**A Review of China’s External Communication Research and a Prospect of Its Practice in 2022**

**Topic, Thinking, and Scenarios**

**Source: External Communication**

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**[Abstract] This article systematically reviews and sorts out the overall picture of my country's external communication theory and practice in 2022, summarizes some noteworthy trends and developments from three levels: event orientation, strategic vision and platform logic, and on this basis, puts forward directional suggestions on the focus and path of my country's external communication in 2023.**

**【Key words】external communication, strategic communication, Chinese-style modernization, digital media platform, Metaverse**

**2022 is an extremely important year in the history of the Party and the country. The 20th CPC National Congress was successfully held, drawing a grand blueprint for building a modern socialist country in an all-round way. The report of the 20th CPC National Congress proposed to strengthen the construction of international communication capabilities, comprehensively improve the effectiveness of international communication, and actively create a new form of human civilization on the road of exploring Chinese-style modernization, which has guided the direction of theoretical exploration and practical innovation of my country's external communication.**

**In 2022, the normalization of COVID-19 prevention and control and the digital technology infrastructure have made the media more deeply involved in the process of globalization than ever before, becoming a "loudspeaker" for building solidarity and consensus in major international events and a "manipulator" for competing for the initiative in international disputes and conflicts. Therefore, it has also become a milestone in the development of global communication in the "VUCA" era (VUCA, liquidity, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity). A systematic review of the theoretical and practical progress of China's external communication this year has very important implications for us to continue to uphold the truth and innovate at the new historical starting point of the successful convening of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, and to escort the advancement of China's modernization process and the creation of a new form of human civilization.**

**1. Research Overview and Review**

**In order to clarify the research landscape in the field of external communication in 2022, the author further supplemented the special literature search and review of the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database based on the research results of this team. In line with the trend of the evolution and differentiation of the concept of external communication in recent years, the four thematic keywords of "external communication", "international communication", "strategic communication" and "global communication" were selected to set the search conditions, and relevant published papers from January 1, 2022 to December 12, 2022 were retrieved, and a total of 1,066 valid documents were obtained. Overall, my country's external communication research in 2022 showed three major characteristics: event orientation, strategic vision and platform logic.**

**1. Event-oriented: Topics of concern in China’s external communication research in 2022**

**In 2022, major events on the global stage took place one after another. With the support of digital media technology, the Beijing Winter Olympics, the Dubai World Expo and the Qatar World Cup were successfully held, bringing the dawn of unity and dialogue to a world that is deeply trapped in "anti-epidemic fatigue" and polarized division. But at the same time, the "dark side" of algorithmic technology has become more obvious. Smart media platforms under the influence of ideology have become "social media weapons" for "brainwashing and winning hearts", making geopolitical disputes such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict more complicated. The academic community has carried out in-depth analysis and theoretical research on the external communication mechanism with the above-mentioned international hot events as the topic orientation.**

**First, as China's most important home diplomatic event in 2022, the Beijing Winter Olympics is a rare opportunity to build a new model of external communication based on the concept of cultural symbiosis, sharing and co-prosperity, and to enhance the country's image and reputation. Related research focuses on the digital transformation of the Beijing Winter Olympics and the upgrade of the "cloud communication" model, focusing on multimodal scenes such as the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics, as well as the symbolic representations and media reporting narratives of the Winter Olympics slogans and mascots, and how to use "empathy communication" to shape a multi-dimensional and three-dimensional national image and the image of Beijing as a "double Olympic city". On this basis, the academic community attempts to promote macro-theoretical sublimation and explore the cross-regional, cross-system, and cross-subject communication model update from "cross-culture" to "transculturalization" brought about by the Beijing Winter Olympics.**

**Secondly, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is a "screen-dominating" event in the international geopolitical arena in 2022. Multiple communication subjects have launched a fierce public opinion war on social media, triggering academic discussions on the role of the media in international disputes in the context of intelligent communication. Related research focuses on the transformation of wartime/crisis communication modes enabled by intelligent media technology. There are empirical studies that use big data and computational communication methods to widely collect social media data to decode the behavioral mechanisms of computational propaganda subjects such as social robots during conflicts. There is also a process perspective to examine the iteration of propaganda modes from the "graphic information war" dominated by mass media to the "algorithm cognitive war" dominated by social media, and analyze its visual, emotional and strategic characteristics.**

**In addition, the academic community continues to offer advice and suggestions on conventional focus issues such as promoting high-quality development of the "Belt and Road" initiative, building a community with a shared future for mankind, and international communication of Chinese culture. The connotation and extension of related research are more subdivided and interrelated. Rooted in the real background, the logical reasoning and value connotation interpretation of China's global communication and network governance solutions such as the "Digital Silk Road" and the "Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace", and the communication strategy and on-site effect feedback of traditional Chinese medicine culture under the perspective of the "Belt and Road" initiative and the "Human Health Community" have received significantly more attention.**

**2. Strategic Vision: A Shift in Thinking in China’s External Communication Research in 2022**

**In 2021, General Secretary Xi Jinping outlined a new development blueprint in his "May 31" important speech: "strengthening top-level design and research layout, and building a strategic communication system with distinctive Chinese characteristics." In 2022, related discussions have continued to heat up, and have gone from the initial theoretical introduction and model overview to the localized and contextualized system construction and practical extension based on China's institutional characteristics and actual needs.**

**First, the academic community has further explored the construction of a local strategic communication system. Most studies have compared the knowledge maps and similarities and differences between Chinese and Western strategic communication research and strategic communication practices, clarified the "Common Goods" value core of the strategic communication system with Chinese characteristics, which is different from the strategic communication system of the United States and Western countries, and advocated the goal of multilateral cooperation and the local construction path guided by the "four-all" relationship; secondly, relevant studies actively incorporate strategic communication logic to provide new ideas for core issues of my country's foreign communication research such as enhancing international discourse power and enhancing cultural soft power. With the strategic communication system as the underlying support, multi-level and multi-dimensional forces should be incorporated into international communication work as discourse subjects, a three-dimensional discourse network should be built, and precise communication of "one country, one policy" and "one group, one policy" should be carried out. On the other hand, the international communication of Chinese culture should establish a multi-level communication cluster matrix based on the logic of strategic communication, break the barriers and distance brought by a single channel for external propaganda through multi-level interaction, and realize the understanding and recognition of the influence of Chinese culture by the international community.**

**3. Platform Logic: Scenario Migration of China’s External Communication Research in 2022**

**In 2022, the platform society and its platform logic are further embedded in the evolution of international communication and public diplomacy in the "VUCA" era. Correspondingly, the platform concerns of related research have also transitioned from early passive adaptation to active industrial and economic migration. The academic community regards the platform as a new track to enhance the effectiveness of external communication, and comprehensively examines the subversive changes it has brought to the concept and practice imagination of external communication, the characteristics of actors, and even the overall pattern.**

**First, the interactive, embodied, multimodal, and scenario-based technical affordances of digital intelligent platforms have pushed the metaverse from science fiction into reality. In 2022, scholars' attention to this vision will shift from general conceptual explanations to application adaptation in subdivided fields, focusing on how the metaverse can redefine or even completely rewrite the conceptual rules and practical paths of news dissemination. International communication and public diplomacy will also be one of the areas with the greatest changes. On the one hand, related research, based on the introduction of cross-domain knowledge resources to clarify the technical architecture of the metaverse, empowers traditional media and physical public diplomacy, creates new forms such as "digital museum diplomacy" and "cloud diplomacy", builds virtual key opinion leaders, and unleashes the external communication potential of cloud-based cross-domain communities. On the other hand, taking digital games, which are currently more mature in the field of metaverse applications, as an incision, it analyzes the innovation of the international communication model of Chinese culture reflected in it.**

**Secondly, as a group with a booming influence on social media platforms, "Generation Z" actors and their impact on the development of external communication in the platform era have sparked heated discussions in the academic community. Relevant research may start with the media usage preferences and acceptance habits of this group, analyzing how to adjust the content, discourse and representation of external communication to attract the attention and participation of "Generation Z" users around the world. Or, from a deeper cultural perspective, starting from the conceptual perspective of "third culture people", explore the transnational and cross-cultural communication potential of new generation sports stars such as Gu Ailing and Su Yiming, and explore how to help them give full play to the advantages of "micro-celebrities" and "self-brands", construct cross-cultural subjects that transcend the boundaries of a single nation, and open up new paths for international communication and public diplomacy.**

**In addition, the "multipolar rise" of digital media platforms has highlighted the importance of countries and regions in the "global south" in the digital industry chain and information dissemination order, driving changes in the geopolitical landscape of international communication. Relevant research uses China as an observation point to outline the basic outline of this change and contribute to the "de-Westernization" of foreign communication theory and practice. Relevant research attempts to deepen the discussion on the "reverse flow" of non-Western media content in the context of social media, revealing the "breaking circle" network communication model of "Japanese style", "Chinese style" and "Korean style" and the hybrid content production and precise distribution mechanism. At the same time, it also pays attention to the platform itself, exploring how the "digital Chinese wave" represented by Chinese digital media platforms such as TikTok, SHEIN, Qidian International and Mihayou can break through the international communication stereotype of "the media is American" through "going overseas with models".**

**II. Outlook on China’s External Communication Practice Innovation in 2023**

**(I) Grasp the key event nodes and promote the dissemination of Chinese-style modernization and the new form of human civilization**

**The 20th CPC National Congress proposed a strategic plan for China's modernization. In the future, it will be one of the key tasks in the field of external communication to take the lead in interpreting relevant topics through active topic management. 2023 coincides with the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. Following the guidance of the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress, continuing the event orientation of topic concerns, seizing the "opportunity period" for external communication created by the key nodes of the "two ten-year anniversaries", interpreting and promoting relevant concept stories, and enriching the external narrative and discourse communication of China's modernization and the new form of human civilization is just the right time.**

**First, the interpretation of the concept should balance the diversity and conflict of values: when integrating the concepts of Chinese-style modernization and the new form of human civilization into the interpretation framework of the "Belt and Road" and the community of human destiny, while highlighting the Chinese characteristics of the concept, we should adopt an inclusive attitude of seeking common ground while reserving differences and integrate the creation of concepts from China and foreign countries, and embed the Chinese political ideological discourse into the global historical process. The Chinese-style modernization path is a beneficial supplement to the global modernization process, rather than an "evil other" in the Western-centric logic. The new form of human civilization is not an exotic wonder from the perspective of Orientalism, but is committed to advocating equal respect and consultation and dialogue on the basis of adhering to the common values ​​of all mankind.**

**Second, the content of the story should integrate the universality and particularity of globalization: when promoting the feasibility and legitimacy of Chinese-style modernization and the new form of human civilization through the Chinese stories in the ten-year development process of the "Belt and Road" and the community of a shared future for mankind, it should be made clear that "telling Chinese stories well" is by no means a self-talk of "only telling Chinese stories", but a value-linked strategy should be adopted to integrate the dialectical relationship between the universality and particularity of individuals and countries, and local and global. Relevant narratives can implicitly express national goals through the perspective of ordinary people and micro-narratives, while connecting relatively abstract Chinese concepts with global common concerns and universal human cognitive laws, organically linking Chinese cultural elements with the values ​​of world civilization, and realizing the transformation from "explaining China to the world" to "explaining the world to the world from a Chinese perspective", and enhancing the appeal and affinity of discourse.**

**(II) Upgrading the system and mechanism from the perspective of strategic communication and improving the strategic communication system with distinctive Chinese characteristics**

**Under the new situation, the historic achievements made by the Party and the country have strengthened our confidence and confidence in telling the Chinese story well. However, we must also be soberly aware that the polarization trend of the "two Chinas" in the current international public opinion field is becoming more and more obvious, and the "China decoupling theory" is rampant, and the international public opinion situation is more severe. However, in the vast developing countries, China's influence and favorability have surpassed the United States and the West, which has become an irreversible trend of the times. Deepening the shift in thinking, upgrading the system and mechanism with a strategic communication perspective, and improving the strategic communication system with distinctive Chinese characteristics are the only way for future external communication work to accurately grasp opportunities and challenges, integrate resources to play to one's strengths and avoid weaknesses, and respond to the test of "high winds and waves" or even "storms".**

**First, give full play to the advantages of personal communication and think tank diplomacy, and effectively strengthen and extend the leading effect of head of state diplomacy: With the optimization and adjustment of epidemic prevention and control measures, head of state diplomacy after the 20th National Congress will also become the service focus of external communication in 2023. Therefore, while continuing to give play to the successful practices of the past "No. 1 Project", we must fully attach importance to the coordination and paving role of personal communication and think tank diplomacy. In 2022, think tanks such as the Center for China and Globalization (CCG) and Renmin University Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies made breakthrough practices in this regard and accumulated valuable experience. In 2023, more think tanks and social organizations of all categories and levels should join in. In addition, new cooperation mechanisms such as "China-Arab" and "China-GCC" opened up by head of state diplomacy need to be further consolidated and extended. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region should be the next key breakthrough and vigorously improved area for external communication work. In the window period when Chinese leaders and leaders of major Western countries have successively achieved their first offline meetings in three years and reached important consensus, how to effectively stop the trend of China's favorability in the United States and Western countries repeatedly hitting the bottom will also be the direction of external communication efforts in 2023.**

**Second, the news release system is fully covered: the news release system is the core of the output end of the strategic communication system. 2023 marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of my country's news release system and the 20th anniversary of its full promotion. It is also the 110th anniversary of the establishment of the world's first news release system, the White House news release system. Relevant practices should, based on the lessons learned from the past, conform to the immediacy and fragmentation of digital communication, and move news releases from the "big back end" of the communication chain to each core node. Through dynamic full coverage, real-time two-way communication can be achieved, and while maintaining the flexibility of policy adjustments, the timeliness, transparency and credibility of policy communication can be improved.**

**(III) Planning and Layout of Web3.0 Space to Enhance “Meta-Soft Power”**

**Web3.0 has become a strategic high ground for the next generation of "network geopolitics" competition. It is an indisputable fact that its concepts and practices have profoundly rewritten the rules of the game and the power structure of external communication. The realization of the initial application scenarios of the metaverse has transformed the digital platform from a flat channel to a three-dimensional scenario, opening up a new space for competition and cooperation in external communication. Occupying a place in this space, transcending the existing geopolitical structure and national border restrictions, making good use of technological imagination to open up new dimensions for enhancing soft power and building national brands, and consolidating the foundation of "meta-soft power" are the key points of the layout of future external communication work.**

**First, we support the practice and exploration of Web3.0 on our own platforms on the basis of strict risk control: mastering the dominance of "information infrastructure" is the basis for improving "meta-soft power". On the one hand, we should provide corresponding support in terms of policies, regulations and operating environment to fully encourage and protect the "shipbuilding and going out to sea" practice and metaverse technology exploration of our own digital media platforms, and activate the creativity of the two-dimensional subculture represented by animation, games, and online literature (AGCN) and emerging fields of cultural and creative industries such as "robot entertainment" (Robotainment) and "virtual incarnation" (Avatar); on the other hand, we should also maintain the bottom line of national security and national interests, and strictly control risks to ensure the healthy development of the external communication environment.**

**Second, multi-faceted collaborative empowerment of "hybrid public diplomacy" (Hybrid PD): The Dubai World Expo held during the COVID-19 pandemic initially demonstrated the innovative potential of "hybrid public diplomacy" through the deep integration of reality and virtuality. Under the background of normalized epidemic prevention and control, this integrated communication model may become the new normal of external communication and the key path to enhance "meta-soft power". For my country, we should make good use of the home diplomacy opportunities such as the third "Belt and Road" International Cooperation Summit Forum and the Hangzhou Asian Games, organize platform technology resources with the idea of ​​"strategic cooperation", and collaboratively empower the virtual and real omni-media, multi-modal "hybrid public diplomacy", enhance the communication coverage and influence of related activities, and attract a wider range of public interaction and participation.**

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