

China's New Development Communication: Paradigm Shift and Practical Implications for the Global South

La nueva comunicación para el desarrollo de China: cambio de paradigma e implicaciones prácticas para el Sur Global

A nova comunicação para o desenvolvimento da China: mudança de paradigma e implicações práticas para o Sul Global

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Abstract: For decades, global development communication has been dominated by Western-centric theoretical frameworks that fail to adapt to the complex historical, cultural and socioeconomic contexts of the Global South. Against this backdrop, neo-developmentalism has emerged as a compelling alternative ideology. Taking China's long-standing communication practices as the research subject, this paper systematically interprets the theoretical origins, operational logic and practical applications of New Development Communication (NDC) under the guidance of neo-developmentalism. Compared with the modernization, critical cultural imperialism and participatory communication paradigms prevalent in the West, China's NDC represents a fundamental paradigm shift. It pursues multi-dimensional holistic development, adheres to the philosophy of constructive journalism, and relies on the synergy of state governance, market dynamics and grassroots participation. This paper elaborates NDC's extensive implementation across governance, economy, ethnic cohesion, ecological civilization and targeted poverty alleviation. It further verifies NDC's value in reshaping the global communication landscape. This study concludes that China's NDC serves as a referable model for media reform in Latin America and other Global South regions and facilitates the construction of indigenous knowledge systems in the field of development communication.

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Keywords:

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Resumen: Durante décadas, la comunicación para el desarrollo a nivel mundial ha estado gobernada por marcos teóricos centrados en Occidente, que no logran adaptarse a las complejas realidades históricas, culturales y socioeconómicas del Sur Global. Ante esta situación, el neo-desarrollismo ha surgido como una ideología alternativa destacada. Tomando las prácticas comunicativas de larga trayectoria de China como objeto de investigación, el presente artículo interpreta de manera sistemática los orígenes teóricos, la lógica operativa y las aplicaciones prácticas de la Nueva Comunicación para el Desarrollo (NCD) bajo la orientación del neo-desarrollismo. En contraste con los paradigmas occidentales dominantes de la modernización, el imperialismo cultural crítico y la comunicación participativa, la NCD de China supone un cambio de paradigma fundamental. Persigue un desarrollo holístico multidimensional, adopta la filosofía del periodismo constructivo y se apoya en la sinergia entre la gobernanza estatal, la dinámica del mercado y la participación popular. Este trabajo expone la amplia implementación de la NCD en los ámbitos de gobernanza, economía, cohesión étnica, civilización ecológica y alivio focalizado de la pobreza, y demuestra su valor para reconfigurar el panorama comunicacional global. Se concluye que la NCD de China es un modelo referencial para la reforma mediática en América Latina y otras regiones del Sur Global, y favorece la creación de sistemas de conocimiento autóctonos en el ámbito de la comunicación para el desarrollo.

Palabras clave:

Nueva Comunicación para el Desarrollo; neodesarrollismo; periodismo constructivo; desarrollo nacional; cambio de paradigma; China; Sur Global

Resumo: Há décadas, a comunicação para o desenvolvimento no cenário global é regida por quadros teóricos ocidentais, que não se adaptam às complexas realidades históricas, culturais e socioeconômicas dos países do Sul Global. Nesse contexto, o neo-desenvolvimentismo surgiu como uma ideologia alternativa relevante. Tomando as práticas comunicacionais de longo prazo da China como objeto de pesquisa, este artigo interpreta de forma sistemática as origens teóricas, a lógica operacional e as aplicações práticas da Nova Comunicação para o Desenvolvimento (NCD), orientada pelo neo-desenvolvimentismo. Em comparação com os paradigmas ocidentais predominantes da modernização, do imperialismo cultural crítico e da

comunicação participativa, a NCD da China representa uma mudança fundamental de paradigma. Ela busca o desenvolvimento holístico multidimensional, adota a filosofia do jornalismo construtivo e conta com a sinergia entre a governança estatal, a dinâmica do mercado e a participação popular. O trabalho detalha a ampla implementação da NCD nas áreas de governança, economia, coesão étnica, civilização ecológica e alívio focalizado da pobreza, além de comprovar seu papel na reestruturação da ordem comunicacional mundial. Conclui-se que a NCD da China constitui um modelo referencial para a transformação midiática na América Latina e demais regiões do Sul Global, contribuindo para a construção de sistemas de conhecimento autóctones na área da comunicação para o desenvolvimento.

Palavras-chave:

Nova Comunicação para o Desenvolvimento; neodesenvolvimentismo; jornalismo construtivo; desenvolvimento nacional; mudança de paradigma; China; Sul Global

1. Introduction

Across contemporary global governance landscape, development has permanently remained the paramount shared pursuit for all sovereign states within the Global South, covering nearly 130 developing economies concentrated in Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and South Asia. Post-colonial independent nations have long strived to escape underdevelopment traps, resolve extreme poverty, improve public livelihood and realize comprehensive social advancement; nevertheless, mainstream development communication research has gradually fallen captive to two dominating Western ideological frameworks since the late 1980s: neoliberal market-centric media freedom doctrine and radical critical journalism paradigm focusing solely on social deconstruction and systemic criticism. Rooted in Western post-war political economy and Cold War academic context, these two dominating thoughts define qualified media development merely as complete market liberalization or perpetual oppositional critique against state governance, which largely erases indigenous development realities and contextual diversities of Global South countries. If one merely identifies theoretical shortcomings as the sole issue, such thinking remains overly simplistic and lacks a basic understanding of the fundamental principles involved.

Under such academic predicament, Global South communication academia is trapped in a dual dilemma: either willingly or unwillingly copying classical Western modernization development or bravely or blindly embracing radical critical communication theories derived from Western left-wing thoughts, both of which generate constant mismatch between imported communication theories and domestic media practices (Mattelart, 1979; Beltrán,

1980).

Therefore, an urgent theoretical appeal emerges among Southern communication scholars: to rethink the core definitions of development, verify whether the Western-originated development paradigms fit the indigenous national conditions of Global South nations, and deeply critique the paradigm of why the above media paradigm has been widely promoted by the United States, and to restructure the normative correlation between mass media and national holistic development, and eventually explore localized alternative development communication paradigms independent from Western-centric theoretical constraints (Servaes, 1999; Krishna, 2023).

Throughout academic history, numerous scholars have begun to consciously summarize the development and dissemination experiences of China's socialism as well as its transnational impacts. In April 1976, Everett M. Rogers, the founder of the Diffusion of Innovations theory, stated in the editorial of *Communication Research* that the rise of the Third World on the international stage and the world's "rediscovery" of the People's Republic of China compelled researchers to reflect on the fundamental question of "what constitutes development" (Rogers, 1976a).

As a matter of fact, China's remarkable comprehensive development over the past four decades delivers a critical empirical sample responding to this global academic demand. Regrettably, plenty of Western mainstream communication studies tend to oversimplify China's multi-layered media development path into stereotyped authoritarian state-controlled propaganda system; such biased labeling blocks Global South academia's objective observation on China's innovative communication practice and eliminates feasible alternative development communication solutions for developing nations (Huang, 2022; Liu, 2019).

Distinct from three classic Western development communication paradigms including Lerner-Schramm-led modernization paradigm, Beltrán-initiated participatory communication paradigm and purely top-down unilateral propaganda mode, China's New Development Communication system originates from the theoretical core of neo-developmentalism, establishing an integrated operational framework featuring four core pillars: overall national strategic coordination and guidance, market - driven industrial empowerment, multi - level local public participation, and large - scale state - led foundational communication infrastructure construction (Wang, 2021; Zhou, 2021).

Different from narrow economic-oriented development definition popularized by early Western modernization theorists, China's developmental philosophy defines holistic national development as a compound system covering steady economic expansion, secure

social governance, eco-friendly living environment, inheritance of native traditional culture and inclusive ethnic welfare advancement (Ding, 2023; Chen, 2003).

Based on referenced Chinese and international literatures collected in attached documents, this paper systematically elaborates three core research modules as preset by research outline: Section One theoretically reviews structural flaws of Western mainstream development communication paradigms and theoretical origin of neo-developmentalism; Section Two dissects theoretical connotation and multi-field practical implementation of China's indigenous New Development Communication from political, economic, cultural, ecological and social security dimensions; Section Three analyzes replicable experiences and localized adaptive suggestions of China's NDC for media transformation in African and Latin American Global South countries, providing theoretical reference for Southern scholars to build homegrown development communication theories.

2. Defects of Western Development Communication Paradigms and Rise of Neo-Developmentalism

After World War II, as the global geopolitical-economic system characterized by colonialism and colonization began to collapse, the concept of "Southern countries" emerged as a new notion within the world order. The Western world, dominated by the United States, leveraged its advantages in capital, technology, knowledge, and institutions, combined with the Southern countries' urgent desire for national development, thereby fostering the rise of developmentism. Southern countries entered an era dominated by American development strategies, and developmentist principles gradually became central to their development trajectory. However, as these countries advanced in infrastructure construction and economic growth, the limitations of developmentism became increasingly apparent, leading to doubts about its effectiveness. This sparked a global movement of developmental critique that ultimately gave birth to neo-developmentalism.

2.1. Inherent Limitations of Three Dominant Western Development Communication Paradigms

Since the emergence of development communication as an independent academic discipline in the mid-20th century, three successive mainstream Western paradigms have dominated global research for decades: classical modernization paradigm, critical cultural imperialism paradigm and participatory communication paradigm, all of which carry unavoidable Western-centric structural defects incapable of matching Global South indigenous development realities (Melkote & Steeves, 1991; Levy, 2011).

2.1.1. Classical Modernization Development Communication Paradigm: Western Teleology and Oversimplified Media Effect Hypothesis

Represented by Daniel Lerner (1958)'s *The Passing of Traditional Society* and Wilbur Schramm (1964)'s canonical work *Mass Media and National Development*, modernization paradigm is regarded as the origin of systematic development communication theory. Lerner put forward the iconic “magic multiplier” theory, arguing mass media serves as core amplifier driving traditional agrarian societies to evolve into industrialized modern societies, cultivating modern individual empathy and psychic mobility to break traditional cultural constraints; Schramm further specified media's triple social functions as state supervisor, policy decision assistant and nationwide public educator, constructing the earliest practical framework linking media operation with national modernization (Lerner, 1958; Schramm, 1964). Everett Rogers supplemented innovation-diffusion paradigm, quantifying the spreading path of modern concepts via mass communication across developing communities (Rogers, 1976).

Nevertheless, as Rogers (1976b) himself critically summarized in his landmark paper *The Death of the Dominant Paradigm* published in 1976, modernization paradigm contains fatal theoretical flaws leading to its comprehensive decline after the 1970s. First of all, it follows rigid linear Western teleology, arbitrarily splitting social development into dualistic “traditional vs modern” binary opposition and presuming all developing nations must duplicate Western industrialization path to realize progress, completely ignoring diversified historical civilization, colonial legacy and resource endowment of Global South countries (Liu, 2019; Chen, 2003). Secondly, it overstates unilateral positive media effects while overlooking structural barriers including unequal global political-economic order, post-colonial resource exploitation and domestic social stratification restricting media's developmental performance; numerous post-colonial African and Latin American nations introduced Western-style media systems under modernization guidance yet failed to achieve expected socioeconomic upgrading (Nguyen, 2016; Schiller, 1976). Thirdly, the paradigm's Cold War origin makes it implicitly serve Western geopolitical expansion, promoting Western value penetration via media assistance programs across Global South without respecting local cultural autonomy (Mattelart, 1979; Li and Tang, 2024).

2.1.2. Critical Cultural Imperialism Paradigm : Excessive Deconstruction and Lack of Constructive Developmental Solutions

Against modernization paradigm's practical failure, critical school represented by Herbert Schiller (*Communication and Cultural Domination*, 1976) and Armand Mattelart (*Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture*, 1979) established cultural imperialism critical paradigm based on world-system theory, exposing core-periphery unequal information exchange under global capitalist operation and criticizing Western transnational media's cultural monopoly toward Global South nations. This theoretical trend effectively unveiled unfair global communication order dominated by Western media conglomerates and triggered worldwide New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) movement initiated by Global South states in the 1980s.

However, this critical paradigm gradually fell into theoretical extremism in subsequent academic evolution: it devotes nearly all research energy to negative deconstruction of Western media hegemony yet provides scarce actionable constructive solutions guiding Southern domestic media construction and national development (Couldry, 2010). Over time, many radical critical scholars equate all forms of state-led media governance with authoritarian suppression, denying state's indispensable role in infrastructure construction and macro-development planning for underdeveloped nations; such one-sided critical logic later evolved into core theoretical source of neoliberal anti-state media discourse dominating Western communication academia after the Cold War (Peng, 2018; Wang Chenyao, 2016).

2.1.3. Participatory Communication Paradigm: Grassroots Priority While Ignoring National Macro-Development Needs

Originated from Latin American progressive communication practice, Latin American scholar Luis R. Beltrán founded participatory communication theory in *Participatory Communication for Social Change* (1980), emphasizing marginalized grassroots communities' inherent communication rights and advocating bottom-up community media construction to realize endogenous social transformation free from top-down state or market control (Beltrán, 1980). Servaes's follow-up research refined the paradigm's operational path and ethical boundary, making participatory communication a mainstream alternative theory challenging previous two Western paradigms and widely applied in rural communication projects across Asia, Africa and Latin America (Servaes, 1999; Mattelart, 1979).

Even so, localized empirical studies conducted by Chinese communication scholars

such as Wang Chenyao (2016) and Zhou Ke (2021) reveal prominent practical limitations of pure participatory communication paradigm in underdeveloped Global South contexts. Most Global South countries suffer from insufficient national fiscal revenue, backward public infrastructure and fragmented grassroots social organization; excessive emphasis on decentralized small-scale community media while excluding state's overall coordination leads to fragmented media resources and incapability of media to match large-scale national economic construction, poverty alleviation and nationwide cultural inheritance tasks (Zhou, 2021; Ding, 2023). Pure bottom-up participatory media can hardly provide systematic nationwide public communication services required for holistic national development of late-developing countries.

Participatory communication emphasizes local culture, traditional values, and development strategies tailored to specific contexts. Scholars have noted that this approach views development as the result of both internal and external factors, integrating "the essence of two worldviews" —the modernization paradigm and the dependency paradigm (Servaes, 2009). Influenced by principles of empowerment, community engagement, and participatory communication, Western governments and non-governmental organizations have invested substantial funds in developing community media across African countries, providing crucial momentum for the growth of participatory communication there. Institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the United Nations Development Programme have actively implemented communication projects in African nations. However, the objectives of development communication have evolved beyond merely mobilizing communities to build nations or boost economic growth; they mostly focus on addressing fundamental needs in areas like nutrition, sanitation, education, and health. This shift significantly deviates from the media's original role in the development communication framework that supports national development agendas and exacerbates developing countries' reliance on developed nations, aid programs controlled by developed countries, and various NGOs—effectively plunging these nations back into a state of passive dependence.

2.1.4. Neoliberal Monopolization of Global Communication Discourse After the Cold War

After Cold War termination, neoliberalism quickly occupied mainstream global economic and communication academic territory, combining partial critical school's anti-state discourse to shape the dominating neoliberal media freedom norm. Global South nations were required to fully deregulate media market, abandon state's macro-regulation on media

industry and realize complete private capital-led media liberalization (Van Dijk, 2020). This norm further marginalizes development-oriented constructive communication research, turning mainstream journalism practice toward perpetual oppositional critique instead of cooperating with state to resolve domestic developmental challenges (Peng, 2018; Shi, 2021). As Krishna (2023) argued in *Decolonizing Development Communication*, Western neoliberal communication theory continues imposing its single universal standard onto Global South nations under decolonization rhetoric, essentially repeating new-type cultural hegemony via discourse monopoly (Krishna, 2023).

For example, during the 1990s, Africa actively or semiactively pursued democratization reforms, accompanied by widespread implementation of media marketization, deregulation, and a "watchdog" journalism paradigm. Under this framework, most private media outlets often deliberately adopted reporting stances that opposed the government to achieve higher viewership ratings and compete in the market; amid intense competition, they inevitably became deeply affiliated with political parties or various NGOs. Meanwhile, state-owned public broadcasting institutions, constrained by financial constraints and limited capacity, frequently struggled to compete with both international media operating locally and domestic private media (Zhang and Chen, 2024). As a result, the public agenda was severely marginalized, and media development gradually came to be regarded as an outdated concept.

This is particularly worthy of reflection, especially given that an overly liberalized Western media philosophy which not only undermines government governance capacity but also exacerbates social division and even ideological polarization and a trend prominently evident in the so-called democratic electoral processes of these countries. Moreover, how can underdeveloped and developing nations already grappling with deep social divisions and lacking cohesive unity overcome the periodic instability inherent in democratic elections and sustain long-term development momentum?

2.2.Theoretical Rise of Neo-Developmentalism as Alternative Developmental

Ideology for Global South

Against continuous failure of Western single-dimensional development theories applied in Global South, neo-developmentalism (new-developmentalism) gradually emerged as a core alternative theoretical framework originating from Latin American structuralist economics at the beginning of the 21st century, pioneered by Brazilian economist Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, now widely accepted by Global South development economists and

communication scholars as theoretical foundation for indigenous development path exploration (Bresser-Pereira, 2018; Oreiro, 2022). Different from neoliberal full marketization and classical Western developmentalism's blind Westernization, core tenets of neo-developmentalism include four dimensions: first, affirming sovereign state's legitimate role in macro strategic planning and public goods provision to overcome market failure and external capitalist monopoly; second, combining effective market allocation and rational state intervention to realize balanced economic growth; third, defining development as multi-dimensional holistic progress including economy, security, ecology, culture and livelihood rather than merely GDP expansion; fourth, insisting on indigenous development path based on domestic historical civilization and national conditions instead of copying Western preset development templates (Bresser-Pereira, 2018).

Clearly, the theoretical core of Neo-developmentalism represents both an inheritance and critique of traditional developmental theory. While traditional developmentalism essentially reflects the perspectives and aspirations of developed countries, Neo-developmentalism is a theoretical framework rooted in the practical experiences of developing nations. Emerging alongside the rise of the Global South, it embodies the knowledge accumulated through these nations' development practices and serves as a central theoretical and policy imperative for advancing their economic and social progress. Crucially, Neo-developmentalism explicitly rejects neoliberal development logic, advocates for government-led development approaches and a series of industrialization policies, while incorporating social development dimensions into its policy framework to achieve balanced economic and social growth (Li and Tang, 2024). Clearly, the theoretical core of Neo-developmentalism represents both an inheritance and critique of traditional developmental theory. While traditional developmentalism essentially reflects the perspectives and aspirations of developed countries, Neo-developmentalism is a theoretical framework rooted in the practical experiences of developing nations. Emerging alongside the rise of the Global South, it embodies the knowledge accumulated through these nations' development practices and serves as a central theoretical and policy imperative for advancing their economic and social progress. Crucially, Neo-developmentalism explicitly rejects neoliberal development logic, advocates for government-led development approaches and a series of industrialization policies, while incorporating social development dimensions into its policy framework to achieve balanced economic and social growth (Li and Tang, 2024).

Neo-developmentalism provides core theoretical ground for Global South to break Western development discourse monopoly and construct localized development

communication paradigms, and China's four-decade media development practice is exactly a comprehensive communication instantiation of neo-developmentalism ideology (Huang, 2022; Liu, 2019). Domestic Chinese communication scholars including Huang Dan, Liu Hailong, Li Liangrong and Ding Wei have systematically summarized China's neo-developmentalism-based development communication practice via long-term empirical research, forming localized theoretical system of New Development Communication distinct from all Western mainstream paradigms (Huang, 2022; Li, 2020; Ding, 2023). After reviewing structural defects of Western three mainstream development communication frameworks, Global South communication academia ought to abandon blind copycat of Western theories and turn to summarize indigenous developmental practice, taking China's mature NDC as vital reference to explore homegrown communication paradigms (Krishna, 2023).

3. China's New Development Communication: Neo-Developmentalism-Based Theoretical Connotation and Multi-Dimensional Practical Implementation

Coincidentally, combined with the core principles of neo-developmentalism, China's New Development Communication (NDC) abandons three Western paradigms' respective [defects.It] (defects.It) avoids modernization paradigm's blind Westernization and unilateral top-down media indoctrination, overcomes critical paradigm's excessive negative deconstruction without constructive solutions, and remedies pure participatory communication's over-decentralization and incapability of nationwide systematic development coordination (Chen Lidan, 2003; Guo Qingguang, 2008).

China's NDC forms an integrated composite framework defined as: state top-level overall strategic coordination as macro-guidance, market industrial operation as development empowerment, multi-layer local government + grassroots public participation as practical foundation, and nationwide full-coverage communication & digital infrastructure as hardware guarantee, forming comprehensive, constructive and coordinative communication system serving holistic national multi-field development (Huang,2022). From political governance, economic construction, ethnic cohesion, ecological civilization, targeted poverty alleviation and traditional cultural inheritance six dimensions, this section analyzes specific practical operation of China's NDC with verified domestic media cases collected from referenced literatures.

3.1.Promote Modern Governance Capacity

Core political function of China's NDC lies in constructing inclusive public opinion communication space to consolidate stable domestic political environment and promote modern national governance system upgrading, different from neoliberal media's perpetual confrontational reporting and pure propaganda's one-way closed information transmission (Peng Zengjun, 2018; Zhang Zhian, 2017). China's mainstream media system combines central authoritative media (Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, CGTN) and diversified local county-level integrated media centers (county-level converged media), realizing vertical communication linkage from central governance decision-making to grassroots community feedback (Zhou Ke, 2021). According to Zhou's 2021 empirical research on county-level converged media construction, over 2,800 county-level media centers nationwide have built localized news release + public complaint receiving platform. On one hand, they accurately interpreting central governance policies and transmitting national development blueprint down to every grassroots administrative unit; on the other hand, collecting public livelihood difficulties and grassroots developmental appeals to feed back superior policy-making departments, forming bidirectional interactive governance communication loop rather than unidirectional information flow (Zhou, 2021).

Meanwhile, Chinese media adheres constructive journalism philosophy (core component of NDC). Constructive journalism represents a typical practical form of new development communication within the China context. New development communication advocates for a localized approach, focusing on inclusive development and diverse values, distinguishing it from the single-perspective orientation of traditional development communication. Constructive journalism is problem-oriented while maintaining the balance inherent in news reporting, rather than amplifying issues and conflicts for market competition. Its narrative transcends adversarial frameworks, addressing real-world challenges while emphasizing solutions, thereby demonstrating the social responsibility of journalism. It adopts a constructive stance, objectively presenting development processes, interpreting development issues, and sharing development experiences, perfectly embodying the core objectives of new development communication. Consequently, both China's international communications and domestic narratives employ rational, positive narrative logic to interpret the essence of development, not only implementing the theoretical tenets of new development communication but also fostering continuous innovation within this theoretical framework through integration with China's practical realities.

It is worth mentioning that Chinese news reports particularly focus on balancing the

supervision of administrative malpractices and the positive guidance of governance progress. The media conducts rational investigative reporting on local governance loopholes to promote institutional optimization, while systematically publicizing successful grassroots governance experiences to achieve cross - regional sharing of governance experiences. Such constructive governance communication effectively avoids two extremes: the unrestricted anti - government confrontation of Western critical media and the total ignorance of public feedback in rigid top - down propaganda, laying a solid public opinion foundation for long - term domestic political stability required for continuous national development (Huang, 2022).

3.2. Empower High - Quality National Economic Development

Consistent with neo-developmentalism's state-market synergy principle, China's NDC coordinates policy publicity, industrial information dissemination and market resource matching to drive nationwide high-quality economic advancement (Yu Guoming, 2015; Hu Zhengrong, 2013). From macro level, central mainstream media systematically interpret national five-year development planning, industrial supportive policies and opening-up strategies, eliminating information asymmetry between market entities and macro policy formulation; from meso level, provincial and municipal converged media release regional industrial layout, investment invitation and supply-demand information to assist small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs) connect domestic and global supply chains; from micro grassroots level, county-level rural media and short-video new media platforms popularize modern agricultural technology, e-commerce sales channels for rural producers, promoting industrial upgrading of agriculture and rural commercialization (Ding Wei, 2023; Zhou, 2021).

Digital transformation of Chinese media further amplifies economic empowering effect of NDC. For instance, China's full-coverage 5G infrastructure supports booming short-video and live-streaming industrial ecology, helping millions of rural households realize live-stream e-commerce poverty reduction and rural industrial revitalization. Unlike Western neoliberal media's exclusive profit-seeking orientation ignoring underdeveloped rural areas and marginal industries, China's NDC balances commercial market profit and public developmental benefit via state macro-coordination and market diversified operation, fulfilling neo-developmentalism's balanced growth requirement (Fang Shishi, 2022; Yu, 2015).

3.3 Boost Cross-Ethnic Communication and National Ethnic Cohesion

Ethnic governance is pivotal to national social stability and sustainable development, as ethnic frictions may threaten domestic security and overall progress. Confrontational and emotionally charged media narratives often exaggerate ethnic disparities and stoke intergroup tensions. Unlike Western multicultural media that overemphasize group divisions and identity conflicts, China's constructive ethnic communication follows a holistic developmental logic. It respects the uniqueness of each ethnic culture while highlighting shared gains from national development, thereby building inclusive ethnic cohesion aligned with the integrated development philosophy of neo-developmentalism (Liu, 2019; Li, 2020).

China's media act as a key platform to forge ethnic consensus and drive regional growth. Mainstream media present real stories of ethnic interaction, exchange and integration, promote the sense of community for the Chinese nation, and consolidate the ideological foundation for national unity. They also showcase ethnic regions' competitive edges including characteristic industries and cultural tourism resources. By adopting converged media and short videos, local brands gain wider exposure and greater influence. Timely policy interpretation and market information release further bridge production and sales gaps. Through positive public discourse and information empowerment, media effectively unites all ethnic groups and fuels economic vitality in ethnic areas.

Rooted in China's multi-ethnic reality, neo-development communication (NDC) performs core functions: removing ethnic information gaps, disseminating shared national development values, and preserving diverse ethnic cultures to reinforce national identity integration (Li, 2020; Huang, 2022). Ethnic autonomous region media and the national multilingual broadcasting system deliver news, cultural content and development policies in more than 20 ethnic minority languages. Meanwhile, national mainstream media produce documentaries and special reports documenting ethnic groups' achievements in poverty alleviation, industrial growth and cultural heritage, which deepens cross-ethnic understanding and identity recognition (Ding, 2023).

3.4. Spread the Ecological Civilization Concept

China's iconic ecological development philosophy "Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" (Green development core principle) is systematically popularized nationwide via NDC's multi-level media communication system, forming nationwide consensus on eco-friendly sustainable development (Chen Changfeng, 2018; Huang, 2022). Central environmental news columns, local ecological special reports and new media short-

video content jointly disseminate green production standards, pollution control experience and eco-tourism development cases, pushing local governments and market enterprises to adjust high-pollution industrial structure toward green low-carbon transformation (Chen, 2018; Ding, 2023).

Different from Western environmental media's usual extreme confrontational reporting against industrial development, China's constructive ecological journalism balances industrial economic growth and environmental protection, exploring feasible green transformation paths for traditional industries, fully embodying NDC's comprehensive developmental attribute beyond single-dimensional critique (Huang, 2022).

It also actively builds a two-way communication bridge between government regulatory departments, industrial enterprises and the public, guiding all parties to reach consensus on ecological governance through full information disclosure and interactive communication. This reporting model effectively avoids social conflicts and efficiency losses caused by one-sided accusations and promotes the formation of a collaborative governance pattern in which multiple subjects participate jointly in environmental affairs, which is a useful exploration of new-type environmental governance that adapts to China's national conditions. By presenting successful cases of green transformation and summarizing replicable experience, ecological journalism with Chinese characteristics helps accelerate the overall green upgrading of the industrial system and provides practical support for improving the modernization level of the national ecological governance system and governance capacity.

3.5.Support Targeted Poverty Alleviation Communication

Targeted poverty alleviation is one landmark comprehensive developmental practice of China's neo-developmentalism implementation, and NDC serves as indispensable information bridge linking poverty reduction policies, helping resources and poor rural populations (Ding Wei, 2023; Zhou, 2021). National and local media set up fixed poverty-alleviation news columns: introducing supportive policies, matching enterprise targeted investment resources, publicizing successful local poverty reduction models and popularizing feasible income-increase techniques for impoverished households. According to Ding's 2023 monograph research on rural revitalization media practice, Chinese county-level rural new media help over tens of millions of poverty-lifted farmers realize agricultural product online sales, playing irreplaceable information-support role in China's historic complete elimination of absolute poverty nationwide (Ding, 2023). Such large-scale systematic poverty-reduction

communication cannot be realized under decentralized pure participatory media or fully marketized neoliberal media frameworks due to insufficient capital and resource coordination capacity (Wang Chenyao, 2016; Zhou, 2021).

However, existing academic discussions on China's targeted poverty alleviation communication mainly focus on summarizing practical experience and discussing communication effects at the macro level, while few studies systematically sort out the operating logic of NDC in this large-scale poverty governance practice, and lack in-depth analysis of its institutional advantages and internal coordination mechanism. This also leads to the fact that in the current international discussion on poverty reduction communication, the unique value of China's NDC paradigm has not been fully summarized and interpreted, making it difficult to provide a replicable reference for other developing countries facing similar poverty governance challenges.

4. Paradigm Shift: Core Differences Between China's NDC and Western Paradigms

Synthesizing above multi-field practical cases and Chinese scholars' research findings from referenced literatures, China's New Development Communication possesses three definitive core features separating it from all previous Western development communication paradigms, fully complying with neo-developmentalism holistic developmental logic.

As a theoretical and practical framework, neo-development communication (NDC) features a comprehensive vision against fragmented development thinking. It advances holistic, multi-dimensional national development covering economy, politics, ecology, culture and people's livelihood, rather than confining its efforts to a single sector. This sets it apart from participatory communication that only targets grassroots community growth and neoliberal media driven purely by market gains (Huang, 2022; Liu, 2019). Therefore, the government's overall coordination capacity and the media's support and collaboration capabilities must work in tandem.

When it comes to narrative and value orientation, NDC embraces a constructive approach rather than a deconstructive one. Aligned with the core tenets of constructive journalism, media guided by this framework devote themselves to exploring feasible solutions to domestic developmental hurdles, instead of indulging in the persistent negative interpretation and confrontational criticism prevalent among Western critical media (Peng, 2018).

In terms of operational mechanism, NDC relies on overall coordination to address the drawbacks of scattered resource deployment. Led by national top-level macro planning, it

unifies the allocation of media resources nationwide and combines market vitality with grassroots participation. Such a mechanism prevents the resource fragmentation of over-decentralized participatory communication and the market chaos brought by fully liberalized neoliberal media (Zhou, 2021; Wang, 2016).

Underpinning all its operations is a people-centered philosophy, which fundamentally rejects the capital-led logic of mainstream neoliberal media. All NDC practices take fulfilling people's aspirations for a better life as the fundamental starting point, always prioritizing public well-being and genuine public needs over capital interests.

These four distinctive features together shape the basic framework of NDC, laying a solid foundation for discussing its unique value and practical logic in the national development process, and providing a clear analytical basis for subsequent in-depth discussion of its operation mechanism and development direction. Development is far more than a purely economic concept; it is an all - round and multi - dimensional undertaking. Against this backdrop, media within the framework of neo - development communication break away from the profit - driven positioning advocated by neoliberalism. Instead, they evolve into an essential instrument serving national economic growth, social governance, and cultural exchange.

Despite its theoretical uniqueness and practical effectiveness, China's neo-development communication still faces mounting challenges amid the digital social media proliferation, artificial intelligence penetration, and the gradual decline of traditional mainstream media. The rise of algorithm-driven platform media has decentralized public communication discourse, fragmented audience attention, and diversified online information ecosystems, which weakens the dominant guiding capacity of traditional mainstream media that underpin conventional NDC practices. Additionally, commercialized social media logic prioritizes traffic, entertainment and emotional resonance over developmental values, often amplifying trivial social conflicts and diluting systematic, solution-oriented development narratives.

However, the rapid iteration of digital communication technologies also creates unprecedented governance dilemmas. Automated false information, cross-platform public opinion fluctuations, and the decoupling of grassroots communication from national developmental strategies collectively undermine the stability, comprehensiveness and coordination of existing NDC mechanisms. In this sense, future development of China's NDC needs to further adapt to intelligent media ecology, balance technological innovation and value guidance, and reconstruct updated communication logics suitable for the AI and

social media era.

5. Practical and Theoretical Implications for Media Development of Global South

As Global South nations strive to break Western media discourse dominance and build contextually adaptive indigenous development communication paradigms (Krishna, 2023; Servaes, 1999), China's neo-development communication (NDC) provides valuable theoretical insights and localized practical references for developing regions across Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. It offers a viable alternative to the historical failures of blind emulation of Western development paradigms (Nguyen, 2016), delivering dual theoretical and practical implications for the media transformation and developmental progress of Global South countries.

Theoretically, China's NDC contributes to the construction of non-Western independent knowledge systems and facilitates paradigm shifts in development communication. It dismantles the longstanding Western-centric universalism that regards Western communication frameworks as the sole standard for global development (Couldry, 2010). Breaking the academia's long-term reliance on modernization, critical, and participatory communication paradigms, China's holistic development practice verifies the feasibility of diversified development communication paths (Huang, 2022; Liu, 2019). It encourages Global South scholars to ground theoretical innovation in local colonial histories, cultural traditions, and developmental realities, rather than mechanically importing Western theories, and promotes comparative research on indigenous communication systems across Southern contexts (Shi, 2021; Song, 2014).

Practically, China's NDC paradigm offers adaptable operational references for media institutional reform and communication development in Global South countries, without requiring rigid replication. It advocates a balanced governance logic that avoids the extremes of neoliberal market privatization and rigid state media monopoly (Wang, 2016; Zhou, 2021), enabling sovereign states to implement moderate top-level strategic coordination while reserving vital market and grassroots operational space (Nguyen, 2016; Van Dijk, 2020). Guided by this framework, Global South nations can advance localized constructive journalism transformation to replace traditional conflict-dominated news norms (Peng, 2018), prioritize solution-oriented and development-centered media narratives focusing on poverty reduction and cultural inheritance (Krishna, 2023; The Standard, 2026), and bridge domestic digital divides through South-South media and technological cooperation (Levy, 2011; Van Dijk, 2020). Integrating centralized mainstream media governance and grassroots community

participation (Beltrán, 1980; Ding, 2023) further helps these nations build coordinated, multi-level communication systems that serve national comprehensive development.

In the long run, the localization and popularization of China's NDC experience carries profound global governance value for reshaping international communication order. The proliferation of diverse non-Western communication practices inspired by China's developmental logic effectively challenges the long-term information monopoly of Western transnational media groups (Mattelart, 1979; Schiller, 1976). It enriches the pluralistic theoretical landscape of global development communication, terminates the single dominance of Western communication theories (Krishna, 2023; Shi, 2021), and continues to advance the construction of a fair, inclusive, and multi-polarized global communication order pursued by Global South countries since the NWICO movement.

Future collaborative academic exchanges between Chinese and Global South communication scholars can strengthen comparative empirical research on the contextual adaptation of China's NDC paradigm across diverse regional, cultural, and socioeconomic settings. Such cross-border cooperation will continuously enrich the theoretical depth of non-Western development communication thought and expand the practical applicability of alternative communication paradigms, contributing diversified innovative resources to global development communication research.

6. Conclusion

Development remains the core pursuit of Global South nations, yet mainstream development communication has long been constrained by Western neoliberal and critical-deconstructive paradigms that are incompatible with diverse local developmental contexts. Rooted in the theoretical tenets of neo-developmentalism, China's decades-long New Development Communication (NDC) practice has driven a fundamental paradigm shift in global development communication scholarship, constructing a systematic and integrated media operational model that fundamentally breaks away from the theoretical and practical shackles of three dominant Western frameworks: classical modernization communication, grassroots participatory communication, and rigid state-centric propaganda models.

This innovative paradigm redefines the interactive logic between media operation and national development through four mutually supportive core dimensions: top-down coordinated national strategic guidance, market-driven industrial empowerment, multi-layered grassroots public participation, and full-coverage digital communication infrastructure support. Distinguished by its unique inherent attributes of holistic

comprehensiveness, problem-solving constructiveness, and systematic cross-domain coordination, the NDC paradigm effectively addresses the inherent defects of Western unilateral, deconstructive, or fragmented communication frameworks. Empirically, this paradigm-shifting approach has delivered tangible, multi-dimensional developmental achievements covering political stability, high-quality economic upgrading, cross-ethnic solidarity, ecological civilization governance, targeted poverty alleviation, and traditional cultural heritage preservation. Ample localized empirical studies on China's media and developmental practices further corroborate the practical validity and theoretical innovativeness of this emerging non-Western communication paradigm, offering a robust alternative to the long-dominant Western-centric development communication system.

For Global South countries across Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, China's mature NDC paradigm provides actionable theoretical insights and practical reform pathways to resolve the longstanding developmental predicament of blind Western model replication. Southern academic communities can adopt NDC's holistic developmental logic to advance indigenous theoretical construction, while local media industries can draw on China's state-market synergistic governance framework and constructive journalism philosophy to pursue media reforms tailored to national developmental needs. The widespread adaptation of NDC-inspired alternative communication paradigms across the Global South will further dismantle Western discursive hegemony and accelerate the formation of a more equitable, pluralistic and inclusive international communication order, a longstanding pursuit of Global South nations since the NWICO movement.

Future collaborative academic exchanges between Chinese and Global South communication scholars can strengthen comparative empirical research on the contextual adaptation of China's NDC paradigm across diverse regional, cultural, and socioeconomic settings. Such cross-border cooperation will continuously enrich the theoretical depth of non-Western development communication thought and expand the practical applicability of alternative communication paradigms, contributing diversified innovative resources to global development communication research.

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