

## Media Convergence Pathways for the International Communication of Central Enterprises: A Post-print Analysis

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### Abstract

**【目的】** To address the issues of monotonous patterns and outdated methods in the international communication of central enterprises, circumvent the resulting predicament of restricted international communication, and safeguard the enhancement of international communication effectiveness for central enterprises.

**【方法】** This article comprehensively applies literature review and case study methods to propose a series of recommendations, including constructing a “四通八达” international communication system, enhancing communication precision and impact, and innovating a “通情达理” international discourse system.

**【结果】** From the practical application case of China National Petroleum Corporation, this methodological system proves feasible and practical, capable of promoting the establishment and dissemination of central enterprise image, and amplifying the “voice of central enterprises” to match the “scale of central enterprises.”

**【结论】** When implementing international communication strategies, central enterprises can draw upon this experience, fully leverage global network and resource advantages, and construct an all-media, multi-dimensional, and multi-level media convergence communication framework, thereby contributing to the dissemination of China’s voice and the shaping of a major country’s image.

### Full Text

#### Abstract

**Objective:** To address the issues of monolithic models and outdated methods in the international communication of central state-owned enterprises (SOEs), thereby avoiding the resulting constraints and enhancing communication effectiveness.

**Methods:** This article employs comprehensive literature review and case study methodologies to propose a series of recommendations, including constructing a “comprehensive and interconnected” international communication system, improving communication precision and impact, and innovating an “empathetic and reasonable” international discourse system.

**Results:** Based on case studies from China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), this methodological framework proves feasible in practice, promoting the establishment and dissemination of central SOE corporate images and amplifying their “voice” to match their substantial economic scale.

**Conclusion:** Central SOEs implementing international communication strategies can draw upon this experience by leveraging global network advantages and resource strengths to build a full-media, multi-dimensional, multi-tiered media convergence communication architecture, thereby contributing to the dissemination of China’s voice and the shaping of its image as a major power.

**Keywords:** International communication; China National Petroleum; Media convergence; Discourse system; Corporate image

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Corporate image constitutes a vital component of national image. The international communication capacity of enterprises not only influences their own image and international development trajectory but also bears upon the nation’s overall image. State-owned enterprises, particularly central SOEs, bear the responsibility to create greater value in developing overseas businesses, fulfill greater commitments in disseminating China’s voice, and play a key role in shaping the image of a major power. From the current state of central SOE international communication, there exists a widespread predicament of single-channel dissemination, limited information reach, and inability to effectively transmit messages or achieve broad diffusion. In recent years, central SOEs have established official accounts on internationally renowned social media platforms, with 38.5%, 22.9%, and 48.5% having 入驻 Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook respectively by 2021. However, compared with their business volume, scale, global contributions, and urgent communication needs, these 入驻 rates remain relatively low and progress has been slow. Even established accounts suffer from monotonous content themes, self-talking narratives, insufficient posting frequency, and overall weak engagement.

President Xi Jinping attaches great importance to China’s international communication capacity building, emphasizing the need to strengthen top-level design and research layout, construct a strategic communication system with distinctive Chinese characteristics, and enhance international communication influence, appeal of Chinese culture, affinity of China’s image, persuasiveness of Chinese discourse, and guidance of international public opinion. The year 2023 marks the 45th anniversary of reform and opening up and the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. At this new starting point and journey, central SOEs—especially energy SOEs—face new opportunities and challenges in building in-

international communication capacity under new circumstances. Using CNPC' s international communication practices as an example, this article analyzes media convergence paths from three dimensions: constructing a “comprehensive and interconnected” communication system, adhering to audience-oriented topic setting, and innovating an “empathetic and reasonable” international discourse system.

## **1. Constructing a Full-Media, Multi-Dimensional, “Comprehensive and Interconnected” International Communication System to Enhance Coverage and Reach**

Current technologies continuously transform information dissemination channels and reach methods, ushering international communication into a new stage dominated by internet platforms. Information flow in international communication primarily involves two directions: inward transmission and outward transmission. Effective delivery of this information depends on receivers and requires unimpeded channels and platforms to achieve effective reach.

### **1.1 Strengthening Owned Platform Construction**

As an autonomous and controllable international communication channel oriented toward overseas audiences, *China Petroleum Daily* serves as CNPC' s window and platform for external voice projection. The newspaper launched the *Belt and Road Energy Cooperation Special Issue*, focusing on win-win cooperation and telling stories of people-to-people bonds; it produced the *Energy News* program, reporting weekly domestic and international energy events to broaden international perspectives. While maintaining foreign-language versions of its portal website, the newspaper developed and launched the English-language news platform CPDnews on its client app and customized the CNPC-Worldwide video channel to tell CNPC' s win-win cooperation stories on the global stage. Against the backdrop of deep media convergence, these expanded owned platforms enhance domestic media' s international communication capacity, providing overseas media and audiences with quicker access channels to understand the authentic, three-dimensional, and comprehensive image of central SOEs, thereby vindicating corporate reputation. For instance, the “China-Kazakhstan Oil and Gas Cooperation International Academic Conference,” co-hosted by CNPC Newspaper, CNPC Kazakhstan Company, KAZGUU University' s Institute of International and Regional Cooperation Science, and the Belt and Road Experts Club, invited scholars from partner countries to discuss and exchange ideas with Chinese counterparts. The event was reported through local national media, news agencies, and related overseas social media accounts, with KAZGUU University and the Belt and Road Experts Club also publishing relevant news on their websites, expanding communication effectiveness and international influence. One hundred fourteen influencers, including the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI), Abu Dhabi National Petroleum Exhibition, World Petroleum Congress Ghana Chapter, Kosovo Energy Efficiency Institute,

and Bolivian Embassy, followed CNPC' s accounts, continuously expanding its international circle of friends who understand and support China.

### 1.2 Strengthening Social Platform Construction

In 2019, building upon its “two microblogs, one client app,” and Chinese-foreign language official websites, CNPC accelerated the construction of a media matrix comprising five major overseas social platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, VK) in three languages (English, Spanish, Russian) with a total of 11 accounts—currently the largest multi-language account matrix among central SOEs under the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC). Simultaneously, addressing the reality that CNPC' s overseas enterprises rarely established overseas social media accounts or websites, the company improved media communication channels for overseas enterprises by establishing overseas social media accounts [3] centered on international cooperation projects locally, constructing a three-tiered (group level, overseas enterprise/project level, overseas employee level) integrated CNPC overseas communication cluster. In 2022, CNPC' s overseas social media accounts achieved a total of 430 million views, with steady growth in followers (a 200% year-on-year increase), rising from 24th place in 2019 to 6th place in the central SOE overseas communication power comprehensive index. SASAC accounts reposted CNPC content 19 times throughout the year, while the Beautiful China account and others reposted over 50 times.

### 1.3 Leveraging Business Platforms for Communication

In international operations, central SOEs form ecological communities with stakeholders in host countries, including government departments, public society, mass media, industry associations, research institutions, and opinion leaders. CNPC has published multi-language corporate social responsibility reports for 15 consecutive years (including periodic country-specific reports) and led the creation of international exchange platforms such as the Belt and Road Oil and Gas Cooperation Roundtable and the China-Russia Energy Business Forum, providing broad stages for “home-field” international communication. For example, the newspaper produced the *Belt and Road International Cooperation Summit Forum • Oil and Gas Cooperation Special Issue* in bilingual Chinese-English layout, comprehensively showcasing CNPC' s fruitful achievements and experiences in actively participating in Belt and Road construction. During the Belt and Road Oil and Gas Cooperation Roundtable, the special issue was presented to nearly 100 Chinese and foreign guests. During the 21st and 22nd World Petroleum Congresses in Moscow and Istanbul, themed “Strong Support for a Developing World” and “Building Bridges to the Energy Future,” the newspaper explored and produced Russian-English and Chinese-English special issues placed at venue booths for participants' reference, enriching concise windows for external information release [4] and conveying CNPC industry' s firm confidence in “continuously promoting global oil and gas transformation and prosperity,”

while demonstrating CNPC's corporate image. Representatives from some well-known Western oil companies even exchanged views with Chinese participants on-site regarding opinions expressed in the special issues.

#### **1.4 Expanding Interpersonal Communication Platforms**

Leveraging media professional advantages to continuously expand international circles of friends requires grasping two core groups: ordinary audiences and opinion leaders. Without powerful and effective communication channels, there can be no substantial influence. Only by solving the problem of visibility can we further expand permeability, interactivity, and impact during information diffusion [5]. For instance, the "China-Kazakhstan Oil and Gas Cooperation International Academic Conference" enabled overseas media and audiences to gain quicker access to understanding the authentic, three-dimensional, and comprehensive image of central SOEs.

## **2. Dialectically Coordinating the "Essence" and "Form" of International Communication to Strengthen Topic Setting and Enhance Precision and Impact**

Improving influence, affinity, and effectiveness in international communication requires enabling audiences to hear clearly, understand thoroughly, and accept willingly. The key lies in fully mastering international communication laws, dialectically grasping the essence and form of communication, and adhering to content primacy while strengthening topic setting. The "essence" refers to core communication content, while the "form" refers to carriers and modalities [6].

### **2.1 Focusing on "Public Issues" to Find "Emotional Resonance Points" Through Enhanced Identification**

From audience psychology analysis, the key to enhancing communication identification lies in finding common interest points and emotional resonance points. At the international level, topics can focus on global concerns such as international cooperation, climate, and environment; at the domestic level, topics can center on reform and opening up, poverty alleviation, and rural revitalization that attract international attention. Through vivid language, lively stories, and appealing formats, these narratives promote overseas understanding of the CPC's governance stories and the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind, enhancing identification and achieving persuasion through both reason and emotion [7]. *China Petroleum Daily* carefully planned to publicize Chinese propositions, wisdom, and solutions from a petroleum perspective. For example, a series of special reports on China's poverty alleviation campaign in response to the UN Millennium Development Goals introduced how CNPC improved local production and living conditions through industrial, intellectual, green, and livelihood assistance, changing village appearances and conducting skills training. These vivid stories showcased an open, confident, sincere, and

committed Chinese corporate image to the world. The “CNPC Poverty Alleviation and Rural Revitalization International Communication Thematic Promotion Exploration and Practice” case won the “2021 Central SOE International Communication Excellent Case” award issued by SASAC. The post *A Bird Paradise: Karamay Guhai Ecological Park in the Oil City*, which tells the story of China’s active participation in global climate governance and building a clean and beautiful world, achieved 157,000 total views and 2,559 interactions, with a Spanish Facebook user commenting: “Indeed, nature and industry can coexist harmoniously.”

## 2.2 Focusing on “Interest Intersection Points” to Tell Compelling Win-Win Cooperation Stories

Central SOEs integrating into the global economic cycle not only bring capital, technology, products, and services abroad but also contribute internationalized products and services to the world economy, fulfilling global responsibilities and achieving win-win cooperation—long a focus of overseas public opinion [8]. CNPC focuses on vivid cases of promoting Belt and Road energy cooperation, strengthening topic setting around bilateral interest intersection points. For example, CNPC’s first international operation project—the Peru Project—operates in Block 58 located in the Amazon basin, home to numerous indigenous tribes with unique traditional lifestyles where globalization progresses slowly. How to balance industrial development with rainforest protection and achieve sustainable development has attracted international attention. Journalists entered communities and tribes, interviewed local residents, recorded local changes, and produced comprehensive graphic, text, and short-video reports titled *Venturing into the Rainforest*. From local community and citizen perspectives, these reports examined Chinese enterprises, project significance, and cooperation outcomes, using vivid cases to address issues of “globalization versus localization” and “industrial development versus environmental protection,” effectively guiding the international community to view these issues objectively and fairly. As Simon, a community leader from the Manavinas community where the project operates and who grew from a CNPC employee, praised: “CNPC and the community are one family.”

CNPC’s active practice of green development commitments in international operations—including ecological protection, biodiversity conservation, and climate change response—deserves broad dissemination to gain international public opinion recognition and approval [9]. In 2022, CNPC’s overseas social media accounts launched the *Marine Mammal Observer (MMO) Series* campaign, combining World Oceans Day with the company’s environmental bulletin release. From the perspective of an international employee—Luiza, a well-educated Brazilian third-party worker from Latin America who served as a marine mammal observer on the BGP Explorer—she told global audiences about her personal participation in and witness to specific ecological protection practices. Due to her unique identity and work content, the interactive dissemination achieved a superimposed

effect, generating nearly 7 million total online traffic within a month, with *Marine Mammal Observer* winning the 2022 State-Owned Enterprise Good News International Communication First Prize.

### **3. Building a Discourse System that Bridges China and Foreign Countries, Enhancing Empathy and Communication Temperature Through “Empathetic and Reasonable” Approaches**

The international public opinion arena represents a silent contest for discourse power. As Chinese enterprises, especially energy SOEs, move to the center of the global energy cooperation stage, various distracting voices emerge in the international public opinion field, stigmatizing China’s Belt and Road Initiative and fabricating and spreading false claims about China’s “new energy colonialism,” severely damaging national reputation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to break Western discourse hegemony and construct a discourse system that aligns with China’s national conditions, possesses strong persuasiveness, and connects with Western discourse.

#### **3.1 Strengthening Audience Thinking: From “Speaking Proactively” to “Leveraging Others’ Voices”**

Upholding the concept of “mutual benefit and win-win cooperation,” CNPC fully leverages its integrated oil and gas industry chain advantages to help Sudan and Niger establish modern petroleum industrial systems, transforming them from refined oil importers to exporters—a model praised internationally as exemplary of China-Africa cooperation. In its communication efforts, CNPC fully considers overseas audience concerns, integrating central SOE international development achievements and philosophies into ordinary Chinese and overseas employees and into each win-win cooperation story. By publishing introductory articles in local media, interviewing relevant officials such as energy and mining ministers of both governments, and interviewing Chinese ambassadors to Niger and Chad, these voices achieved excellent dissemination through 叠加 release via newspapers, websites, and new media platforms, strengthening mainstream public opinion. For example, the *Desert Emerald* and *Oasis on the Edge of the Sahara* series garnered nearly 900,000 views and over 15,000 interactions, receiving numerous comments from overseas netizens such as “The Chinese people have the will to solve such natural conditions” and “Excellent, we should all learn from this.” Chad National Television praised the project: “The realization of this dream should be attributed to Chad and its great friend China.” Niger’s largest newspaper, *Le Sahel*, enthusiastically acclaimed: “Since CNPC came to the Diffa region to develop oil cooperation, people no longer need to leave their hometowns in search of ‘El Dorado’ as in the past.” These “personal testimonials” from partner country governments, media, and people are credible and 可亲, powerfully refuting fallacies and distracting voices in Western public opinion.

### 3.2 Strengthening Localized Perspective: From “Talking to Oneself” to “Having Others Speak for Oneself”

CNPC’ s overseas projects adhere to localized employment, with local talent hired from over 70 countries and regions, achieving an average localization rate of 88% for overseas employees. In communication, CNPC emphasizes localized perspective dissemination forms, strengthens education, guidance, and professional training of foreign employees, and comprehensively shapes integrated win-win values to continuously enhance the consciousness of “having others speak” for the company. Murat, a local employee at CNPC’ s Amu Darya Natural Gas Company in Turkmenistan, published *My Chinese Dream* in *China Petroleum Daily*, emotionally recounting his lifelong interest in the Great Wall, the Silk Road, and ancient Chinese oil and gas utilization techniques, his dream of “personally experiencing this great and legendary country,” his connection with CNPC after university graduation, his selection by the company to study in China and learn Chinese, and finally realizing his dream. The article conveyed his understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture and his admiration and love for Chinese enterprises, authentically reflecting project employees’ and local residents’ recognition of China’ s path and philosophy, triggering enthusiastic responses. Influenced by his brother, Murat’ s younger brother also actively applied to join a Chinese company after graduation.

### 3.3 Strengthening Humanistic Perspective: From Project “Going Out” to Culture “Blending In”

Amity between peoples holds the key to friendly relations between states, and amity between peoples stems from mutual understanding and affection. We must recognize that different countries vary in social systems, religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and openness levels [12], resulting in different value judgments, market rules, behavioral patterns, and living customs. The successful overseas dissemination of Li Ziqi’ s works provides inspiration: telling Chinese stories well in the international communication context requires strengthening humanistic perspectives, promoting cultural integration, seeking common ground while reserving differences and respecting differences, and pursuing the transformation from culture “going out” to culture “blending in.”

Excellent Chinese culture represents the most profound and enduring force, providing solid cultural and path confidence for overseas project development of central SOEs. For example, *International Friends Fascinated by Chinese Culture* tells the story of Ahmed, an excellent crew foreman at CNPC Great Wall Drilling’ s Iraq Project GW309 Team, who, through daily interaction with Chinese employees, increasingly identified with corporate culture and gradually fell in love with Chinese culture. He wrote in his diary: “I must go to China once to experience the charm of this ancient Eastern country!” The post achieved 275,000 total views and 2,197 interactions. In *Norman’ s Great Wall Dream* about Great Wall Drilling’ s Iraq project employees, Norman said, “I’ m proud to be part of Great Wall Company, and given the chance, I want to go to Beijing

to experience the real ‘Great Wall’ .” The post introducing the project received 275,000 total views and 2,197 interactions.

The enhancement of central SOEs’ overseas communication capacity will not be achieved overnight. Only through continuous innovation while maintaining fundamentals, and by accelerating the construction of more efficient communication paths from channels, content, and discourse systems, can we make communication more credible and perceivable, achieving new breakthroughs in connecting China and the world and integrating dissemination.

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

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