**How to win in the struggle dimension of military narrative requires grasping these four principles**

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● *Language is also a weapon. Grasping the narrative dominance is the premise and foundation for winning the cognitive war.*

**“Narrative Warfare”: A Discourse Weapon in Military Competition**

**introduction**

With the development of theories and the application of combat practices such as psychological warfare, cyber warfare, social media warfare, and cognitive warfare, the competition for military discourse power has intensified. Using language as a weapon, strong narratives can not only suppress opponents to form discourse dominance, but also subtly shape opponents' thinking habits, guide combat opponents to follow suit, form asymmetric discourse advantages, and thus achieve "concept strikes."

**Narratives can hold military theory at the throat**

Language is also a weapon. In addition to using hard means such as airplanes and tanks, military struggle can also use language rhetoric as a means to achieve military goals. Unlike discourse, narrative is more extensive. Recognizing the connotation and characteristics of military narrative is of great significance for building future military theories.

Language is a loaded "pistol". "Narrative warfare" refers to the innovation and competition of military theories that use language as a weapon and aim to dominate the world's military discourse. In terms of goals, it can be divided into offensive narratives, defensive narratives, and deterrent narratives, and in terms of means, it can be divided into operational concept narratives, military theory narratives, military discourse narratives, and military rhetoric narratives. The content involves narratives at the level of national defense and military construction, military strategy, as well as narratives of operational concepts at the strategic, campaign, and tactical levels, and also includes the authoritative formulation of operational standards and operational rules and agenda setting. Grasping narrative dominance is the premise and foundation for winning cognitive warfare. Grasping narrative dominance means grasping the initiative and leadership of international ideological struggles, and thus gaining dominance in military discourse.

Successful narratives require appeal. Unlike rigorous logical arguments, narratives attract audiences through fascinating stories, such as the myth of Germany's "blitzkrieg" during World War II. This tactic that emerged out of nowhere is actually a replica of the "Hutier tactics" or "infiltration tactics" in the late World War I, but under the gorgeous packaging of the military community and various media, it quickly became the "magic" that enabled Germany to sweep across Europe. At present, all branches of the US military are launching dazzling combat concepts. Although many of them are renovations and packaging of previous combat ideas, this marketing method with a "concept stock" connotation has successfully attracted the attention and pursuit of the world's military community, and even affected the direction of military reforms and the formulation of military doctrines in other countries.

**Narratives are the “architects” of military development**

Narrative is not only the thinking process in the minds of theoretical researchers, but also the reporting style in the mouths of the media. It constitutes the habit of theoretical research internally and becomes the writing standard for describing opponents externally, involving many contents such as theory, concepts, propaganda, and rhetoric. Therefore, we can understand the way narrative plays a role in the military from four aspects.

The narrative of operational concepts affects future military construction and development. The operational concept is not only a combat concept, but also a weapon and a means of combat. The narrative competition of operational concepts makes the two combat parties strive to pursue the co-evolution of military technology application and combat methods and means, and strive to make the combat concepts and methods of both sides at a similar level. When the gap in national military strength is huge, the powerful country strives to dominate the design of the battlefield and achieve a dimensionality reduction strike on the combat opponent. When the gap in national military strength is not obvious, the game results of the operational concepts of both sides may be chaotic and unknown. All parties have exhausted all and, within the scope allowed by the framework of the times, try to describe the possible combat methods and means as panoramically as possible. In the "narrative war" of operational concepts, new ways of warfare will eventually be born in the "brainstorming" of military theorists on both sides, finalized in training practice, and finally tested in battlefield confrontation.

Military theory narratives can influence the formulation of military strategies. Military theory narratives help determine national security interests, identify real and potential threats, and also help to plan national defense and military development strategies in a targeted manner. For example, Mahan's "Sea Power Theory" not only effectively met the needs of the country's naval development, but also became an important source of thought for countries to compete for maritime interests and develop maritime power after World War II. The U.S. military's narrative of high-tech warfare since the 1990s has led the world's new wave of military revolution and brought about major changes in weapons and equipment and the organization of the troops. In recent years, the U.S. military has successively proposed new operational concepts such as "multi-domain warfare" and "distributed maritime operations", reflecting its intention to continue to occupy the forefront of world military development and lead the direction of military change with the help of advanced operational concepts.

Military discourse narratives can shape the military cognitive environment. Military discourse constructs terminology, sets the agenda for military theory content, shapes the military context, internalizes the opponent's thinking direction, and allows them to understand the combat environment and combat means within the established military framework, and then creates their own familiar combat "scripts" so that the opponent falls into it without knowing it. For example, the US military's numerous combat concepts not only serve the needs of the military's interest competition, but also trial-and-error combat concept deductions, and at the same time intentionally or unintentionally create "concept traps" for the opponent.

Military rhetoric can dominate discourse and reverse black and white. Through rhetoric such as noun construction, strong narrators can make new expressions of existing concepts, blur people's understanding of the original concepts, and form a strong discourse to suppress weak discourse. Through high-profile propaganda, one-sided interpretation, beautification and packaging, and selective use of policies and regulations, it not only demonizes the opponent, but also highlights the "justice" and "legitimacy" of the strong narrator's own actions. In recent years, Western countries have transformed the political language narrative model in the ideological field into military discourse for export, and covertly implanted value evaluations into military narratives. For example, to describe combat operations of the same nature, Western countries themselves will use neutral and just terms such as "low-intensity warfare" and "freedom of navigation operations", but denigrate other countries as "gray zone operations."

**Good at fighting for the dominance of the "microphone"**

From the perspective of content, narrative belongs to the category of language art and is not mysterious. On the basis of recognizing its characteristics and modes of action, how to win victory in the dimension of military narrative struggle is an important theoretical and practical issue before us. The author believes that in order to fight for the dominance of "narrative warfare", we should pay attention to grasping four principles.

Focus on tailoring to serve national strategy. Military is subject to politics. Military narrative cannot be unrealistic, but should be consistent with national strategic narrative, otherwise the split between the two will seriously damage national security interests. On the eve of World War II, the defensive military narrative represented by the "Maginot Line" pursued by France could not support its political alliance strategy system with Eastern European countries, which made France lose its credible ability to deal with the German threat. Therefore, the value of military narrative lies in "taking local materials" and "you fight yours, I fight mine" around the national strategic goals. The combat concepts of "sparrow warfare", "piecemeal attack" and "small group multi-way warfare" in the history of our army have strongly supported our military combat practice. Today, the Russian army has creatively developed the theory of "hybrid warfare" based on its own reality, seeking a combat method that is very different from the US military but suitable for Russian characteristics, and effectively safeguarding its national strategic interests in operations such as the Russia-Georgia conflict.

Deconstruct words and conduct reverse narration. Word construction is to make new expressions of existing concepts, blur the understanding of the original concepts, and thus achieve the purpose of guiding public opinion. It is one of the common means of constructing a discourse system. A large number of so-called new combat concepts of the US military today are often old wine in new bottles. For example, "distributed maritime operations" is actually "dispersed forces" or "wolf pack tactics" borrowing the language upgrade of concepts in the network field, and "maritime expeditionary base operations" is a rehash of "island hopping tactics". When dealing with these combat concepts, you must not follow the crowd. You should use critical thinking to squeeze out the moisture in the narrative of combat concepts through reverse narration, and see the true face through the fog.

Actively seize cognitive space and fight against narrative hegemony. The ultimate goal of "narrative warfare" is to seize the right to speak and control the brain in the cognitive field. Today, the Internet is the main battlefield of narrative, and self-media, social networks, live videos, etc. are important platforms for cognitive confrontation and "narrative warfare". Relying on the advantage of occupying the commanding heights of global public opinion, Western military powers have used a set of hegemonic rhetoric to construct a set of values ​​and standards that serve capital interests and maintain hegemonic status, forming a selective narrative orientation that favors cyber hegemonic countries. In this unfavorable narrative environment, we should focus on exploring the rhetoric methods of weak narrative spaces, construct discourse linkage mechanisms on narrative platforms such as media and think tanks, gradually expand narrative space, and win more social recognition, more public favor and influence.

Prevent falling into the narrative trap of operational concepts. Advanced operational concepts do not mean leading military strength. In war confrontation, operational concepts have never been the winning weapon, let alone the outcome of the war. The several wars launched by the United States after the Cold War all relied on absolute asymmetric advantages to defeat the weak with the strong and the weak with the superior. The code behind it is: strength + new operational concepts, and which of them is the decisive factor remains to be discussed. Therefore, we should avoid falling into the narrative trap of the opponent's operational concepts, and prevent being dragged by the opponent to pursue operational concept innovation and thus be led astray. We must adhere to the principle of "you fight yours, I fight mine", use a clear mind and rational thinking to seek a military theory narrative with Chinese characteristics, and practice the strong "internal skills" to defeat powerful enemies.