Rethinking the Empirical Mechanism of the United States Strategic Communication in the Era of Intelligent Media: Trends, Constraints and Chinese Countermeasures

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Abstract. The acquisition of emotional experience plays a critical role as the foundation for cognitive formation. As such, the emphatic mechanism is of significance ontological value in shaping cognitive processes related to strategic communication. This research paper products an analysis of the trends in the emphatic mechanism employed in the U.S. strategic communication during the era of intelligent media, through a context-driven approach, spanning three stages. The study delves into the limits arising from imbalanced development of the empathy mechanism. Finally, it suggests responding to the official of the empathy mechanism in Ameri-can strategic communication by embracing the Tai Chi notion of "balance" and " virtuality and reality combination", communicating with the idea of "flexibility," and actively participating in shaping the emotional system of international public opinion. The paper seeks to offer insights and strategies to construct a strategic communication system tailored to Chinese characters.

Keywords: Intellectual media; United States; strategic communication; empathy; Chinese countermeasures

1   Introduction

The development of the American strategic communication system spans a lengthy historical timeline. Following the period of the Cold War, it underwent a transformation from serving "war propaganda" to serving "soft culture infiltration," while still maintaining its primary objective of exporting ideology to perceived "third-party" actors, thus demonstrating its inherent hegemonic nature within the international narrative domain [1]. The overarching operations of the American strategic communication system can be distinguished by its shrewd selection of topics, fabrication of stories, and delineation of roles at the macro level, along with resource coordination, channel control, and information manipulation at the micro level. Ultimately, the effectiveness of its communication tactics depends on the acceptance of the intended audience. In intercultural communication, human common emotions, acting as the

driving force of strategic communication, possess greater compatibility and stronger appeal than regional or national languages, rhetoric, or symbols. Hence, exploring the American strategic communication approach in a context driven by empathy is profoundly necessary in order to comprehend its communication paradigm and practice from an ontological perspective.

The digital ecological pattern in the era of intelligent media has brought about technological changes and media generalization, which have further expanded the communication dimension of multi-modal media. This expansion is characterized by the proliferation of contact points between various nodes in the communication network and various media, as well as the establishment of stronger bonds and more generalized styles between communication content and audience [2]. In conjunction with the combination of real and virtual subject matter, the deepening of digital communication, the blurring of temporal and spatial boundaries, and the basis of empathy mechanism, which is rooted in "body coexistence," can manifest in various forms and scenes. Thus, the personal emotional system can be more readily integrated into the increasingly complex mimetic environment to facilitate emotional transmission and interaction. Given this transformation, it is critical to devote attention and develop a responsive approach to address the trends and limitations of American strategic communication.

2   Trend: Mechanism Empowerment

As a systematic communication activity, the operation of the empathy mechanism in strategic communication can be segmented into three stages: emotional stimulation, emotional contagion, and cognitive shaping [3]. This mechanism traverses the entire communication process from topic setting to target audience radiation. The intensity of emotional stimulation hinges on the dynamic force of information dissemination to ignite the audience's physiological response, whereas the breadth and depth of emotional contagion are contingent upon the scope of the audience's involvement in empathy. In addition, under the same emotional accumulation, the efficacy of cognitive shaping is closely tied to the alignment with the social context. Consequently, facilitated by the digital ecological pattern in the era of intellectual media, the United States amplifies its empathy mechanism of strategic communication in three dimensions: physiological impetus, empathic participation, and social construction.

2.1   Physiological Impetus

The media richness in the era of intelligent media has been substantially enhanced through the incorporation of artificial intelligence, three-dimensional modeling, and virtual reality technologies. These developments have significantly increased the information-carrying capacity (sound, text, image, etc.) and action intensity of traditional audio-visual channels. Furthermore, they have bridged the gap between communication and non-communication behaviors, providing novel ways of communication and extending sensory scheduling beyond visual and auditory to touch, smell, and

taste. As a result of these advancements, the human connection to communication information has been noticeably reinforced [4]. As technology continues to advance, communication becomes increasingly humanized, emotional interaction more immersive, and physiological drive much quicker in multi-sensory stimulation.

In the realm of China-related strategic communication, the United States has innovated the content production of traditional audio-visual channels using artificial intelligence technology. Large numbers of photographs are automatically generated as avatars and utilized to feign independence as media organizations. By disseminating large quantities of narratives through these channels, the United States aims to quickly incite people's emotions and break through the "threshold" driven by physiology. Additionally, cross-cultural attributes in non-communication behaviors, such as games, have gradually revealed the rhetoric of strategic communication in the United States. The US-based Villefort Company's overseas version of Steam game platform is an example of this trend. Despite containing numerous games with insulting plots, these games attract potential users through exquisite 3D modeling and VR device compatibility. Users are drawn into carefully planned plots, their five senses are fully mobilized, and the stickiness of multi-senses and media within digital communication is amplified through gameplay. Through these tactics, emotional interaction and memory formation are frequently shaped through physiological drive.

2.2   Empathic Participation

The emergence of sharing-based big data and We Media has elevated the audience's subjective position in communication and significantly reduced the communication threshold, thereby unleashing the "participation needs" of ordinary people. In response, all actors in the media market have been striving to develop diverse "participation interfaces" by leveraging the powerful computational capabilities of artificial intelligence, big data, and blockchain massive data processing, while also incorporating users' instant communication feedback. By doing so, they have established a coherent communication mechanism that is conducive to the propagation of emotional memes within information flows [5].

One of the strategies used by the United States in its strategic communication efforts is to establish communication networks on well-known and emerging social media platforms, utilizing public and personal accounts as network nodes. Through interactions such as "posting" and "following posts," virtual social relations are created, and emotional seeds are disseminated within all circles. The "Great Translation Movement" is a notable example of this tactic, where extreme Chinese internet discourse is selected, translated, and disseminated with various labels and hot search terms serving as participation interfaces. Robot accounts are employed to praise and pay attention to these posts, thereby increasing their exposure and expanding the digital community's scale. Ultimately, the aim is to discredit China's image as being associated with "violence" and "populism," creating an intertextual narrative that awakens the audience's inner resistance to these concepts.

2.3   Social Construction

Society can be regarded as a cognitive environment that involves adaptive psychological activities. A highly compatible social construction is crucial in reducing resistance to emotional expression, transmission, and implantation among individuals. It can also speed up the blending of the pseudo-environment with individual cognitive experiences. In the era of intelligent media, multi-channel information fusion technology connects with various advanced sensors to process the external environment through man-machine cooperation. The information is then handed over to algorithms for distribution. Moreover, the physiological and emotional feedback of users is packaged into a data return platform through intelligent equipment and blockchain technology analysis, further integrated as self-examination and iterative reference. This updated digital interaction enables social cognitive modeling in near real-time, facilitating the expected social construction in strategic communication under deliberate guidance.

Looking toward future strategic communication, the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has developed several related projects including "Artificial Intelligence Reasoning Map," "World Modelers," "Big Mechanism," and "Semantic Forensics" with the goal of improving social construction. According to comprehensive reports from US media outlets, DARPA's investment in cutting-edge technologies such as microelectronics, artificial intelligence, and network security ranked first in fiscal year 2023, primarily focused on improving social engineering technology. It is anticipated that the media application of these projects will significantly enhance social situational awareness and accumulate multi-modal communication assets for social construction.

3   Constraints: Imbalance Tendency

Despite the advantages presented by the empathy mechanism in American strategic communication under the influence of intelligent media, technological advancement does not eliminate contradictions. In fact, problems and limitations tend to gradually surface following the widespread adoption of technology. As the extroversion of American strategic communication becomes increasingly prominent, its inherent limitations are equally revealed in the unbalanced development of communication elements.

3.1   Empathy Deficit Due to Information-noise Imbalance

By drawing on the concept of "noise" in the Shannon-Weaver model, propagation efficiency can be attributed to the propagation signal-to-noise ratio. A high signal-to-noise ratio implies a high arrival rate of propagation content. In the present era of intelligent media, not only the media tasked with strategic communication in the United States but also media of all scales worldwide, including small-scale "We Media," can avail themselves of the communication dividend brought about by digital technology. Consequently, the degree of media network flattening has experienced

further deepening. The uncontrollable resources of traditional strategic communication in the United States have been significantly enhanced, and diverse forms of personalized media in the United States or Europe, which are often contrary to official media, have emerged one after another. As a result, the proportion of mixed noise is on the rise in strategic communication "information" with a strong purpose. However, the audience acceptance mechanism has failed to compensate for the imbalance of signal-to-noise ratio. In the limited time and space of communication, the capacity of the audience's cognitive space remains fixed and has not kept pace with the development of intelligent media. Therefore, indiscriminate shaping of information and noise is accepted by the pseudo-environment, leading to unfocused public emotion. This may even trigger "resistance communication" with stronger emotional appeal [6].

3.2   Empathy Principles Violation Due to Discourse Governance Disorder

Technological advancements have always been a double-edged sword. While the reduction of communication costs has led to exponential growth in information flow and flow rate, the black box of intelligent algorithms has made managing information quality more difficult. The traditional methods of communication governance are no longer suitable for the era of intelligent media. Discourse chaos has become increasingly complicated, particularly in the United States, where domestic contradictions are increasingly acute [7]. Although the United States has utilized intelligent media platforms to implement communication strategies, attempts to update governance concepts and capacities have not been made equally, resulting in an imbalance between communication and governance capacities. For an extended period, the United States relied on its strong control over communication channels to abuse the "fourth power." However, the era of intelligent media brought fake news, which once occupied media landscapes, into public view with its true face. This inconsistency violates the basic principle of empathy-honesty and trust. The fragmentation of the cornerstone means that the carefully built emotional interaction system is instantly shattered, sensitive public emotions falling off the cliff and even going to the other extreme.

3.3   Empathy Crisis Due to Perceptual-rational Imbalance

In American content production related to China-related strategic communication, an anxious and tense emotional tone is often adopted [8]. Manifestations such as discourse distortion, incitement, hatred, double standards, and other phenomena emerge one after another. Emotional information occupies a significant proportion of communication, forsaking continuous and logical chains for high "infectivity," causing the balance between "sensibility" and "rationality" to tilt to the left, exhibiting certain features of irrational communication. In consideration of the fragmentation and immediacy of media information in this era of intelligent media, the rapid expansion of empathy mechanisms makes it increasingly challenging to conduct targeted communication. This promotes the undifferentiated empathy of groups in a "post-emotional society," rendering the public opinion field a breeding ground for negative emotions

and even extreme emotions in the social mentality schema. Rational groups may also become victims of "silence spirals."

4   Chinese Countermeasures: The Philosophy of Tai Chi

Strategic communication serves as both an offensive and defensive weapon for large countries to engage in low-intensity competition in the "grey zone." The empathy mechanism undergoes a qualitative change to affect target audience cognition through the cumulative effect of emotional power. Emotions, as soft elements in the communication game, are expressed with varying degrees of emotional intensity and emotion during public opinion struggles. The flexible and diverse transmission methods employed exhibit the "softness and changeability" characteristics of Tai Chi. Against this backdrop, in the era of intellectual media where "change" is the dominant theme, it is a strategy unique to China to use Tai Chi, which is renowned for its adaptability, to cope with the pluralistic onslaught of American strategic communication.

4.1   Discourse Reinforcement: Dynamic Balance

In the realm of strategic communication, it is crucial to maintain a dynamic balance and combine reality with reality to effectively respond to low-intensity competition between large countries. On the defensive side, the emotional system formed by strategic communication is complex, with various emotions colliding and coexisting. To stabilize the public opinion situation, it is necessary to avoid sudden extreme emotions that may break the balance point. Therefore, China's strategic communication must strive to maintain a dynamic balance while intensifying emotional expression in proportion to its communication governance ability. Additionally, the emotional tendency should be consistent with the national discourse to prevent China from going to extremes under negative emotional contagion from American strategic communication. Blindly attempting narrative output without proper discourse governance may further exacerbate issues such as uneven information quality and communication inconsistency, resulting in increased self-communication noise and resistance or domestic public opinion getting out of control.

In the era of intellectual media, the cognitive domain has undoubtedly become a highland of communication confrontation, with cognitive shaping closely tied to emotional identity. Facing the generally anxious Western public opinion, there is a need for virtual flexibility in the means of communication and digital computing. This can be achieved by identifying any imbalance in malicious information dissemination and leading overall linkage among various media and channels. Introducing narratives full of extreme emotions and devoid of logical support into the "moral trap" can violate the principle of empathy, unload the stamina of continuous communication, and break the emotional identity foundation. In contrast, the "real" approach in strategic communication involves winning international trust through a steady attitude, confident culture, and practical actions. It can effectively correct the polarization of public opinion, establish a solid domestic emotional community defense line, and expand the

main position of international public opinion. This helps China get rid of the "other-shaped" international public opinion and shape a positive and healthy emotional system in the field of public opinion [9].

4.2   Communication Strategies: Softness overcoming Roughness

At the level of communication strategies, it is critical to employ a soft approach to overcome rigidity and leverage strength. China has long been passive in external communication and has faced challenges in the confrontation of positive public opinion. Western public opinion has frequently neglected Chinese voices, blocked channels, and distorted information dissemination. Moreover, low intensity, weak persistence, deviation from the direction, and other issues regularly prevent gaining the upper hand in the confrontation centered on traditional media. There is a risk of being pulled into hegemonic logic and taking the old road of western communication.

Therefore, there is a need to take advantage of opportunities presented by the era of intellectual media to soften the front and seize potential advantages through emotional "Flexibility" and "Taking Advantage" communication in strategic communication. First, it is necessary to broaden the field of empathy mechanisms in strategic communication by actively creating a national image in international affairs such as peace-keeping operations. This can gradually dispel resistance deliberately brewed by American media with the help of the American image falling into the "trust deficit". Second, there is a need to enhance the resource integration ability of strategic communication and implant symbols and rhetoric of strategic communication in new media communication methods such as online celebrities, short videos, live broadcasts, and physical interaction. Expanding the empathetic participation of non-governmental organizations and avoiding too dense and frequent one-way information exchange can further increase emotional appeal by the diffusion/cohesion of communication nodes [10].

Thirdly, it is essential to propose Chinese solutions on issues of concern to Western audiences, such as spreading the narrative seeds of new cosmopolitan ideas like the community of human destiny on issues like climate change, environmental protection, feminism, and humanitarian assistance. It is also vital to expose the disadvantages of capital manipulation in American or Western media. By changing the ecological pattern of public opinion through the trend of the times, a positive and healthy emotional system can be shaped in the field of public opinion.

5   Conclusion

In order to establish a strategic communication system that embodies Chinese characteristics and enhances the communication power of the international narrative space, a clear understanding of the new variables in the public opinion environment brought about by the era of intellectual media is essential. Additionally, it is critical to comprehend the strategic communication trends and limitations of Western media, particularly as led by the United States.

To achieve success in this endeavor, it is necessary to leverage China's backwardness as an advantage, seize technological opportunities available in the era of intellectual media, promote extroversion and visual development of the emotional orientation of strategic communication, and stimulate the physiological driving and social construction ability of the empathy mechanism within China's strategic communication. A dynamic balance between information and noise, communication and governance, sensibility and rationality need to be realized while uniting a domestic consensus defense line with empathy narrative.

Furthermore, flexible communication is crucial to restraining the emotional intensification of American strategic communication. Participating actively in the correction and amelioration of emotional system polarization in the ecology of intellectual media public opinion, accumulating identity through emotional power under the new circumstances, expanding the scale of international audience empathy participation, and presenting a genuine, three-dimensional, and comprehensive image of China are all necessary components of this approach.

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