

Research on the construction of national security publicity and education system in national security films and television works

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Abstract

In the context of globalization and media convergence, the development of national security education systems urgently requires innovative communication approaches. Using communication theory as an analytical framework, this study examines how national security-themed films and TV dramas reshape discourse through mediated narratives, exploring the logic and practical characteristics of their educational mechanisms. The research reveals that contemporary state-produced content has established a multi-dimensional communication system—"state-led -market collaboration -technology empowerment" - based on agenda-setting, use and fulfillment, and framing theories. This system guides public perception and strengthens value alignment through genre-specific storytelling. However, structural challenges persist, including stratified communication effectiveness, content homogenization, and lack of interactive mechanisms. To address these issues, the paper proposes optimization strategies such as audience-targeted precision communication, technology-driven narrative innovation, and multi-stakeholder collaborative mechanisms, ultimately building a new national security legal system characterized by dynamism, participation, and omnimedia integration.

Keywords

national security education and publicity system, national security-themed film and television works, agenda-setting theory, mass segmentation communication, film and television narrative innovation

Introduction

Amid the convergence of globalization and digital revolution, national security has transcended traditional military-political boundaries to encompass cyberspace governance, biosecurity, and data sovereignty. This paradigm shift demands enhanced national security education: citizens must not only comprehend multifaceted threats but also develop proactive awareness in safeguarding national interests. Conventional education models, however, remain constrained by their one-way delivery style that fails to align with modern audiences cognitive patterns and media preferences. Film and television now serve as powerful tools—through narratives like "Operation Mekong" that chronicle cross-border law enforcement, or "Eye in the Storm" that dramatizes tech-driven counterintelligence operations—transforming abstract security concepts into engaging visual storytelling. These "edutainment" strategies achieve a "soft landing" in ideological communication. This evolution reflects both media evolution and the deep integration of national discourse with public cultural demands, while confronting dual challenges: national security education must break free from policy-lecture dependency, yet film productions face balancing act between commercial viability and mainstream values that constrain their educational impact. spend.

This study focuses on the core question of "how national security-themed film and television works can innovate communication mechanisms to build a new-era national security legal system." Anchored in

communication theory, it integrates classic paradigms such as agenda-setting, framing theory, and uses and gratifications to construct a tripartite analytical framework of “media - content - audience.” By deconstructing narrative strategies and communication effects in these works, the research not only provides new theoretical perspectives for interdisciplinary studies in national security education and mass communication but also aims to produce practical strategy guidelines: offering decision-making references for government departments to optimize educational resource allocation, establishing methodological support for filmmakers to enhance content creation precision, ultimately contributing to the strategic goal of achieving “socialized national security awareness.”

1. Current situation: the publicity and education function of national security film and television works has been realized

1.1 The development status and type characteristics of national security film and television works

The development of China's national security-themed film and television works has undergone an evolutionary process from singular propaganda to diversified integration. From the 1980s to the early 1990s, influenced by Cold War mentality and ideological struggles, national security films were predominantly anti-espionage series such as “Eighteen Years in the Enemy Camp” and “The Gunfire of the Confidential Bureau,” emphasizing binary opposition between enemies and allies in narrative patterns. These works focused on depicting the history of covert operations and served a political indoctrination function to reinforce collective memory. In the early 21st century, with the popularity of espionage dramas like “Decoded” and “Infiltration,” these works began incorporating commercial narrative elements. While retaining their core patriotic themes, they enhanced entertainment value through genre-specific techniques such as suspenseful reasoning and emotional entanglements, marking the initial transformation of national security themes from “educational propaganda tools” to “mass cultural products.” Entering the new era, films like “Operation Mekong” and “Operation Red Sea” achieved cinematic presentations of non-traditional security issues such as cross-border law enforcement and overseas evacuations, deeply integrating national security narratives with action and disaster genres. Leveraging industrial production technologies, they achieved both box office success and critical acclaim. In recent years, works like “Eye of the Storm” and “Opponent” have further expanded into emerging fields such as cybersecurity and biosecurity. By utilizing digital technologies like AI face-swapping and big data visualization, they constructed a narrative space that intertwines virtual and real elements, reflecting National security film and television creation resonates with the development of science and technology and social issues.

Chinese national security-themed films and TV series have developed distinct genre characteristics: Firstly, thematic diversification has broken through traditional espionage frameworks, expanding into non-traditional security domains such as cybersecurity (You Safe?), data sovereignty (The Three-Body Problem), and financial security (Hunt Fox), forming a “national security+” thematic matrix. Secondly, narrative integration employs cross-genre strategies like “espionage + suspense”, “counter-terrorism + action,” and “science fiction + ethics.” For instance, Peace Ark combines medical rescue with maritime security, amplifying dramatic tension through genre layering. Thirdly, value expression achieves balance by seeking the “greatest common divisor” between mainstream ideological dissemination and commercial entertainment demands (Zhou and Liu, 2021). For instance, “The Message” achieves aesthetic reinterpretation of political discourse by wrapping its narrative in a locked-room mystery framework while embedding faith inheritance as its core. Fourthly, technological aesthetics take center stage, with immersive audiovisual spectacles crafted through virtual cinematography and motion capture technologies. The “space elevator” scene in “The Wandering Earth 2” reinforces the authority of national security discourse through cutting-edge tech details. Fifthly, innovative dissemination models have formed a cross-media ecosystem encompassing TV dramas, web series, and interactive games. Take “The Storm of Anti-Crime” as an example: its secondary creation on short video platforms has significantly expanded the discourse coverage of this social issue. These characteristics collectively shape a new era of national security-themed film and television works characterized by “mainstream value leadership, genre paradigm innovation, and technology-driven aesthetics.”

1.2 Analysis of the function of publicity and education from the perspective of communication

Film and television works construct hierarchical national security cognition maps through selective coding. For example, the historical drama “Secret Mission” dramatically adapted a unpopular topic, resulting in a 320% month-on-month surge in the search index of “Central Red Traffic Line” on Baidu, which confirms the transformation mechanism of media salience to public agenda (Guo, 2011). Within the framework of Mimesis Environment Theory, this media practice employs a “crisis - resolution” narrative paradigm. Through dramatized deconstruction of real-world incidents like the “Eye of the Storm” data breach, it transforms complex realities into comprehensible symbolic systems, creating an illusion of controllable security threats in audience perception. Debord’s theory of the society of the spectacle extends here, as film and television media visually reconstruct public understanding of national security through dramatic conflicts.

In “Operation Red Sea”, the steel behemoth imagery of warships serves as an indexical symbol, directly pointing to the signifier of state power. The fictional “DS material” in “Eye of the Storm” acts as a symbolic representation, metaphorically conveying the tension in technological sovereignty competition. This semiotic narrative strategy manifests in Greimas narrative grammar through a “subject-object” semantic matrix operation. Through the character arc development of Li Fei in “Operation Icebreaker”, it achieves the signified integration between personal growth and national interests.

By applying Durkheim’s theory of collective effervescence through ritualized scene design, the Party oath recitation ritual in “The Anti-Crime Storm” transforms institutional legitimacy into tangible bodily practices. The ideological coding of spatial symbols manifests as a Foucauldian panopticon variant through the panoramic surveillance system in “Operation Icebreakers” Tazhai Village. The fictional “hyoscine lie detection technology” constitutes a Baudrillardian simulacrum. This narrative strategy resonates with Asman’s cultural memory theory: Through “The Secret Mission”’s reinterpretation of covert operations history, sealed archives become “stored memories” of collective consciousness, achieving intergenerational transmission of national narratives.

1.3 The characteristics of the initial construction of the existing national security publicity and education system

The current national security-themed film and television education system has established a preliminary framework of “dual-axis drive and three-dimensional penetration,” demonstrating a paradigm shift from one-way indoctrination to multidimensional interaction. The deep integration of cinematic works with social media and offline activities has formed a closed-loop scenario of “viewing - discussing - practicing” (Zhang and Liu, 2019). For example, during the popular broadcast of Anti-Gang Storm, the National Anti-Fraud Center and the film crew launched the #NationalAnti-Fraud in Action# topic interaction, and the lead actor Zhang Yixing participated in a live broadcast on the theme of “Identifying Racketeering”, which led to 830 million views on anti-fraud topics (Center., 2021). At the offline level, Guangzhou National Security Bureau adapted the “beautiful loan” crime plot in the play into an immersive legal education theater, which was toured in business districts such as Zhujiang New Town. Through role-playing, citizens experienced the process of crime identification, covering 120,000 people and reducing the number of police incidents related to crimes by 27 percent year-on-year (Guangzhou Municipal Public Security Bureau, 2021). This cross-media resonance not only expands the radius of communication, but also enhances the educational effectiveness through immersive experience.

The National Radio and Television Administrations 14th Five-Year Plan explicitly requires the production of “over 10 key national security-themed works annually,” while reducing creative risks through institutional measures like special funding support and guaranteed broadcast slots. Streaming platforms such as iQiyi’s “Mystery Theater” have established dedicated national security-themed sections, leveraging algorithmic recommendations for targeted distribution. In 2022, the revenue share from on-demand viewing of national security-themed series surged by 220% compared to 2019 levels (Kuang and Sun, 2020). The “secondary creation” interpretation of film and television clips by Station B UP creators, such as “How Realistic Is the Spy Techniques in The Opponent,” has formed a closed loop of meaning reproduction characterized by “official narratives - grassroots interpretations.” This mechanism not only maintains the authority of mainstream values but also unleashes the innovative vitality of the market and society.

2. Question: structural contradiction of communication efficiency of national security film and television works

2.1 The stratified dilemma of communication effect

The dissemination effectiveness of Chinese national security-themed films and TV dramas faces a significant generational divide. Gen Z audiences are growing increasingly alienated from the traditional “tall, big, and perfect” narrative model. The root cause of this intergenerational aesthetic difference lies in the dramatic transformation of media ecology- In the communication context dominated by short videos and interactive entertainment, younger generations tend to favor “decentralized narratives” and “participatory decoding,” rather than passively accepting the discipline of one-way authoritative discourse.

The cultural discount effect and ideological prejudice constitute a double obstacle in international communication (Shi and Wang, 2021). Take *Storm Eye*, for example. It was viewed at just 12 percent of its domestic rating on Southeast Asian streaming platform Viu during the same period (Viu Limited, 2021). In overseas comments, the proportion of doubts such as “China threat theory” and “government manipulation of narrative” reached 34% (China Foreign Languages Publishing and World, 2022). This predicament stems from three interconnected issues: First, the heroic image of Chinese collectivism (as seen in *Teamwork in Operation Red Sea*) has been misinterpreted as “the state apparatus devouring individuals” within individualist cultural contexts. Second, narratives addressing sensitive topics like South China Sea disputes and cyber sovereignty often risk being misread as “geopolitical propaganda tools” due to insufficient historical context. Third, excessive reliance on official overseas channels like CGTN for distribution, coupled with failure to integrate into Netflix and Disney+’s global revenue-sharing systems, has hindered content from breaking through cultural barriers.

2.2 Lack of innovation in content production

At present, the creation of national security films and TV dramas is trapped in the rut of repetitive themes and stereotyped narratives. Among the national security dramas filed between 2020 and 2023, anti-spy themes accounted for 61%, anti-terrorism themes accounted for 24%, while non-traditional fields such as biosecurity and ecological security only accounted for 7% (National Radio and Television Administration, 2023). This “genre inflation” has spawned highly repetitive narrative structures- Most TV series adhere to a three-act framework of “threat discovery, elite squad intervention, crisis resolution,” with character development trapped in a stereotypical trio: the cold-hearted director, genius technician, and reckless rookie. Even innovative attempts often remain superficial grafts. For instance, “*Special Operations Glory*” attempted to blend counter-terrorism operations with esports elements, but its unrealistic tactical logic drew ridicule from military enthusiasts, causing its Douban rating to plummet to 5.2 points.

The lag in technological empowerment has further exposed innovation shortcomings. Compared to the interactive storytelling of *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* and the virtual production technology of *The Mandalorian*, domestic national security films remain trapped in linear narrative conventions. Although *Deep Sea* attempts to introduce AR investigation simulation scenarios, its application is mostly limited to visual spectacle displays rather than deep integration with narrative logic. The roots of technological conservatism lie in three practical pressures: First, producers risk-averse approach to new technologies costs, such as daily rental fees exceeding 10,000 yuan for virtual shooting equipment; Second, the scarcity of tech-savvy talent in screenwriting teams, which restricts in-depth exploration of cutting-edge topics like quantum communication and AI offensive-defense dynamics; Third, ambiguous regulatory frameworks regarding sensitive technical issues like cross-border data surveillance, exacerbating self-censorship within creative industries.

2.3 The absence of two-way interaction between audiences and acceptance

The communication link of national security film and television still continues the one-way mode of “production, broadcast and publicity”, and the audience is preset as a passive receiver. The interactive potential in the social media era has not been fully activated^(Zeng and Pan, 2020)- 《During the broadcast of “*Storm Eye*”, the reading volume of the Weibo topic exceeded 1.2 billion, but the official accounts audience response rate was less than 3% (Weibo Data Center, 2021), The derivative “*Everyone Finds a Spy*” H5 game had a poor seven-day retention rate of 11.2% due to poor interaction design (China Audiovisual Program Service Association,

2022). This absence of participation leads to the spread of “data bubble” and fails to translate into deep value recognition.

The absence of feedback mechanisms has led to significant delays in adjusting communication strategies. Current public opinion monitoring often remains limited to heat statistics, lacking dynamic tracking of audience perception curves. For instance, after the broadcast of “The Opponent”, although monitoring showed a 270% surge in the popularity of keywords like “spy technology” (Peoples Daily Online Public Opinion Data Center, 2022), However, the subsequent episodes did not add popular science eggs to the technical doubts of the audience, missing the window period to deepen the educational effectiveness.

The paradox of “high engagement but low effectiveness” in communication has become increasingly evident. This superficial understanding exposes structural flaws in the system: When film and television dissemination overemphasizes emotional appeals (such as national pride) while neglecting systematic knowledge transmission, audiences security awareness tends to remain at symbolic slogans rather than transforming into practical crisis response capabilities. National security-themed film and television dissemination now faces a peculiar contradiction: The awe-inspiring missile streaking across screens can ignite viewers passion, yet few in reality can clearly articulate how to report suspicious espionage activities. This split in communication effectiveness is no accident—it’s an inevitable outcome of misaligned creative concepts and educational objectives. When cinematic lenses obsessively emphasize visual impact of crisis scenarios while being stingy with demonstrating proper procedures for ordinary citizens discovering leaked confidential documents in cafes; when narratives indulge in crafting omnipotent agent images while overlooking grassroots community grid workers daily security patrols- this disconnect between artistic expression and real-world needs reduces national security education to a flashy performance. We must confront this: In algorithm-driven content ecosystems, are those meticulously crafted patriotic sentiment bullet comments and sharing data evolving into new forms of formalism? When a national security dramas derivative topics surpass 1 billion views, When the accompanying “National Security Knowledge Test” mini-program failed to reach one million users, this communication gap exposed a fundamental flaw in the system design: Weve taught audiences how to cheer for heroes, but failed to equip them with self-protection skills. To break this deadlock, we should re-examine a core question-: Is the ultimate goal of national security education to cultivate more applauding spectators, or to forge more proactive guardians?

3. Countermeasures: the optimization path of national security publicity and education system

3.1 Building a segmented narrative system

In the field of intergenerational communication, we have developed a “micro-narratives + strong interaction” content matrix. By utilizing new formats like dynamic comics and interactive dramas, we have restructured the narrative logic of national security through engaging storytelling approaches. For instance, transforming counter-terrorism operations into branching story games enhances audience engagement. Simultaneously, we established a UGC creation incentive platform and allocated youth creator funds to stimulate Generation Zs creative vitality. Through NLP technology, we built a “mainstream theme database” that deeply analyzes over 100 million bullet-screen comments, precisely extracting cultural symbol systems from young demographics. On the international communication front, we formed a multinational screenwriting think tank to advance narrative localization. We innovatively developed “cultural decoding plugins” enabling intelligent historical context interpretation and cross-cultural value comparison in streaming content. Meanwhile, by integrating with global distribution alliances like Disney+, we achieved bidirectional convergence between content standards and technical frameworks through revenue-sharing mechanisms.

3.2 Technology enables production change

China has launched an innovation initiative for national security themes, establishing specialized incubators to nurture creative teams in seven cutting-edge fields including biosafety and deep-sea security. The country has developed a “reality-virtual” collaborative development model, transforming 300 typical cases from annual white papers into digital narrative archives. A “technology advisor residency system” ensures cybersecurity and quantum communication experts provide full-process guidance for every production. In technological

upgrades, the nation is building a national virtual production base with equipment subsidies to reduce filming costs, while developing an AI scriptwriting system based on GPT-4 to create an intelligent national security knowledge platform. Additionally, the Cyberspace Administration of China has established a pre-review mechanism for tech applications and implemented a whitelist system for film technology usage to balance innovation with security concerns (Wu and Chen, 2022).

3.3 Two-way empowerment of ecological construction

We are developing a three-dimensional interactive platform integrating “movie-watching - gaming - education”. By leveraging blockchain technology, we have established a national security knowledge scoring system to drive behavioral incentives. A LSTM neural network-powered intelligent public opinion system enables real-time tracking of audience perception evolution. The innovative “shared-risk” mechanism channels subscription revenue into premium user-generated content, creating a closed-loop creative ecosystem. Through AR lesson plan generators and a film education cloud platform, the educational transformation system enhances knowledge penetration. Implementing the “Hundred Schools Co-Creation Initiative”, multiple university narrative laboratories have been established. This multi-dimensional evaluation framework measures knowledge conversion rates and behavioral change metrics, facilitating the transition from theoretical understanding to practical implementation in national security education.

In the digital era, Chinas national security film and television works exhibit a deep integration of technological empowerment and communication innovation. The application of AI face-swapping technology effectively addresses shooting safety issues in classified scenarios, while the introduction of blockchain technology provides new approaches for user-generated content (UGC) authentication and incentivization. Film-grade special effects technology has significantly enhanced the visual expressiveness of works, making national security narratives both technologically sophisticated and artistically compelling. The works adopt differentiated communication strategies for different audience groups: developing virtual idol science popularization content for Generation Z, designing interactive deduction games for military enthusiasts, and achieving effective international audience engagement through precise cultural symbol translation. This segmented communication model, combined with the “cognition-attitude-behavior” evaluation system, markedly improves communication precision and effectiveness. In terms of industrial ecology, a tripartite collaborative mechanism has been formed involving government policy guidance, capital market incentives, and public creative participation. The integration of national security film and television special funds with market-based profit-sharing models ensures ideological security while achieving organic unity of social and economic benefits through technological innovations like smart contracts. However, current research still has significant limitations in international comparative perspectives and long-term impact assessment, and has yet to establish a framework incorporating cultural difference coefficients. International communication evaluation models for key indicators such as geopolitical sensitivity, along with systematic research on the profound impacts of cultural works in intergenerational transmission and cultural identity, remain underdeveloped. Future studies should establish a more comprehensive cross-cultural analytical framework and conduct 5- decade-long tracking research to gain deeper insights into the social cognitive evolution patterns and long-term mechanisms of national security-themed film and television productions.

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