

The Revelation of Agenda Setting Theory to China's Resolving "Belt and Road" Threat Theory

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Abstract

The "Belt and Road" initiative is China's wisdom to provide global governance with the idea of a community of human destiny. How to deal with these false international public opinion and grasp the international right of speech has become an urgent task for our country. As an important theory of western communication, the theory of agenda setting is helpful to understand the agenda, characteristics and operation mechanism of some countries on the Silk Road, to provide a new perspective of interpretation for the "Belt and Road" initiative, and to effectively alleviate the Chinese threat theory.

Keywords

Agenda Setting Theory, Belt and Road Threat Theory, New Silk Route Map.

1. Introduction

As an important theory in the West, agenda setting theory has a certain explanatory power to the means and methods of public opinion guidance and the operation law behind it. Therefore, this paper analyzes "Belt and Road" from the perspective of agenda setting, that is, to help us understand the essence and law of western media hype, and to effectively resolve the popular "Belt and Road" threat theory in the international public opinion field. It also puts forward some suggestions on how to improve the ability of agenda setting enhance the international discourse power in the future.

2. The Theory of Agenda Setting

Agenda-setting is a communication concept that describes how the news media can influence popular thinking. It can be traced back to Walter Lippmann. In *The Science of Public Opinion*, the concept of agenda setting is not used, which basically summarizes the idea of agenda setting. We cannot see, touch or think of the political world with which we have to deal. It can only form "a picture of the world in the mind" through the medium. Subsequently, Maxwell E. McCombs examined some polls from the 1968 US presidential election and found that the media agenda greatly influenced and even determined the public agenda. When globalization began to develop, some domestic issues gradually became international issues. The concept and research of international agenda setting emerge as the times require. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye once said in *Power and Interdependence*: "Each country tries to raise its concerns in international organizations, which uses the expansion or reduction of the agenda to pursue the maximum of its own advantages." [1] Therefore, the initiator and organizer of international issues are important indicators to measure the power of a country's international discourse power.

Although the agenda-setting theory is constantly evolving, its process and effect are basically determined by three factors: issue prominence, issue attribute and guiding demand. According to Maxwell E. McCombs, issue prominence refers to the degree to which an issue attracts attention. In society, there are multiple issues. Only a few important issues are likely to be on the public agenda. Due to the limited attention of the public and the limited capacity of the

public agenda, many issues compete for the attention of the public and the media. The importance of the topic is demonstrated in the process and effect of agenda-setting.

The topic attribute is the second level of agenda setting. If attention is the result of the game of topic prominence, then understanding or recognition is the result of the competition of topic attributes. In addition, the issue attribute is a comprehensive concept, which covers all the characteristics of an object. It is set, which provides the context. This context determines how people think and evaluate their values, which is used to construct public agenda to guide public thoughts and concepts. Shaping public opinion and behavior patterns is the embodiment of political power by setting an attribute agenda about an issue. [2]

Directed needs is a psychological concept, which explains the effect of agenda-setting from a psychological perspective. Why this happens and what factors can reinforce or limit agenda-setting. Guiding needs are closely related to the relevance and uncertainty of the issue. In the previous part, the importance of the topic and the importance of the topic attribute to the agenda setting are discussed. But the effect of public attention on agenda-setting does not depend on the one-way message of the agenda. If the guiding needs of the public are grasped in advance, the initiative in setting the agenda can be greatly enhanced. Agenda prominence, agenda attributes and guiding needs are the key factors for the effectiveness of agenda setting, which is not an isolated relationship. They are interrelated and interact with each other. At present, the emergence of the "One Belt and One Road" threat theory and the above three factors are closely related. In order to resolve these doubts, the problem can be solved from these aspects.

3. The Fictitious "Silk Road Map" of the Western World

When the "One Belt And One Road" initiative was launched, it injected fresh vitality into the recovery of countries along the belt and road and the world economy. China's international image and voice are also increasing. The relative strength of China and the West will shrink, and some countries will maintain the current situation. Relying on its powerful agenda-setting ability, western countries have repeatedly blocked China's cooperation with countries along the route. Occupying the commanding heights in the field of public opinion, what kind of "silk Road map" has been invented for the Western countries?

3.1. First Set Tone to Frame Color

For the western countries, they pay special attention to the events happening along the "One Belt and One Road" and are good at commandeering discourse, which preemptively sets the tone of events. Then, a series of public opinions were used to build momentum. For example, when the construction of the full eastern railway was halted due to the corruption arrest of the former Malaysian prime minister, Mohammad Najib Abdul Razak, the west directly believed that "One Belt and One Road" would fail. The dam of the Hydropower station in Colombia is in danger of bursting, and the Western media hype the "unfinished project". For united petrochemical's loss, the American think tank declared that "' One Belt and One Road 'investment in southeast Asia will lead to more than 50% of the loss." Western countries spare no effort to collect subjects to grasp the hegemony of discourse. They assume subjectively and distort deliberately, which affects the public's understanding and recognition of "One Belt and One Road".

3.2. Prominent Issues Were Concocted to Denigrate China's Initiative

The "One Belt and One Road" initiative itself is closely related to countries along the belt and road, among which its topic is of great importance. As the "China Initiative" was gradually introduced, the western mainstream countries and media began to worry and nervous. They stigmatize China with their consistent political intentions and ideological prejudices. In the

international community, they keep hyping up such untrue topics as "debt trap diplomacy", "excess capacity transfer theory", "China model export theory", "China's version of the Marshall Plan", "China's neo-colonialism" and so on. Under the guidance and emphasis of the bad media, these issues are rapidly expanding their influence, which even undermines the agreed public agenda.

3.3. Setting Geopolitical Fetters and Smear the "One Belt And One Road" Issue Attribute

Under the great change, China has already been involved in the complex geopolitics, and it has become an important participant, defender and leader. The "One Belt and One Road" initiative is a "public product" that China provides to countries along the routes in keeping with the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind. This proposal would solve the global governance dilemma. As we all know, the Belt and Road passes through the "broken zone" of geopolitics, which ignores the "silk road spirit" of China in some Western countries. "One Belt and One Road" is seen as a geopolitical tool for China, with western countries directly advocating that China will in the future make infrastructure construction, economy, trade and investment and other livelihood projects closely linked to politics. These international expressions, to a large extent, taint the issue nature of the Belt and Road initiative, which will affect the views of countries along the Belt and Road on China's silk Road construction.

As such, the western countries and the media have adopted an agenda-setting approach, in which they collect information selectively and report it in attractive packaging. As a result, China has become a so-called "problem power".

4. Enhancing Our Ability to Set the Agenda and Drawing Up A "New Silk Road Map"

At present, the power of international discourse is still strong in the west and weak in the east, and China is often at the disadvantage of "being unable to make a reason out, and the reasons that are clearly explained cannot be spread". In order to change this situation, China needs to improve its agenda-setting capability, and strive to become the dominant player in the setting of the "Chinese agenda" and the advocate and participant of the international agenda.

4.1. Choose the Right Entry Point and Seek Consensus

In a situation of great changes unseen in a century, social problems are emerging in an endless variety of forms. However, due to the limited capacity of the agenda and the limited resources, people can only pay attention to the few issues that are important and meet the guiding needs. Therefore, for China to improve its agenda-setting ability, the first step is to cultivate keen insight, in which the appropriate issues are selected as the entry points for agenda-setting and the greatest consensus is sought. Therefore, China should take the initiative and actively take the topic as the breakthrough of the "One Belt and One Road" initiative, which is of practical urgency, highly consensus and practicality

4.1.1. Urgency refers to the problem that needs to be solved urgently, which provides a reasonable premise for the proposal and establishment of relevant agenda. At present, the global governance dilemma includes economic problems, political reform, ecological imbalance, environmental pollution, resource shortage, international terrorism, transnational crime and so on. However, the biggest concern, and the biggest convergence of interests, is the economy. Especially in the outbreak of COVID-19, economic development imbalance, economic recession, trade shrinkage and protectionism, temporary "shock" in the production chain and other issues have become the focus of the world. Faced with these difficulties, China can set the "One Belt And One Road" agenda in terms of practical attitude, actions and policy support, which can actively influence international public opinion. First, China needs to take the initiative to clarify

the purposes and principles of "One Belt And One Road" in international organizations and platforms such as the UN and G20 summit. Its attitudes and positions are stated. Secondly, the "One Belt and One Road" project has been promoted as soon as possible to restore the normal supply chain, which can help countries along the route to recover the economy affected by the epidemic. Finally, appropriate tax cuts and exemptions should be given to countries along the belt and Road and policy support in fiscal, credit and insurance should be increased.

4.1.2. A high degree of consensus means that issues can arouse international resonance, among which non-exclusive and non-competitive issues are more likely to be accepted. For example, China has invested in the construction of railways, dams and other infrastructure, which make many countries praise. Second, in order to achieve consensus, we need to understand the "China concept". In addition, the key to recognition is strength. If China wants to improve its agenda-setting ability and defuse the western "One Belt and One Road" threat theory, it must enhance its soft power and hard power to improve its competitiveness.

4.1.3. Practicability is also called operability. In the academic world, researchers generally believe that "low-political issues" are operable, while "high-political issues" are difficult to set. For example, there is room for discussion, compromise and compromise on economic, cultural, ecological and social issues. But when it comes to sovereignty, military, security and other issues, other countries will be vigilant and suspicious. In view of this, for our "One Belt and One Road" initiative, China should try to put forward some low-political issues.

4.2. Seize the "Opportunity and Motivation + Platform" and Spread It Effectively

The agenda-setting theory holds that even if issues with realistic urgency, high consensus and practicality have been proposed, how to make them spread effectively is the key to improve the ability of agenda-setting. According to relevant research, in this paper, preemption of "Opportunity and motivation + platform" can be used to effectively spread the "One Belt and One Road" initiative in the international community.

"Opportunity and motivation" refers to the motive and the first opportunity. On the one hand, we should take the initiative to explain the motivation to gain the understanding of other countries and regions. Agenda-setting is essentially a game between countries based on a common concern. Eventually, consensus was reached. Robert.O.Keohane has said: "Co-operation is highly political, which does not mean there is no conflict. On the contrary, it is clearly mixed with conflict. At the same time, "One Belt and One Road" involves multiple countries and regions, they have differences in social, economic, cultural and interests, therefore, we should avoid when things happen, we went to remedy the situation, clarify the motives of "area" initiative for advance to build the trust of the various countries and regions. By this way, our country and the cooperation of countries along the line to reach. On the other hand, facing the "One Belt and One Road" in the construction of the emergency, China should seize the opportunity. For the first time, China should participate in agenda setting and news reporting to spread its own discourse system, which can change the tone set by the West before. China is going to clarify the passive situation.

The platform is a bridge and link for the "One Belt and One Road" initiative to integrate or shape the international agenda, which is one of the measures to improve the capacity of agenda-setting and defuse public opinion. First, China chooses the platform. The United Nations is the most representative, universal and authoritative inter-governmental international organization, and the "One Belt and One Road" initiative is consistent with the sustainable development goals of the United Nations. For this reason, China should actively use the UN to develop external contacts and promote the core concept of "One Belt and One Road". In addition, on such occasions as the Security Council, APEC and ASIA-Europe Meeting, China needs to take the initiative to express its legitimate concerns about the plight of global governance. The "One

Belt and One Road" topic and "China plan" are proposed, which can guide the outside world's cognitive direction, observation perspective and attitude tendency towards the topic set by China. Second, the "platform effect" is formed. We must play to the advantage of diplomacy at home. We need to illustrate with facts that the "One Belt and One Road" as an economic integration platform is development-oriented, policy communication as a means, infrastructure connectivity as a goal, and openness and sharing as a purpose. In this way, the "platform effect" can be formed, which will provide an endogenous force for China's initiative to be translated into the international agenda.

4.3. Strengthening the Authority of Agenda Attributes and Forming Discourse System

Strengthening the authoritative nature of the agenda is a key indicator for China to gain international prestige, shape national image, implement national will, safeguard national interests, and form a discourse system. It contains three dimensions of standardization, legalization and institutionalization. First, standardization refers to the appropriate behavior of each behavior subject in accordance with the common idea. Over a long period of practice, "normative power" is formed. The "One Belt and One Road" initiative involves multiple international actors, and differences in cooperation are unavoidable. Therefore, they are required to follow common norms to bridge differences, which can guarantee the completion of the project. Second, the rule of law should run through the whole process of "One Belt and One Road" construction. In essence, the "One Belt And One Road" initiative uses the market economy to allocate resources and interests worldwide. However, the market economy belongs to the rule of law economy, which indicates that the rule of law is the core of "One Belt and One Road". Third, institutionalization is the highest embodiment of the authoritative nature of agenda, and the most direct expression of discourse soft power can also be reflected through it. The institutionalization of the "One Belt and One Road" initiative requires the development of a common international system. At the same time, it is necessary to combine it organically with the domestic system of individuality. Only in this way can the "One Belt and One Road" initiative be offered maximum consensus, which could defuse western doubts.

References

- [1] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye: Power and Interdependence, (Peking University Press, Beijing 2003).
- [2] Max Weber McCullmes: Agenda Setting: Mass Media and Public Opinion, (Peking University Press, Beijing 2008).