

On the Deconstruction of the Connotation, Generative Logic, and Era-specific Practice of the Great Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression

Yanru Liu

Liaoning Communication University, Shenyang, Liaoning, 110136 China

15204007644@163.com

Abstract. 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. Looking back on the magnificent 14-year journey of bloody struggle, the great Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, as a landmark achievement of the spiritual awakening of the Chinese nation, possesses a spiritual power that transcends time and space. Guided by General Secretary Xi Jinping's important expositions on the Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression as the core, this paper conducts research from three dimensions: deconstruction of connotation, generative logic, and epochal practice. It systematically interprets the historical manifestations of the four core connotations—patriotic feelings, national integrity, heroic spirit, and belief in victory; deeply analyzes the three-dimensional generative foundation composed of cultural inheritance, practical tempering, and the Party's leadership; and, in the context of the new era, proposes practical paths for the Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression to address risks and challenges, cultivate the sense of responsibility among young people, and promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind in the course of national rejuvenation. The research shows that the great Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression is not only an important part of the spiritual lineage of the Communist Party of China but also a source of spiritual motivation for advancing Chinese modernization.

Keywords: The Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression; Deconstruction of Connotation; Generative Logic; Epochal Value; National Rejuvenation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

Eighty years ago, impoverished and militarily outmatched China achieved its first complete victory against foreign aggression in modern history, making a major contribution to the World Anti-Fascist War. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized at the Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War: "History carries the past and inspires the future; the great Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression will forever be a powerful spiritual force motivating the Chinese people to overcome all difficulties and strive for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" [1]. At the critical juncture of concluding the 14th Five-Year Plan and charting the 15th Five-Year Plan, clarifying the core essence and generative mechanism of this spirit and unlocking its contemporary value are of major theoretical and practical significance for rallying national strength and meeting risks and challenges.

1.2 Research Framework

Taking the logical thread of "what it is — why it exists — how to translate it into action," this paper combines historical analysis with value analysis. The first part deconstructs the four core connotations of the Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and reveals their historical significance for the awakening of the national character. The second part traces the cultural, practical and guiding foundations that underpinned the spirit's formation, elucidating its historical

inevitability. The third part, in light of the missions of the new era, explores practical pathways for sustaining and revitalizing this spirit, thereby bridging past and present.

2. The Core Connotation of the Great Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression: The Awakening and Breakthrough of National Character

On September 3, 2014, at the symposium commemorating the 69th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, General Secretary Xi Jinping systematically summarized for the first time the four core connotations of the Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. These are: the patriotic sentiment that "every common person has a responsibility for the rise and fall of the nation"; the national integrity of "facing death unflinchingly and refusing to yield even unto death"; the heroic spirit of "not fearing brute force and fighting to the end"; and the unwavering belief in victory characterized by "persevering through hardships and remaining steadfast" [2]. This statement not only reveals the essential nature of history, but also marks the spiritual awakening of the Chinese nation since modern times.

2.1 Patriotic Sentiment of "Every Individual is Responsible for the Rise and Fall of the Nation": From Individual Awakening to National Mobilization

Compared with the onlooking public of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), patriotism during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression leapt from elite awakening to nationwide mobilization. On 19 September 1931, the Manchurian Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China issued the first anti-Japanese declaration; Zhang Jiazhou, a Tsinghua student, laid down his pen and fought in the forests and rivers of northeast China until death. After the North China Incident of 1935, the December 9th Movement kindled a wave of self-rescue: workers struck, peasants enlisted, and overseas Chinese donated, forging an all-people united front. "United as one, we advanced through the enemy's artillery fire," a collective action that re-forged national identity and consciousness.

2.2 National Integrity of "Facing Death Unflinchingly and Refusing to Surrender Even in the Face of Death": from Cultural Tradition to Life Practice

During the War of Resistance, China's age-old esteem for integrity found concrete expression. Mei Lanfang (1942) grew a beard and refused to sing for the puppet regime, defending national dignity through his art; Bai Wenguan, mother of Ma Benzhai, starved herself in Japanese hands to embody the maxim "righteousness runs in the family"; Yang Jingyu, cornered in 1940, fought alone until his stomach held only grass, bark and cotton—astonishing even his pursuers. Their deaths bore witness to a spirit "unyielding to power and undiverted by poverty," forging an invisible Great Wall against foreign invasion.

2.3 Heroic Spirit of "Defying Violence and Fighting to the End": From Historical Memory to Practical Resistance

Faced with superior firepower, China's soldiers and civilians offered a flesh-and-blood testament to indomitable heroism. The three-month Battle of Shanghai shattered Tokyo's boast that China would fall in ninety days, while the victory at Pingxingguan broke the myth of Japanese invincibility. Street-to-street bayonet fights in Taierzhuang and the leap of the five heroes of Langya Mountain embodied Mao Zedong's verdict that "the Chinese nation has the spirit to fight its enemies to the bitter end." [3] This mettle washed away a century of humiliation and raised China upright once more.

2.4 Indomitable Belief in Victory: From Theoretical Guidance to Practical Perseverance

Despite fourteen years of hardship, the Chinese people never doubted final victory. In *On Protracted War* (1938) Mao Zedong predicted that “final victory will belong to China,” [4] giving the nation a scientific roadmap; on the North-China plain a farmer’s couplet—“Unite as one to safeguard independence; persevere to win liberation”—captured popular faith. From the trauma of the Nanjing Massacre to chronic shortages in the base areas, this conviction that the war must be fought to the end sustained China until victory.

3. The Generative Foundation of the Great Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression: A Historical Logic of Three-Dimensional Interaction

The great spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression emerged neither by chance nor in isolation; it is the historical product of three mutually reinforcing forces—cultural inheritance, practical tempering, and the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

3.1 Cultural Foundation: Inheritance and Sublimation of the Chinese National Spirit

Rooted in patriotism, the national spirit provided the cultural source for the great spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. Ancient traits—unity, diligence, courage and self-reliance—were distilled into the wartime watchwords “every individual is responsible for the rise and fall of the nation” and “all-people resistance,” while the traditional resolve to “rather be a shattered piece of jade than an intact tile” was fused with a modern nation-state identity, crystallizing the spirit of the age. [5]

3.2 Practical Foundation: Lessons Forged in Fourteen Years of Blood and Fire

Practice forged the spirit. From local resistance after the Mukden Incident (1931) to nationwide war after Marco Polo Bridge (1937), fourteen years of blood and sacrifice turned patriotism from abstraction into action. Soldiers at the front and civilians behind the lines, guerrillas in the forests of Manchuria and partisans in eight southern provinces, together hammered out an indomitable character. As Mao Zedong observed, “No previous struggle ever aroused and united the Chinese people to such a degree.” [6]

3.3 Guiding foundation: the Communist Party of China as the mainstay

The leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) is the key guarantee for the formation of the Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. As the “backbone” of the united resistance against Japanese aggression, the CPC advocated the cessation of civil war and united resistance against Japanese aggression through the August 1st Declaration, established the policy of the Anti-Japanese National United Front at the Wayaobu Conference, formulated the all-round anti-Japanese war line at the Luochuan Conference, and consolidated the ideological consensus of the whole Party through the Yan'an Rectification Movement. It was precisely the Party's theoretical guidance and organizational mobilization that integrated the scattered anti-Japanese forces into an organic whole, elevated the spontaneous patriotic feelings into a systematic spiritual form, and endowed the Spirit of the War of Resistance with distinct directionality and cohesion.

4. The Contemporary Practice of the Great Spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression: Mission and Responsibility in the New Era

General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed that the great spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression is “a priceless spiritual asset that will forever inspire the Chinese people to

overcome every obstacle on the road to national rejuvenation.” [7] In the new era, this force must be creatively transformed from historical memory into practical action.

4.1 Addressing Risks and Challenges: The Practical Transformation of Spiritual Strength

In the current era of accelerating centennial global change, China confronts “high winds and rough seas—or even terrifying storms” as unilateralism and protectionism resurface. Inheriting the great spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression entails safeguarding national sovereignty and development interests with the courage to “defy violence,” overcoming critical technological bottlenecks such as advanced semiconductors and aero-engines through an “indomitable” conviction, and resolving deep-seated contradictions in reform and development with “unwavering” perseverance, thereby translating spiritual strength into demonstrable, problem-solving outcomes. [8]

4.2 Cultivating Youth Responsibility: Intergenerational Connection in the Inheritance of Spirit

Young people are the vital force of national rejuvenation, and their spirit shapes the country’s future. The great spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression offers them a moral compass: it converts “everyone is responsible for the nation’s rise and fall” into the conviction that “I must be part of the success,” and turns the resolve to “fight to the bitter end” into a habit of overcoming obstacles. [9] Whether in laboratories, village offices, or international forums, young researchers, cadres and diplomats are translating this spirit into action, fulfilling the pledge of “pure love, only for China.”

4.3 Contributing to Global Governance: The Global Extension of Spiritual Value

The great spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression is both nationally specific and universally relevant. The wartime cooperation of the anti-fascist allies demonstrates that solidarity is the only viable response to present-day challenges such as climate change and regional conflict. Guided by this conviction, China pursues the Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development Initiative, translating the core conviction of “safeguarding peace and opposing hegemony” into concrete contributions to building a community with a shared future for mankind and offering Chinese wisdom for global governance.

5. Conclusion

The great spirit of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression—patriotic sentiment, national integrity, heroic mettle and unwavering belief in victory—is a precious legacy forged in fourteen years of blood and fire. Rooted in China’s cultural tradition, tempered by protracted struggle and guaranteed by the leadership of the Communist Party of China, it now confronts new-era challenges, drives national rejuvenation and informs China’s contribution to global governance. Only by embedding this spirit in concrete action will it continue to illuminate China’s future journey.

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