work together to advance this process by formulating policies and giving full play to their respective advantages.

Keywords

People-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and EU; Overseas Chinese; Roles; Countermeasures.

1. Introduction

People-to-people and cultural exchanges include personnel exchanges, ideological exchanges and cultural exchanges. Its purpose is to promote the mutual understanding between the people of countries, so as to shape the regional cultural identity, value identity, and finally to achieve the support of regional political legitimacy. In modern international relations system, cultural exchanges have become the third driving force behind political and security cooperation, economic and trade cooperation to promote the development of relations between countries, which has an irreplaceable role in the development of state-to-state relations extremely important Bridges and pipelines, plays an important role in eliminating differences in understanding, enhancing mutual trust and friendship[1], and promoting the progress of human civilization[2]. The goal of people-to-people and cultural exchanges is not only cultural exchanges, but also influences the thoughts of the people of other countries and the policy actions of their governments[3]. Mark Leonard pointed out that there are four levels of goals for cultural exchanges in a sovereign country. The first level is to enhance understanding, so that the people of other countries know themselves, and constantly update the impression of their own; The second level is to improve understanding, to shape a positive perception of oneself, and to enable its people to see things from the country's perspective; The third level is to reach out the public and make them see themselves as an ideal place for travel, study and shopping and identify with their values through the contact with the public. The fourth level is to influence the behavior of other people, obtain investment from other countries and support

from them, so that politicians of other countries can change their policies and eventually become their Allies[4].

On May 6, 1975, China established formal relations with the European economic community (the predecessor of the European Union). In 2001, the two sides announced the establishment of a "comprehensive partnership", and in 2003, it was upgraded to a "comprehensive strategic partnership". Since then, China-EU relations have entered a future-oriented period of active coordination and cooperation from a strategic height. But on the other hand, Europe remains one of the main shapers of international public opinion, especially China-related public opinion, and one of the regions where prejudice against China is most concentrated. The grassroots of European politics is obvious, especially the influence of public opinion, which is particularly important for European public diplomacy. However, for a long time, China's public diplomacy towards Europe has been more about refutation than persuasion, more about explanation than construction, and more about abstract propaganda than image communication. After the outbreak of the European debt crisis, China bought a large amount of bonds of Eurozone countries, which was criticized by the European public as "poor newcomer" in an attempt to exchange for the EU recognition of China's market economy status and even control of Europe. The root cause is the lack of understanding of Chinese culture and behavior in Europe[5]. Therefore, it is particularly important and urgent to strengthen people-to-people and cultural exchanges and increase mutual understanding between China and EU.

2. Current Situation and Problems of China-EU Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges

2.1. Current Development of China-EU Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges

In recent years, in order to further enhance mutual understanding and trust between the Chinese and European peoples and promote the long-term and stable development of China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, people-to-people and cultural exchanges between the two sides have gradually stepped into the institutional track. In February 2012, the 14th China-EU summit, the two sides agreed to establish China-EU high-level cultural exchanges announced dialogue mechanism, to further enriched the contents of the comprehensive strategic partnership, to enhance cultural exchanges dialogue mechanism and high-level strategic dialogue, high level economic and trade dialogue equally important position. People-to-people and cultural exchanges have become the third pillar of China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, apart from the two pillars of economic and trade cooperation and political mutual trust.

At present, the major cultural exchange activities at the EU level are "the China-EU year of youth exchange" and "the China-EU year of cultural dialogue". "the China-EU year of youth exchange" activities include over 100 projects such as the China-EU youth week, sustainable youth BBS, and the bridge of volunteers. Within the framework of the EU-China year of cultural dialogue, we have implemented nearly 300 cooperation projects in the fields of literature, art, philosophy, language, sports, press and publication, youth exchange and tourism, covering 22 Chinese provinces, cities and special regions including Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Macao, and 27 EU member states.

In the area of education and linguistic diversity, the two sides have established the China-EU higher education exchange and cooperation platform, which integrates decentralized policy dialogues in the field of higher education, identifies topics of mutual interest, focuses on and strengthens bilateral support for existing China-EU cooperation in running schools, and encourages relevant activities. On the cultural front, the two sides will further enhance the cultural policy dialogue, support the full implementation of the China-EU year of cultural

dialogue, expand exchanges between intellectuals and policy makers, and strengthen cooperation in cultural and creative industries. In terms of talent mobility, the European commission encourages Chinese researchers and institutions to participate in the Marie Curie initiative and the follow-up EU horizon 2020 plan to strengthen cooperation in the field of long-term exchange of young researchers. In terms of youth cooperation, the China-EU seminar on youth entrepreneurship was held in 2013, which significantly increased the sustainable partnership and network links between the Chinese and European youth. A total of 500 youth organizations from both sides have participated in the cooperation projects[6]. In addition, China and the UK, France, Italy, the Netherlands and other EU member states hold cultural year activities with each other. The two sides will continue to conduct extensive exchanges and cooperation in the fields of education, science and technology, culture, media, sports and youth.

2.2. The Characteristics and Effectiveness of China-EU People-to-People Exchanges

Firstly, the mechanism of people-to-people and cultural exchanges has been gradually established and high-level communication has been strengthened. At the China-EU summit in 2012, the leaders of the two sides formally announced their agreement to establish the China-EU high-level people-to-people dialogue mechanism. The Chinese side was chaired by liu yandong, then vice premier of the state council, while the European side was chaired by vassiliou, commissioner for education, culture, linguistic diversity and youth affairs of the European commission.

Secondly, the field of people-to-people and cultural exchanges has been expanded and diversified channels have been established. On the basis of the existing people-to-people exchanges, 15 memoranda of understanding, joint communiques and other agreements and documents were signed after the first high-level people-to-people dialogue.

Thirdly, the level of people-to-people exchanges has become more three-dimensional, with more and more participants. The people-to-people exchanges between China and the EU are not only at the level of China and the EU, but also between China and its member states. The Chinese cultural centers in France, Germany, Malta and Spain, as well as the French cultural centers in China, the Goethe institute in Germany and the institute Cervantes in Spain, have become important platforms for cultural exchanges between China and EU[7].

2.3. Major Existing Problems

2.3.1. Focus on High-Level Dialogue Rather Than Grassroots Exchanges

In recent years, China and the EU have attached increasing importance to the development of bilateral relations. Frequent contacts between top leaders and steady progress in exchanges at all levels. But many decisions are made directly from the top down and fail to fully reflect the actual needs of grassroots people.

2.3.2. Heavy Official Channel, Light Civilian Path

Compared with the traditional diplomatic approach, China has gradually attached importance to people-to-people diplomacy. However, at present, people-to-people exchanges between China and EU are still mainly promoted by official government programs, while purely people-to-people exchanges are rare[8].

2.3.3. High Art, Light Mass Culture

Currently, cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries focus on the lofty. Both music, painting and calligraphy and other cultural arts are domestic and even world class. But most ordinary people in the country have never seen, let alone understood these cultures.

2.3.4. Heavy "Go Out" And Light "Bring in"

In recent years, as China's economic strength has grown, it has put forward the strategy of "going global". Relatively speaking, the introduction of cultural products is very less, two-way exchange is imbalance.

2.3.5. Emphasis on Form Rather Than Effect

Under the current background, all levels, all departments, all forms of projects continue to spread out, but the actual effect of the late implementation of the lack of follow-up assessment. This is not conducive to further communication and development, but sometimes left a negative impact on the other side.

3. The role of Overseas Chinese in China-EU People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges

As mentioned above, China and the EU have achieved fruitful results in people-to-people and cultural exchanges against the backdrop of friendly relations between China and European countries' vigorous efforts to promote people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and EU. But at the same time, there are also shortcomings such as the lack of non-governmental exchanges, the lack of a basic sustainable exchange platform and the imbalance of bilateral interactions. However, the 2.5 million overseas Chinese living in Europe can give full play to their unique advantages and further promote people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and Europe.

After hundreds of years of history and decades of rapid development, the Chinese community in Europe has undergone significant changes in terms of population size, economic strength and social status. According to the latest survey data on overseas Chinese, the number of overseas Chinese in Europe is about 2.5 million, including about 1.7 million new immigrants, 1,199 overseas Chinese groups, 455 Chinese schools and 142 Chinese media. In terms of geographical distribution, Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands and other old western European countries have a large number of immigrants and are relatively stable. Countries in eastern and southern Europe, such as Italy, Spain and Russia, grow rapidly but have strong liquidity. Northern Europe has fewer people and slower growth. In addition, the residence of overseas Chinese in Europe is closely related to the occupational composition, showing the characteristics of "full coverage, large concentration and small dispersion". The characteristics of the Chinese community determine that they have unique advantages and can play a positive role in China-EU people-to-people and cultural exchanges.

3.1. Universality Is A Solid Foundation for China-EU People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges

The large number, wide distribution and wide range of overseas Chinese constitute a unique social foundation for carrying out people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. They are integrated into the world and form a communication network covering all walks of life, becoming an important seed for people-to-people exchanges. Most of the overseas Chinese in Europe are new immigrants. They have deep feelings and close connections with their ancestral countries, and they are also the carriers of Chinese culture overseas.

3.2. Duality Is An Important Bond for China-EU People-to-People And Cultural Exchanges

The duality is embodied in the identity and cultural connotation of the overseas Chinese. Although there are some differences in nationality between overseas Chinese and Chinese, both of them have the blood of the Chinese nation. They have lived overseas for a long time and are familiar with Chinese and foreign cultures. They know the similarities and differences in

thinking mode and aesthetic taste between China and the people in the host country. This is even more evident in the fact that most of European Chinese are new immigrants. Duality highlights its role as a bridge and link between Chinese and foreign people in carrying out cultural exchanges. Many foreigners come into contact with Chinese culture and learn about China from overseas Chinese.

3.3. Proximity Is the Fundamental Guarantee for Carrying Out Cultural Exchanges Between China and Foreign Countries

People-to-people and cultural exchanges require mutual trust and a sense of closeness. Chinese immigrants in Europe have a long history and have made important contributions to the countries where they live. For example, Chinese workers made great sacrifices for France in the first world war. In recent years, the development of overseas Chinese in Europe has also contributed to the economic and social prosperity of the countries where they live. It is precisely that this kind of solidarity with other ethnic groups has contributed so much to the development of the country where they live, and ultimately established an indissoluble bond of friendship between the people and the country where they live. This kind of closeness and trust makes it more flexible and effective as a lubricant to carry out cultural exchanges with the help of overseas Chinese.

3.4. Integration Is the Unique Advantage of Carrying Out Cultural Exchanges Between China and Foreign Countries

The overseas Chinese living in Europe, together with all ethnic groups living in the country, have jointly built the multi-cultural environment in the country. They form an interwoven and inseparable whole with the exchange objects and become the source of people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. The integrated characteristics of the overseas Chinese provide positive energy for carrying out the cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. Whenever major issues such as China's sovereignty, national dignity and territorial integrity are involved, overseas Chinese attach great importance to the national interests and carry out solidarity activities in support of the positions and propositions of the Chinese government.

3.5. Sustainability Is A Sustainable Platform for China-EU People-to-People And Cultural Exchanges

Overseas Chinese live abroad, from generation to generation, and never interrupted. They will always be the subject of people-to-people exchanges. Chinese communities organize colorful Chinese cultural activities; Overseas Chinese media have been actively building a dialogue platform for cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world. The overseas Chinese are quietly sowing the seeds of cultural exchanges through their daily contacts at all times.

4. Suggestions and Countermeasures for Overseas Chinese to Promote People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges between China and EU

4.1. Expand Channels of Non-Governmental Exchange with the Help of Precious Resources of Overseas Chinese

The state should further enhance its awareness of the importance of overseas Chinese in Sino-foreign cultural exchanges, attach importance to the role of overseas Chinese affairs in people-to-people and cultural exchanges and coordinate cultural exchanges among departments concerned with overseas Chinese. This will greatly help expand the channels and scope of people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries.

4.2. Enhance the Cultural Literacy of Overseas Chinese, and Enhance the Transmission Effect of Individual Roles

In order to become a bridge of cultural exchange, the overseas Chinese must improve their own Chinese culture and maintain their national identity. The cultural quality of Chinese individuals may affect the image of the ethnic group. We should further seize appropriate opportunities, select excellent and practical cultural products, and try our best to meet their diverse needs. In addition, overseas Chinese are encouraged to learn and understand local culture, integrate into local society, and be accepted and recognized by local residents.

4.3. Give Full Play to the Active Role of Excellent Cultural Personages of Overseas Chinese and Encourage Them to Go to The Grassroots

The overseas Chinese community in Europe is full of talents, and has a large number of artists, practitioners or enthusiasts who have profound attainments in literature, art, sports, cuisine, traditional Chinese medicine and other fields. Art has no borders. They have great potential in carrying forward Chinese culture. We should focus on the work of the "four talents" in the overseas Chinese community, encourage them to strengthen their ties and support with ordinary communities, and promote their cultural functions.

4.4. Build Basic Communication Platforms Such as Chinese Community and Chinese Community, and Increase the Interaction with Local Society

The Chinese community is a relatively populated place for overseas Chinese. If the policy allows, Chinese can be guided to add elements of Chinese culture, such as facade decoration, advertising, posters and banners, etc., which can be integrated into the characteristics of Chinese culture and contribute to the cognition and understanding of Chinese culture by local residents and the society. With rich activities, greatly influenced by Chinese culture community as the center of gravity, strengthen its important role in cultural exchange and communication, focusing on the Chinese new generation development, by focusing on the key people together overseas Chinese, invite people to participate in local, continuously expand people-to-people and cultural exchanges in the form of "snowball" scope, enhance the level of cultural exchanges. Among them, the coordination and cooperation among overseas students, cultural elites, professional associations and comprehensive associations should be strengthened.

4.5. Strengthen the Communication Function of Overseas Chinese Media and Expand Its Influence on Mainstream Society

Public diplomacy aims to improve the coverage of China by news media, enhance the effect of sino-foreign communication and exchange of Chinese values, and improve the relationship between China and foreign individuals, civil institutions and civil organizations. Overseas Chinese media have touched on all three aspects. Special attention should be paid to the communication function of bilingual media with certain influence. Support and promote its interaction with local mainstream society. We should support overseas Chinese media in becoming bigger and stronger, and expand the coverage of Chinese media in Chinese society and even the mainstream society. We can learn from the selection and funding methods of overseas Chinese language education model schools, select some competent and influential Chinese language media as key cultivation objects, and provide support and funding in terms of personnel, funds and business. In addition, new media and traditional media channels should be used to let more countries know and understand China.

4.6. Doing A Good Job in Overseas Chinese Education and Chinese as A Foreign Language Education to Consolidate the Foundation for People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges

The Chinese language education is aimed at the overseas Chinese, which is an important "project to retain Chinese roots". Its essence is to promote the inheritance and development of Chinese culture overseas. Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is an important channel for foreigners to learn Chinese directly. The state should further support the development of Chinese language schools and Confucius institutes.

4.7. Strengthen Mechanism Construction and Management to Improve the Effectiveness of People-to-People Exchanges

Relevant management departments should actively formulate policies and measures and establish relevant mechanisms, including departmental coordination mechanism, China-EU project cooperation mechanism, project initiation, implementation and evaluation mechanism, etc., and timely track, guide and evaluate the projects to improve their effectiveness.

5. Conclusion

With their unique advantages of being familiar with the bilateral cultural environment between China and Europe, good social capital and natural cultural inheritors, overseas Chinese can play an important role in China-EU people-to-people and cultural exchanges. In the long run, people-to-people and cultural exchanges should attach importance to people's understanding of each other's culture, and more achievements will be made in the future. But many of the current exchange activities are multifaceted, that is, in the other side did not understand the background of our culture. The effect is more likely to be wishful thinking. Therefore, in carrying out cultural exchanges through overseas Chinese, we should pay special attention to this point. On the one hand, we should improve their Chinese cultural level, on the other hand, we should encourage them to get familiar with local culture. Otherwise, it is difficult to have deep and lasting communication and exchange. Therefore, the focus of our work in the near future should be on attracting overseas Chinese who are familiar with the cultures of both China and Europe.

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