

Ideological and Political Education Design for International Security Courses Based on Current Political Trends

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Abstract: Currently, the century-long transformation is accelerating, nationalism, populism, and conservatism are interacting and surging, posing multiple challenges to international security. Based on sorting out the evolutionary logic and latest trends of these three ideological trends, this paper systematically analyzes their impacts on national sovereignty, multi-ethnic communities, and global governance, then proposes a systematic design for the ideological and political education in international security courses. Specifically, it includes: deepening the theoretical teaching system; innovating practical teaching carriers; strengthening the dimension of value guidance; and promoting interdisciplinary integrated teaching. This aims to provide a replicable and promotable paradigm for universities to build an international security course system and cultivate students with both theoretical research and governance capabilities.

Keywords: Political trends; National security; Ideological and political education; Ethnic community

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1. Introduction

The world today is experiencing profound changes unseen in a century, with various social ideologies interacting, cultures interweaving, and concepts blending. Under the influence of this era, nationalism, populism, and conservatism have been endowed with new connotations and vitality, profoundly affecting and changing the global landscape of security issues. To systematically consolidate the frontiers of socialist ideology, it is necessary for us to accurately grasp the development trends and negative impacts of political ideologies such as nationalism, populism and conservatism, and then propose an ideological and political design for international security courses based on the era's context. This not only has important theoretical significance but also practical value in enhancing teaching effectiveness and the international influence of the socialist core value system.

2. The basic trend of current international political thought

2.1. The continuous evolution of nationalism

Modern nationalism emerged in Western capitalist societies, and its theoretical construction and historical practice have jointly shaped the discourse system of modern nationalism. From the perspective of its development process, nationalism worldwide has shown a progressive evolutionary logic in different historical periods. The first stage is the gestation period. Before the formation of nationalism, European countries went through three stages: city-states, the Roman Empire, and feudal fragmented states dominated by Christianity. However, with the development of capitalism, the royal power, relying on the citizens, defeated the feudal aristocratic forces and established a republic based on the nation, thus providing conditions for the emergence of the national community^[1]. The second stage is the formation period. This period is represented by state-building nationalism, which is specifically manifested in the following aspects: at the psychological level, nationalism is a state of mind, a belief or proposition regarding national interests, national independence, and national unity; at the political level, nationalism is a political proposition and movement for a nation to pursue statehood, emphasizing that the state is the true representative of national interests; at the ideological level, nationalism is a powerful ideology, which, combined with patriotism, becomes the spiritual support for national mobilization. The third stage is the expansion period. During this period, including aggressive nationalism and autonomous nationalism coexist. On the one hand, established capitalist countries use nationalism as a political tool for foreign aggression to meet their colonial expansion needs. On the other hand, national consciousness in colonial regions is aroused, and national independence movements are carried out under the banner of local nationalism. The fourth stage is after the Cold War. Separatist nationalism has become the main manifestation of nationalism. National separatist forces primarily mobilize on a national basis, using national culture, national interests, and national future as reasons and excuses for political movements. In addition, transnational nationalism has gradually emerged. It is a non-realistic and anti-historical political nationalism based on “cross-border nations,” which aimed at establishing a new “nation-state.”

2.2. Populism is on the rise

Populism was initially used to refer to the Populist movement in the United States and the Narodnik movement in Russia in the 19th century. Classic populism, represented by Peronism, became the mainstream of Latin American politics after the 1930s. Populism opposes political systems dominated by elites or aristocrats, advocating populist values such as referendum and people’s initiative. As a political trend, it emphasizes the value and ideals of the common people, viewing democratization and popularization as the ultimate source of the legitimacy of political systems. At the same time, it emphasizes relying on the common people to carry out radical reforms in society, and regards the masses as the sole decisive force for reform. Amidst ongoing geopolitical conflicts and intertwined domestic contradictions, populism has gained new vitality and momentum. Firstly, populism and nationalism echo each other. Under the intensified impact of anti-globalization, some Western political forces often integrate populism and nationalism into theoretical policy discourse under the banner of ensuring national security, safeguarding national interests, and protecting domestic livelihoods, in order to gain more psychological recognition and political support from domestic citizens. Secondly, left-wing populism and right-wing populism compete and cooperate with each other. As domestic contradictions deepen and economic and social issues become increasingly politicized, left-wing populism is gradually influenced by the tripartite opposition ideology of right-wing populism (people-elites-others), advocating anti-globalization and prioritizing national interests. Finally, cyber nationalism has risen rapidly. With the continuous expansion of

the depth and breadth of information networks, populism has accelerated its development after combining with modern media, enhancing its inherent penetration and spread.

2.3. Conservatism endures and evolves

The Western conservative ideological trend originated from the Enlightenment period. In the process of its subsequent formation and development, it has exerted a profound influence on the political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of modern Western countries. As an important political trend in modern times, Western conservatism tends to respect the historical culture and traditional customs of a country in terms of national governance, maintain the historically formed property ownership status and a moderate tension between order and freedom, as well as promote extensive and clear separation and effective interaction between the state and society ^[2]. Currently, there is differentiation among different schools within Western conservatism, with the neoconservative school represented by the United States emerging. Specifically, firstly, the conservative school began to split. In order to resist the intensifying left-wing tide, conservatism gradually became extreme, starting to differentiate itself through nationalism and populism, and constantly seeking its own spokesperson. Secondly, conservative forces are continuously consolidating. Taking the United States as an example, despite the Republican Party's disadvantage in Congress gradually narrowing or even beginning to surpass the Democrats, due to internal divisions causing a lack of strength, conservatives are still unable to ascend to the White House. Therefore, establishing a "conservative alliance" and seeking new spokespersons have become a common need for both the upper and lower echelons of the Republican Party's voters ^[3]. Thirdly, conservative discourse is facing a transformation. Although some mainstream conservative advocates do not regard extreme ideologies such as populism or nationalism as orthodox ideologies, these political ideologies have been incorporated into the theoretical system of Western conservatism.

3. Practical challenges of relevant political trends to international security

3.1. Nationalism

The current world is in the midst of the third wave of nationalism, encompassing two value orientations: civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism. As Anthony Smith has stated, the success of modern nation-states lies in the coexistence and symbiosis between two different nationalism models: civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism. Once there is an imbalance between these two nationalisms, it may lead to the failure of the nation-state ^[4]. In comparison, ethnic nationalism tends to be more destructive, and the "ethnic political mobilization" can have a significant impact on the political order within multi-ethnic countries, and may even pose a serious challenge to the integrity of the sovereignty of multi-ethnic countries ^[5]. Under this influence, the existing great-nation chauvinism and local nationalism have hindered the process of building modern nation-states. Great-nation chauvinism unilaterally emphasizes the interests of the dominant ethnic group, thereby ignoring the rights of ethnic minorities and obliterating their developmental differences. The prominent manifestation of local nationalism is that some ethnic minority people believe that the interests of their own ethnic group are superior to those of the country, and excessively exaggerate the superiority of their ethnic group ^[6]. Both types of nationalism are essentially negative and conservative ideologies. Their proliferation can, to some extent, create structural tension in national and ethnic identities, which can weaken the cohesion and integration of modern nation-states.

3.2. Populism

As a global political trend, populism has experienced several rises and falls, alternating between prominence and obscurity ^[7]. Since the end of the Cold War, these contradictions have not only not been resolved but have intensified, specifically including: On the one hand, populism has impacted the international order. It places extreme emphasis on the primacy of national interests, fuels the momentum of anti-globalization, and hinders the development of relations between nation-states towards a direction of wide coverage, broad fields, and high standards. On the other hand, populism has weakened internal solidarity. With the proliferation of xenophobia, hatred towards the wealthy, and resentment towards Muslims, the overall political trend tends to be conservative and isolated, thus intensifying ethnic and class conflicts. In addition, populism has changed the political party ecology. The radicalization of nationalism and the popularization of populism in Western countries have led to the mainstreaming of traditional mainstream political parties and the mainstreaming of populist political parties.

3.3. Conservatism

Conservatism emerged as the mainstream ideology at the political level in the early 19th century, bolstering the restoration and rise of nationalism ^[8]. In recent years, the focus of neoconservatism has shifted from domestic affairs to foreign affairs, exerting a significant impact on international relations and the global political landscape. Firstly, neoconservatism excessively emphasizes a universal value system; its admiration for Western democratic values gives its foreign policy a distinct ideological tint, and it places democratic values in opposition to communism. Secondly, neoconservatism excessively emphasizes the inherent interests of one's own country, advocating that foreign policies should be determined and unilaterally implemented based on these interests, without giving excessive consideration to the interests of other countries, nor using moral standards as the foundation of foreign policies. Finally, neoconservatism excessively emphasizes free trade and market economy, posing challenges to the sovereignty and security of nation-states. It has led to an over-reliance of some developing countries on developed countries, thereby depriving them of autonomy and independence in economic development.

4. Measures for ideological and political education in international security courses

4.1. Deepening the theoretical teaching system

It is necessary to build a systematic teaching system of “historical evolution-realistic manifestation-value core” based on the theoretical logic of political trends. The course can incorporate core contents, such as the four-stage evolution of nationalism (incubation, formation, expansion, and post-Cold War period), the “elite-people” binary discourse of populism, and the differentiation of conservative schools. At the same time, education on the “correct view of the country” should be integrated. Through case analysis (such as distinguishing between reasonable national sentiments and narrow-minded nationalism), students can be helped to establish a rational understanding of ideological trends and lay a solid theoretical foundation for opposing extremism.

4.2. Innovating the practical teaching carriers

The fundamental goal of ideological and political education is to systematically shape the worldview, outlook on life, and values of the educational subjects ^[9]. In response to the current challenges posed by ideologies for international security, the course needs to design immersive, practical teaching modules to enhance students' ability to analyze and respond to problems. On the one hand, “case study workshop” can be set up to guide students in breaking down problems into smaller parts: for example, analyzing how populism leads to “social

division” and “alienation of political parties,” and simulating the formulation of policy plans that balance national interests and international responsibilities. On the other hand, “Model United Nations” activity can be carried out, focusing on the topic of “international cooperation under anti-globalization”. Students can play the role of representatives from different countries, understanding the conflict between conservatism’s “supremacy of national interests” and the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind through debate, and then cultivate a global governance perspective.

4.3. Strengthen the dimension of value guidance

In response to the negative impact of extreme ideologies, the curriculum needs to strengthen value analysis and positive guidance, and construct an ideological and political chain of “cognition-identification-practice,” which mainly includes: Through “comparative teaching,” clarifying the boundaries of ideologies and guiding students to recognize the unity of a multi-ethnic country. Through presenting data on the intensification of ethnic conflicts, it establishes the value of “inclusive coexistence.” Through analyzing the relationship between “universal values” and “diversity of civilizations,” guiding students to embrace the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind. Through course papers, keynote speeches, and other forms, encourages students to transform their value cognition into conscious action.

4.4. Promoting interdisciplinary integrated education

The core of interdisciplinary thematic teaching lies in integrating multidisciplinary methods and perspectives while adhering to the core subject-based approach. Through thematic teaching design, classroom content is optimized and educational objectives are highlighted ^[10]. Firstly, from the historical perspective, analyzing the evolutionary trajectory of nationalism from a “tool for nation-building” to a “weapon for division”; secondly, from the sociological perspective, examining the class differentiation and online communication mechanisms behind populism; finally, from the legal perspective, exploring the challenges posed by conservatism to the principle of “sovereign equality” in international law. Through interdisciplinary integration, students can not only understand the relevance of ideological trends but also develop comprehensive judgment capabilities that combine professionalism with value guidance.

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