

## The Influence and Enlightenment of the Media on National Spirit

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### Abstract

From the historical point of view, this paper analyzes the positive and negative influence of the media on the national spirit. Then it probes into how to use the media to give positive inspiration, encouragement and shaping to the spirit and thought of the people, so as to cultivate a rational, correct and progressive national spirit.

**Key words:** The media; National spirit; Influence; Enlightenment

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### INTRODUCTION

The national spirit is based on the subject of the people, and it refers to the general public psychology and basic identity in the moral standards, values, ways of thinking, socio-political economy and cultural awareness, ethics, attitude and manner of life and so on. It can be expressed as distinct character, thoughts, emotions, behavior and attitudes.

Throughout the great period of human history, the media played an important historical role in the formation of progressive or reactionary national spirit. The content of media communication ultimately determines the positive or negative impact on the national spirit. Studying the media's influence on the national spirit and its effect on social development is conducive to guiding and

shaping the positive national spirit and national character, and promoting the progress of human society.

### 1. THE INFLUENCE AND CONSEQUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON NATIONAL SPIRIT

#### 1.1 The Negative Influence of Injustice Media on National Spirit in History

During World War II, Nazi fascism education in Germany and Japan was a typical negative impact on the national spirit and social development.

Nazism first came after the First World War. Due to the war responsibility and compensation, post-war Germany fell into the economic difficulties, and frustrated national sentiment led to the emergence of Nazism. Hitler and other German political opportunists changed the concept of socialism, and they evolved it into an extreme, pathological, reactionary nationalism. Its basic claims are: racial superiority, that is, "superior race" has the right to slavery or even eliminate the "inferior race"; emphasizing the principle of "leader" in all fields, declaring that "leader" is the representative of the nation's will, and state power should be grasped by one person; promoting social Darwinism, and advocating war as a means to seize the living space and establish world hegemony; opposing the communist ideology system and the socialist system, viciously attacking the Marxist theory. The essence of Nazism is extreme barbaric imperialism, racism and terrorism.

From 1931, "nine one eight" incident, to 1945, "eight one five" defeated surrender, the Japanese fascist militarism launched the war of aggression against China and the Pacific War, which had spread throughout the eastern hemisphere, spanning fifteen years, much more than Nazi Germany. To explore the reasons, it is necessary to study the main role of foreign aggression thought produced by the combination of fascism and militarism,

in particular, its reactionary fascist expansion theory. Japanese fascist expansion theory is a combination of traditional Bushido, Emperor center theory and so on, and its composition mainly includes a variety of discussion proposed for the current situation by a group of reactionary fascist theorists and activists; as well as the guiding ideology arose from the formulation of the outline of the plan by the military decision-making bodies. Japan's fascist expansion theory also includes: "living space", "universalism of war", "national harmony", "chemical crystallization" and "colonial liberation" and so on. All kinds of reactionary expansion theories with oriental characteristics are in no way inferior to the Nazis in the sophistry, diversity, uniqueness and applicability. Japanese fascism, composed of fascist expansion theory, not only changed Japan's social politics, helping it formulate foreign aggression policy, but also cracked down on the domestic democratic forces, controlling the Japanese people's minds, and turned countless Japanese into the war machine without human nature.

The fascist media industry had a very important and obvious common feature: national ownership, or national control. The first priority of its communication business was to serve the state machine, as well as to publicize fascism. Some scholars believe that Nazi Germany itself was a product of publicity, and it was the first country to establish an international propaganda organization, which had a profound impact on the world. The Nazi German Propaganda Department Minister Goebel had also become the object of concern and research after the war. The monopoly of the mass communication business and the complete system of national propaganda were powerful boosters to realize fascism deceit, and also were key factors that fascism fooled the spirit of the people, and then launched a war of aggression.

Since Germany was the defeated country of the First World War, the shame of defeat, the struggling survival pressure and national interests being unfairly plundered, all of which contributed to the vindictive mentality of the whole nation. After Hitler's election to the German heads of state, his highly appealing and deceptive speeches mobilized the media's absolute obedience and narrow national spirit. Then the media subjectively embarked on the path of fascism.

In addition to carrying out the highly deceptive fascist incitement, after taking the power, Hitler immediately implemented the fascist dictatorship. He disbanded the opposition press, and brutally cracked down on these opposition parties and their media. After "Congressional arson case" (February 20, 1933), Hitler closed 51 Communist newspapers and closed more than 130 newspapers of the social democratic party. Moreover, the German fascists also deprived the non-Germans of their rights of press communication. Later, Hitler issued an order, passed by president Hindenburg, declaring that in order to guarantee the safety of the country and the people,

the freedom of the press prescribed by the constitution was temporarily terminated. Thus the freedom of press and speech under the Weimar Constitution was abolished. Finally, unified public opinion formed a resultant force, and brazenly implementing fascist "public opinion is uniform", serving the fascist state, paving the way for the implementation of state ownership and war policy.

In order to ensure that the media industry was absolutely obedient, Hitler also founded the National Propaganda Department in 1935, specializing in the control of national newspapers and radio speeches and reports, and being responsible for the overall propaganda work of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. The Ministry of Publicity had a number of punitive measures against the media that oppose Hitler or question his domination. The Nazi government imposed very severe sanctions on newspapers that violated the policy, sometimes confiscating newspaper property directly, or sending the person in charge of a prison or concentration camp.

Propaganda Department was the leading role that Germany achieved "national supremacy" in the media world. Goebbels was a good player in the use of media publicity, especially in the use of radio. He was convinced that "A lie that has been told one thousand times will become a truth". The Propaganda Department regularly published some directives through a press conference. These instructions, as many as dozens of pages, told reporters in detail how to do their work, and required journalists to report in accordance with what the government wanted them to know. These instructions covered every aspect of the basic line of the Nazi Party. Of course, the Propaganda Department also made specific instructions on which issues could not be reported. For example, it was forbidden to publish photographs of the party leaders; and it was not allowed to report the war of aggression launched by Germany unless it was reported in praise and approval; also, the "anti-Semitic" movement reported from the Jewish point of view was not allowed.

Japan established an informal intelligence committee in 1932. Standing in the national position, it judged and directed the news content to ensure that they did not violate national interests. With the changes in the situation, such as, telegraph news agency and news association merging into the national news agency, the popularity and development of radio broadcasting, the official intelligence committee was established, which was responsible for the relevant information, internal and external reports, contacts and adjustments for inspiring publicity. This agency had gradually developed into the Cabinet Intelligence Unit, or the Intelligence Service, which was an absolute fascist authority to control freedom of speech.

At the same time, under the wartime media system, which was "guiding" by the powerful fascist government, the Japanese media industry was gradually manipulated

by the government and became the propaganda machine of Japanese militarism. Japanese militarism adhered to the spirit of Bushido. The requirements of this spirit were absolutely loyal to the emperor, believing in revenge, and a firm spirit that can prevail over everything. These ideas of “will first” were fundamentally contrary to the basic philosophy of substance dominating consciousness, and they led the media to completely abandon objectivity and impartiality. The presence of the reactionary media was only to meet the needs of the fascist propaganda. Even at the end of World War II, in the case of successive failures of the Japanese army, the media was still reporting the news of the war, boasting the great victory of the “emperor” and the dream of “Great East Asia Co-Prospersity Circle”, deceiving the Japanese people. In addition, under the colonial rule, the journalism of Korea, Taiwan of China and three northeastern provinces of China were implemented a unified control by Japanese government, that is, being administered centrally by the colonial governor or the administration, or being included in Japan’s major newspaper system.

From the above historical records, we can clearly see that, during the World War II, German and Japanese fascists gradually controlled the national media system, then blockaded and suppressed all the different voice of the media publicity, implementing obscurantism, infiltrating the fascist reactionary thought into the people for a long time. In such a state-controlled fascist media indoctrination environment, this kind of day-to-day and monotonous fascist propaganda and education paralyzed the individual’s independent thinking ability, depriving them of their independent judgment, all of which gradually formed the entire national fascist spirit. The public, blindly and feverishly, followed the government and the army as victims of the war of aggression.

During the World War II, Japan’s “Kamikaze commando” was a typical example of the reactionary national spirit. The so-called “Kamikaze commando” was the death squads with suicidal nature, which consisted of sixteen or seventeen-year-old teenagers who were encouraged by the spirit of the Bushido. In the face of the final attack of the Allied forces, according to the requirements of “one man, one machine, one bomb for another ship”, batch of batch of Japanese young people in the air war shouted the slogan “allegiance to the emperor”, driving the aircraft, rushing to their enemies and perished together.

The former member of Kamikaze Teams, Nakajima once said that no one was pursuing death or trying to commit suicide, and we did this just because we had the responsibility to defend our country. Therefore, the reactionary education of the fascist media had played a great role in the deceiving and transforming the minds of the Japanese and German people. Especially after a long period of indoctrination, young people had gradually formed a national spirit of anti-social and anti-human.

## 1.2 The Media With Positive Energy Encourages and Shapes the People and Their Spirits

The role of the media for a national spirit is a double-edged sword. If you can use it properly, maintaining fairness and objectivity, spreading positive, progressive ideas and culture, it will greatly encourage people, and form the resultant force of national spirit to promote social progress.

Among the countries of the world, the Korean people have a distinctive national spirit and a unique national character. This national spirit, characterized by strong independence, unyielding spirit, national and democratic consciousness, has a great relationship with the mass media of Korea, which enlightened and inspired Korean national character and national spirit in history.

In the modern history of Korea, the most influential media should be “Independent News”, which opened the precedent of the Korean modern mass communication in the process of spreading the patriotic enlightenment thought and acting as the mouthpiece of the nation and the people. The “Independent News” contributed to the open mind building on the basis of the people, and as “a torch of modern history of change”, it was a well-deserved milestone in the history of Korean news and mass communication.

“Independent News” is a non-official newspaper published on April 7, 1896, which is the product of the independent civil rights movement launched by the independent association. In its first issue editorial, “Independent News” said that they would determine to become the spokesman for all the people of Korea, and they would inform the public about what the government was doing and inform the government of the lives of the people. Thus, at the beginning of publication, the Independent News clearly demonstrated its responsibility and attitude to serve the society and the people. After the founding, “Independent News” trained a lot of famous writers such as Li Chengwan, Yin Zhihao, Li Shangzai, Liang Hongmo and et al, sparing no effort to expose the corruption of feudal officials at that time, condemning foreign aggression, inspiring public political awareness. Therefore, it was very influential at the time. In addition, independent associations rapidly expanded in society, and the consciousness of autonomy could go deep into the people, all of which were mainly due to Independent News.

The founding day of the “Independent News” was later set as the “news day” of Korea. Under the impetus and influence of Independent News, a number of popular newspapers had been established by Koreans, such as “Daily News”, “Empire News”, “Imperial City News”, etc. “Empire News”, which was a Korean daily newspaper founded in August 1898, launched a fierce confrontation and debate against the Japanese business “Seoul News”. The Empire News maintained that it is necessary to seek the strength of Korea, to live on equal footing with

other countries, to be free from shame and to cultivate the patriotic enthusiasm of the people. “Imperial City News”, representing the Confucian school view, opposed to sign the “Protection Agreement Between Japan and Korea”, and published the famous editorial, “Today is the day of loudly crying”, in which it denounced the illegal acts of the Japanese invaders forcing the South Korean government to sign the treaty, and rebuked the South Korean government ministers who signed the treaty being worse than pigs or dogs. The article was considered to be “shining masterpiece in the history of Korean modern newspapers”. Although the newspaper could not escape from the fate of being forbidden, it aroused the people’s sense of revolt, establishing the unyielding national spirit, and it left a permanent voice in the history of modern media in Korea.

In general, during this period, although there were differences among the various Korean daily newspapers in the specific views and ways to save the country, these media were consistent in the overall sense of nation’s rise and fall. These newspapers published a large number of words to publicize the national spirit against foreign aggression, and spared no effort to enhance the national consciousness of the Korean people, inspiring the national spirit, bravely carrying out the mission entrusted by history.

Social development determines the national spirit, while the national spirit in turn acts on social development. National and democratic consciousness are all important part of the Korean national spirit. In the process of developing from the traditional feudal society to the modern democratic country, the Korean public communication continued to develop and promote the awakening of the Korean people’s modern national consciousness and democratic consciousness, guiding and creating a strong national spirit characterized by independence, freedom and democracy.

As mentioned earlier, the “Independent News” born in the independent movement and the subsequent series of national newspapers had made great achievements in the popularization of national consciousness and the influence of national autonomy. After the founding of the Republic of Korea, the development of modern political democratization was bound by the dictatorship of the military, so the mass media was duty-bound to assume the historical mission of enlightening national political democracy consciousness. For example, in 1974, *East Asia Daily* reporter published the *Declaration of Scholars in Free Practice*, which caused a strong reaction not only in the whole public opinion, but also in society. More than 100 persons in the field of literature set up a council, and proposed the release of intellectuals, religious figures and students who had been illegally arrested, calling for the protection of speech, publication, association, faith, thought, freedom of expression. This struggle against political tyranny and dictatorship reflected the evolution

and ascension from the national consciousness to the democratic consciousness, which were advocated by the media. The Korean press had shown great power in raising the Korean national political consciousness. As Ito Hirobumi, the first Japanese director, said that in terms of mobilizing South Koreans, one word in Korean newspapers was more powerful than his one hundred words.

The long-term interaction between the Korean media and its national spirit has also played an important role in contemporary social development. In 1997, the Southeast Asian financial crisis tumbled the Korean economy. South Korean nationals launched a spontaneous “donation movement”.

They donated their own gold bars, gold ornaments and other things to the country, which contributed to Korea’s victory over the financial crisis. “Donation movement” once again demonstrated the Korean nation’s highly cohesive patriotism and national spirit. At the same time, the Korean government attached great importance to the great national spirit embodied in the “donation movement”, then developed and implemented a series of measures to advocate or carry forward this patriotic, independent, indomitable and positive national spirit. As a result, a large number of positive spiritual and cultural products had sprung up. For instance, the “Korean wave” hot represented by Korean dramas rose rapidly and went out of the country; the media that included online games, music, fashion, food, beauty and combined the spirit and culture of Korea set off a wave of communication both at home and abroad.

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## 2. ENLIGHTENMENT AND THINKING ABOUT THE MEDIA SHAPING THE NATIONAL SPIRIT

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The media plays a very important role in influencing and shaping the national spirit and national character. Correctly using the advanced media means to correctly guide the national mind and spirit, then gradually cultivate the progress, rational, scientific national spirit, all of which play an immeasurable role in promoting the progress of the country, society and even mankind. We can easily find from many historical events that in the process of inspiring and cultivating the national spirit, there are many characteristics and laws that are worthy of our study or reference.

### 2.1 In Conformity With the Current Situation of National Thought and Social Development, Correctly Enlighten and Guide the National Spirit

As mentioned earlier, the “Independent News”, “Imperial News” and other media of South Korea properly and correctly guided and inspired the spirit of national independence, liberation and patriotism when the South

Korean government was forced to sign the humiliating *Protection Agreement Between Japan and Korea*; the country was invaded and colonized; people were oppressed and exploited.

However, the fascist media during World War II was a negative example. The media deceived and guided the nation towards the path of extreme nationalism, militarism, and expansionism by taking advantage of the economic difficulties and the prevailing national mentality such as narrow nationalism, revenge and closure.

From both positive and negative aspects, these two historical events illustrate the truth that in the process of inspiring the national spirit, it is very important to combine and utilize the current national ideology and social development.

## **2.2 To Cultivate Rational, Correct and Progressive National Spirit, We Must Criticize and Rethink on the Wrong Thoughts and Culture**

After the World War II, Germany and Japan treated this war differently in their history textbooks, which created two entirely different national spirits.

As a kind of mass media, the role of history textbooks is to pass on historical knowledge and educate people, especially the vast numbers of young people, so that people can understand history correctly. The authenticity and correctness of the history textbooks have a direct impact on young people and adults about the scientific understanding of the country and the world history. It also directly affects the national ideology and behavior.

The attitude of Germany's history textbooks towards the World War II has gradually changed from avoidance in the beginning to objective, real and introspection now. The federal government education supervisory body called for the "National Socialist Party" as the object of "comprehensive discussion" among middle school students, with the aim of keeping students remembering the Holocaust forever, which is illustrated in Chapter 6 of the history textbook currently used by German high schools. In addition, the German Education Act stipulates that historical textbooks must contain sufficient content about the history of the Nazi period, and teachers must give an in-depth account of the history of Nazi autocracy, especially on the concentration camps and massacres. West Germany's former president Weizsacker said: "Those who do not look at the past are blind to the present and the future". Today, in German history textbooks, there is no word to defend the crime of Hitler's aggression, and all middle school students know that Hitler committed aggression against the people of the world.

By exposing the war crimes of killing innocent lives, the values of the Germans cherishing individual life began to recover. Nowadays, the Germans have the courage to assume the responsibility of the World War II, which

is their rational pursuit on return and reconstruction of human nature. It can be said that it is the criticism and reflection of historical textbooks and other media on war crimes that make the Germans recover their healthy, active and progressive national spirit.

In contrast to Germany, since the end of the World War II, the Japanese government and their media have been confusing, distorting, and even obliterating the facts of aggression. Since 1951, the Japanese Ministry of Education has been distorting its history textbook, and openly publicizing Japan's foreign aggression theory. In some Japanese news media and various rallies, they only emphasize that they are victims, rendering the damage caused by the atomic bomb, but cover up or deny their own crimes against the people of other countries.

The reactionary propaganda of the Japanese media and the government has led to the fact that the Japanese people have not been able to properly recognize and reflect on the crimes they committed in the World War II, which encouraged the narrow, self-centered, irrational, unhealthy national mentality and national spirit of the Japanese people.

## **2.3 The Demonstrative Role of Media Has Great Influence on the Construction of National Spirit**

Because the media is oriented to a large audience, it can produce a great demonstration and enlightenment to the formation of national spirit. Moreover, it has a very high authority, as well as a strong infection and educational effectiveness. Therefore, the ideas and concepts of the public are easily influenced by the content expressed by the media.

In the movie *Saving Private Ryan* of the United States, the film described, during the World War II, six American soldiers were ordered to search and rescue a soldier named Ryan in enemy occupied areas. In the end, several lives were exchanged for the success of the rescue operation. The value of life in the film: "Six lives to save one life" brings us a lot of thought.

The deep description on the psychological activities of the people in the war makes the film full of impact and appeal. Through this powerful influence, the movie conveys the idea that the rescue operation is a mistake or even absurd task from a perceptual or rational point of view, but from a moral and just point of view, it is definitely a real rescue, a fearless action, a manifestation of lofty spirit and noble character. Through this highly resonant and contagious way, the bright, positive spirit of the film is easily accepted by the audience.

The film is a special modern media, which has the characteristics and superiority beyond the other media. It is a comprehensive art which combines music, literature, drama, dance and so on. It can not only go beyond the time and space to "simulate" or "restore" the real world situation, but also realistically and vividly reveal many

abstract connections, phenomena and emotions among human beings, society and nature. Therefore, it can be close to the inner world of the people and can accurately reflect all aspects of social life. It can easily arouse the sympathy of the people, and thus play a guiding role in the education of the public.

Just like the broadcasting of *Saving Private Ryan*, the film objectively infected and educated the broad masses of the people, arousing the noble sentiments of the people, and played a great exemplary role in the construction of the lofty national spirit.

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## CONCLUSION

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The national spirit is vital in the development of the state and society. It is related to the ethical standards and values of the whole nation. With the development of network society, the influence of media on national spirit is more and more important. The media determines the development direction of the national spirit. Therefore, we should emphasize and attach importance to the study of the media, especially in its impact on the national spirit and related social effects.

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