

**MODERN VECTORS OF SCIENCE  
AND EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT  
IN CHINA AND UKRAINE**

中国与乌克兰科学及教育前沿研究

Harbin Engineering University

State institution "South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K. D. Ushynsky"

Educational and Cultural Center "Confucius Institute"

Odesa, Ukraine

Harbin, the People's Republic of China

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The ninth issue of the materials represented by the Ukrainian and Chinese scholars are dedicated to the relevant issues of General and Contrastive Linguistics within the Chinese, English, Ukrainian, Turkish and Korean languages; linguodidactic problems of teaching native and foreign languages within polycultural educational space; peculiarities of cross-cultural communication in geopolitical space alongside education-related aspects regarding profession-oriented training of future specialists under conditions of multicultural environment and military actions in Ukraine; post-COVID-19 pandemic challenges.

The given articles may be of use to researchers, graduates, postgraduates and practising teachers who are interested in various aspects of Sinology, Cross-cultural Communication, Linguistics, Pedagogy and Psychology.

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## **CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION OF SOUTH KOREAN FILMS FROM A GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Abstract:** *Due to geographical location and historical reasons, China and South Korea have engaged in frequent and in-depth cultural exchanges, showcasing noticeable similarities and common origins in their cultures. South Korea's significant geographical position has historically led to numerous geopolitical entanglements. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992, the exchanges and cooperation between China and South Korea have achieved remarkable success in many areas, with cultural exchange being particularly vibrant. In recent years, many South Korean films and television series have gained international recognition and praise, offering valuable lessons for the "going global" strategy of China's film and television industry. This paper aims to explore the cultural presentations behind South Korean cinema and its characteristics of cross-cultural communication from a geopolitical perspective, intending to provide references and insights for the international development of China's cultural and creative industry.*

**Keywords:** *Geopolitics; Movies; Cross-cultural communication*

## **1. Introduction**

Directed by the South Korean filmmaker Joon-ho Bong, "Parasite (Gisaengchung)" not only swept numerous awards within Korea but also garnered universal acclaim on the international stage. At the 92nd Academy Awards in February 2020, Parasite achieved an unprecedented feat by winning four major awards: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, and Best International Feature Film. This recognition not only elevated the reputation of the South Korean film industry but also drew widespread attention across the Asian cinematic landscape. Embedded with dark humor, the film intricately explores profound social issues such as the wealth gap, unemployment, familial debt, and class stratification, delicately narrating the efforts of an impoverished family to secure employment opportunities in a wealthy household. Cinematic literature serves not merely as an artistic expression but as a reflective mirror of social realities, capturing the zeitgeist and the emotional landscape of the populace. Through a complex web of conflicts and contradictions, the film profoundly unveils the intricate psychology of the lower social strata when confronted with life's adversities, sparking profound contemplation among viewers about societal realities. As a distinctive art form, cinematic literature shares a unique synergy with traditional literary works in conveying deep-seated meanings, adeptly weaving specific ideologies within its narrative. These rich and complex themes do not emerge in a vacuum; rather, they are shaped under the multifaceted influence of socio-economic, political, and cultural forces.

## **II. The Geopolitical Influences on South Korean Cinema**

The foundational theories of geopolitics, as established by Sir Halford John Mackinder, a political geographer, delineate the world into a dichotomy of Land Power and Sea Power. Terrestrial power, termed as the "Heartland" or the historical "geographical pivot," represents the epicenter around which all historical dynamics revolve. In contrast, maritime spaces, encompassing oceans and lakes, are characterized by their fluidity, hence maritime power is inherently mobile. Mackinder posited that the binary struggle between land and sea powers is pivotal for

understanding historical trajectories. His theory was further expanded by Nicholas Spykman (1893-1943), who emphasized the rimlands surrounding the Heartland, asserting, "Who controls the rimland rules the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the world." Korea's unique geographical positioning as a bridge between land and sea has historically subjected it to dual pressures from continental and maritime forces. In antiquity, the Korean Peninsula fell under the indirect rule of various empires, such as the Han Dynasty, the Khitans, the Jurchens, and the Mongols, yet it was never fully integrated into their territories. In more recent history, Korea experienced three decades of Japanese colonial rule. Today, Korea is further entangled in the internal strife resulting from the national division of the Korean people. The strategic location of the Korean Peninsula, at the nexus of land and sea, rendered it a focal point of contention between the Soviet and American empires in their quest for Asian dominance. With the support of these superpowers, the Korean nation, once unified, was split along the 38th parallel into two states, divided by differing ideologies and marked by prolonged animosity.

The cultural exchanges between China and South Korea are not insulated from political and geopolitical influences. Regional security situations, bilateral political relations, and changes in relations with other major powers can all impact the scope and depth of cultural exchanges. For instance, since the Obama administration's pivot to Asia strategy, the United States has viewed North Korea's nuclear program as a primary geopolitical risk on the peninsula, leading to the strong deployment of the THAAD missile defense system in South Korea. Before the crisis in 2016, Chinese tourists constituted 47% of South Korea's international tourism market, a vital source of income for Korean businesses. The deployment of THAAD, perceived by China as a threat to its interests and security, led to a voluntary reduction in Chinese tourist visits to South Korea, and the installation of the U.S.'s THAAD elicited dissatisfaction at the national level in China, impacting cultural and economic exchanges to a certain extent. Both Beijing and Moscow consider Pyongyang to hold strategic value in defending their national interests. Although a ceasefire agreement was signed between North and South Korea in 1953, neither side recognizes the other's government as legitimate, each



claiming to be the sole lawful government of the peninsula. Geopolitical risks are inevitable for South Korea, facing complex and profound contradictions stemming from external pressures to internal dynamics, from political and economic challenges to ideological and cultural influences. Throughout the development of Korean culture, influences from Chinese Han culture, Japanese-imposed modernization during the colonial period, and Western civilization led by the United States have all left indelible marks on its cultural landscape. Therefore, from a geopolitical perspective, the cultural exchanges between China and South Korea carry multifaceted meanings and impacts, reflecting mutual attraction and learning at the cultural level as well as cooperation and competition within the geopolitical framework.

### **III. Implications of South Korean Cinema's Global Success for China**

South Korea is a pivotal partner in China's endeavor to elevate its level of international openness, with the deepening of bilateral cooperation in the post-pandemic era bearing significant strategic value. Cinema, recognized as the seventh art form, integrates various arts and reflects the ideologies and emotions of its audience's era, often hailed as humanity's Tower of Babel to the spiritual realm. The dissemination of film and television works has facilitated mutual trust between the peoples of both nations, contributed to the eradication of Cold War mentalities, and played a part in maintaining stability in the Northeast Asia region. This has also offered valuable lessons for the internationalization ("going global") of Chinese films and TV dramas.

Contemporary South Korean cinema, emerging from the unique historical and cultural context of the Korean Peninsula, embodies profound multilayered meanings. Director Kim Ki-duk's "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring" masterfully blends Buddhist Zen with modern culture, not only securing the Blue Dragon Film Award domestically but also achieving international acclaim with awards like the Locarno International Film Festival's Don Quixote Prize and the Las Palmas de Gran Canaria International Film Festival's Best Cinematography Award. The film, rooted in the cultural backdrop of Eastern Zen and integrating a narrative framework of the changing seasons and life cycles, showcases another cultural aspect to the West through its unique cinematographic techniques and deep cultural essence.

In recent years, South Korea's deep collaboration with Netflix has expanded the influence of Korean dramas and films in the United States. For years, South Korea has specialized in the romance genre, infusing it with elements of imaginative foresight, thereby garnering international fame for its romantic dramas. This genre introduces a variety of fresh character types, including love stories between humans and ghosts, aliens, individuals from ancient Korea, immortals, and even between grim reapers and goblins. South Korea's unique societal context also provides ample material for content creation. Korean dramas frequently explore themes such as political elections, religious theology, class stratification, and legal cases. The rich and diverse societal phenomena possess both the uniqueness of the East and the globally ponderable values and issues.

Directed by the acclaimed South Korean director Bong Joon-ho, "Parasite" received universal praise upon its release, sweeping numerous awards in Korea and scoring a high rating of 8.8 out of 10 on China's authoritative film review website, Douban. It also won the Best Foreign Language Film Award at the 44th Japan Academy Prize. The film garnered numerous honors in the East Asian cultural sphere and resonated in the West. At the 72nd Cannes Film Festival in 2019, "Parasite" won the Palme d'Or, marking a historic victory for South Korean cinema. Subsequently, at the 77th Golden Globe Awards, the film was awarded Best Foreign Language Film. "Parasite" achieved a historic breakthrough at the 92nd Academy Awards in 2020, becoming the first non-English language film to win Best Picture. Additionally, it secured awards for Best Director (Bong Joon-ho), Best Original Screenplay, and Best International Feature Film, totaling four major awards. That same year, it received both the Best Original Screenplay and Best Foreign Language Film awards at the 73rd British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA). Furthermore, "Parasite" won the Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture at the 26th Screen Actors Guild Awards (SAG Awards), becoming the first non-English language film to achieve this honor. The accolades for "Parasite" not only signify South Korean cinema's global achievements but also its profound social consciousness, innovative narrative style, and exquisite production quality, garnering high recognition from the international film community.

In "Parasite," the upper class enjoys vast spaces and resources, while the poor are confined to cramped semi-basements. As the story unfolds, class conflicts emerge conspicuously. Ultimately, all art is inherently speculative, and cinema is no exception. The protagonists, the Kim family, ingeniously infiltrate the Park household, securing jobs that perfectly fit their needs. The Park family's villa contains a secret room, isolated and nearly unknown, making everything seem overly coincidental and fortuitous. Despite the plot's speculative nature, it remains deeply connected to reality. The phenomena of class solidification and the widening wealth gap are not unique to Korea but represent a global social challenge. Thus, Bong Joon-ho's allegorical storytelling in this film has elicited profound resonance among global audiences. The use of cinematography and dual narratives, a technique favored by Korean directors, is exemplified in "Parasite," where the narrative of Mr. Park's family serves as a subplot contrasting starkly with the main storyline of the Kim family, intertwining to create a significant contrast in the film's content. In the 2016 film "The Handmaiden," directed by Park Chan-wook, this dual narrative structure is showcased to full effect. The film, adapted from the British author Sarah Waters's novel "Fingersmith," significantly shifts the story's setting to 1930s Korea under Japanese colonial rule, achieving a highly successful localization that imbues the film with an Eastern flavor.

For an extended period, China's cultural and creative industry has operated within a fixed mindset, gravitating towards two distinct phases: either fully embracing Hollywood-style blockbuster production or concentrating on showcasing Chinese culture while neglecting the untranslatable aspects of cross-cultural communication. As a mainstream medium, cinema presents an array of human cultures in a more diverse and inclusive art form, enjoying widespread popularity among the public. Films serve as a crucial platform for ideological propagation, a beloved form of literature and art, and a significant marker of a nation's soft cultural power. The development and prosperity of the film industry are of paramount importance for advancing the construction of a culturally strong socialist country.

The key to international success for films lies in the high quality of their content. China and South Korea share deep historical and cultural ties, with Chinese culture

having a profound impact on the Korean Peninsula throughout history, including in areas such as language, philosophy, and arts. This shared cultural heritage provides a solid foundation for cultural exchanges between the two countries. The rise of Korean Wave culture has not only been warmly received in China but has also promoted the export of Korean cultural products and services. Similarly, China's cultural industry, including films, TV dramas, and music, enjoys a wide audience in South Korea. Therefore, the content creation and market models of South Korean cinema are replicable for China.

Short video platforms like TikTok and Kuaishou are continuously dividing user time, squeezing the living space of long video platforms. Chinese streaming media platforms such as iQIYI, Youku, and Tencent Video have been exploring overseas development in recent years to strengthen their competitiveness in streaming platforms and content in hopes of finding new growth points and attracting more users to expand their commercial space. Their initial focus has been on countries within the Confucian cultural sphere. Given South Korea's years of deep cultivation in the entertainment industry and the highly competitive market in Northeast Asia, many platforms have targeted the populous and vast paid market of Southeast Asia. The international success of South Korean films offers valuable lessons for Chinese entertainment platforms in their "going global" strategy, providing insightful implications for establishing a foothold domestically while expanding globally.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In accordance with the requirements of China's "Fourteenth Five-Year Plan" for the development of the film industry, the country aims to achieve the status of a cultural powerhouse in cinema by 2035. This goal necessitates not only an increase in the capacity for film creation and production but also a greater emphasis on enhancing the international discourse and influence of Chinese cinema. Due to its unique geopolitical factors, South Korea has developed profoundly rich and diverse film content, with non-stereotypical character portrayals and themes that resonate with modernity. It is imperative that we continue to explore the diverse modern values within Chinese culture and devise strategies to strengthen the cultural identity of China. By drawing

on South Korea's successful experiences, China can gain new insights for film creation, thereby continuously enhancing the international competitiveness of its film industry and augmenting its cultural soft power.

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## 地缘政治视角下的韩国电影的跨文化传播

**摘要：**由于地理位置和历史原因，中韩两国在文化领域展开了频繁而深入的交流，在文化层面拥有高度的相似性和共同起源。韩国由于其重要的地理位置在历史上导致了众多地缘政治的纠葛。自1992年建立外交关系以来，中韩之间在众多方面的交流与合作均取得了显著成就，特别是在文化交流方面活跃度尤为突出。近年来，许多韩国电影和电视剧国际上获得认可和好评，为中国影视行业的“出海”战略提供了可供借鉴的成功经验。本文旨在从地缘政治的角度探讨韩国电影背后的文化展示及其跨文化交流的特点，旨在为中国文化创意产业的国际发展提供参考和启示。

**关键词：**地缘政治学；电影；跨文化交际