

An “Effect-Oriented” Mechanism for the International Dissemination of China’s Human Rights Discourse

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Abstract: *The current international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse predominantly adopts a “sender-oriented” model, emphasizing the output of human rights discourse by transmitters while overlooking strategy adjustments based on audience feedback. To some extent, the current approach has resulted in characteristics such as strong practical implementation but weak discourse, limited theoretical foundation, and insufficient recognition in China’s international human rights communication. Consequently, while China has achieved remarkable progress in its human rights endeavors, human rights issues remain a critical area of stigmatization by some Western countries. An “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse, therefore, aims to address this challenge by re-centering the audience as active participants in the communication process. By emphasizing the dual nature of human rights’ international communication, this approach leverages the reflexive monitoring of initial transmitters throughout the dissemination process to finally construct a dynamic human rights discourse framework responsive to different time and space contexts. This mechanism directly confronts the diverse backgrounds of global audiences and the resulting varied interpretations of China’s human rights discourse. It advocates for dynamic evaluation of global dissemination outcomes based on audience feedback and the timely adaptation of communication strategies according to context. By doing so, it seeks to effectively advance China’s human rights communication efforts and enhance dissemination efficiency on the global scale.*

Keywords: human rights ♦ China’s human rights discourse system ♦ international dissemination ♦ effect-oriented

I. Introduction

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In recent years, ideological and value conflicts have gradually become the focus of international competition, shaping and amplifying the fundamental patterns of complex contradictions between nations through their interconnections across multiple fields. In the realm of human rights, although China's human rights endeavors have achieved significant accomplishments that draw global attention and its human rights discourse system has continuously been improved and updated, the human rights issue remains a critical area for certain countries to stigmatize China. In this context, it is particularly crucial to address the mismatch between China's human rights practices and its international reputation, as well as the dissonance between the construction of the human rights discourse system and the effectiveness of its international dissemination. Indeed, "the international dissemination of China's human rights discourse" is no longer a fresh topic; scholars have engaged in theoretical construction and attempted to guide practices from their own research perspectives across different historical contexts. Specifically, existing research primarily focuses on several aspects: first, from the perspective of discourse order, relevant studies reveal that China can promote the international recognition of its human rights discourse based on the construction of a reasonable discourse order and the facilitation of shared meanings, by expanding the "common cognitive space" between the East and the West to mitigate ideological differences and remove communication barriers.¹ Second, from the perspective of power, relevant studies advocate for following a "deconstruction-construction" approach based on the correlation between discourse dissemination and national soft power — namely, objectively recognizing the essence of Western human rights discourse as a form of "local knowledge," while consciously enhancing China's strategic planning and design capabilities for conducting public diplomacy on human rights in the international community, thereby optimizing global dissemination effects and striving for international discourse power.² Third, drawing from the constructivist theory on international relations, some researchers have introduced normative and institutional studies,

¹ Jin Tiandong and Ren Xiao, "Research on the 'Common Cognitive Space' of the International Communication of the Vision of Building a Global Community of Shared Future," *Journal of Social Sciences* 2 (2021): 32-46; Mao Junxiang, "The International Dissemination of China's Human Rights Discourse from the Perspective of Western Human Rights Discourse Expansion," *Legal Forum* 2 (2021): 121-134; Zhao Yonghua and Liu Juan, "Construction and International Dissemination of China's Human Rights Discourse," *Journal of Renmin University of China* 5 (2021): 117-125.

² Mao Junxiang, "The Formation Path, Essence and China's Response to the International Human Rights Discourse," *Studies in Law and Business* 1 (2017): 153-163; Qiu Changqing, "China's Discourse in International Human Rights Affairs: Practical Dilemmas and Countermeasures," *Human Rights* 3 (2018): 63-77; Ren Danhong and Zhang Yonghe, "On the Construction of China's Human Rights Discourse System and Struggle for International Discourse Power," *Journal of Southwest University of Political Science and Law* 1 (2019): 64-73.

and employed an interdisciplinary perspective that intersects international law and international politics to put forward a practical path from “Chinese human rights concepts” to “international human rights norms”.³ Currently, the studies of international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse have seen a shift towards social constructivism. In addition to the aforementioned macro-level research, some scholars focus on analyzing specific discourse expressions rich in human rights ideas, such as “a global community of shared future” and “promoting human rights through development,” exploring the mechanisms by which China seeks international recognition in terms of human rights development. Mechanisms such as “advocacy,” “demonstration,” and “embedding” are employed to realize the internationalization of Chinese concepts, emphasizing the active role of actors in shaping normative structures.⁴ Furthermore, some studies focus on analyzing specific cases with regard to Western criticisms of China’s human rights practices, and advocate for exploring China’s discourse resources on human rights protection by reconstructing the historical perspective of China’s human rights discourse. Meanwhile, some scholars propose more proactive dissemination methods, breaking through the soft approaches of “alignment” or “integration” and replacing them with competition and clash to transcend the central position of Western human rights discourse on the world stage and enhance the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse.⁵

Through the combing of the existing research achievements around the topic of “international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse,” it can be found that current studies mainly focus on reviewing current dissemination situations and analyzing the reasons behind. When it comes to the path of practice, relevant studies usually present a macro plan to optimize

³ Yuan Zhengqing, Li Zhiyong and Zhufu Xiaofei, “China’s Contribution to Reshaping International Human Rights Norms,” *Social Sciences in China* 7 (2016): 189-203; Mao Junxiang, “China’s Participation in Global Human Rights Governance: Building a Global Community of Shared Future,” *Journal of Human Rights Law* 1 (2022): 35-53; Shan Xiulei and Liu Changming, “The Diffusion and Alienation of Human Rights Norms,” *International Forum* 4 (2022): 85-108; Mao Junxiang, “The Diffusion of International Norms in Xi Jinping’s Important Discourses on Respecting and Protecting Human Rights,” *Legal Forum* 1 (2023): 16-26.

⁴ Cai Wencheng and Mou Chen, “On the Formation Mechanism of International Identity of a Global Community of Shared Future: From the Perspective of the Diffusion of International Norms,” *Journal of Socialism Studies* 6 (2021): 156-163; Gui Xiaowei, “The Advantages of China’s Plan for ‘Promoting Human Rights through Development’ in International Discourse: Based on the Theoretical Exposition of Excerpts of Xi Jinping’s Discourses on Respecting and Protecting Human Rights,” *Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 10 (2022): 117-126.

⁵ Zheng Liang, “International Dissemination of Xinjiang-related Human Rights Issues: Analysis of the Current Situation and Countermeasures,” *Journal of United Front Science* 4 (2021): 93-101; Zheng Liang, “Research on the Innovation of International Dissemination of China’s Human Rights Discourse on Ethnic Issues,” *Human Rights* 2 (2022): 139-154.

the effect of international dissemination of human rights discourse with Chinese characteristics in the new era from the dimensions of communication contents, communication subjects, communication objects, and communication methods.⁶ However, due to the lack of a specific theoretical framework to define and integrate the relevant improvement suggestions at the practical level, there is a risk of disintegration and fragmentation in the process of countermeasure analysis and practical implementation. Based on the aforementioned practical problems, the paper aims to propose an “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse, and analyze the internal logic of the framework from three dimensions: duality, reflectivity, and spatiotemporal nature, in order to enhance the systematization of China’s human rights discourse from the perspective of the essential “Dao” (truth) of communication. Furthermore, efforts will be made to utilize the “Dao” (truth) to develop methods to optimize the international dissemination strategy of China’s human rights discourse, thereby responding to the call of theory in practice.

II. “Effect-Oriented” Mechanism for International Dissemination of Human Rights Discourse and Its Operational Logic

An “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international dissemination of human rights discourse refers to one that fully respects the primary status of the audience in the dissemination process, i.e., dynamically adjusting China’s international communication strategy on human rights discourse by observing the different reactions of various audiences in the international community to the expression of China’s human rights discourse. This mechanism emphasizes intersubjective interaction and is based on the duality of international dissemination of human rights discourse, relying on the initial disseminators’ continuous reflective monitoring of the discourse dissemination process, ultimately returning to the spatiotemporal nature of China’s human rights discourse system.

A. Duality: the intrinsic attributes of the “effect-oriented” mechanism for human rights discourse dissemination

Both the construction of the human rights discourse system and the international dissemination of human rights discourse involve the collision and exchanges between individuals, nations, and cultures. The expressive methods

⁶ Tan Enjie, “International Dissemination of Human Rights Discourse with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era,” *Hebei Law Science* 6 (2022): 146-166; Cai Fei and Wang Xiaoyang, “Constructing a Strategic Communication System for China’s Human Rights Discourse in the New Era,” *Chinese Social Sciences Today*, July 7, 2022, page 3.

of human rights discourse and the real-time feelings of the audience jointly determine the actual effect and lifecycle of discourse dissemination. This philosophical nature of intersubjectivity, or the duality of the international dissemination of human rights discourse, represents the intrinsic attributes that serve as the foundation for the “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse.

Giddens’ Structuration Theory, which emphasizes the duality of structure, posits that duality exists between the actions of humans as participants in society and social structures. On the one hand, individuals living in society, as subjects of action, construct social structures; on the other hand, social structures also serve as conditions for specific human actions to progress. The structural characteristic of the social system is not merely embodied in actions; it is both a product of actions and a medium of actions. The two continuously generate each other through interaction, collectively completing production and reproduction.⁷ In short, the ongoing actions shape the structure, while the structure subtly defines and guides the actions. It is evident that there are no two isolated entities in the relationship of duality; they reflect each other and represent two facets of a single entity. This idea that replaces the stereotype of “binary opposition” with the philosophical thinking of “duality” and supplants the “unidimensional, hierarchical logic of subject-object relationship” with the unity of “individualism and holism” holds significant enlightening implications for reconstructing the mechanism for the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse. Only by emphasizing and highlighting this duality characteristic can this mechanism effectively enhance communication efficiency. Specifically, this duality encompasses two aspects: the duality of the discourse itself and the duality of the identities of “disseminators and audiences”.

First, the duality of China’s human rights discourse system itself implies that human rights discourse serves as the “raw material” for promoting continuous international communication, while the human rights discourse system itself is constantly reshaped and recreated through the interactive feedback between the disseminator and the audience. The two should exist in a cycle of dynamic reproduction, serving as media, resources, and means for each other, undergoing persistent adjustments and constructions, constituting the duality of the same reality.

Second, the “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse is based on the infinite interchanges of identities between the disseminator and the audience. The

⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology: A Brief but Critical Introduction*, Guo Zhonghua trans. (Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 2013), 5-9; Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis*, Guo Zhonghua and Xu Fayin trans. (Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 2015), 60-94.

“transmitter and receiver” collaboratively complete the duality of each other’s identities through continuous interactions. When the disseminator A (as shown in Figure-1, defined as the initial disseminator) conveys human rights discourse containing informational symbols to the audience B (as shown in Figure-1, correspondingly defined as the initial audience) through media, the communication process is initiated; upon receiving the human rights discourse expressed by the initial disseminator A, the initial audience B will understand, process, and respond to the discourse, and then send his or her responses back to the initial disseminator A as informational symbols. In this process (as indicated by the dashed line in Figure-1), the identities of both parties are interchanged at a factual level. The initial audience B begins to effectively assume the role of a disseminator, and the initial disseminator A analyzes the feedback information from the initial audience B, and then choose to reinforce, maintain, or modify his or her expression of human rights discourse, and place the adjusted human rights discourse into international communication channels for effect testing. This cyclical process may undergo repeated iterations. Only in this way can it constitute a complete operational process of the “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse.

Under this mechanism, there is no dichotomic or hierarchical relationship between the disseminator and the audience in terms of identity, and the disseminator’s discourse expression and the audience’s understanding of the discourse play an equally important role in the orderly proceeding of the communication process. Moreover, the identities of the two parties are mirror images of each other and penetrate each other, and they can only obtain the meaning of their own existence through coexistence with each other. Therefore, the advantage and characteristics of the “effect-oriented” mechanism lie in that it promotes the “integration of visions” between the disseminator and the audience, and ensures the integrity of the communication chain by endowing all the “others” external to the “self” with a subject value that transcends the objectivity like the “self” and transforming the “subject-object” relationship into a “subject-subject” relationship, which is conducive to improving the acceptability, recognition and appeal of China’s human rights discourse around the world. The implementation and maintenance of this mechanism depends on the initial disseminator’s continuous and reflexive monitoring of the communication process.

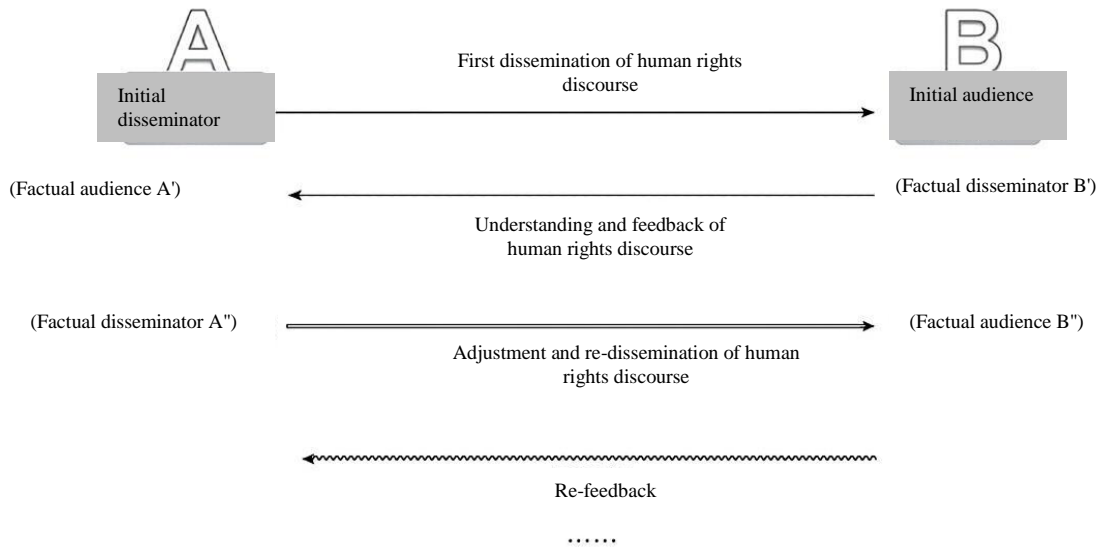


Figure-1: The operational process of the “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international communication of China’s human rights discourse (created by the author)

B. Reflexivity: the practical guarantee of the “effect-oriented” mechanism for human rights discourse dissemination

Reflexivity is a concept in sociology that refers to the ways in which social actors are increasingly able to monitor their actions.⁸ As a constructive element, reflexivity highlights the autonomy of a subject, so that he or she is no longer a passive recipient of results, but an active creator. This concept has found a way out of the dilemma faced by China in the international dissemination of its human rights discourse, and has become a practical guarantee for the “effect-oriented” dissemination mechanism.

First, the international dissemination of human rights discourse is neither a unilateral act nor a mechanical sum of unrelated one-dimensional acts, but a continuous stream of actions guided by a unified goal. Second, the initial disseminator (hereinafter referred to as the “disseminator”) needs to constantly monitor and reflect on this flow of actions. Such reflexivity relies on the initiative of the related subjects, namely the disseminator and the initial audience (hereinafter referred to as the “audience”). Along the extension of the communication network, the discourse chosen by the disseminator is no longer the only variable that affects the communication effect, and the audience’s understanding and feedback on the human rights discourse will always be projected into the disseminator’s own vision of reflective monitoring. The results of his or her reflection will also affect the adjustments of the communication strategy. Furthermore, the choice of communication strategy is no longer triggered by random and separate intentions and motivations, but a strategic choice based on the continuous monitoring and reflection guidance of the disseminator. Through inspecting, filtering and absorbing the communication effect, the disseminator becomes aware of the direction to improve the initial discourse expression mode, and thus begins the transformative process of self-transcendence. Under continuous reflection, the disseminator can shape a dynamic cognition of the discourse system and international communication ecosystem. By doing so, an effective interaction can be achieved between the construction of the discourse system and the development of communication behaviors, and between the disseminator and the audience.

This further leads to a series of questions about the origin, objects, boundaries, standards, and purpose of the disseminator’s reflective actions. First of all, the origin of reflective actions stems from the disseminator’s understanding and comparison of the differences among various types of audiences, including differences in political systems, social and cultural differences, differences in economic development stages, and so on. The

⁸ Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis*, Guo Zhonghua and Xu Fayin trans. (Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 2015), 61-66.

international dissemination of human rights discourse itself is a complex and dynamic process. Considering that the disseminator and the audience differ in cultural environments, they inherently have different ways of expressing and thinking. This will not only hinder the comprehension and internalization of discourse, but also restrict the realization of intersubjectivity. Secondly, the objects of reflection include not only the “original self” but also the “other” and the “other self”. Therefore, the disseminator should, first of all, evaluate the communicative power and communication effect of the discourse. Specific indicators may include the presence or absence of discourse (the frequency of human rights discourse expressed among the audience), the proportion of identity (the proportion of positive and negative evaluations of human rights discourse among the audience), etc., so as to objectively evaluate the actual effect of international dissemination of human rights discourse (e.g., “ineffective,” “positive” or “negative”). In addition, the content of the reflection should be further deepened along the communication chain. For example, if a dissemination endeavor fails, the disseminator should analyze whether the failure is due to the coding reasons (e.g., the integrity of the information is compromised) or the technical reasons (e.g., the discourse leads to the wrong targets of dissemination) or the decoding reasons (e.g., there is a mismatch with the audience in the process of receiving the discourse). Different audiences have varying views and attitudes towards China’s human rights discourse, and this divergence has formed a reflective projection of the “other self” on the disseminator’s side and penetrated into his or her internal reference system, which permeates the entire communication process from start to finish. On this basis, the disseminator will play an active and constructive role in “creating new ways of communication by developing and transforming themselves through production and fostering new forces and new ideas,”⁹ thereby promoting discourse re-production. “Theoretical solutions need to be perfected through the accumulation of enormous practical experiences”. The most reliable indicator of discourse identity comes only from practice.¹⁰ Only by accumulating experiences through practice can we truly gain a complete understanding of the positioning of our own human rights discourse system, and only then can we test whether the current dissemination mechanism is feasible. The audience’s understanding is a measure of the effectiveness of the disseminator’s discourse. Feedback from the audience manifests the validity of the dissemination efforts and the possibility of mutual understanding and consensus among relevant parties in the dissemination process.

⁹ Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 46 (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1979), 494.

¹⁰ Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1972), 417.

Although constant reflection brings uncertainty, real-time information feedback from different audiences, as a dynamic resource, provides boundaries and references for the disseminator's self-reflection and renewal, so that the latter can adjust his or her communication strategies in a timely and dynamic manner for the purpose of improving discourse expression to obtain universal intersubjective recognition between the two parties or to achieve intersubjective coordination and build consensus in the normative context of mutual recognition. The optimal result is that relevant ideas are sublimated into "knowledge," which in turn is established as a generalizable principle. The international dissemination of human rights discourse is also advancing in such constant self-denial and self-abandonment. However, it needs to be recognized that this kind of reflection will inevitably have historical limitations, that is, it is still impossible for the reflective discourse to go beyond the social development stage and historical and cultural backgrounds of the disseminator. This is because although "people create their own history, they do not achieve it completely at will nor under conditions they freely choose, but based on the conditions that they encounter directly or that are established and inherited from the past."¹¹ In addition to this intergenerational difference, there are also intragenerational differences in discourse understanding and expression. Even in the same historical period, people from different regions and different strata of society will not be able to exist independently of social production relations because of their differentiated background knowledge. This further shapes the spatiotemporal nature of human rights discourse in China and even around the world.

C. Spatiotemporal nature: the ultimate direction of "effect-oriented" mechanism for human rights discourse dissemination

"All social interactions take place in time and space".¹² The international environment for the dissemination of China's human rights discourse is a variable that develops and evolves constantly, so China's human rights discourse system should also be a dynamic concept. It contains the adjustment of the original expression and the generation of new expression, which is generatable, applicable and restrictive, and has been constantly improved in continuous international communication and constant interactions between relevant subjects. The "effect-oriented" mechanism for the international dissemination of China's human rights discourse transcends the previous one-way "sender-oriented"¹³

¹¹ Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2018), 9.

¹² Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, Guo Zhonghua trans. (Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 2010), 38.

¹³ Sender-oriented communication refers to a model of communication in which the primary focus is on the sender's instrumental intentions and how effectively these can be achieved, while ignoring receiver factors. It is typically associated with asymmetrical relationships in which the sender is dominant and the receiver is

dissemination model, and aims at the communication, understanding and reconstruction of discourse. That is, on the premise of maintaining the “uniqueness” of one’s own discourse, it forms an integrated perspective through communication and interaction with others, thereby leading to a reorganization of meaning. Based on this, the spatiotemporal nature of China’s human rights discourse system is highlighted.

First, the continuous reflective monitoring and adjustment made by the disseminator bestows a spatiotemporal nature on China’s human rights discourse system. The changes of the discourse stem from collision, friction and interaction between the disseminator and the audience. Through reflective monitoring of the communication process, the disseminator continuously receives feedback from the audience, based on which the disseminator reorganizes his or her discourse expression and consolidates the existing or newly-adjusted discourse blueprint. The expression of human rights discourse has undergone a subjective change in this process. Each discourse expression adjusted by reflective monitoring is a certain “point” in the historical coordinates of China’s human rights discourse system, and they are linked together to form a “line” with the extension of time and a “plane” with the layout of space. The continuous interactions between the disseminator and the audience gives an inherent spatiotemporal nature to China’s human rights discourse. China’s increasingly mature human rights discourse system has achieved self-reconstruction in such continuous interactions and path-shaping process, which will come into reality in a new round of communication practice. This process dynamically presents a virtuous circle of the construction and international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse system.

Second, civilization can transcend the limits of time and space in terms of form. As a vital part of civilization and one of its external manifestations, human rights are also spatiotemporal. Besides, as a product of “transculturality,”¹⁴ the

subordinate and dependent. Such communication is within the framework set by the sender; the receiver must adjust to it. This model of communication may alienate audiences, resulting in limited effectiveness of communication. See the website of Oxford Reference, accessed May 15, 2024, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100454484>; Nie Yuanzheng. “Integrated Development of Community Media and Community Governance from the Perspective of Shared Community,” *Journal of Hubei University (Philosophy and Social Science)* 4 (2020): 163. The model of “sender-oriented” communication partially embodied in the mechanism for the international communication of China’s human rights discourse will be analyzed in detail later.

¹⁴ The concept of transculturality originates from the concept of “Transkulturalität” proposed by the German cultural philosopher Wolfgang Welsch, which is translated as “Transculturality” in English and as “*zhuan wenhua*” in Chinese by some Chinese scholars. This concept focuses on the complex and multi-layered phenomenon of culture, and it holds that there is no culture exclusive to a certain group in the world, and that association, overlapping, mutual infiltration, and hybridization are the essential characteristics of all cultures. Transculturality emphasizes the internalization of heterogeneous cultures. Through the excavation,

discourse itself means hybridization as a product of mutual integration and absorption between different groups and individuals. Acknowledging the differences between different contexts while actively seeking commonalities between different cultures and bridging intercultural gaps through the interaction and adjustment of discourse can realize the localization and reconstruction of our own culture and promote the continuous re-production of China's human rights discourse. After transplantation, grafting, transformation and re-production, China's human rights discourse has become inclusive and rich because it integrates the essence of the cultures of both the disseminator and the audience, making it easier to be recognized by the local people and accepted by the international community in form and content. The background knowledge formed through the continuous adjustments based on interactions will further serve as a reference system and premise for the disseminator to conduct reflective monitoring, and promote the disseminator and the audience to develop the human rights discourse system into a cycle of "compossibility".¹⁵

III. The Current "Sender-Oriented" Mechanism for the International Dissemination of China's Human Rights Discourse

The "effect-oriented" mechanism for human rights discourse dissemination proposed in this paper is based on observation, summarization, and reflection on the realities of the international dissemination of China's human rights discourse. Due to the late exposure to modern human rights concepts and the ongoing pressure from Western human rights discourse, the international dissemination of China's human rights discourse has long been limited to a "sender-oriented" mindset. Consequently, it faces varying degrees of practical issues in terms of the actions of the disseminator, the interactions between the disseminator and

examination, filtering and absorption of external cultures, different individuals transcend the initial cultural model at the epistemological level, and constantly carry out self-transcendence and transformation. In other words, in the process of cultural transmission between different groups, one culture transcends its own cultural identity and gradually internalizes other cultures. See Guo Mengmeng and Wang Yanlong, "Transculturality: The Logic and Direction of the Paradigm Transformation for the International Dissemination of Chinese Culture," *Modern Publishing* 6 (2019): 52-55; Zhao Yuezhi, "Cross-Cultural Connotation in Political and Economic Studies on Cross-Cultural Communication," *Global Journal of Media Studies* 1 (2019): 115-134; Shi Anbin and Sheng Yang, "From Cross-Cultural to Transcultural: Theoretical and Path Reconstruction of Communication Research in the New Era of Globalization," *Contemporary Communication* 1 (2020): 18-24; Wang Xin and Chang Xiangqun, "The Concept, Practice and Production of Transculturality from a Global Perspective: A Dialogue with Professor Chang Xiangqun," *Intercultural Communication Studies* 1 (2022): 3-23.

¹⁵ The concept of "compossibility" was coined by the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who argued that a logically optimal possible world must be a world in which all things are compossible. In textual interpretation, the interaction between the whole and the part, and between the traditional and the contemporary is an internal cycle model. A "compossible" cultural cycle refers to the external circulation mode in which local culture and foreign culture interact.

the audience, and the international environment in which the dissemination occurs.

A. The “sender-oriented” mechanism for the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse and its formation mechanism

The “sender-oriented” mechanism is a relatively traditional mode of information dissemination, which can be traced back to Aristotle’s model of linear communication. It primarily serves public speaking rather than interpersonal communication. This model emphasizes that the speaker delivers different messages to the audience at different times and on different occasions, and that the latter, as a “passive” information container, needs to be filled with the speaker’s eloquence and persuasiveness.

Due to the long-term absence of human rights discourse at both governmental and nongovernmental levels in China, academic research in this area has started relatively late and the theoretical framework remains underdeveloped. Consequently, in the face of Western accusations and criticisms, in the past China’s theoretical community often adhered to the position of viewing human rights as a concept of capitalism and took human rights research as a theoretical taboo.¹⁶ In terms of discourse expression, researchers either deliberately made a “detour” or monotonously repeated official rhetoric, lacking innovative expression in human rights discourse. Although there are many “ideological or functional equivalents of the notion of human rights”¹⁷ within traditional Chinese culture, how to transform these “thick theories” deeply rooted in local contextual knowledge into “thin theories” that are easily accepted by the international community has long been a challenge to the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse.¹⁸ Therefore, for a long time, enhancing the ability to refine and shape discourse from the perspective of the disseminator has been the focus of China’s efforts to disseminate its human rights discourse globally.

Additionally, due to the fact that China introduced the modern notion of human rights relatively late and started the international dissemination of its human rights in response to the pressures of Western discourse, we are compelled to constantly grapple with the one-sided efforts to “introduce China” and “explain China” to the outside world as we face the stigmatization and the

¹⁶ He Zhipeng, “On Human Rights in China: The Coevolution of Practice, Theory and Discourse,” *Contemporary Legal Science* 6 (2022): 27.

¹⁷ On the question of whether there is a universal origin of the “ideological and functional equivalents of the notion of human rights” in Eastern and Western civilizations, see Panikkar, Raimon, “Is the Notion of Human Rights a Western Concept?,” *Diogenes* 30 (1982): 75-102.

¹⁸ Regarding the expression of “thick theory” and “thin theory,” this paper refers to Benjamin Gregg’s discussion of “the thickness of norms” and the “thinness of norms.” Benjamin Gregg, *Human Rights as Social Construction*, Li Xianfei trans. (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2020), 59-68.

construction of the “other” image by certain countries. This has led to China’s human rights discourse inadvertently falling into a “self-justification trap,” resulting in the formation of a one-way and passive communication logic. Over time, this not only hinders the further international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse, but also results in other countries controlling the selection and setting of themes, agendas, and keywords in international human rights discourse competition.

B. Basic characteristics of the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse under the “sender-oriented” mechanism

The international dissemination of human rights discourse under the “sender-oriented” mechanism is a simple and linear communication process, which acquiesces in the discourse flowing directly from the sender (the disseminator) to the receiver (the audience) without any deformation, and the responsive effect from the audience and the interaction between the two sides being not taken into account. Specifically, the international dissemination of human rights discourse under the guidance of this mechanism demonstrates the following two features:

First, since information is processed as a one-way flow from the disseminator to the audience, the mechanism emphasizes the disseminator’s control over the process while ignoring the audience’s background and needs. At present, the international communication of China’s human rights discourse attaches more importance to the dominant position of the sender, and the improvement of communication effect mainly depends on the upgrading of the disseminator’s techniques, including the ability to select and innovate the discourse blueprint, the update and iteration speed of the communication media, and the techniques to expand and optimize communication channels. Its most essential difference from the “effect-oriented” mechanism is that the adjustment of the disseminator’s actions is based on his or her subjective judgment. The default object of dissemination is a homogeneous unit, which in essence regards all the “others” external to the “self” as an objective existence, and the “self” only needs to understand them according to “one’s own position, viewpoint and needs, and make them be used by the ‘self’ on the basis of this understanding”.¹⁹ The emphasis on the self-existence and initiative of the disseminator inevitably leads to the neglect of the audience as a “non-self,” which has no longer adapt to the current era of multi-entity interactive global communication.

Second, the “sender-oriented” mechanism neglects the singularity of human rights discourse, often treating the international dissemination of human rights discourse with experiences gained from the dissemination of other types

¹⁹ Zhang Zailin, “On the Intersubjective Transition in Modern Western Philosophy,” *The Journal of Humanities* 4 (2000): 13.

of discourses. On the one hand, human rights discourse differs from literary discourse and ecological discourse; the specificity of topics in the area itself makes it susceptible to politicization, ideologization, and instrumentalization, which has become a “battleground” for international political manipulation and counter-manipulation. Therefore, the international dissemination of human rights discourse requires a higher macro design capability in theory and a more urgent need for close coordination among various links in practice. On the other hand, as a cultural product — unlike natural phenomena, which can be universally interpreted — the notion of human rights holds different values and meanings across different cultures. Thus, in the dissemination process, the selection and processing of discourse materials require the disseminator to invest more brainpower and exhibit greater wisdom. At present, however, constrained by the “sender-oriented” mindset, China’s practices in disseminating its human rights discourse worldwide are often overly proactive yet lacking in skills, suffering from problems such as vague expression and homogenization in discourse dissemination. On the one hand, as the object to be disseminated, China’s human rights discourse itself possesses considerable ambiguity. For instance, although China has created a series of human rights concepts and ideas such as “whole-process people’s democracy” and “the happiness of the people is the greatest human right,” the theoretical interpretation of specific connotations such as “what aspects are included in the whole-process people’s democracy” and “what constitutes a happy life” is still insufficient, and there is a lack of intuitive quantitative indicators and evaluation systems. On the other hand, the interpretation of China’s human rights discourse is highly homogenic, with unclear boundaries between political discourse, policy discourse, academic discourse, and nongovernmental discourse, leading to a failure in targeted communication.

C. Practical issues faced by the international dissemination of human rights discourse under the “sender-oriented” mechanism

First, the “sender-oriented” mechanism inadvertently increases communication costs and limits the space for the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse. “Discourse itself carries the significance of interaction, and the formation of discourse consensus must rely on the free and equal participation of the negotiating subjects in discourse argumentation.”²⁰ Any failure in the process, from the information input by the disseminator to the feedback of the audience, and then to the analysis and re-delivery by the disseminator, can lead to a standstill in the international dissemination of human rights discourse. The “sender-oriented” mechanism for the international

²⁰ Sun Shaoyong, “Analysis of the Intersubjective Orientation of Communicative Rationality and Contemporary Reflection: From the Perspective of Habermas’ Communicative Paradigm and the Practical Purpose of Communicative Interactions,” *Shandong Social Sciences* 7 (2022): 62.

dissemination of human rights discourse neglects the initiative of the audience, segmenting the continuous process into an “expressive line” radiating from the disseminator to the audience, causing a rupture in the communication chain at the section from B’ to A’ (as indicated by the dashed line in Figure-1). International communication is an art of seeking recognition, and the “sender-oriented” mechanism simplifies “interactive dialogue” into “subordinate monologue,”²¹ ultimately limiting the discourse space and increasing communication costs.

Second, the “sender-oriented” mechanism cannot bridge the cultural differences between the East and the West in a timely manner, which restricts the effectiveness of human rights discourse communication. As an exported term, the introduction of the modern notion of “human rights” has undergone a transformation from a Western academic concept to a Chinese academic concept, a process that involves not only paraphrasing at the level of translation, but also the ontological differences behind its ideas. Whether it is “human,” “rights” or “human right,” the notion represents varied dimensions and meanings in different cultures. Ignoring the cultural background of the audience will lead to a lack of resonance with the disseminator’s discourse, and even cause resentment and resistance. The “sender-oriented” mechanism fails to pay attention to the differences in cultural backgrounds and concerns between the two sides, so the discourse blueprint carefully edited by the disseminator is likely to be neglected or misread by the audience. The lack of responses leads to a failure in the timely testing of communication effectiveness and adjustment of communication strategies, thus preventing effective communication and reducing the likelihood of achieving the desired outcomes.

Finally, the “sender-oriented” mechanism cannot cope with the current international environment in which political realism and anti-intellectualism are superimposed. The world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century, and the return of realism has become a structural feature of international relations that is unlikely to change in the short and medium term.²² In the digital age, social media platforms have contributed to the proliferation of populism and anti-intellectualism due to their global reach, fast spread, low thresholds, and enormous information storage capacity. In this context, human rights issues have been continuously politicized and weaponized by some countries, and public empathy has been exploited by the Western elites who pursue political realism in their own countries, which has undermined the external environment for the dissemination of China’s human rights discourse. However, the existing

²¹ Zhang Zailin, “On the Intersubjective Transition in Modern Western Philosophy,” *The Journal of Humanities* 4 (2000): 13.

²² Zhang Yunling, Zhu Feng and Yang Bojiang, “The Strategic Games of Great Powers and the New Trend of the International Situation,” *Asia-Pacific Security and Maritime Affairs* 1 (2023): 7.

“sender-oriented” mechanism is apparently unable to solve the serious problem of information asymmetry between the disseminator and the audience, which has greatly weakened the actual effect of the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse.

By examining the realities of the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse, it is not difficult to find that the “sender-oriented” communication mechanism regards the audience’s reception of information as a mechanical movement of “reacting with stimulus” that occurs in a “vacuum” environment. In this sense, discourse is assumed to be a fixed constant between the disseminator and the audience — the former produces the discourse and the latter absorbs it, in which the interaction sequence, logic, and precedence are strictly limited. This communication mechanism is not only unable to deal with the long-standing political and cultural differences between the East and the West, but also cannot resolve the instrumental construction of human rights issues in some countries against the backdrop of intensifying great-power competition. Nowadays, as China actively participates in global human rights governance and strengthens dialogue and integration with the international community, we urgently need to reflect on the perspective of “taking ourselves as the original coordinates,” and update and reposition the power relationship between the disseminator and the audience in the field of international communication, so as to build a positive international image of China, with a view to enhancing cohesion and appeal internally, and enhancing affinity and attractiveness externally.²³

IV. Differences between Audiences: The Limits of the International Dissemination of China’s Human Rights Discourse under the “Effect-Oriented” Mechanism

“Human rights are concrete, rooted in history, and based on current realities. We cannot mouth empty words on human rights regardless of the social and political conditions and the historical and cultural traditions of a country.”²⁴ As mentioned earlier, the same human rights discourse has different meanings in different contextual knowledge; In addition, different countries face different circumstances and have different understandings and practices in human rights. The “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international communication of China’s human rights discourse directly faces this heterogeneous social relationship, seeks to gain insights into the interactions between the disseminator and the audience from the perspective of specific social realities, and embraces

²³ Cui Yuxuan, “The Construction of China’s International Image from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence,” *Journal of News Research* 7 (2023): 41.

²⁴ Xi Jinping, “Unswervingly Follow China’s Human Rights Development Path and Advance the Development of China’s Human Rights Cause,” *People’s Daily*, February 27, 2022, page 1.

the influence of differences in political system, social culture and economic development on the perception of human rights discourse. With the aforesaid as raw materials, the mechanism can advance the international dissemination of China's human rights discourse with a "one policy for one country" approach, thereby achieving accurate delivery.

A. The differences in political systems affect the connotations of human rights protection

The notion of human rights is a complex concept rich in connotations of politics and values, and class and social contradictions. A country's definition on the subjects, categories, protection mechanisms, and evaluation standards of human rights must be based on its own choices regarding political and social systems, influenced by the values of the ruling class and the operational methods of its organs of state power. Taking the contrasting political systems of China and the West as an example: Firstly, both are rooted in different economic foundations. The political systems of Western countries are generally established on the basis of capitalist private ownership of the means of production, with the ultimate goal being safeguarding the interests of the bourgeoisie; whereas the people's congress system in China is based on the socialist public ownership of the means of production, with everything aimed at the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. Secondly, in countries with presidential or parliamentary systems, the organs of state power are only accountable to the constitution and the electorate, often neglecting, ignoring, or even deviating from certain public opinions in practice; whereas in China, based on the system of the National People's Congress, a multi-party cooperation and political consultation system led by the Communist Party of China (CPC), a system of regional ethnic autonomy, and a community-level self-governance system have been formed, creating a modern multi-pronged political system that truly involves the participation of all people and is accountable to all people. The differences between Chinese and Western political systems not only grant different social classes varying rights²⁵ but also reflect deeper interpretations of the essence of humans and definitions of the boundaries of rights.

First, the connotation of "human" means the definition of the scope of subjects of human rights. Late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping once pointed out, "What are human rights? First of all, how many people's human rights are we talking about? Are they the rights of the minority or the rights of the majority, the rights of all the people in the country?"²⁶ Essentially, this question is about the connotation of "human" in the term "human rights," which determines the

²⁵ Zhang Can and Wu Bo, "The Improvement of China's Human Rights Discourse System and Development Path in the New Era," *Ningxia Social Sciences* 1 (2023): 18.

²⁶ Party Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, *Annual Compilation of Deng Xiaoping Thought: 1975-1997* (Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 2011), 545.

scope of the subjects of human rights. If “human” in the term “human rights” is interpreted solely as a “citizen,” it will inevitably create significant gaps and omissions in the protection of rights in practice. A citizen refers to a person who possesses the nationality of a country and enjoys rights and assumes corresponding obligations according to the constitution and laws of that country.²⁷ In the era of globalization, the cross-border movement of people has led to a large number of residents within a country being foreign nationals; the proliferation of non-traditional security issues and the expansion of global risk society have also caused a rapid increase in the number of refugees and stateless persons. Therefore, limiting the subjects of human rights to citizens would overlook these vast “marginalized groups,” which is a regression in human rights theory. China has reasonably expanded the scope of “human” in its human rights practices to include not only citizens but also non-citizens; it includes individuals as well as the collectives formed by individuals.²⁸ Unlike the West, which emphasizes the apolitical nature of human rights and recognizes individual rights while denying collective rights, China adheres to the Marxist outlook on human rights, viewing the connotation and extension of the subjects of rights from an inclusive and holistic perspective; it insists on the mutual promotion and coordinated development of both collective and individual human rights, where individual human rights are a component of collective human rights, and collective human rights serve as external guarantees for individual human rights... Relevant human rights concepts are gradually externalized into discourse expressions such as “a global community of shared future”.

Second, the boundaries of rights refer to the definition of the objects of human rights. Only by clearly defining what content is included in the rights within the common will of a collective can one truly understand what it means for a person to “enjoy human rights”. If human rights are primarily guaranteed in accordance with the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* as in some countries, where individual freedom and proactivity in the exercise of rights are advocated while opposing government intervention, on the one hand, the human rights attributes of economic, social, and cultural rights are undervalued or even denied, significantly narrowing the scope of the objects of human rights and making it difficult for human rights to escape the narrow realm of civil and political right²⁹; on the other hand, it amplifies the divergences between individuals and the state, neglecting the significant responsibility of the state to take proactive measures to promote the protection of human rights. China’s socialist system of people’s democratic dictatorship emphasizes the

²⁷ Zeng Qingmin, *Dictionary of Law* (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 1998), 210.

²⁸ Li Buyun, “On the Three Forms of Human Rights,” *Chinese Journal of Law* 4 (1991): 13.

²⁹ Wang Xigen, “The Human Rights Value of Xi Jinping’s Thought on the Rule of Law,” *Oriental Law* 1 (2021): 45.

necessity for the state to take action to promote the realization of individual rights. Discourse expressions such as “do everything for the people” and “ensure the benefit of the people” affirm the primary status of the people while also aiming to expand the scope of the objects of human rights to the greatest extent possible and enrich the resources of rights.

B. Social and cultural differences affect the levels of human rights protection

The notion of human rights is a multi-level conceptual system. If the concept of “human being” is the first level, then the concept of “human rights” is the second level. Furthermore, the notion can further be subdivided into such third-level specific rights such as the right to democracy, the right to freedom, the right to survival, and the right to development.³⁰ Whether these rights are understood as claims, interests or qualifications, the realization of all of them requires a certain amount of resources from society.³¹ However, given that the social resources are limited, the rights at the third level are bound to conflict with each other, which brings a series of questions such as which rights are prioritized for protection, which rights can be derogated, and what is the degree of derogation that society can afford. At the same time, the notion of human rights is a concept closely related to culture³² as “a social product that is constantly evolving on the basis of the corresponding social environment and value system”³³. Therefore, as a kind of “regional outcome and local knowledge”³⁴, the notion of human rights based on the value identity of different core cultural circles will guide different groups to produce completely different value sequences. How to allocate limited resources and how to weigh conflicting demands?... These choices present a hierarchical system based on the history, culture, and collective cognition of the local society.³⁵

Taking the differences between the idea that prioritizes the “right to survival and development” and the notion that prioritizes the “right to freedom” as an example: The reverence for life is not only embedded in the cultural genes of the

³⁰ Zhang Yonghe, “A Comprehensive and Correct Understanding of Human Rights Concepts, Discourse, and Discourse System,” *Hongqi Wengao* 14 (2017): 8; Zhang Yonghe, “On the Right to Life,” *Human Rights* 3 (2020): 24.

³¹ Dai Jitao et al., “Deeply Study and Implement the Guiding Principles of the 20th CPC National Congress and Adhere to the Chinese Path of Human Rights Development,” *Human Rights* 1 (2023): 21.

³² Sheng Xi and Mao Junxiang, “Overview of the Theoretical Seminar on Building China’s Human Rights Discourse System for the New Era,” *Human Rights* 3 (2018): 147.

³³ Lyu Yiwei, “The Formation of Chinese Human Rights Concepts from a Localization Perspective,” *Modern Law Science* 1 (2023): 104.

³⁴ He Zhipeng, “On the Diversity of Human Rights Civilization,” *Human Rights Law* 2 (2022): 38.

³⁵ Lyu Yiwei, “The Formation of Chinese Human Rights Concepts from a Localization Perspective,” *Modern Law Science* 1 (2023): 105.

Chinese nation but has also been continuously reinforced in the historical process of modern China resisting humiliation from foreign powers and achieving national liberation and rejuvenation. Marxists have always believed that the right to life is the precondition and foundation of all other rights. “We must first determine that the first premise of the survival of all mankind, which is indeed the first premise of all history, is: to ‘create history’, people must be able to live.”³⁶ However, the Chinese concept of prioritizing the right to survival and development does not mean neglecting the protection of the political rights of the people. As early as 1949, the CPC put forward the answer to breaking free from historical cycles, which is the people’s democracy.³⁷ If lacking the production and supply of material resources and being detached from economic development, democracy and freedom would face significant risks to maintain stability and sustainability. In the Western hierarchy of human rights protection, the primary value of the individual-centered rights system is freedom, followed by equality.³⁸ Under this guiding principle, civil rights and political rights are brought to the core position of the Western human rights system, where not only the right to survival and development is overlooked or even denied, but also a wide array of “positive rights,” including economic, social, and cultural rights, receive little attention in the mainstream discourse.

In addition, the debate on the relationship between human rights and sovereignty also reveals differences in the hierarchy of human rights in different countries. From Hugo Grotius’s belief that “natural law gives man eternal and unchanging natural rights” to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s concepts that “human beings are born with natural rights” and “sovereignty rests with the people,” from Bentham’s principle that “the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the only right and proper end of government” to John Rawls’s “new social contract theory,” such concepts of rights that put personal interests first has been continuously consolidated and strengthened in modern Western liberal theories. Guided by atomistic ideas, they usually emphasize the primacy of human rights over sovereignty. Chinese culture, on the contrary, emphasizes the ethical order and the responsibility of individuals to the collective, and believes that “relationship” precedes “individual” and is the premise of the existence of individuals. Moreover, most developing countries experienced the loss of sovereignty in modern times and were forced to become colonial or semi-colonial countries in the past. Due to their different origins of human rights

³⁶ Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1956), 31.

³⁷ Dai Jitao et al., “Deeply Study and Implement the Guiding Principles of the 20th CPC National Congress and Adhere to the Chinese Path of Human Rights Development,” *Human Rights* 1 (2023): 21.

³⁸ Zhao Tingyang, “Prepaid Human Rights: A Non-Western Theory of Universal Human Rights,” *Social Sciences in China* 4 (2006): 26.

concepts and their varying social development courses, developed and developing countries hold different understandings of the relationship between national sovereignty and international human rights protection.³⁹ It is important to realize that human beings, as “quasi-beings,” must depend on society and the state to materialize their identity, role and status.⁴⁰ People wouldn’t enjoy human rights without national sovereignty. Therefore, human rights should never precede sovereignty, and no one should practice “neo-interventionism” in the name of “human rights”.

C. Differences in economic development affect the level of human rights protection

Marx once made it clear that “rights can never go beyond the economic structure of society”.⁴¹ Human rights, as an embodiment of rights, are an economic issue to a large extent. Only when the commodity economy becomes more and more prosperous will there be a fundamental evolution of the human rights protection system, which is an important part of the superstructure, and then a smooth progression from due rights to legal rights and then to real rights.

Based on intergenerational comparison, the practical path of human rights development in China reflects a “clear economic logic”.⁴² Back in 1978, when China just started its reform and opening up, its per capita GDP (based on 2015 constant dollars) was only USD 381.1.⁴³ According to the first Human Development Index (HDI) report unveiled by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990, China scored only 0.484 (the world average was 0.601 at the time).⁴⁴ At that time, the principal contradiction facing Chinese society was one between the people’s growing material and cultural needs and backward social production. Against this backdrop, China has successfully organized and implemented the largest poverty alleviation campaign in human history, with the largest scale and the largest number of benefited populations⁴⁵, making outstanding contributions to global poverty reduction. Nowadays, with China’s continuous economic development, the Chinese people’s awareness of

³⁹ Liu Zhiqiang, “The Expression of China’s Human Rights Discourse System in the New Era,” *Science of Law (Journal of Northwest University of Political Science and Law)* 5 (2018): 15.

⁴⁰ Lu Guangjin, “The Justification Logic of Human Rights in Chinese Modernization,” *Human Rights* 6 (2022): 26.

⁴¹ Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2015), 16.

⁴² Dai Jitao et al., “Deeply Study and Implement the Guiding Principles of the 20th CPC National Congress and Adhere to the Chinese Path of Human Rights Development,” *Human Rights* 1 (2023): 15.

⁴³ The website of the World Bank, accessed June 9, 2023, <https://data.worldbank.org.cn/>.

⁴⁴ The website of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), accessed June 9, 2023, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>.

⁴⁵ See the white paper “Moderate Prosperity in All Respects: Another Milestone Achieved in China’s Human Rights,” www.humanrights.cn, accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.humanrights.cn/html/wxzl/2/6/2021/0812/60790.html>.

the rule of law and rights are also constantly increasing, and the principal contradiction in Chinese society has transformed into the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life. A series of reforms based on the improvements of economic foundation have fueled the progress of China’s human rights cause: By 2020, there were 1.023 million medical and health institutions nationwide, 340 million people were covered by basic medical insurance for urban workers and 1.02 billion by basic medical insurance for rural and non-working urban residents, with the total number reaching 1.36 billion; There were 3,212 public libraries around the country, and the comprehensive population coverage rate of radio and TV programs reached 99.4% and 99.6%, respectively; China’s carbon dioxide emissions per 10,000 yuan of GDP decreased by 48.4% compared with 2005, and the target of reducing carbon emissions by 40% to 45% from 2005 was completed ahead of schedule...⁴⁶ This indicates that “the comprehensive realization of human rights is a historical process from low to high, that is, from insufficient to relatively sufficient and even completely full development”⁴⁷. The expectations and demands of citizens as well as the international community for human rights protection in a country should also be in line with its economic development level.

Based on intra-generational comparison, the economic development levels of different countries in the same period can also profoundly affect the level of human rights protection in respective countries. Taking the right to education as an example, a regression analysis of the five countries of Greece, Italy, France, Germany, and the United States⁴⁸ as randomly selected samples shows that there are tremendous differences in the investment in the education system (such as government fund allocation, average standard of teachers’ statutory salaries, etc.) in different countries, which has a significant positive correlation with the economic development level of each country (using the GDP index as a reference) ($k > 0$). The specific parameters and regression equations are shown in Table-1, Table-2, Figure-2 and Figure-3.

Table-1 GDP of the five countries and the share of public education expenditure in their total government expenditure in 2019⁴⁹ (created by the author)

	GDP in 2019 (based on 2015 purchasing power parity; Unit: USD)	Public education expenditure as a percentage of total
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⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2015), 22.

⁴⁸ Some countries were deleted from the sampling frames, as relevant data were not publicly available or were broken in the timeline.

⁴⁹ The website of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), accessed June 9, 2023, <https://stats.oecd.org/>; accessed June 9, 2023, <https://data.worldbank.org/cn/>.

	trillion)	government expenditure in 2019
Greece	0.20	6.9
Italy	1.92	7.4
France	2.62	8.5
Germany	3.60	9.2
United States	19.93	11.7

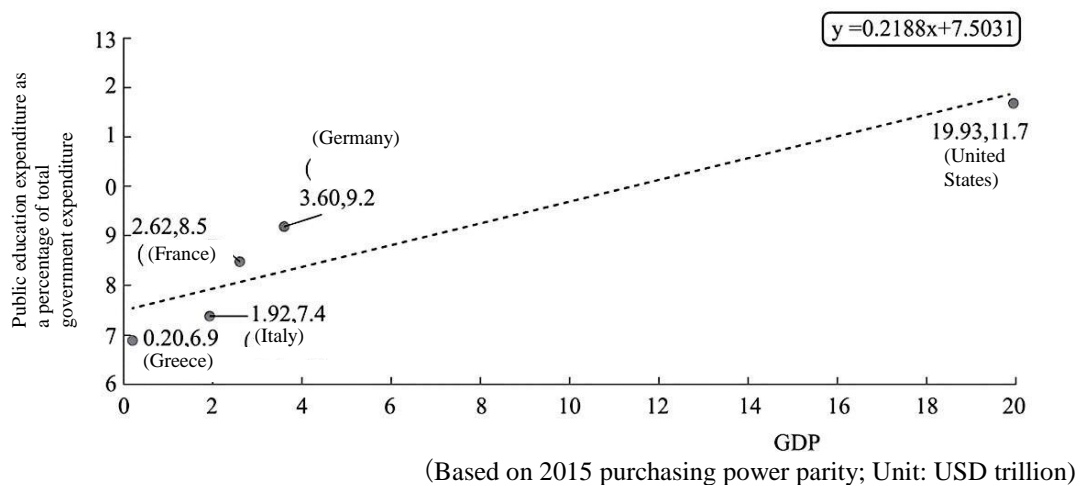


Figure-2 Relationship between the GDP of the five countries and the share of public education expenditure in their respective total government expenditure in 2019⁵⁰ (created by the author)

Table-2 GDP of the four countries and the statutory salaries of their respective secondary school teachers in 2021⁵¹ (created by the author)

	GDP in 2021 (based on 2015 purchasing power parity; Unit: USD trillion)	Statutory salaries of secondary school teachers in 2021 (annual salaries of teachers in public institutions, based on purchasing power parity; Unit: USD)
Greece	0.20	30,334.5
Italy	1.86	44,062.5
France	2.58	48,495.5

⁵⁰ The regression analysis of the data in the table yielded the regression equation: $y = 0.2188x + 7.5031$ ($k > 0$, positive correlation).

⁵¹ The website of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), accessed June 9, 2023, <https://stats.oecd.org/>; accessed June 9, 2023, <https://data.worldbank.org/cn/>.

United States	20.53	60,531.0
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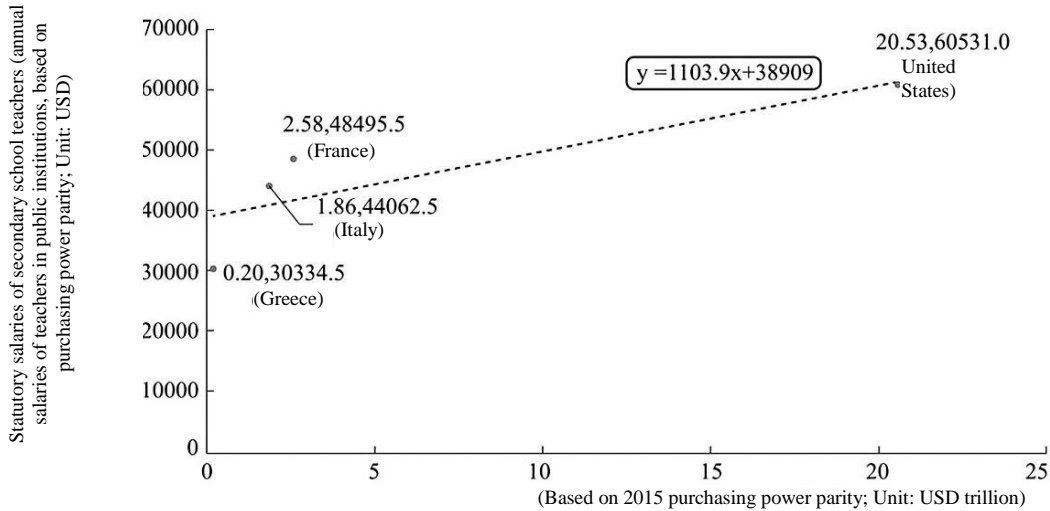


Figure-3 Relationship between the GDP of the four countries and the statutory salaries of their respective secondary school teachers in 2021⁵² (created by the author)

V. Adjustment and Construction: Optimization of the International Dissemination Path of China’s Human Rights Discourse under the “Effect-Oriented” Mechanism

The international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse cannot be based on “a transcendental rational architecture blueprint”⁵³, but must rely on concrete practice and effect feedback to continuously adjust. It is essential to continuously improve the international dissemination practice and effect of China’s human rights discourse through targeted measures such as shaping a clear, internationalized, and differentiated discourse blueprint according to the responses of different audiences, consciously fostering the thinking of strategic communication, showcasing China’s human rights protection experience in a panoramic way, and expanding the international united front.

A. Respecting the differences in social systems and fostering a strategic thinking for the dissemination of human rights discourse

⁵² The regression analysis of the data in the table yielded the regression equation: $y = 1103.9x + 38909$ ($k > 0$, positive correlation).

⁵³ Qi Yanping, “The Tension Balance Structure of the China’s Path of Human Rights Development,” *Human Rights* 5 (2021): 10.

At present, due to the fact that human rights issues have been “politicized” and “weaponized” by some countries, it is particularly important to establish a strategic communication thinking from the perspective of the top-level design of international dissemination of human rights discourse on the premise of respecting differences in social systems and transcending competition and confrontation between countries. Specifically, this thinking should include the following three aspects: first, strategic stability, second, strategic initiative, and third, strategic systematization.

First of all, it is necessary to maintain sufficient strategic focus in the diversified discourse competition, make a clear expression of the blueprint for the dissemination of human rights discourse, and reduce the space for speculation and misinterpretation as much as possible. For example, we should clarify the political basis, system positioning, theoretical connotation, practical path, evaluation criteria, and development direction of a specific human rights discourse; the special inherent prescriptiveness and peculiar external manifestations contained in the human rights discourse; and the levels, fields, and dimensions in which relevant expressions contribute to the diversity of human rights civilization; and the enlightenment it can bring to the development of human rights.⁵⁴ In addition, “in the process of constructing China’s human rights discourse system, it is necessary not only to clearly and accurately define all concepts, but also to clarify the different relationships between them”⁵⁵. Taking the statement that “the people’s happiness is the greatest human right” as an example, we need to accurately understand what “happiness” means, what its connotation and boundaries are, and how to evaluate and safeguard it. Also, it is essential to distinguish what is the relationship between this right and other human rights, and how it is positioned in the entire human rights discourse system.

Second, enhancing strategic initiative means making full use of existing resources and platforms to actively participate in the international human rights discourse competition. At present, a “discourse enclosure movement”⁵⁶ is on the rise around the world, and some countries garner the leadership to create human rights discourse and interpret rules, which has led to the fact that although most latecomer countries in the field of human rights have widely participated in the process of global human rights governance in recent years, they have done so at the cost of assimilating the values and norms of the first-mover countries and

⁵⁴ He Zhipeng, “On the Diversity of Human Rights Civilization,” *Human Rights Law* 2 (2022): 35.

⁵⁵ Sun Pinghua, “On the Implications of China’s Human Rights Discourse System on Global Governance,” *Journal of China University of Political Science and Law* 3 (2019): 127.

⁵⁶ That is to say, the current discourse competition among different countries in the international community has transcended the competition in discourse interpretation, dissemination and expression to expand to discourse selection, drainage and promotion.

following the logical rules they have set. To a certain extent, this has strengthened the dominance of Western human rights discourse, making it more difficult for weaker discourses to emerge onto the world stage, let alone coexisting with the Western one. In this regard, it is necessary for China to strengthen its strategic initiative in disseminating its human rights discourse, actively participate in the formulation of international human rights instruments, and expand dialogue and exchanges with other countries in the field of human rights.

Finally, improving the strategic systemization means strengthening the degree of integration between disseminators, between disseminators and communication channels, and between human rights discourse and other discourses. At the 30th group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee pointed out that “it is necessary to strengthen the top-level design and academic layout to build a strategic communication system with distinctive Chinese characteristics”⁵⁷. Inspired and guided by this idea, the “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse focuses on the top-level design of the discourse system. It aims to bridge theory and practice by dissolving the information barriers between domestic practice development, human rights discourse research and international communication work, which is conducive to reversing the unfavorable situation in which the image of China’s human rights is “other-shaped” rather than “self-shaped” of human rights.

B. Acknowledging historical and cultural differences and improving the effectiveness of international interpretation of human rights discourse

Limited by the historical and cultural differences of various countries, the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse often fails due to the differences in background knowledge when it goes through the process of “encoding and decoding” from the disseminator to the audience. In order to seek the greatest common ground and improve the efficiency of discourse interpretation, the “effect-oriented” dissemination mechanism requires an appropriate international transformation of the human rights discourse blueprint.

The reason why the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the notion of building a “global community of shared future” have been widely recognized by the international community is that they “transcend the boundaries of countries, nationalities, cultures and ideologies and safeguard the common interests of the people of all countries”⁵⁸ and conform to the deepest and most

⁵⁷ Xi Jinping, “Xi Jinping presides over and delivers speech at the 30th group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee,” www.gov.cn, accessed December 10, 2023, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-06/01/content_5614684.htm?lsRedirectHit=20481191.

⁵⁸ Tan Enjie, “International Dissemination of Human Rights Discourse with Chinese Characteristics in the

legitimate aspirations of the people around the world.⁵⁹ Therefore, the most critical step to enhance the efficiency of international dissemination of China's human rights discourse is to identify the correct starting point of the alignment and dialogue between China's human rights discourse and the world discourse system. Only by making appropriate adjustments to adapt to the cultural context of the international community can we find the common similarities between different cultures by appropriately adjusting the specific ways, symbolic concepts, theoretical paradigms and value orientations of China's human rights discourse. Moreover, when recontextualizing China's human rights discourse for the international community, it is also necessary to disenchant Western culture and prevent Chinese culture from losing its unique charm in the process of international transformation.

In addition, the international transformation of communication means will also help improve the efficiency of international interpretation of China's human rights discourse. In an era when multiple civilizations coexist, the facilitation and diversification of communication methods and means have boosted exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations⁶⁰, while also paving the way for China's human rights discourse to break the "antinomy" between localization and internationalization. International dissemination no longer only relies on official channels, and the general public can interpret, convey and sense the development level and ideological and cultural connotation of human rights in different countries through online exchanges, overseas travel and even cross-border e-commerce platforms. This intuitive, authentic and relatively soft expression is more conducive to increasing the international appeal of China's human rights discourse.

C. Emphasizing differentiated discourse expressions and earnestly expanding the international united front

As a natural member of the Global South, China and most of the countries in this bloc experienced similar fates in history, so they can exchange experiences on common issues concerning human rights protection; In reality, countries in the Global South are also facing a similar external environment as well as the actual harm caused by many transnational problems to their own human rights. Thus, even if each country has different national conditions and

New Era," *Hebei Law Science* 6 (2022): 146-166; Cai Fei and Wang Xiaoyang, "Constructing a Strategic Communication System for China's Human Rights Discourse in the New Era," *Chinese Social Sciences Today*, July 7, 2022, page 3.

⁵⁹ Xiao Xiaomao and Antônio A. Cândido Trindade, "The Interdependence of All Human Rights: Obstacles and Challenges to Their Implementation," *International Social Science Journal (Chinese edition)* 4 (1999): 56.

⁶⁰ Wu Zhicheng, "The Core Connotation and Promotion Path of the Global Civilization Initiative," *China International Studies* 4 (2023): 29.

diverse interests, they can still build a consensus on the value of global governance and have common expectations for development. Therefore, emphasizing differentiated expressions and continuously consolidating and expanding the international united front of human rights discourse through the “effect-oriented” dissemination mechanism not only will help China’s human rights discourse gain more positive feedback among global audiences, but also may break the hegemony of Western human rights discourse.

Specifically, this differentiation can be manifested in three aspects: The first is the diversity of discourse dissemination subjects. Effective international dissemination of human rights discourse should not only present the official political discourse, but also academic discourse and non-governmental discourse. By supplementing political discourse based on their respective discourse fields and expression habits, “using academic discourse to guide social discourse and encouraging professionals to tell popular stories”⁶¹ can help optimize the efficiency of international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse. The second is the differentiation of discourse connotations and themes. In the past, because the relevant departments of the Chinese government lacked knowledge about human rights issues and were relatively unfamiliar with human rights discourse, many actions that objectively protected and promoted human rights were not included in the vision of China’s human rights cause⁶², let alone being refined into a systematic human rights discourse narrative system. Nowadays, it is necessary to differentially showcase China’s outstanding achievements in many fields such as politics, economy, society, culture and ecological progress to the international community from the perspective of human rights and the thinking of human rights, so as to form a differentiated dissemination of the themes contained in the human rights discourse, and then prove the rationality and feasibility of China’s original human rights concepts such as “development-based human rights”. The third is the differentiation in the dimensions of discourse improvement. Systems and practices, concepts and values, results and processes, positive experiences and negative lessons...⁶³, all of them should become the dimensions to enrich and improve China’s human rights discourse. Only through multi-angle and multi-faceted refinement and improvement can China shape a multi-dimensional human rights discourse system that can withstand the scrutiny of the international community.

In a word, the “effect-oriented” international dissemination of human rights

⁶¹ Chen Xuelian, “The International Dissemination of Governance Experiences: On the Diversified Content Construction of China’s Stories,” *International Communication* 7 (2018): 8.

⁶² He Zhipeng, “On Human Rights in China: The Coevolution of Practice, Theory and Discourse,” *Contemporary Legal Science* 6 (2022): 31.

⁶³ Chen Xuelian, “The International Dissemination of Governance Experiences: On the Diversified Content Construction of China’s Stories,” *International Communication* 7 (2018): 8.

discourse should be a “symphony” and “concerto”. Different disseminators broaden their minds and explore differentiated expressions according to their own role positioning, which will help improve the accuracy and effectiveness of the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse. In addition, in the digital age, tempo-spatial limitations of “region-nation-state” have been continuously broken through, and the intersubjectivity, textuality, and intermediacy of international communication have moved from behind the scenes to the front stage, and from latency to immediacy, all of which have made the “effect-oriented” dissemination mechanism ready to emerge and operate. By creating “common epistemic experiences” and “shared intergenerational collective memories” with different countries to weaken highly sensitive ideological differences, China has been able to “collaborate and dialogue with countries with similar experiences, expand the international united front, and strive to gain global recognition in a broader geographical dimension”⁶⁴ through the international dissemination of its own human rights discourse. Moreover, by doing so, a true “global association of free people” is expected to form.

Conclusion

Today’s China is either a “self-country” or an “other-country”; it is part of the world.⁶⁵ The “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international communication of human rights discourse overcomes the one-way “sender-oriented” communication mode by basing itself on the reality of international communication of China’s human rights discourse, and systematically answers the urgent practical question: How can China change the current communication deficit of human rights discourse and transform its outstanding human rights practices into a human rights discourse acceptable to the world? Under the guidance of the “effect-oriented” communication mechanism, the initiative and intersubjectivity of both the disseminator and the audience are fully mobilized, and the identities of the two are constantly exchanged and entangled, and constructed mutually, which further enhances the effectiveness of the international dissemination of China’s human rights discourse and enriches and improves China’s human rights discourse system. It is worth noting that differences in political systems, society, culture and economic development do not exist in isolation but are intertwined with each other in practice, which further poses a test for the theoretical creation and practical wisdom of the international communication of China’s human rights discourse in the new era.

⁶⁴ Wang Xigen, “Dialogue and Transcendence: China’s Law-based Human Rights Development in the Age of Globalization,” *Wuhan University Journal (Humanity Sciences)* 4 (2005): 397-401. Quoted from He Zhipeng, “The Action Logic of the Development of China’s Human Rights Cause: An Analysis from Three Dimensions,” *Human Rights* 5 (2021): 51-52.

⁶⁵ Liu Zhiqiang, “The Expression of China’s Human Rights Discourse System in the New Era,” *Science of Law (Journal of Northwest University of Political Science and Law)* 5 (2018): 18.

With this in mind, the paper aims to preliminarily showcase the operational mode of the “effect-oriented” mechanism for the international dissemination of human rights discourse. In the future, more efforts should be made to advance relevant research to answer the question of how to promote the further implementation of the mechanism in the “overlapping differences”. Based on this, we strive to further interpret the connotations of China’s human rights discourse and expand its global reach, thereby comprehensively enhancing China’s international discourse power and conceptual appeal in the field of global human rights governance.

(Translated by *LIU Haile*)