**Cultural warfare in the context of cognitive warfare**

——Interpretation of Clausewitz's On War

Source: China Social Sciences Network

Author: Zhu Min, Feng Lei, & Liu Xiao

Editor: Xie De

 2023-05-15

<https://www.cssn.cn/jsx/jsx_jqlw/202305/t20230515_5638016.shtml>

　　At present, the war mode is no longer a single military confrontation between countries, but has turned into a hybrid war. As an important part of hybrid warfare, cultural warfare is constantly and subtly influencing the country's public opinion environment, spiritual beliefs, and social atmosphere. However, the vertical and horizontal are not beyond the square circle, and the essence remains unchanged. To deal with this war mode, we can borrow Carl von Clausewitz's interpretation of the nature of war in "On War" to analyze cultural warfare. This article mainly discusses cultural warfare from three aspects: the nature of cultural warfare, the main forms and response strategies.

**Mental control "wins without fighting"**

　　The essence of cultural warfare is cognitive warfare. Clausewitz emphasized that war is the continuation of politics, and the fundamental purpose of war is to defeat the opponent's will to resist through violent means and impose one's own will on the enemy. Cognitive warfare takes the human brain as the main combat space, aims to strike, weaken and disintegrate the war will of individuals or groups of the enemy country, and creates psychological weaknesses such as anxiety, suspicion, and fear as a breakthrough. It focuses on intelligence warfare, psychological warfare, public opinion warfare, cyber warfare and other soft-kill means to create an insecure, uncertain, and distrustful political atmosphere within the enemy. Increasing their internal struggles and internal consumption and decision-making doubts will eventually lead to the self-disintegration of the war system and achieve "victory without fighting." This is similar to the idea of ​​"subduing the enemy without fighting" emphasized in "The Art of War" in Chinese history.

　　As a form of cognitive warfare, cultural warfare also achieves the goal of defeating the enemy through soft killing rather than violent means. As China's economic strength and comprehensive national strength continue to increase, the vigilance and resistance of some international forces are also increasing. Some Western countries have launched non-violent cultural warfare against my country in the field of ideology and culture, with the ultimate goal of shaking the guiding role of Marxism in China. Compared with armed struggle, cultural warfare in the ideological field is silent on the surface, but its ultimate effect is spiritual invasion and control, which is no less lethal than other forms of war.

**The means are secretive and varied**

　　There are many forms of cultural warfare, and the three most common forms are: first, cultural infiltration in the Internet field; second, the invasion of cultural products; and third, the invasion of ideology.

　　The first is cultural penetration in the field of the Internet. The Internet has gradually become the main tool for Western countries to conduct cultural penetration into China due to its concealment and virtuality. Since the beginning of the 21st century, social media has been regarded by some Western countries as a low-cost propaganda, planning and communication tool and a highly potential weapon of war due to its speed and breadth of information dissemination. Social media culture represented by Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Tik Tok is one of the main means for these countries to carry out infiltration and invasion. On the one hand, they cleverly add their country's political values, ideology and cultural symbols to various online media such as microblogs, search engines, and computer games; on the other hand, they use online cultural penetration to win over intellectual elites, shape social favor, gradually open up the situation of ideological and value dissemination, and form a strong infiltration influence.

　　The second is the invasion of cultural products. Some Western countries are carrying out cultural invasion in a more covert way, including music, film, language, and educational resources. In terms of music and film, by importing popular culture such as pop music that is popular all over the world and film and television works such as movies and TV series, they promote their own values, belittle the values ​​of the opponent's people, and cause the opponent's people to abandon their local culture. In terms of language, they use derogatory words to modify the opponent's government, and use terrorist incidents to carry out news propaganda to demonize the opponent's government, creating a negative impression of the opponent's government in the minds of the people. In terms of educational resources, malicious and ugly pictures are quoted in youth education books to undermine young people's correct understanding of their own national heroes and excellent historical memories, and destroy and collapse the generational inheritance process of the opponent's excellent traditional national spirit.

　　Finally, there is the invasion of ideology. This aspect has been planned for a long time. Some Western countries have successively published absurd nonsense such as the so-called "China arrogance theory" and "China collapse theory", with the purpose of fermenting international public opinion, creating multi-party intrusion pressure, and lowering China's international status. They attempt to use their own political and economic advantages to unscrupulously advocate the so-called "universal values", deliberately modify and package the political purposes of deliberately eroding other countries, and subconsciously instill Western capitalist ideology and codes of conduct. For example, a Western country maliciously fabricated the so-called "forced labor" lie in Xinjiang, vilified the image of its opponent, and suppressed Xinjiang enterprises through sanctions, engaging in political manipulation. In the complex international society and network environment where we are cautious step by step, it is undoubtedly crucial to find a way to break the deadlock in promoting China's image and value dissemination, always stand firm in the core position, and safeguard the country's ideological security.

**Build a strong defense to stay invincible**

　　As "fast food culture" continues to enter the lives of the masses, the forms of cultural warfare invasion are becoming more diverse and the means are becoming more secretive. In the face of the impact of foreign culture, what attitude and approach should we adopt are the key issues to be considered at present. First, we should firmly strengthen our cultural confidence on the basis of unswervingly following the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics to deal with cultural warfare. We should attach importance to the important role of cultural construction in the current era. This requires us to unswervingly follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, adhere to Marxism as the guide, and adhere to the direction of socialist advanced culture. To open up a new realm of the sinicization and modernization of Marxism, we must adhere to the "two combinations", combining the basic principles of Marxism with China's specific reality and with China's excellent traditional culture. Secondly, attaching importance to cultural construction means firmly establishing cultural confidence. There are two requirements for cultural confidence. In short, it is to make use of the past for the present and to make use of foreign things for China.

　　To make use of the past for the present requires us to promote Chinese culture based on tradition, and to have a deep understanding and appreciation of the cultural traditions of the Chinese nation. We cannot blindly deny the historical development process of society without specific analysis. We must neither forget our roots nor blindly return to the past, and persist in leading Chinese traditional culture to the world.

　　We must base ourselves on tradition and on the rich connotations of traditional culture. Only by taking root in the land where we were born and raised can literature and art be grounded, confident, and full of vitality, and stand firm in the turmoil of world culture. As the saying goes, "Those who eat the fruit think of the tree, and those who drink the stream think of the source." We must deeply explore the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, uphold the melody of patriotism, and inspire every Chinese person's sense of national pride and national honor. Heroes are the indelible glorious color of a nation. We must cultivate the Chinese people's lofty respect for national heroes, record heroes with heavy ink, and let heroes be promoted in literary and artistic works so that they can be grounded in society.

　　To promote traditional Chinese culture, we must persist in promoting the Chinese wisdom contained in the excellent traditional Chinese culture to the world. The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind profoundly reflects the wisdom of Chinese traditional culture of loving the people and all things, establishing oneself and helping others, and building harmony among all nations. Against the backdrop of a major change in the world that has not been seen in a century, the major initiative of building a community with a shared future for mankind has profoundly answered the major questions of where the world is going and what mankind should do. It has demonstrated the brilliant light of truth at the turning point of history and guided China and the world in the right direction.

　　To use foreign things for China's benefit requires us to "embrace all rivers", face the world, and actively learn and absorb the excellent elements of the cultures of all countries in the world for our own use. We must not only correctly understand the diversity of world culture, objectively judge and evaluate Western literary and cultural works, but also dialectically analyze the complexity of multiple discourses such as history and politics contained in these works. Maintain a clear understanding of Western culture, do not worship foreign things, and do not belittle ourselves. A clear understanding of Western culture comes from discernment, and the cultivation of discernment needs to start from education. First of all, we should cultivate students' pride in the 5,000-year-old Chinese culture, and then cultivate students' ability to distinguish right from wrong. Improve their ability to judge values ​​when facing Western ideology, and encourage them to internalize their sense of identity with Chinese history and culture in the process of examining Western literary and cultural products, and form a cultural character with Chinese feelings and a global perspective, as well as a sense of responsibility and responsibility to firmly realize the dream of a strong country.

　　Going back to the source, cultural warfare is only a kind of soft power confrontation in hybrid warfare. Facing various forms of cultural warfare, my country has firmly established its own cultural confidence. Cultural confidence is a more basic, broader and deeper confidence. It is the most basic, profound and lasting force in the development of a country and a nation. Confidence in the path, theory and system, in the final analysis, is cultural confidence. In the current increasingly complex international situation and complex combat styles, we can only better build a cognitive defense line and be invincible in the cultural war if we integrate national cultural confidence into the inheritance and promotion of excellent Chinese culture, strengthen China's position, peace culture, anti-aggression spirit and the awareness of a community with a shared future for mankind.

**(Author’s unit: Center for International Studies, National University of Defense Technology)**