

A Study on Methods and Pathways for Cyber Ideology Governance in the New Era: Postprint

Authors: Chen Weihong

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Abstract

[Objective] The primary research objective is to investigate how to effectively control the source and focal points of risk outbreak in ideological work and manage the most significant variable within new-era network ideology governance. **[Method]** This study systematically analyzes existing literature on network ideology, combined with the new-era context, to delineate feasible pathways for network ideology governance. **[Results]** Network ideology governance must firmly secure dominance, discourse power, and management authority in cyberspace to construct effective network communication channels and achieve a manageable and controllable network environment. **[Conclusion]** Enhancing the effectiveness of network ideology work requires proceeding from the actual status quo, leveraging the solid position of mainstream ideology, consistently upholding the correct orientation, utilizing Marxist theoretical weapons to seize the ideological high ground, improving netizens' acceptance, affinity, and willingness to embrace mainstream discourse expression, and expanding the governance pathways for network ideology.

Full Text

Abstract

Objective: The primary research aim is to identify how network ideology governance in the new era can effectively control the critical sources of ideological risk and manage its most significant variable. **Method:** By analyzing existing literature on network ideology and contextualizing it within the new era, this study systematically examines viable pathways for network ideology governance. **Results:** Effective network ideology governance requires firmly grasping dominance, discourse power, and management authority in cyberspace to establish effective communication channels and achieve a manageable and controllable network environment. **Conclusion:** Enhancing the effectiveness of network ideology work must proceed from current realities, leverage the solid position

of mainstream ideology, consistently maintain the correct orientation, utilize Marxist theoretical weapons to occupy the ideological high ground, improve netizens' acceptance of, affinity for, and appreciation of mainstream discourse expression, and broaden governance pathways for network ideology.

Keywords: Network Ideology; Risk Prevention; Network Governance; Mainstream Discourse Expression

Network ideology represents a key focus area for ideological work in the new era. The Party Central Committee attaches great importance to internet governance, issuing a series of policies and adopting major initiatives to achieve “good governance” and “benevolent governance” of the internet, thereby forging a distinctly Chinese path to cyberspace regulation. In the report to the 20th Party Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping noted that “the online ecology has continued to improve, and the ideological landscape has undergone a global and fundamental shift” [1], affirming China’s governance of network ideology over the past decade and offering a profound assessment of its steady, positive development trajectory. As people’s lives become increasingly technological and intelligent, network ideology—existing through the internet as its carrier—has gradually integrated into daily life, becoming an unconscious yet pervasive element of people’s existence. How to effectively utilize this powerful network medium to promote mainstream values and harness the “greatest variable” of the internet has become a critical challenge on the path of network governance.

Since the reform and opening up, social structural transformation has led to increasingly differentiated interest articulation, which is refracted into cyberspace as collisions among diverse ideas and intermingling lifestyles. Groups uphold different value systems and advocate for different interests, with various viewpoints clashing online, resulting in a muddled landscape of evaluation standards that makes network ideology governance more difficult and challenging. Before internet popularization, public access to information was primarily concentrated in traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television, characterized by a unidirectional dissemination model from a single source that, to some extent, guaranteed discourse power. However, internet development has shifted the primary mode of information dissemination from centralization to fragmentation, with the resulting multiplication of information actors further weakening traditional media’s influence. Fundamentally, this trend toward fragmented actors reflects individuals’ desire, against the backdrop of rapidly developing productive forces, to break free from traditional models of receiving information at fixed times and in fixed ways, seeking instead to access information anytime and anywhere to achieve information liberation. Taking China’s Weibo platform as an example, users upload information in short texts and videos, while other users quickly browse homogeneous, interest-aligned content through algorithms. Real-time trending topics are calculated based on participation volume, triggering widespread public discussion. Its low barriers and multiple information sources perfectly illustrate the current state of fragmented participation in the internet era.

Individual ideological differences and the diversified interest relationships formed during the reform process are accelerating their expression through networks. The development of mobile smart devices has fostered a habit among social groups of absorbing and browsing information in fragmented time. Brief snippets consumed in short periods may fail to truthfully reconstruct event realities, yet citizens can rapidly respond based on existing partial information, collectively participating in information processing. Group logic and rationality are always lower than those of individuals, yet from an emotional action perspective, groups may react more intensely than individuals. This accelerated transformation of thinking patterns further leads online groups to make more emotionally extreme actions than in individual decision-making contexts, with previously latent personal demands more likely to transform into public group demands that influence online public opinion and create adverse social impacts.

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1.2 Diverse Manifestations of Network Ideology

Network ideology, born under new productive force conditions, necessarily possesses new development characteristics and manifestations. Treating the internet merely as an information and communication technology or a new media transmission method fails to grasp the essence of network ideology. In recent years, the unified discourse center of traditional media has gradually been dismantled by the internet's powerful information dissemination capacity, exhibiting characteristics of "decentralization" and "recentralization" that create a new online form of "everywhere is a center, nowhere is a margin." Many previously static, defined phenomena have long been subverted by the internet into decentralized, pluralistic existences. This phenomenon arises because technological progress has granted people discourse power online. In a dissemination network with individual users as nodes, each user is both a transmitter and receiver of information. Groups gather through shared interests and hobbies, evolving into new information subjects that make "everyone has a microphone, everyone is a news agency" possible. Ultimately, this acquisition of discourse power is essentially a right conferred by science and technology—a derivative phenomenon of lowered information access barriers and network technology development. Technological advancement has made it easy for individuals to access and share information, while the birth of new media platforms has simultaneously generated entirely new information transmission pathways, making it easier for individuals to share ideas and create topics online, further highlighting the pluralistic nature of network ideology.

1.3 Increased Challenges in Network Ideology Work

Under the new situation, network ideology work has become increasingly complex and challenging. With the development of mobile internet in recent years,

the number of internet-connected devices has soared, making network usage part of daily life but simultaneously exacerbating network ideology governance issues. Against the backdrop of explosive network information growth caused by increasing information sources, distinguishing truth from falsehood in network ideology has become more difficult, with various institutions and netizens increasingly powerless to screen information. Some websites deliberately create topics and manufacture online public opinion to maximize clicks and traffic, seriously disrupting basic internet order and creating numerous difficulties for network ideology management. Today, supervision and management of network ideology are showing a complex, multi-domain, interdisciplinary development trend alongside internet development. Simultaneously, online public opinion is accelerating its integration with specialized subfields, using other disciplines as camouflage, further increasing the difficulty of identifying online speech and placing higher demands on practitioners' learning capabilities, technical skills, and knowledge. This further highlights the complexity and variability of network ideology work. Since the 18th Party Congress, the Party has proposed methods such as "guiding mainstream social values" and "telling China's story well" on the foundation of creating a clean online environment, continuously enhancing the credibility of official media discourse, basically clearing online noise and discordant voices, and gradually eliminating public confusion and distrust caused by poor network environments. This has established behavioral norms for scientific internet usage and provided clearer direction for network ideology management.

2. Risks and Challenges Facing Network Ideology

2.1 Risks Under Multiple Discourse Systems

The risk of mainstream ideology's absence in the network field. Traditional mainstream ideology discourse power in cyberspace has been impacted in the internet era, greatly diminishing its political functions. The information fog created by complex data prevents modern people from making correct judgments. The resulting multiple discourse and ideological systems continuously ferment in the network environment, with non-mainstream ideologies eyeing mainstream ideology's dominant position while attracting unwitting followers. As Marx stated: "Everything that people struggle for is related to their interests" [2]. Using Marxist positions, viewpoints, and methods for insightful analysis is essential to prevent Marxism from "losing its voice," "disappearing," or "falling silent" in cyberspace.

The risk of insufficient joint management of network ideology. Against the backdrop of intertwined traditional and non-traditional security issues, cybersecurity, as a key non-traditional security concern requiring urgent resolution, is particularly representative and severe. General Secretary Xi Jinping noted when discussing internet governance: "Without cybersecurity, there is no national security; failing to pass the internet test means failing to pass the test of long-term governance" [3]. As an important component of national security, cy-

bersecurity' s role cannot be ignored. With cybersecurity issues becoming more diverse and concealed, the difficulty of effective supervision by network monitoring departments increases daily, further highlighting the necessity of establishing a collaborative governance system for network ideology security across society. As the backbone of cybersecurity governance, the government is the core and key to mobilizing netizens' enthusiasm and rallying forces from all sectors to participate in cybersecurity governance. It should bear primary responsibility for creating a clean online environment and promoting mainstream value discourse systems. Internet enterprises, as actual operators of social platforms, must manage and use these platforms well, never treating them merely as tools for corporate profit but as important bridges for spreading correct values and reshaping social discourse systems. Netizens, as the most active elements in the network environment, should actively exercise their rights to purify cyberspace, monitor erroneous speech, and fulfill their obligation to report improper public opinion to monitoring departments.

2.2 Outstanding Problems in Network Ideology Work

Traditional discourse systems and social structures generally lack effective communication mechanisms. Since the reform and opening up, society has entered a transformation period, with private enterprises and individual workers increasing and interest articulation becoming more pluralistic. Around 2000, as the internet gradually popularized in China, group incidents became concentrated expressions on network platforms, with interest demands and public opinion hotspots rising and falling in cyberspace. Public channels for interest expression underwent major changes. During this stage, information dissemination subjects gradually used internet platforms to break through restrictions, using network technology to empower individual discourse rights. However, the network environment after individual empowerment indirectly created numerous management problems. For instance, netizens' discourse anomie disrupted procedures for citizens to exercise their right to make suggestions and supervise, while radical behavior by some individuals affected stable and orderly public opinion environments. With today' s deep integration between network platforms and real life, governing network ideology requires strengthening guidance while protecting citizens' legitimate expression rights, uniting the people to the greatest extent possible, promptly understanding their ideological dynamics, channeling negative emotions, and strengthening ideal and belief education to transform netizens into positive forces for building a modern socialist country.

General Secretary Xi Jinping noted that the ideological and public opinion field can be roughly divided into three zones: the red zone composed of positive forces, the black zone formed by negative speech, and the gray zone between red and black [4]. Netizens' behavioral anomie, online rumors, fraud, and violence continuously challenge the bottom lines and red lines of network order. Without reasonable governance measures, the black zone will inevitably encroach upon the gray zone and covet the red zone, threatening the construction of a clean

online environment and the discourse position of mainstream values. To resist black zone encroachment, we must analyze netizens' online behavior, consolidate and develop the red zone, transform and develop the gray zone, and dare to tackle the black zone.

For a considerable period, mainstream media excelled at using grand narrative frameworks in propaganda, concentrating major efforts on significant issues concerning national rise and decline, with macro-oriented communication methods and discourse environments favoring majestic styles. However, in the modern network ideology context, mainstream ideology's grand narrative approach conflicts with the concise, succinct expression style of network social platforms, creating difficulties for mainstream ideology dissemination online. Today, network hotspots and public opinion dynamics increasingly use fragmented, scattered language forms, gradually deviating from mainstream ideology's macro track of logic and deduction toward a micro track emphasizing individual feelings and public opinion feedback. In responding to this shift, the mainstream discourse system should seriously consider adopting more life-oriented, down-to-earth approaches in cyberspace, using language forms that netizens enjoy to integrate into networks and residents' lives, dispelling misunderstandings about mainstream ideology being "aloof and cold" [5].

The complex discourse system also reveals insufficient affinity in some mainstream media discourse. To enhance mainstream media's appeal and influence in cyberspace requires continuous innovation and experimentation, expressing ideas through multiple discourse forms, improving upon previous rigid, dull, copycat expression methods, and instead adopting lively, brisk internet language. By capturing user preferences and reshaping user habits, we can strengthen grasp of network governance methods balancing text and practice, innovation and tradition. Additionally, we should increase response frequency to issues concerning public interests, never selectively ignoring hot topics that netizens care about or avoiding pain points and difficulties related to people's vital interests. This enhances netizens' trust, enabling them to spontaneously identify with the values promoted by mainstream media, quickly resonating among netizen groups and improving their acceptance of, affinity for, and appreciation of mainstream discourse expression [6].

2.3 Analysis of Network Ideology Risks

As discourse actors in the network ideology field multiply and the field becomes increasingly complex, public demand for information consumption on network platforms grows, accelerating social media evolution from blogs to Weibo, from electronic newspapers to WeChat public accounts. The gradual downward shift of discourse power and decentralization of transmission channels have created more complex and pluralistic discourse environments. Notably, behind this complex discourse field lie multi-dimensional influencing factors from economic development, political construction, and cultural environments. For instance, the public's greater focus on personal interests and material life and less attention to

world construction, spiritual connection, transparency in policy implementation, and perfection of rule of law construction are all important factors generating network ideology risks. These factors intertwine in the network ideology field, breeding more complex discourse systems than before.

3. Breaking Through Constraints: Methods and Paths for Network Ideology Work

3.1 Consolidating Dominance: Holding High the Banner in the Battle for Network Ideology Positions

Following the exposure of surveillance programs such as “PRISM” and “X-Keyscore,” countries worldwide have prioritized cybersecurity and informatization security as important measures to protect national security. Using Marxism as the essential theoretical weapon is paramount. In governing network ideology, we must consistently uphold Marxist viewpoints, positions, and methods, continuously consolidate Marxist theory’s dominant position, encourage the public to study and apply Marxism well, use Marxism’s vivid discourse to persuade through reason, employ the profoundness of excellent Chinese traditional culture to move through emotion, and guide through action using the great practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This enhances mainstream ideology’s credibility and influence in the network environment, consistently maintains the correct orientation of network ideology, and provides strong guarantees for competing in the ideological battlefield. In governing network ideology, we must clearly reject infiltration and propaganda by Western forces through network platforms, refuse to disseminate film and music that vilify China and Chinese people, and prevent youth from falling into value traps created by the West. We should gradually improve market access regulations and review mechanisms for film and television culture, building upon existing foundations to grade video and music content: actively introduce content in the red zone, transform and introduce content in the gray zone, and resolutely exclude content in the black zone, protecting people’s thinking from corrosion and infringement.

3.2 Enhancing Discourse Power: Network Ideology in the International Discourse System

China’s rising international status has yielded remarkable achievements in disseminating political ideology and cultural values abroad. The *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* series has been translated into more than 20 languages and disseminated through network platforms, becoming a microcosm of China’s growing centrality on the world stage. Chinese stories and discourse are gradually becoming a language system that the world listens to and understands.

Constructing a network discourse system can not only consolidate China’s discourse power on the international stage, completing the transformation from participant to leader and from attendee to speaker, but also serves as a powerful pathway to building a cyber superpower. General Secretary Xi Jinping stated:

“We must proceed from international and domestic trends, make overall plans, coordinate all parties, pursue innovative development, and strive to build China into a cyber superpower” [7]. By innovating in technology, talent, and transformation of scientific research achievements, we should integrate the construction of a cyber superpower, digital China, and smart society, promote the integration of network technology with the socialist discourse system, and continuously incorporate the core pursuits of socialist core values into cyberspace construction. Together with countries worldwide, we should establish common value ideals that conform to development laws, setting benchmarks and examples for building ideological discourse power globally [8].

3.3 Strengthening Management Power: Cultivating Network Discourse Actors with Comprehensive Qualities

The difficulty in network ideology governance lies in optimizing discourse expression, enhancing mainstream ideology’s influence, and eliminating “discordant voices” and “noise” online. To promote a healthy online ecology, we must eliminate adverse effects caused by non-mainstream discourse systems, identify the root causes of some network information actors’ insufficient understanding and lack of confidence in the socialist path, theory, system, and culture, re-examine problems, continuously enhance information actors’ comprehensive qualities, strengthen theoretical education for information actors based on network conventions, and create pathways for network ideology governance [9].

Strengthening network discourse actors’ inner sense of identity and pride is the remedy for online negative phenomena. Addressing insufficient understanding and confidence among some actors should start with the series of development miracles created by the Communist Party of China leading the Chinese people. By summarizing the Party’s history of arduous struggle and fearlessness in facing difficulties, we can use facts to explain principles and history to boost confidence, enhancing network discourse actors’ national pride and identity [10]. Simultaneously, we should further enhance network discourse actors’ information literacy and information ethics, training and improving their skills in collecting, organizing, analyzing, and expressing information tools, enabling them to identify correct information in complex network environments. On the other hand, we must attach great importance to improving network information ethics, enhancing netizens’ moral compliance when expressing viewpoints and commenting on network platforms, and promoting community behavior norms that uphold the social mainstream melody and disseminate positive energy [11]. Network public figures and opinion leaders with certain influence should lead by example, providing public demonstrations, using their influence to jointly resist harmful information in the network environment, and calling on fans to participate in building correct network ideology, thereby better creating a clean and upright online environment.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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