

# Ethnic HeQin: a concentrated embodiment of the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization

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**Abstract.** The HeQin policy is a unique political strategy in ancient China for handling ethnic relations, and constitutes a historical practice of ethnic interaction, exchange, and integration of the Chinese nation. The purpose of forming and maintaining HeQin-based ethnic relations is not only to end wars or eliminate the risk of war, but also to further achieve ethnic peace and friendship through the establishment and maintenance of HeQin relations. Ethnic HeQin represents a historical practice of the Chinese nation's unrelenting pursuit of peace—a fine tradition—and serves as a concentrated embodiment of the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization. Most of the historical episodes of peaceful and friendly ethnic relations in China began with the formation of HeQin-based ethnic relations; the sustained development of such peaceful situations was mostly based on the continuous maintenance of HeQin relations; and the eventual breakdown of peaceful and friendly situations often started with the disruption of HeQin relations. The frequent formation and long-term maintenance of ethnic HeQin relations in Chinese history have, to a certain extent, fostered the development of a historical mindset and fine tradition of resolving ethnic contradictions and conflicts through peaceful negotiations.

**Keywords:** ethnic HeQin, inter-ethnic Kinship-Based political relations, peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization

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## 1. Introduction

On June 2, 2023, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized at the Symposium on Cultural Inheritance and Development: “Chinese civilization is notably peace-oriented. Peace, harmony, and concord have been concepts passed down in Chinese civilization for more than 5,000 years. It advocates constructing a world where the individual and the collective are unified through moral order, and prioritizes others in interpersonal relationships. It promotes communication to achieve harmony and opposes isolation and seclusion; advocates coexistence and common progress and opposes imposing one’s will on others; advocates upholding great harmony and opposes the law of the jungle. The peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization fundamentally determines that China will always be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of the international order; it determines that China will continue to pursue exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations rather than seeking cultural hegemony; it determines that China will not impose its values and political system on others; and it determines that China will adhere to cooperation rather than confrontation and will never form exclusive cliques to ‘align with allies and oppose others.’” The pursuit of peace is a fine tradition of the Chinese nation, which endows Chinese civilization with a distinct peace-oriented character. Scholars in the academic community have already conducted in-depth research on the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization. Generally speaking, these studies mostly focus on its cultural genes [1], profound connotations [2], important roles [3], modern implications [4], contemporary value [5], and modern diplomatic practices [6]. In fact, the Chinese nation’s fine tradition of pursuing peace took shape and developed in the specific historical process of interaction, exchange, and integration among various ethnic groups of China; meanwhile, the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization is also concentrated in the specific historical practices of such interaction, exchange, and integration. “HeQin” is an important method and approach for the interaction, exchange, and integration of China’s ethnic groups, and a concrete practice of the Chinese nation’s pursuit of “peace.” Therefore, the formation of the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization should be closely related to ethnic HeQin. In the long-term historical practice of ethnic HeQin, the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization has been continuously strengthened, becoming a prominent feature of Chinese civilization.

## 2. HeQin as the main thread of the development of ethnic relations in ancient China

HeQin is a political strategy used in ancient China to handle ethnic relations. Specifically, HeQin refers to a political strategy adopted by different political entities to alleviate or promote their relations by establishing blood or quasi-blood ties and thus rendering their political relations kinship-based. As early as the Pre-Qin period (before 221 BCE), HeQin had already become a political strategy for handling relations between different political entities. Zixia's Commentary on the I Ching states: "The former kings established numerous states and formed HeQin alliances with feudal lords, thereby bringing peace to the world." [7] Yuejue Shu (The Lost History of Yue) notes: "When a wise ruler governs and peace prevails under heaven, feudal lords form HeQin alliances." [8] HeQin alliances were frequent among the vassal states of the Pre-Qin period. Records of the Grand Historian: The House of Chu records: "King Qingxiang of Chu and King Zhaoxiang of Qin held a friendly meeting in Wan and formed a HeQin alliance." [9] During the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), the vassal states pursued strategies of "vertical alliances" (uniting with weaker states to resist stronger ones) and "horizontal alliances" (allying with stronger states to dominate weaker ones), which were often referred to in historical documents as "horizontal alignment" (henghe) and "vertical kinship" (zongqin). Su Qin, a strategist of the time, once said: "If we form vertical kinship alliances, the feudal lords will cede land to serve Chu; if we form horizontal alignments, Chu will cede land to serve Qin." [10] According to the principle of mutual context in ancient Chinese, "horizontal alignment" and "vertical kinship" actually refer to "HeQin alliances in both vertical and horizontal strategies"—an accurate description of the frequent HeQin practices among the Pre-Qin vassal states.

After the unification of China by the Qin (221–207 BCE) and Han (202 BCE–220 CE) dynasties, the HeQin policy, which originally applied mainly to the vassal states in the Central Plains, was gradually extended to relations between the Central Plains dynasties and surrounding ethnic groups, as well as between different surrounding ethnic groups. In the early Han Dynasty, Emperor Gaozu (Liu Bang) launched a northern expedition against the Huns (a nomadic ethnic group in northern China) but was besieged at Baideng. After the siege was lifted, Emperor Gaozu sent Liu Jing to the Huns to "conclude a HeQin alliance [11]." Soon after, Liu Jing was again dispatched to "present a princess of the imperial clan (styled Wengzhu) as the Chanyu's (leader of the Huns) consort, and stipulate the annual tribute of silk, textiles, wine, and food to the Huns in fixed quantities, forming a fraternal pact through HeQin [12]." Thereafter, the Han Dynasty (or its fragmented regimes in later periods) frequently formed HeQin alliances with the Huns. At that time, HeQin was also widely used in relations with other ethnic groups. For example, "the Nanyue (a regime in southern China) formed a HeQin alliance with the Han Dynasty" [13]; and Lu Fang "sent envoys to form HeQin alliances with the Western Qiang (an ethnic group in western China) and the Huns [14]." Clearly, HeQin had become an important means for various ethnic groups to handle their mutual relations at that time.

After the Qin and Han dynasties, the HeQin policy gradually became the main means and strategy for handling relations between the Central Plains dynasties and surrounding ethnic groups, as well as between different surrounding ethnic groups. Due to space limitations, specific cases will not be listed one by one here. Ban Gu (a historian of the Eastern Han Dynasty) once stated: "People hold different views, with some agreements and differences, but in essence, these views can be summarized into two categories: scholar-officials advocate HeQin, while military officers advocate conquest [15]." The History of the Sui Dynasty: Biography of the Turks notes: "Strategists discuss HeQin in the imperial court, while military commanders advocate counterattacks on the border [16]." The Old Book of Tang: Biography of the Tubo also records: "Regarding the strategy of appeasement and preparedness, scholar-officials mostly advocate HeQin, while military generals only hope for victory in battles—this is the general trend [17]." The History of the Song Dynasty: Biography of Zhu Taifu further states: "The 'barbarians' invading the Central Plains is recorded in the Canon of Emperors; since the Shang (c. 1600–1046 BCE) and Zhou (c. 1046–256 BCE) dynasties, they have repeatedly harassed the borders. Rulers either sent troops to conquer or formed HeQin alliances to seek peace—these have been the effective strategies in successive dynasties [18]." Evidently, HeQin and war were the two most important ways for different ethnic groups or regimes in ancient China to handle their mutual relations.

War, as armed conflict, is the most direct and violent way to resolve problems. It not only consumes huge amounts of material resources but also costs the lives of many people on both sides. HeQin, by contrast, advocates resolving problems through negotiation: it not only ends wars and eases contradictions but also enables the two sides to achieve peaceful and friendly relations by establishing and maintaining inter-ethnic kinship-based political relations. The Chinese nation has a fine tradition of pursuing peace, so when addressing ethnic contradictions, it often tended to adopt the HeQin approach. Jian Bozan (a modern Chinese historian) argued: "When discussing ethnic relations, it is incorrect to focus only on wars or only on friendly exchanges between ethnic groups. The normal and dominant relationship between ethnic groups is friendly exchange and peaceful coexistence—this is the mainstream of the history of ethnic relations. At the same time, 'war is not an accidental outburst in history, but the result of the long-term development of ethnic contradictions, and the most concentrated expression of such contradictions [19]." Zhou Weiyan (a modern Chinese historian) also pointed out: "The formation of the Chinese nation community was accomplished through two methods—peace and war—which complement each other. However, in terms of both time and space, the peaceful method was the main one.... From a macro perspective, the former (peace) is the norm and foundation, while the latter (war) is an abrupt change and a means [20]." Clearly, peace and friendship were the mainstream and dominant features of ethnic relations in ancient China. From the perspective of specific historical development, the peaceful and

friendly ethnic relations in ancient China were mainly achieved through HeQin. Therefore, HeQin constituted the main thread of the development of ethnic relations in ancient China. It was through the frequent formation and long-term maintenance of HeQin relations that a relatively stable environment of peace and friendship was created among various ethnic groups of China, providing favorable conditions for frequent interaction, extensive exchange, and in-depth integration of these groups. This not only facilitated the cultivation and development of the sense of community of the Chinese nation but also directly promoted the continuous cohesion and connotative development of the Chinese nation community.

### 3. The essential attribute of ethnic HeQin: peace and friendship

As the main thread of the development of ethnic relations in ancient China, HeQin alliances were frequently formed and long maintained by various ethnic groups of China. According to historical records, the formation of HeQin relations generally occurred against the background of wars or the risk of war. Therefore, the primary purpose of HeQin was to end and avoid war. In the early Han Dynasty, the Huns frequently raided the Han borders. Emperor Gaozu personally led troops to fight but was besieged at Baideng. Against this backdrop, the Han Dynasty sent Liu Jing to the Huns twice to form HeQin alliances, which not only successfully eased the tense situation and ended the war but also prevented further Huns raids to a certain extent, avoiding the risk of renewed war and creating favorable external conditions for the reconstruction and recovery of social economy in the early Han Dynasty. Later, Emperor Wu of Han launched military campaigns against the Huns, and the HeQin relations were broken. However, as the war dragged on, the social economies of both sides were severely damaged, leading to political crises, and the two sides began negotiations to restore HeQin. During the reign of Emperor Zhao of Han, HeQin was formally resumed: "Between the Zhishi and Fengyuan eras, the Huns and Han resumed HeQin, and the people lived in prosperity [21]." This ended the state of war that had lasted for decades. In the early Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127), relations between the Song and Liao (a regime founded by the Khitan ethnic group) remained tense, with frequent wars. Finally, the two sides formed a HeQin alliance, putting an end to the wars. Sima Guang (a historian of the Northern Song Dynasty) wrote: "Before the Jingde era, when the Khitan (Liao Dynasty) had not yet formed a HeQin alliance with the Song, military campaigns were launched every year, and the borders were in constant alarm. The imperial carriage was exposed to danger at Chanyuan, and enemy cavalry invaded the regions of Qi and Yun; the bones of the dead lay like grass in the area between the two rivers [22]." "Since our country formed a HeQin alliance with the Khitan fifty-six years ago, the people have lived and worked in peace and contentment [23]."

In fact, ending and avoiding war was only the first-level purpose of HeQin; in reality, HeQin had a higher-level goal: to seek the establishment of peaceful and friendly relations. According to historical records, most HeQin alliances in ancient China shared a common feature: the two parties established one or more types of kinship or quasi-kinship relations. For example, the HeQin alliances between the Han and Huns, and between the Song and Liao, all involved "forming a fraternal pact." Fraternal HeQin was a typical type of HeQin in ancient China. In addition, there were other types such as father-son (or mother-son) HeQin, political marriage-based HeQin, uncle-nephew HeQin, and monarch-vassal HeQin. The formation and maintenance of HeQin relations enabled different ethnic groups to achieve peaceful and friendly relations, promoting and accelerating the process of interaction, exchange, and integration. For instance, after the Han-Huns HeQin, the two sides engaged in extensive interaction, comprehensive exchange, and in-depth integration, gradually forming the concept that "the Han and Hu (non-Han ethnic groups) are one family." Emperor Wen of Han stated: "The Chanyu and I have both set aside past trivial grievances and embarked on the great path, abandoning former enmities to pursue long-term stability, so that the people of our two states may be like members of one family [24]." The Huns Chanyu also said: "Our two states have formed a HeQin alliance; the two rulers are delighted, and we will disarm our troops, rest our soldiers, and raise horses. May prosperity and joy prevail for generations, and may we make a fresh start [25]." After the Tang Dynasty (618–907) formed HeQin alliances with the Tubo (a regime founded by the Tibetan ethnic group), the two sides engaged in frequent interaction and extensive exchange, eventually forming a peaceful and friendly situation based on the uncle-nephew kinship-based political relations. In the 17th year of the Kaiyuan era (729), the Tubo Zhanpu (leader) sent a letter to Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, stating: "Your nephew is a long-standing kinsman of the former Emperor (your father); moreover, you bestowed Princess Jincheng (as a bride to the Tubo), leading to our unification as one family. All the people under heaven live in peace and happiness [26]." In the 4th year of the Jianzhong era (783), the Tang and Tubo concluded the Qingshui Alliance, and the alliance document stated: "The Tang Emperor and the Tubo Zhanpu have formed marital alliances for generations, consolidating friendly neighborly relations. Our fates are bound together in safety and peril; our states, as uncle and nephew, have maintained this bond for nearly 200 years [27]." In the 1st year of the Changqing era (821), the Tang and Tubo concluded another alliance, and the alliance stele reads: "Today, our lands and people are as one, and great harmony prevails. However, in accordance with the principle of friendship between uncle and nephew, we must always communicate with sincerity and trust... We must uphold the etiquette of closeness between uncle and nephew, so that no smoke of war rises along our borders, no bandits are heard of, and no fear or alarm troubles our people [28]." Through two political marriage-based HeQin alliances (involving Princess Wencheng and Princess Jincheng), the Tang and Tubo formed stable uncle-nephew kinship-based political relations, fostered and strengthened the intimate uncle-nephew bond between them, and achieved peace and friendship.

Clearly, the formation and maintenance of HeQin relations not only eased tense relations and ended wars to achieve peaceful coexistence between ethnic groups but also promoted friendly exchanges between them. From this perspective, the ethnic HeQin in Chinese history is fundamentally different from the armistice agreements under the modern international relations system; to some extent, it combines the functions of both an Armistice Treaty and a Treaty of Peace and Friendship. In ancient Chinese terms, HeQin can be described as “transforming weapons of war into jade and silk” (*hua gangge wei yubo*). “Gan” (shield) and “ge” (halberd) are both weapons, referring here to war and armed conflict; “yu” (jade) and “bo” (silk) refer to jade artifacts and bolts of silk, respectively. In ancient China, these were gifts exchanged during alliances between feudal lords and during court visits by feudal lords to the Son of Heaven, symbolizing peaceful and friendly exchanges. Therefore, the phrase “transforming weapons of war into jade and silk” means resolving enmities, turning war into peace, and converting conflict into friendship [29]. For thousands of years, the concept of “transforming weapons of war into jade and silk” has been an important guideline and ideal goal for Chinese statesmen in handling internal and external relations, and it also represents a concrete embodiment of the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization.

#### **4. Ethnic HeQin as a concentrated embodiment of the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization**

The Chinese nation has a fine tradition of pursuing peace, and the peace-oriented nature is a prominent feature of Chinese civilization. This prominent feature is particularly evident in the development of ethnic relations throughout successive dynasties. The ancestors of the Chinese nation attached great importance to the concept of “harmony” (*he*) or “unity and harmony” (*hehe*). When handling various social relations, they often advocated “valuing harmony as the most important” (*yi he wei gui*) and “transforming weapons of war into jade and silk” (*hua gangge wei yubo*), emphasizing peaceful coexistence and friendly exchanges. In addition, the ancestors of the Chinese nation advocated the isomorphism of family, state, and the world (*guojia tianxia tonggou*), proposing to govern the state and stabilize the world by applying the principles and methods used to manage families or clans. In ancient China, when different ethnic groups or regimes handled their mutual relations—especially when resolving contradictions and conflicts—they often tended to form HeQin relations, i.e., by establishing and maintaining inter-ethnic kinship-based political relations, rendering their political relations kinship-based and affectionate, thereby achieving the political goal of resolving or easing their relations. Therefore, ethnic relations in Chinese history have always been dominated by peace and friendship. Throughout history, various ethnic groups of China mainly handled their mutual relations by frequently forming and long maintaining HeQin alliances; ethnic HeQin constituted the main thread of the development of ethnic relations in ancient China. Since the essential attribute of ethnic HeQin is peace and friendship, ethnic HeQin represents a historical practice of the Chinese nation’s fine tradition of pursuing peace, and a concentrated embodiment of the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization.

First, the initiation of a peaceful and friendly ethnic situation often begins with the formulation and implementation of the HeQin policy. Different ethnic groups or regimes often experience tense relations or even wars due to conflicts of interest—a common phenomenon in Chinese history. However, on the one hand, the consequences of war or tense relations are generally severe, and both sides pay a heavy price regardless of victory or defeat; on the other hand, the Chinese nation has a fine tradition of pursuing peace and friendship, and Chinese civilization has a prominent peace-oriented nature. Therefore, soon after the outbreak of war or tense relations, people will actively seek effective ways to end the war or ease the tension. According to historical records, the ancient Chinese often achieved this goal by forming HeQin-based ethnic relations. For example, in the early Han Dynasty, after the Han and Huns fought a major war, the Han Dynasty took the initiative to formulate and implement the HeQin policy, concluding a “HeQin pact” with the Huns [30], which not only ended the state of war but also achieved ethnic peace and friendship. Another example is the 1st year of the Jingde era of the Northern Song Dynasty (1004): after the Battle of Chanyuan between the Song and Liao, the two sides ceased fire and negotiated peace. Finally, on the basis of the Liao Dynasty’s willingness to “treat the Southern Dynasty (Song) as an elder brother” [31], the emperors of the two states “formed a fraternal pact” [32], establishing a fraternal HeQin alliance. This eased the decades-long tension between the two sides and further achieved ethnic peace and friendship. According to historical records, during the formation of HeQin relations, the two parties would establish a kinship relation that matched their balance of power, thereby constructing a stable inter-ethnic kinship-based political relation. Once HeQin-based ethnic relations are formed, the two parties will not only end the war and ease tensions but also achieve peaceful coexistence.

Second, the sustainability of a peaceful and friendly ethnic situation often benefits from the effective maintenance of HeQin relations. As discussed above, the formation of HeQin-based ethnic relations not only ends wars but also realizes friendly exchanges between ethnic groups through the establishment of inter-ethnic kinship-based political relations—creating the possibility for the long-term maintenance of peaceful and friendly ethnic relations. However, whether this possibility can be realized depends largely on whether the two parties can effectively maintain the HeQin relations. The Chanyuan Covenant between the Song and Liao established a fraternal HeQin alliance, which not only ended the state of war and achieved ethnic peace but also created a situation of friendly ethnic exchanges based on inter-ethnic kinship-based political relations. With the joint and effective maintenance of both the Song and Liao, this peaceful and friendly ethnic situation lasted for more than a

hundred years. Sima Guang wrote: “Since our country formed a HeQin alliance with the Khitan (Liao) fifty-six years ago, the people have lived and worked in peace and contentment [33].” Li Gang (a statesman of the Northern Song Dynasty) stated: “During the Jingde era, the Khitan invaded. The Song Dynasty abandoned the plan to flee far away, decided on the strategy of the emperor’s personal expedition, and concluded a peace treaty by offering 300,000 gold and silk. For more than a hundred years, the people of both states have benefited from this.” [34] The Chanyuan Covenant between the Song and Liao established a fraternal HeQin alliance, and the two sides effectively maintained this relation until the end of the Northern Song Dynasty—an important reason for the century-long peaceful coexistence and friendly exchanges between the Song and Liao. HeQin was the main thread of the development of ethnic relations in ancient China, and various ethnic groups of China frequently formed and long maintained HeQin relations. The effective maintenance of HeQin-based ethnic relations not only provided a peaceful, harmonious, and concordant external environment for friendly ethnic exchanges but also cultivated and developed a sense of kinship and family affection among ethnic groups, which in turn promoted and safeguarded ethnic peace and friendship. This created favorable conditions for the long-term maintenance of peaceful and friendly ethnic relations. Clearly, the long-term maintenance of peaceful and friendly ethnic relations in ancient China was closely related to the effective maintenance of HeQin relations.

Third, the disruption of a peaceful and friendly ethnic situation often begins with the termination of HeQin. In Chinese history, the establishment and maintenance of HeQin-based ethnic relations created a historical situation of peace and friendship. The disruption and end of this peaceful and friendly ethnic situation were also closely related to HeQin relations—usually starting with the breakdown of HeQin relations. The Sui Dynasty (581–618) formed and maintained a HeQin alliance with the Eastern Turks for a relatively long period. However, the continuous recovery and development of the Eastern Turks’ power aroused suspicion in Emperor Yang of Sui, who then abandoned the HeQin policy. He not only implemented a “divide-and-rule strategy” in an attempt to split and disintegrate the Eastern Turkic Khanate but also lured and killed its officials [35]. As a result, Shibi Khan (leader of the Eastern Turks) “refused to pay tribute to the Sui Dynasty thereafter [36].” Soon after, the Eastern Turks sent troops to besiege Emperor Yang in Yanmen City—an event known as the “Siege of Yanmen.” The HeQin relations between the Sui Dynasty and the Eastern Turks were completely broken, and the peaceful and friendly ethnic situation came to an end. In this regard, Li Mi (a rebel leader at the end of the Sui Dynasty) criticized: “Today, the ruler is muddle-headed at the top, and the people are resentful at the bottom. The elite troops have been exhausted in the eastern campaigns against Goguryeo, and the HeQin alliance with the Turks has been terminated. Yet the emperor still tours Yangzhou and Yue (regions in southern China), abandoning the capital. This is an opportunity for heroes like Liu Bang and Xiang Yu to rise [37].” The breakdown of HeQin relations not only deprived the Sui Dynasty of a peaceful external environment but also indirectly intensified internal contradictions within the dynasty, thereby accelerating its collapse. In fact, this was not unique to the late Sui Dynasty; it was the case in most historical periods. The disruption and termination of HeQin relations signified the resumption of war and the end of peace. The sense of kinship and family affection that had been cultivated and developed through the establishment and maintenance of inter-ethnic kinship-based political relations was damaged, and friendly exchanges between ethnic groups were forced to cease. Clearly, the disruption of most peaceful and friendly ethnic situations was related to the breakdown of HeQin relations.

Finally, the continuous formation and long-term maintenance of HeQin-based ethnic relations gradually fostered the development of a historical mindset and fine tradition of resolving ethnic contradictions and conflicts through peaceful negotiations. The frequent establishment and continuous maintenance of HeQin-based ethnic relations not only initiated and sustained the situation of ethnic peace and friendship, making peace and friendship the mainstream of the development of China’s ethnic relations but also gradually cultivated a historical mindset and fine tradition of resolving ethnic contradictions and conflicts through peaceful negotiations. During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, the HeQin relations between the Han and Huns were broken, and wars broke out frequently. Decades of war caused severe damage to the political, military, and social economies of both the Han and Huns. As a result, both sides hoped to resume HeQin relations. The *Book of Han: Biography of the Huns* records: “Initially, two Han generals led large armies to besiege the Chanyu, killing and capturing over 80,000 Huns soldiers; however, the Han also lost tens of thousands of soldiers, and more than 100,000 Han horses died. Although the Huns were weakened and retreated far away, the Han also had few horses left and could no longer launch expeditions. The Chanyu, following Zhao Xin’s advice, sent envoys with kind words to request the resumption of HeQin. The Emperor submitted the matter to his ministers for discussion: some advocated resuming HeQin, while others proposed subduing the Huns as vassals [38].” Consequently, the two sides engaged in frequent contacts and conducted arduous negotiations on resuming HeQin. Although no consensus was reached and HeQin was not resumed during the entire reign of Emperor Wu (spanning over 30 years), the two sides never gave up their efforts to resolve the issue through peaceful negotiations. They maintained close contacts and sent envoys to conduct multiple rounds of in-depth discussions on resuming HeQin. This not only laid the foundation for the eventual resumption of Han-Huns HeQin during the reigns of Emperors Zhao and Xuan of Han but also set a model for resolving contradictions and conflicts through peaceful negotiations. The Chinese nation is one that pursues peace and friendship, and its people have always tended to resolve ethnic contradictions and conflicts through peaceful negotiations—thus forming the uniquely Chinese HeQin policy. Throughout history, it was precisely through the frequent establishment and long-term maintenance of HeQin-based ethnic relations that a historical mindset and fine tradition of resolving ethnic contradictions

and conflicts through peaceful negotiations gradually took shape. Meanwhile, ethnic HeQin became a concentrated embodiment of the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization.

## 5. Conclusion

China has been a unified multi-ethnic country since ancient times, and multiple ethnic groups have coexisted on the land of China. Therefore, the issue of how to handle relations between different ethnic groups or regimes has always been of great importance. Our ancestors always adhered to the concept of “transforming weapons of war into jade and silk,” persisted in the ethnic HeQin policy, and actively pursued peace and friendship. Ethnic HeQin represents a historical practice of the Chinese nation’s pursuit of peace and constitutes the main thread of the development of ethnic relations in ancient China. The continuous formation and long-term maintenance of HeQin-based ethnic relations not only resolved tensions, ended wars, and achieved ethnic peace but also enabled various ethnic groups of China to cultivate and strengthen a sense of kinship and family affection through the establishment of kinship-based political ties during the HeQin process, realizing ethnic closeness and friendship. Therefore, the essential attribute of ethnic HeQin is peace and friendship. The Chinese nation possesses a fine tradition of pursuing peace and friendship, and Chinese civilization has a prominent peace-oriented nature—this is prominently reflected in ethnic HeQin. HeQin is a concentrated embodiment of the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization. Most historical situations of peace in China began with the formation of HeQin-based ethnic relations; the sustained development of such peaceful situations was mostly based on the continuous maintenance of HeQin relations; and the eventual disruption of peaceful situations often started with the breakdown of HeQin relations. The continuous formation and sustained maintenance of HeQin-based ethnic relations ultimately fostered the development of a historical mindset and fine tradition of resolving ethnic contradictions and conflicts through peaceful negotiations.

The Chinese nation’s fine tradition of pursuing peace, as well as its historical mindset of resolving contradictions and conflicts through peaceful negotiations, are not only important components of China’s outstanding traditional culture but also crucial foundations of the modern civilization of the Chinese nation and an important ideological source of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in the new era. In his report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping called on the people of all countries to work together to build a community with a shared future for mankind and create a world of lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness, inclusiveness, cleanliness, and beauty. He emphasized the need to respect each other, conduct equal consultations, resolutely reject the Cold War mentality and power politics, and take a new path of state-to-state exchanges featuring dialogue rather than confrontation and partnership rather than alliance. He also stressed the importance of resolving disputes through dialogue, addressing differences through consultation, responding to both traditional and non-traditional security threats in a coordinated manner, and opposing all forms of terrorism. General Secretary Xi Jinping’s call for countries around the world to resolve contradictions and conflicts through equal consultation and dialogue on the basis of mutual respect is a contemporary embodiment of the peace-oriented nature of Chinese civilization, and represents the creative transformation and innovative development of the Chinese nation’s fine tradition of pursuing peace and its historical mindset of resolving contradictions and conflicts through peaceful negotiations.

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