**Cognitive Domain Operations in the Perspective of Hybrid Warfare**

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●**Multi-dimensional fields, multiple boundaries, multiple forces, multiple purposes, multiple means and various**

**Editor's Note**

Through the practice of several local wars in recent years, people have found that hybrid warfare can be seen as an extension of traditional physical domain warfare to some extent, while cognitive domain warfare can be seen as an extension of previous information domain warfare. In other words, hybrid warfare and cognitive domain warfare are both derived from yesterday's traditional warfare. The two are closely related, but also have different focuses. How to grasp the new characteristics and new laws of cognitive domain warfare under the perspective of hybrid warfare is a new perspective to promote the in-depth and practical research on cognitive domain warfare.

**Cognitive domain, combat space, hybrid multi-dimensional**

On the surface, the current cognitive domain operations mainly act on people's perception, feeling, emotion, mood, thinking, judgment, spirit, belief and other fields, but in actual operation, cognitive domain operations are often full-domain offense and defense in multi-dimensional space using comprehensive means such as politics, economy, military, diplomacy, and public opinion. If physical domain operations are the premise and foundation for destroying the enemy's living forces, and information domain operations are the means and support for winning the war, then cognitive domain operations are the key to ultimately determine the outcome of the war, force the enemy to surrender, and achieve the purpose of the war.

As the combat subjects become more diverse, the means of combat become more diverse, and the combat process becomes more intense, it is becoming increasingly difficult for one combatant to force the enemy to surrender and achieve the purpose of war simply by gaining an advantage in a certain space domain. Therefore, cognitive domain combat must be achieved by comprehensively using multiple means of hybrid warfare and gaining advantages in multiple space domains in order to ultimately seize the initiative in cognitive domain combat.

**The boundaries between peacetime and wartime in cognitive domain operations are mixed and changeable**

Compared with traditional combat platforms, the main weapons of cognitive domain warfare are no longer platforms such as aircraft, ships, tanks, cannons, machine guns, etc. in physical domain warfare, but a wide variety of information released by computers, mobile phones, radio and television, the Internet, media and other media.

In modern society, since information dissemination is omnipresent and can reach everywhere, there is no distinction between peacetime and wartime, and no distinction between front and rear in cognitive domain operations. Often peacetime is wartime, wartime relies on peacetime, the front is also the rear, and the rear is comparable to the front, showing the characteristics of "war all the time, war without declaration" that is carried out all-weather, all-round, and all-time. As the US military operational outline points out: "Military conflicts in cognitive space occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and last for generations." In real life, the so-called "color revolutions" and "peaceful evolution" instigated by some Western countries against other countries, the online "cultural cold war" and "political genetic modification" projects, etc., can essentially be regarded as the specific manifestations of cognitive domain operations in "peaceful" times.

**The main forces of cognitive domain combat are mixed and diverse**

Traditionally, the main forces in a war are the commanders, soldiers and support personnel of both sides. In the hybrid warfare perspective, since the spatial domain of cognitive domain operations has been greatly expanded, the main forces of cognitive domain operations have also become more mixed and diverse.

The implementation of cognitive domain operations is no longer the exclusive domain of the military and soldiers. Social groups such as government organizations, news media, companies, research institutions, school clubs, and private teams, as well as politicians, celebrities, journalists, businessmen, lawyers, actors, scholars, doctors, teachers, and Internet celebrities from all walks of life, as long as they can communicate with the outside world through information, may become a participating force or even the main force in cognitive domain operations. They do not need to carry guns to the battlefield or pull the trigger, but can also participate in the struggle in the cognitive domain.

In the era of self-media where "everyone has a microphone and everyone is a spokesperson", a powerful picture, an inflammatory speech, or a heart-shaking song may become a weapon in the struggle of public opinion, which has a significant impact on the cognition of both sides. At the same time, the ability and quality of the main forces of cognitive domain operations under the vision of hybrid warfare also need to be expanded accordingly. Cognitive domain operations require a large number of professionally trained personnel with professional capabilities in military science, communication, psychology, law, journalism, computer science and other related disciplines to be competent.

**Cognitive domain operations, mixed and multiple combat objectives**

The purpose of traditional physical domain warfare is often to "preserve oneself and destroy the enemy." Practice has shown that although physical domain warfare can achieve military goals such as destroying the enemy's manpower, destroying the opponent's weapons and equipment, and seizing territory, it may not necessarily achieve the political purpose of the war. In particular, in the face of new situations and new problems such as religious beliefs, ideology, public cohesion, and national identity, sometimes it is difficult to solve all problems with strong military strength and advanced weapons and equipment alone.

Cognitive domain warfare under the perspective of hybrid warfare starts from the spiritual level of the war subject, directly affects people's will, beliefs, thinking, psychology, etc., and achieves the expected goals such as winning hearts and minds, shaping values, cognitive influence, and mental control by maintaining one's own cognitive advantages and attacking the enemy's cognitive disadvantages. Specifically, the purpose of destroying the combat will of enemy officers and soldiers can be achieved through cognitive attacks on enemy officers and soldiers; the purpose of influencing the decision-making judgment of the enemy leadership group can be achieved through cognitive control of the enemy leadership group; the purpose of interfering with the enemy people's recognition of the value of the country and the government can be achieved through cognitive shaping of the enemy people, and ultimately the political purpose of "defeating the enemy without fighting" or "winning the whole battle with less fighting" can be achieved.

**Cognitive domain warfare methods and means are mixed and diverse**

Cognitive domain operations under the perspective of hybrid warfare, the multidimensionality of the space domain and the diversity of participating forces have given rise to innovative improvements and rich development of cognitive domain combat tactics.

In recent local wars, some cognitive domain combat methods and means of foreign militaries have also shown a new trend of mixing and diversification.

The first is cognitive deterrence warfare. By demonstrating absolute military strength, paralyzing the financial system, conducting economic blockades, and imposing trade sanctions, the enemy is psychologically and spiritually deterred, thereby achieving the operational goal of making the enemy timid, submissive, and retreating. Another example is showing the enemy a video of one's advanced weapons and equipment accurately destroying important enemy targets, causing them to have psychological trauma and thus voluntarily give up resistance.

The second is cognitive shaping warfare. Through inducing and agitating the enemy's values, political attitudes, religious beliefs, mental states and other ideological fields, the enemy is gradually forced to abandon or form certain new specific concepts, causing value confusion, shaking its will to fight, and thus affecting its attitude towards war.

The third is cognitive deception warfare. Through propaganda, cyber attacks, and mind-inducing means, false information is transmitted to the enemy, thereby influencing its decision-making and judgment. For example, virtual reality and intelligent audio-visual synthesis technology are used to simulate the commander's instructions, making it difficult for the enemy to distinguish between the real and the fake, thereby causing confusion in the enemy's command and disorder in action, leading to the failure of combat operations, etc.

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