Study on the Role and Path of Media Cooperation in Building the Mekong Community of Destiny

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Abstract: Some ethnic minorities in southwestern China and the Mekong River Basin countries are geographically close to each other, with similar customs and a long history of economic and cultural exchanges. The Me-kong cooperation is an important initiative of China in promoting peripheral diplomacy. It is an important platform for building "The Belt and Road", and an important pilot project for promoting mutually beneficial cooperation among ethnic groups and promoting the building of a community of human destiny. The media is the recorder, disseminator, participant, and builder of the Mekong cooperation. At present, the media cooperation between China and the Mekong countries is, on the whole, not deep enough, not strong enough, and not bright enough. Academics should carry out as soon as pos-sible a basic study on the situation of media cooperation in the Mekong countries and a planning study on the path of cooperation, to provide wise solutions and intellectual support for promoting exchanges among nationali-ties and building the Mekong Community of Destiny, and to make it a model for building the Community of Destiny of Humanity, and to provide Chinese ideas on the path of Chinese and foreign media cooperation and the con-struction of the discourse system.

Keywords: Lancang-Mekong Cooperation; Transnational Media Coopera-tion; Path study

1 Introduction

The term "Lancang Mekong" stands for "Lancang-Mekong River". It is an im-portant international river in Asia, originating from China and flowing through five countries: Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

The Lan Mekong Cooperation is a new sub-regional cooperation mechanism created by the six countries in the basin to discuss, build and share. The Lan Me-kong Cooperation is an important initiative of China to promote neighboring di-plomacy and an important platform for building "The Belt and Road".In 2018, the Second Leaders' Meeting of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation was held in Cambo-dia, where the Five-Year Action Plan of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (2018-2022) was published. The publication of this plan marked the entry of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation from the incubation period to the growth period. The "from near to far, from easy to difficult" is a feasible path to building a com-munity of human destiny, and the Lan-Mei cooperation provides an excellent sample for promoting the construction of a community of human destiny, which is of great importance as an early and pilot test. Several early projects have been effective, and their leading role in sub-regional and regional cooperation

is be-coming more and more prominent.

Media cooperation is described in detail in the Five-Year Action Plan for Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (2018-2022), which shows that media cooperation plays an important role in the process of promoting Lancang-Mekong coopera-tion. Some ethnic minorities in southwestern provinces of China are geograph-ically close to the Mekong River Basin countries, with similar customs and a long history of economic and cultural exchanges. Therefore, by studying the current situation of media cooperation in the Mekong countries, sorting out the problems and challenges, analyzing the relevant factors affecting media cooperation, and proposing practical and effective paths, we can carry out humanistic exchanges and public diplomacy with the six basin countries in a more targeted manner.

This paper divides the research objects of media cooperation in the Mekong countries into dimensions, and systematically analyzes the current situation and influencing factors of media cooperation in the Mekong from multiple dimen-sions. At the same time, the paper analyzes and summarizes experiences with specific cases and practices, explores media cooperation models and effective paths, and then proposes scientific recommendations. This is conducive to strengthening the docking of cultures and cognitive systems in different regions, changing to a certain extent the international discourse pattern in the Mekong region and even in ASEAN and Asia, enhancing China's national image and inter-national discourse power, and forming an international public opinion environ-ment favorable to China in general.

2 Research Methods

Two main research methods are used in this paper: the literature combing method and the comparative research method.

Literature combing method. Through literature analysis and summary of the Community of Human Destiny and related theories, summarizing its connotation and construction path, exploratory research on the Mekong Community of Desti-ny, further deepening and enriching the theory of the Community of Human Des-tiny; research on the coverage of the main content areas of Mekong cooperation and cooperation practices by various media, sorting out the effects and methods of content agenda setting, etc.

Comparative Research Method. Through a comparative study of the media co-operation practices of the Lancang-Mekong countries, the commonalities and individualities are summarized to provide an opinion reference for building a community of destiny in the Mekong.

3 Current Situation and Problems of Media Cooperation in Mekong Countries

3.1 Analysis of the current status of media cooperation

3.1.1 Build a multi-channel communication network

In the field of news papers, China has always had closer relations and coopera-tion with the countries in the basin. In 1992, China established a comprehensive monthly magazine named "Auspicious" with the main purpose of promoting eco-nomic and trade cooperation and cultural exchanges between the two countries. After the initiative of holding China-ASEAN Expo was put forward in 2003, Guangxi Daily put forward a three-step strategy of "international communica-tion": firstly, the communication from the outside to the inside, introducing the customs, people and economy of ASEAN countries to Guangxi and China; sec-ondly, the communication from the inside to the outside, putting the The third is to communicate and cooperate with the media of ASEAN countries to enhance mutual understanding and trust and serve the national foreign strategy.

Headed by the Information Office of the State Council, Mekong (Thai), Auspi-cious (Burmese), Champa (Lao) and Khmer (Cambodian), these traditional for-eign propaganda periodicals aim to introduce and promote China to the target countries and publish magazines in the languages of the target countries, elimi-nating to a large extent the communication barriers caused by language barriers and providing a window for China's foreign exchanges.

In the field of radio and television, CCTV has built a permanent correspondent station and sent reporters to the Mekong River Basin countries on a long-term basis. In August 2013, the international channel of Yunnan Radio and Television started broadcasting. The new channel is different from other international TV stations in that it targets ordinary people in the target countries, as well as Chi-nese culture lovers and business people who have trade and economic relations with China. In terms of language, the channel is broadcast in both Chinese and English, with subtitles in various small languages.

China has been actively promoting the "going abroad" of outstanding TV works, which has greatly changed the awareness of the people in the Mekong River Basin countries about Chinese TV dramas. In recent years, TV series such as Empresses in the Palace, The Journey of Flower and Ode to Joy have been purchased and translated and broadcasted by the Mekong River Basin countries, all of which have achieved good ratings and become a bridge and link for cultural exchange among the six basin countries.

In the field of new media, in addition to the traditional outreach websites for Mekong countries, the central government has set up an official website on Lancang-Mekong cooperation, where the latest information on the progress of Lancang-Mekong cooperation is regularly released, and special sections on the Mekong countries are opened. In 2015, the local Myanmar website established by China.com in Myanmar was officially launched. And in order to meet the diverse browsing needs of local users, two different versions, web and mobile, were launched at the same time. China.com is one of the earliest portals in China and has a great influence in the industry. The newly launched China.com Myanmar website includes channels such as China-Myanmar News, China Film & TV, Chi-na Today, China Creates and Health & Wellness, highlighting cultural infor-mation dissemination, video-on-demand and social media interaction. The web-site is available in both web and mobile versions to meet different browsing needs.

3.1.2 Enhancing media talent engagement

In recent years, hundreds of substantive cooperation in the Mekong cooperation mechanism have been reached, and the platform for mutually beneficial and win-win development has been expanded, making Mekong cooperation a vivid prac-tice of building a community of human destiny. As the practice of Mekong coop-eration continues to deepen, the central government pays increasing attention to exchanges with Mekong countries, and the degree of media talent exchange among the basin countries continues to deepen. For example, the 2020 Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Media Cloud Summit hosted by the People's Daily in Bei-jing was held in this context. The summit mainly invited media professionals from the Mekong countries to participate in the summit, and centered on the theme of "Cooperation against Epidemics and Economic Revitalization", media representatives from the six Mekong countries exchanged views and discussed cooperation, and achieved a series of consensus on topics such as cooperation and exchange in the media field.

Since 2013, Yunnan has regularly organized media talent exchange activities. For example, in June 2019, under the support and guidance of the Information Office of the State Council, the "7th China-Greater Mekong Subregion Media Exchange Program" was held in Yunnan and Chongqing under the auspices of the Information Office of the Yunnan Provincial People's Government. During the nine-day event, 16 press officials and media representatives from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar exchanged visits in Yunnan and Chongqing. During the meeting, the press officials of each country spoke highly of the event and suggested the GMS countries to further improve the level of information and media cooperation and establish a more solid exchange and cooperation mecha-nism.

3.2 Problems Facing Media Cooperation in the Context of Lan-Me Cooperation

3.2.1 Lack of clear planning for transnational media cooperation, making it diffi-cult to achieve systematic effects

In recent years, most of the media in southwestern provinces of China have act-ed spontaneously in the practice of foreign cooperation, lacking a clear strategic plan and a unified deployment and coordination mechanism. Since media at all levels lack guidance at the national level in their outreach work, and lack opera-tional ideas and long-term planning, as well as a systematic communication and coordination mechanism, it is difficult to expand communication coverage and achieve precise guidance by groping on their own.

In terms of the scale of media cooperation, it is also difficult to achieve sys-tematic and large-scale effects. Media cooperation in the six countries of the basin is still more focused on higher education, cultural exchanges and mutual visits, and there is almost no media cooperation for depth. Therefore, it is diffi-cult to produce a large impact in each country, and the scale of media coopera-tion needs to be expanded and improved.

In addition, profound cultural differences are the result of historical and cul-tural accumulation, often more profound than ideological and regime system differences, and these cultural differences will inevitably lead to differences and even differences in practical activities in each country.

3.2.2 Deficiencies in funding, policies and talents

At this stage, mass communication in developing countries, due to financial and technological constraints, is highly dependent on developed Western countries in both hardware and software. The West uses this to inculcate its values and play a role in influencing decisions through public opinion.

At present, although the media at all levels in southwestern provinces of China have financial support for foreign propaganda, the overall effort is not very strong, and the amount of funds available to train media talents and lay out for-eign propaganda channels is relatively far from adequate, which to a certain ex-tent also has an impact on media cooperation in the basin countries. In addition, the government's policy support is particularly important. At present, there are still limitations in policies related to foreign media cooperation, and the govern-ment should vigorously guide media at all levels to strengthen communication and contact with foreign government authorities and media, and expand the over-seas influence of media at all levels.

At the same time, the lack of composite communication talents in transnational media cooperation is also one of the urgent problems to be solved. At present, although media talents are available at all levels in southwestern provinces of China, there is still a shortage in quantity and quality, which is largely difficult to meet the needs of the development of the situation.

3.2.3 The new media field needs to be expanded

In recent years, Internet giants such as Tencent, Ali, and Baidu have also active-ly developed the Mekong River Basin countries' markets. On June 16, 2015, Myanmar Business Daily reported that WeChat, a social application devel-oped by China's Tencent, has been released in Burmese. WeChat users in Myan-mar can use WeChat's voice chat, group chat, and video functions. Tencent said it is currently working on designing emojis and animations for the Burmese ver-sion, hoping to provide a new communication experience and capitalize on the promising Burmese market.

In early 2016, according to data issued by consulting firm App Annie, Ten-cent's WeChat barely made it into the top five in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and other Internet social markets. Chinese social juggernauts WeChat and QQ account for almost 90% or more of social users at home but are hardly compara-ble to Facebook's WhatsApp and Messenger overseas, and WeChat's overseas users are mainly focused on overseas Chinese, with a low penetration rate of local people.

In addition, among the world's most popular social media platforms, only Tik Tok has been the most successful in China, which to a certain extent allows Chi-nese people to have an Internet platform of their own overseas, but the content posted by Burmese users on Tik Tok is mostly violent videos such as "uniformed soldiers and police threatening protesters with weapons", so it is still worthwhile for Chinese online media to further expand their influence in Myanmar.

4 An Analysis of the Media Cooperation Path for Building the Mekong Community of Destiny

4.1 Expanding the Research Dimension of the Subjectivity Perspective of Lan-Me Cooperation

Since the Asian Development Bank advocated Greater Mekong Sub-regional Cooperation (GMS) in the early 1990s, Japan, Europe, America, ASEAN, and other developed countries and international organizations have invested a lot of money and research into the Mekong region. In particular, Japan has a certain discursive advantage in the Mekong region by using economic assistance. The Mekong cooperation is a new type of cooperation mechanism advocated by China, and China has a discursive advantage. In terms of subject, strength, and con-tent, it is much higher than the previous cooperation mechanisms in the Mekong region.

In transnational media cooperation, it is necessary to work at different levels and find priorities. In the Mekong Basin countries, the more successful foreign media are mainly the mainstream international first-class media. Western coun-tries use their powerful and influential international media to "make their voices heard" in international affairs and, under their "hegemonic monopoly" on infor-mation resources, force other countries to "secondarily disseminate" the infor-mation in the form of reproduction. The "hegemonic monopoly" on information resources forces other countries to "secondarily disseminate" the information by reproducing it.

New media can be used flexibly. China should make extensive use of media platforms that are well established and well promoted in the Mekong Basin coun-tries, such as Twitter, Facebook, and other media platforms. Not only can adver-tisements be placed on public accounts on Twitter and Facebook with high atten-tion, but also interesting and viral audio and video content can be produced and promoted on these platforms. It is possible to transfer and copy all the domestic new media marketing experience. These new media platforms can be actively used for reverse "secondary communication". The new media platforms can be used to send out different voices and different styles of reports from the tradi-tional media platforms on events such as relations between basin countries and conflicts between basin countries.

Therefore, in building transnational media cooperation, it is necessary to take the Mekong Community of Destiny as the subjective perspective, to systematical-ly study the six Mekong countries as a whole, and expand the dimension and depth of previous research perspectives.

4.2 Play a unique role of media in building the Mekong Community of Destiny

As the recorder, disseminator, participant, and builder of the Mekong coopera-tion, the media plays a pivotal role in building the Mekong Community of Desti-ny. When cooperating with the media of Mekong countries, Chinese media should do a good media survey and choose suitable media for cooperation. As the Mekong countries do not have strong public relations companies and lack new media content operation companies, Chinese media can hire local profes-sional research institutions in the Mekong countries to conduct media surveys, establish influential media databases that do not exclude cooperation, and select media for cooperation as needed. According to preliminary understanding, the longest established and most famous media survey company in Myanmar is MSR (Myanmar Survey Research), which has been commissioned by the United Na-

tions and some Japanese organizations to conduct surveys.

For traditional media, consider purchasing cooperative media services, includ-ing media advertising, news coverage, event planning, and other aspects. For ex-ample, several national newspapers in Myanmar, some well-developed private newspapers, etc. can be actively approached and advertised. The new media business of these traditional media can also be actively approached. Some paper media in Myanmar, especially some private newspapers, are quite active on the new media platform because, in the general environment of media control, tradi-tional media can still often make a different voice and form a certain influence with the help of new media.

At present, the local Chinese media in the Mekong countries are relatively weak and lack visibility among the general public, apart from having little influ-ence in Chinese circles. It is possible to have more contacts with the Chinese media in the early stage, to build a good public relations system, and thus create a good public opinion environment through comprehensive three-dimensional communication.

By condensing the important status and special value of media cooperation in building the Mekong Community of Destiny, and combining it with specific case studies and practical propaganda, the media will further play its propaganda role, bonding role, promoting role, and cohesive role in building the Community of Destiny.

4.3 Building a China-led path for Sino-foreign media cooperation

The media cooperation among the Mekong countries is China-led, the purpose of the cooperation is to share and win-win, and the discourse approach has changed from learning by borrowing to building and enhancing. Therefore, in transnation-al media cooperation, we should break through the Western-dominated discourse mode of previous studies and build a new foreign communication discourse sys-tem.

Media at all levels in China's southwestern provinces must further strengthen their ties with Chinese foreign propaganda agencies. Media at all levels in the provinces should be transformed into part of the government's public diplomacy system, avoiding a solo effort and working with all parties to shape China's image in a mutually beneficial way. With the help of government communication chan-nels, the means of shaping China's external image are enriched and the efficiency of communication is greatly enhanced. For example, in his op-ed "The Belt and Road" - Leading Cooperation, Promoting Development, published in Myanmar's mainstream media, The Union Daily, Ambassador Yang Houlan explained the construction philosophy and construction opportunities of Chinese enterprises to promote the understanding and support of Myanmar people. Media at all levels should also actively contact these foreign media for various forms of coopera-tion, as Xinhua News Agency, China News Service, CCTV and China Radio In-ternational have relevant agencies and foreign correspondents in the Mekong River Basin countries. They can provide local media with news materials, condi-tions for interviews, and joint planning for exchange activities with national leaders. At the same time, Chinese foreign propaganda media should also strengthen their own construction and soft power construction. They should dom-inate the sources of their reports on China and guide the local media in the Me-

kong countries to report more positive public opinion in favor of China.

Media in the basin countries can regularly contact each other for training and joint planning of activities. At the same time, regular exchange visits between Chinese and GMS media can be carried out to enhance communication and ex-change of media talents from the basin countries and further improve the level of information and media cooperation.

In the cooperation between Chinese and foreign media, it tries to make up for the shortcomings of the media in the Mekong cooperation, enrich the develop-ment fields of the Mekong cooperation, explore the path of China-led media co-operation, and build a foreign communication discourse system with Chinese characteristics. It provides a model and reference for enhancing China's interna-tional discourse, shaping the national image and improving the country's soft power.

4.4 Provide a new way of cooperation between Chinese and foreign media

In the Internet era, various new media platforms are good ways to react to public opinion and establish early warning mechanisms. The limitations and negativity of which on shaping the country's image also need attention. The development of new media provides new channels and soil for improving the means and strate-gies of communication of China's national image on the one hand, and on the other hand provides space for the dissemination of rumors and public opinions that create a negative image of China.

On the one hand, some new media platforms need to be done well. Although new media platforms such as WeChat are not as popular as Facebook in the Me-kong Basin countries, there will still be a considerable audience for platforms like WeChat due to the popularity of cell phones such as Huawei and ZTE in the Basin countries. Therefore, importance should be attached to platforms like WeChat and further deepen the cultivation.

On the other hand, we should actively use the well-known local new media agencies and online media in the Mekong countries for the dissemination of Chi-na's image. While the traditional foreign propaganda strategy basically focuses on traditional media such as newspapers and TV, promoting the dissemination of new media should be the focus of China's propaganda efforts in the future. The media industry in the Mekong River Basin countries is developing rapidly, enter-ing the mobile Internet era almost overnight. And with the deregulation of the press, cell phones and social media have changed the daily lives of ordinary peo-ple a lot. Not only should we cooperate with local new media organizations, but we should also try to find the interests and communication characteristics of the people in the basin countries on new media, and we can increase publicity by setting up websites and opening public accounts on Facebook and Twitter. The successful experience of operating "two microblogs" in China can be transferred to foreign countries, and local media professionals can be found to strengthen the operation. At the same time, we should take the initiative to integrate into the discourse system of the Mekong Basin countries. The Chinese media must be aware of this complex and unique linguistic situation, and strive to improve their language-transfer skills, actively integrate into the local discourse systems of the Mekong countries, and make extensive use of new media to integrate into the local

discourse system.

In transnational media cooperation, multidisciplinary research methods should be used comprehensively, combined with empirical analysis in multiple fields, and new media cooperation methods should be explored by making in-depth use of new media means and social media channels to provide new ideas and paths for Sino-foreign media cooperation with a decentered way of thinking.

5 Conclusion

The media plays an important role in advancing the country's foreign communi-cation activities. Actively strengthening cooperation with media in other coun-tries and understanding public opinion in other countries is conducive to the timely adjustment of foreign communication strategies. The Mekong River Basin countries are an important part of China's "One Belt, One Road", "Lan-Me Coop-eration" and "China-India-Myanmar-Bangladesh Economic Corridor" strategies. Therefore, in this context, it is more important for China to comprehensively plan its media cooperation policy for the Mekong countries under the new situation.

The potential for media cooperation in the Mekong countries is huge, and the countries have built a good foundation for cooperation. As the Mekong coopera-tion progresses, China's international voice in the Mekong countries is gradually increasing, but the overall situation is still "strong in the west and weak in the west". While official cooperation platforms and mainstream media channels have been established, private platforms and social media channels need to be ex-panded and built. In the cooperation between Chinese and foreign media, joint interviews, joint operations and market sharing can be used.

At present, there is a gap in the analysis of ethnic exchanges among the Me-kong countries from the perspective of media, and the existing media develop-ment and media cooperation among the Mekong countries are studied individual-ly as isolated cases, without incorporating the six Mekong countries into a whole and studying them systematically as a community of destiny. In this regard, the theory of the Community of Human Destiny should be taken as a guiding ideolo-gy and internalized in all aspects of the research and practice of media coopera-tion in the Mekong countries, so that the construction of the Mekong Community of Destiny can be truly put into practice and raised to a high level.

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