

Rethink Cultural Self-confidence and Tolerance from the Perspective of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

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Abstract: The power of culture matters and cultural self-confidence is needed to enhance belonging of nations. At the same time, various cultures in the world constitute a colorful space with different values interacted which are not superior, or inferior contributed by cultural tolerance. The recognition of cultural differences for handling cultural self-confidence and tolerance can be enhanced by explaining the theory of cultural dimensions proposed by Dutch psychologist Greet Hofstede revealing the underlying logic and manifestations of cultures. With the recognition of different cultures, how to correctly view them then is essentially a study of the concepts of cultural self-confidence and tolerance. In short, be confident and firm in one's own culture, and to be tolerant and respectful of other cultures. The two are by no means in conflict with each other, but are compatible, and it's incorrect and even dangerous to fall into the mire of ethnocentrism or worship of foreign things.

Keywords: hofstede's cultural dimensions, cultural self-confidence, cultural tolerance

1. Introduction

The strength of a country or a nation is always supported by cultural prosperity and firming cultural self-confidence is a major issue concerning the rise and fall of the nation, cultural security, and the spiritual independence of the nation. In addition, cultures are not superior or inferior, but only distinctive and regional. Each culture is rooted in the soil of its own existence, unites the extraordinary wisdom and spiritual pursuit of a country or a nation, and has its own value of existence. Promoting cultural tolerance can enrich the colors of human culture and enable people of all countries to enjoy a more meaningful spiritual life and create a future with more choices. Purely realizing the differences among cultures conceptually is quite insufficient to strive for cultural self-confidence and tolerance, which can be complemented by some technical analysis from Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory systematically reflecting the colorfulness of cultures in the world.

2. Cultural Dimensions Theory of Hofstede

The theory of cultural dimensions is a framework proposed by Dutch psychologist Gilbert Hofstede to measure cultural differences between countries. He argued that culture was the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another [1]. This theory was originally based on an analysis of data from a worldwide questionnaire survey conducted by IBM from the 1960s to the 1970s. At first, Hofstede categorized the value orientations of different cultures into four basic dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and collectivism, and masculinity and femininity. In 1991, based on the research findings of Professor Michael Bond of the Chinese University of Hong Kong on the comparison of Eastern and Western cultures, Hofstede added a fifth dimension: long-term and short-term orientation. And in 2010, based on Micheal Minkov's analysis of data from the World Values Survey, Hofstede added a sixth dimension to the theory: indulgence and restraint. Here is a brief analysis about Hofstede's six cultural dimensions to better realize the existence of cultural differences.

2.1 Power Distance

Power distance means beliefs about the appropriate distribution of power in society. In low-power-distance society, there's a belief that effective leaders do not need to have substantial amounts of power compared to their subordinates. However, a belief exists in high-power-distance society that people in positions of authority should have considerable power compared to their subordinates. In other words, power distance can be defined as the degree to which less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept the fact that power is not distributed equally [2]. The main specific difference of two patterns of power distance can be summarized to three aspects. First, with regard to inequality between people, low-power-distance societies strive to minimize inequality, while high-power-distance societies actively construct inequality. Second, about social relations and status, low-power-distance societies emphasize connecting social relations through care, while

high-power-distance societies focus on achieving social status differentiation through various restrictions. Third, regarding the powerful and the vulnerable, low-power-distance societies believe that the two groups should be interdependent, while high power distance societies think that the vulnerable should be dependent on the powerful.

2.2 Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance means the degree of uncertainty that can be tolerated and its impact on rule making. Weak uncertainty avoidance shows tolerance for ambiguity and little need for rules to constrain uncertainty. Strong uncertainty avoidance reflects intolerance for ambiguity and need for many rules to constrain uncertainty. In other words, uncertainty avoidance can be defined as the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have created institutions and beliefs for minimizing or avoiding those uncertainties. Three major aspects in the difference of weak and strong uncertainty avoidance can be revealed specifically. First, weak uncertainty-avoidance societies regard uncertainty as a normal part of life and accept each day as it comes, while strong uncertainty-avoidance societies see uncertainty as a constant threat that must be fought. Second, weak uncertainty-avoidance societies maintain a low level of stress and anxiety, while strong uncertainty-avoidance societies have a high level of stress and anxiety. Third, weak uncertainty-avoidance societies are open to and calmly deal with ambiguous situations and uncommon risks, whereas strong uncertainty-avoidance societies accept routine risks but are fearful and withdrawn from ambiguous situations and unfamiliar risks.

2.3 Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism and collectivism stand for relative importance of individual vs. group interests. In individualist societies, individual interests generally take precedence over group interests. However, the opposite is true in collectivist societies. In other words, individualism can be defined as the tendency of people to look after themselves and their immediate family only and collectivism can be understood as the tendency of people to belong to groups who look after each other in exchange for loyalty. There are three concrete points mainly considered in the distinction between individualism and collectivism. First, individualism insists that bluntness is a sign of honesty, while collectivism believes that harmony should always be maintained and direct conflict avoided. Second, individualism advocates a low-context approach to communication, i.e., directness and frankness, while collectivism emphasizes a high-context approach to communication, i.e., euphemism and subtlety. Third, individualism thinks that errors result in guilt and loss of self-esteem, while collectivism believes that mistakes lead to shame and loss of face for oneself and the group.

2.4 Masculinity and Femininity

Masculinity and Femininity reflect assertiveness vs. passivity or material possessions vs. quality of life. Masculinity can be defined as the degree to which the dominant values of a society are success, money, and material goods. Femininity can be understood as the degree to which the dominant values of a society are caring for others and the quality of life. The major difference between masculinity and femininity concretely reflects three aspects. First, in masculine societies, men are expected to be decisive, strong, and ambitious, and women are expected to be gentle and relationship-oriented, whereas in feminine societies, both men and women are supposed to possess these qualities. Second, in masculine societies, the standard model is that the father earns money and the mother takes care of the family, whereas in feminine societies, the standard model is that both parents share the responsibility of earning money and taking care of the family. Third, masculine societies believe that people live in order to work, whereas feminine societies think that people work in order to live.

2.5 Long-term and Short-term Orientation

Long-term orientation is future orientation, which values dedication, hard work, and thrift. Short-term orientation is past and present orientation, which values traditions and social obligations. In other words, Long-term orientation is the extent to which a culture programmes its members to accept delayed gratification of their material, social and emotional needs. For short-term orientation societies, the opposite is true. There are four specific points mainly considered in the difference of long-term and short-term orientation. First, long-term orientation promotes tenacity and a willingness to keep working hard for long-term rewards, while short-term orientation believes that the effort put in should yield quick results. Second, long-term orientation regards leisure time as unimportant, whereas short-term orientation believes it is important. Third, in long-term orientation societies, if A is right, its opposite B may also be right, whereas in short-term orientation societies, if A is true, its opposite B must be false. Fourth, in long-term orientation societies, common sense takes precedence, while in short-term orientation societies, abstraction and reason take precedence.

2.6 Indulgence and Restraint

Indulgence stands for a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to

enjoying life and having fun. Its opposite pole, restraint, reflects a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms. Note that the gratification of desires on the indulgence side refers to enjoying life and having fun, not to gratifying human desires in general. The key difference between indulgent and restrained societies reflects four aspects. First, in indulgent societies there is a higher percentage of very happy people, while in restrained societies there is a lower percentage. Second, in indulgent societies, people feel in control of their personal lives, whereas in restrained societies, there is a sense of helplessness that what happens to me is not my own doing. Third, indulgent societies are more loosely organized, while restrained societies are more tightly organized. Fourth, indulgent societies promote positive attitudes, while restrained societies exhibit cynicism.

3. Cultural Self-confidence and Tolerance

Under the above analysis of Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions, the status quo of the existence of cultural differences has been constructed. The question of how to view cultural differences is essentially a question of how to view domestic cultures, foreign cultures, and the relationship between the two. Hofstede explained that the basic skill for surviving in a multicultural world was understanding first one's own cultural values and next the cultural values of the others with whom one has to cooperate [2]. Cultural self-confidence should be established for domestic cultures and cultural tolerance should be cultivated for foreign cultures. Cultural self-confidence and cultural tolerance are compatible and can coexist so that the world can maintain a healthy and vital cultural ecology.

3.1 Cultural Self-confidence

What is self-confidence? Self-confidence is not questioning the abilities and knowledge one possesses. What is cultural self-confidence? In short, cultural self-confidence refers to a country's or a nation's strong identification with its own culture, its conviction of its value, and its persistent pursuit of its creativity and prospects for development [3]. Only by strengthening cultural self-confidence can we maintain the cultural foundation of our country or nation. Based on Hofstede's cultural theory, there are intended and unintended intercultural conflicts in interpersonal communication [2]. In the process of cultural collision, foreign culture can cause cultural shock to individual's native cultural thinking to a certain extent. Under the influence of cultural shock, the confidence and firmness of domestic culture are very significant for maintaining personal identity.

In China's context, the outstanding traditional Chinese culture nurtured in the development of more than 5,000 years of civilization, and the revolutionary and advanced socialist cultures nurtured in the great struggle of the Party and the people have accumulated the deepest spiritual pursuits of the Chinese nation and represent the unique spiritual identity of the Chinese nation. The basic connotation of cultural self-confidence unfolds from three aspects: traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture. Meanwhile, the connotation of cultural self-confidence reflects three dimensions: history, reality, and future. The first is to have an objective and sober understanding of the accumulation of culture precipitated by history; the second is to believe that culture can adapt to the needs of the times and withstand the test of time; and the third is to insist on the inheritance and promotion of culture, and to realize the great prosperity of socialist culture [4].

3.2 Cultural Tolerance

What is cultural tolerance? It is mainly reflected in two aspects: first, horizontally, the ability to accept the existence of other different cultures, i.e., the tolerance of differences in cultural content; and second, vertically, the ability to reasonably treat cultures whose level of development is relatively slow, i.e., the tolerance of differences in the level of cultural development. It is only with an open and tolerant mind that we can have exchanges and mutual understanding with other cultures in the world. In Hofstede's view, the contact and reaction with foreign cultures have a transition process from the period of cultural shock to the period of acculturation and finally to the period of stable state [2]. This essentially reflects the degree of acceptance and adaptation to foreign cultures. Obviously, the role of cultural tolerance in this process cannot be ignored.

Every culture in the world is engraved with unique and distinctive connotations of discourse, ways of thinking, narrative logic, and historical traditions, and contains thoughts and summaries of daily life and social experiences, as well as wisdom for solving real-life conflicts. In today's world, with the development of information technology and the expansion of capital on a global scale, a series of global problems have emerged that are difficult to be solved fundamentally by the traditional means of a single country. The gravity of reality urgently requires all countries to strengthen cultural exchanges and understanding, to fully adopt and absorb the wisdom of other cultures, to ensure the consistency of values and goals, to continuously improve the efficiency and relevance of cooperation, and to seek the best solutions to deal with global problems

by pooling the wisdom of all people and relying on the strengths of all groups of people.

Globalization, with economic development as its solid foundation, is the basic prerequisite and objective need to help human civilization achieve leapfrog changes. In this process, sufficient attention must be paid to, and steady progress must be made in mutual understanding and dialogue among cultures. The reason for this is that the differences between cultures can lead to cultural clashes from time to time, and it is necessary to rely on mutual understanding of cultures in order to mitigate cultural clashes. If we allow the cultural conflict to develop unchecked, the overall trend and degree of development of economic globalization will be affected and a chain reaction of some countries being decoupled from the world economy will happen. It is thus clear that the promotion of cultural mutual understanding and tolerance is a general trend that can provide more possibilities for effectively responding to the changes in the world.

3.3 Interaction Between the Two Concepts

It is very significant to correctly grasp the relationship between cultural self-confidence and cultural tolerance, which is closely related to the reasonable construction of comprehensive cultural values. Based on the above, cultural self-confidence requires firmness, recognition, and promotion of one's own culture, while cultural tolerance requires realization, understanding and respect for other cultures. These two concepts are not conflicting or contradictory, but compatible. Grasping the appropriate degree of both internal and external lines can truly achieve the revitalization of national culture and the integration of world culture.

If cultural self-confidence is excessive and cultural tolerance is diminished, the result will be cultural superiority, which means that the culture of one's own country is regarded superior to the culture of other countries. This is, in Hofstede's words, ethnocentrism which is to a people what egocentrism is to an individual: considering one's own little world to be the center of the universe [2]. There are two specific manifestations of cultural superiority: first, cultural conservatism; and second, cultural hegemony.

Cultural conservatism focuses on the stubborn defense of one's own culture and holds a prejudiced mentality of exclusion and discrimination against other cultures, thus creating a closed-door attitude. Under the confusion of this wrong tendency, the space and channels for promoting cultural exchanges are easily squeezed. The root of the problem is that cultural conservatism is closely and intricately linked to a strong sense of national identity and a long cultural tradition. In the stage of cultural exchange and advancement, national consciousness and cultural tradition can be said to follow and run through. In particular, the differences between national groups in terms of values and behaviors have further consolidated and strengthened national consciousness and cultural traditions, resulting in a monotonous and stereotypical national cultural pattern, which has the consequence of being detached from the development of the times and the practice of the society [5]. Cultural hegemony, through the foreign dissemination of its own values and ideology, forcibly exports its own culture to other countries and forces other cultures to accept its own culture in order to achieve the purpose of cultural infiltration and cultivation of subordinates. The essence of cultural hegemony is cultural expansion, and its brand name is universal values, i.e., a kind of eternal conceptual ideology with fixed value standards that can transcend classes, countries and time and space and can be publicized and popularized in the world. The pervasive global promotion of universal values as a paranoid way of thinking is like waging a white war on a global scale, which will cause subversive shocks and damage to the national culture and security of other countries.

If cultural tolerance is excessive and cultural self-confidence is diminished, the result will be xenocentrism, which means regarding one's own culture inferior to other cultures. It's regarded as xenophilia in Hofstede's opinion, the belief that in the foreigner's culture, everything is better [2]. The biggest threat of it lies in self-denial, i.e., the lack of hope for one's own culture and the attempt to realize one's self-worth by attaching oneself to foreign cultures. In fact, this is a problem of identity loss. A person, nourished by his local environment, is blindly seduced or manipulated by foreign culture. Such unacclimatization will greatly destroy an individual's independent judgment ability and the formation of a stable sense of belonging for the whole nation.

4. Conclusion

Cultural construction, as an important aspect of national soft power construction, is an endogenous driving force for national development and international cooperation. As an important part of cultural construction, the recognition and distinction of cultural self-confidence and tolerance should not be neglected, which is supported to understand further based on Hofstede's cultural theory. The two concepts of cultural self-confidence and tolerance matter, going hand in hand and occupying one side of the relationship with balancing, on the basis of Hofstede's emphasis upon the transition process from the period of cultural shock to the period of acculturation. One question to ponder about this research or similar ones is the future of cultural differences. Based on cultural evolution, will cultures converge or diverge in the future? It is directly related

to the existential value of cultural self-confidence and tolerance. Hofstede's previous research reflects that there is little evidence that cultural values converge over time. However, with the increasingly complex development of economy, politics and science and technology today and even beyond, the changes in the world's cultural environment may be unimaginable and deserve further study.

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