

Analysis of Factors Affecting the Protection of Cultural Heritage in War – Taking the Second World War as an Example

Jiarong He

*School of Politics and Public Administration, Northwest University of Political Science and Law,
Xi'an, China
hejiarong678@qq.com*

Abstract: On the issue of cultural heritage protection, there has been little systematic research on the subject in the past. At the same time, the importance of cultural heritage protection is self-evident. Therefore, from a political science point of view, why are some cultural heritages protected in wars while others are destroyed? In response to this question, this paper attempts to explain the factors affecting the protection and destruction of cultural heritage in war, and argues for the protection of cultural heritage in four different paths, including three factors, using specific battles in the Second World War as examples. The factors influencing the protection of cultural heritage are categorised into a military and a political level, where the military level, which is prioritised, is where the subjective estimation of the power contrasts and whether cultural heritage is used for military purposes directly affects the protection of cultural heritage, and the political level where political considerations at home and abroad are the influencing factors. Only when these factors work together and favour protection, cultural heritage can be protected from destruction.

Keywords: cultural heritage protection, heritage military, power contrasts, international reputation, international ethics.

1. Introduction

It is widely believed that cultural artefacts are destroyed in war. For example, during the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, numerous cultural heritage sites in the Gaza Strip were destroyed, including the Omari Grand Mosque, the Gaza Central Archives, the Gaza University Library, and so on. In addition, in March 2001 the Afghan Taliban blew up the Buddhas of Bamiyan. And the Taliban have actually been destroying this Buddha statue since 1996, and have destroyed other small and medium-sized Buddha statues in the area under their control. In Somalia, the fundamentalist terrorist group Al-Shabaab in Somalia launched a 'grave jihad' against local Sufi tribes in southern Somalia, destroying a large number of ancestral Sufi tombs.

Cultural heritage is often the target of conflict because of the primacy of military objectives in war, and when cultural heritage is used for military purposes, it is generally the target of destruction.

Not all cultural heritage is destroyed, however, as they face the impact of international reputation or sanctions, international law, domestic repercussions, morality and other issues. For example, during World War II, Allied bombing avoided the Florence Cathedral in Italy to protect this

architectural masterpiece of the Renaissance. Admiral Scholtitz refused to carry out Hitler's decision to destroy Paris, preserving many of its important buildings and cultural monuments. Therefore, the question posed in this paper is: How can the preservation and destruction of cultural heritage in war be explained?

2. Literature review

Most of the current research on cultural heritage from the Second World War is conducted from sociological, historical and legal perspectives. One type is the study of its historical content and historical value. Although scholars have different understandings of the cultural heritage of the Second World War, their perspectives are all from the perspective of the historical content and values embedded in it. Labadi S lays out a similar perspective in her article *cultural heritage, and outstanding universal value: Value-based analyses of the World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Conventions*[1].

Another type of research is the study of laws and relevant international rules for solving a series of problems currently facing the protection of cultural heritage and the return of displaced cultural relics, for example, *international law and the protection of cultural heritage* by Forrest C and War and *the impact of uniform laws on the protection of cultural heritage and the preservation of cultural heritage in the 21st century* [2,3].

Scholars at home and abroad have already conducted very in-depth studies on the historical significance and legal rules concerning the cultural heritage of World War II, which has laid a solid foundation for the research of this paper. At the same time, this lacks a political science perspective, i.e. starting from the causes of the destruction of cultural heritage and analysing the influencing factors.

To address this situation, this paper attempts to study the protection of cultural heritage during wartime from a political science perspective. This analysis can help to better understand the causes of destruction, and then improve the relevant laws and regulations for cultural heritage protection and prevent the possible destruction of cultural heritage in war; it is also conducive to a better understanding of the history of the Second World War. At the same time, this discovery challenges Clausewitz's assertion that 'war is nothing but the continuation of politics by another means'[4]. War does require political considerations. However, at least in terms of cultural heritage, military considerations come first, while political considerations come second. This is what Clausewitz warned about to avoid creating a tyranny of politics.

3. Specific factors affecting the preservation of cultural heritage in war

The reasons affecting the protection of cultural heritage fall into two areas. On the one hand, there are military considerations, including estimates of the power balance, military casualties and military counter-attacks; on the other hand, there are political considerations, such as international reputation or sanctions, international law, ethical issues, and so on.

There is indeed a trade-off between military imperatives and political repercussions, but military considerations often take precedence over political ones. More specifically, there are three independent variables that influence whether cultural heritage is preserved or not, namely, the subjective estimation of the balance of power, whether cultural heritage is used for military purposes or not, and political considerations in terms of international reputation and domestic popular reaction.

3.1. Subjective estimation of the balance of power

As of 2019, the updated List of World Heritage in Danger contains 53 World Heritage properties from 33 countries, with the highest number of endangered properties in Syria, followed by Libya.

The civil war in Syria has lasted since 2011, and Libya has seen a number of conflicts erupt after the Libyan War ended in October 2011. In addition, other areas of the world where cultural heritage has been severely damaged have often experienced prolonged and intense wars or conflicts. This is because prolonged confrontations reflect a small gap between the two sides in terms of power, making it difficult for one side to achieve an overwhelming victory and end the fighting quickly, and prolonged fighting exacerbates the level of destruction of cultural heritage. In a situation where the gap between the two sides is small and where both combatants have the same perception of their own strength, the primary goal of the warring actors must be to extend their advantage by any means possible, and therefore to spare no effort in destroying the other side, and the protection of cultural heritage must not be a consideration in such highly destructive behaviour. At the same time, it can be observed in many battles in history that the longer the war lasts, the more determined the combatants tend to be, weakening the other side through bombing, etc. This indiscriminate bombing can also be more damaging to the cultural heritage, and more than 1,000 cultural heritage sites have been destroyed in Ukraine during the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

In addition, such a balance of power is subjectively judged by the war actors, rather than objectively judged from the perspective of a third party or on the basis of actual data on the balance of power between the two warring parties in the post-war review of the war. The reason for this is that whether cultural heritage can be protected or not must be due to the decision made by the war actors during the war, and the primary basis of this decision is to consider from the military purpose, i.e. to win the war as the main purpose, and to assess the difficulty of achieving this purpose from the subjective point of view, which in turn influences the relevant decision on the protection of cultural heritage. The difference between such subjective judgements and objective comparisons of power is that they can be influenced by many factors, which can lead to miscalculations that can lead to a more violent outbreak of war or to a more serious situation. Hobbes has mentioned that “it will be difficult to establish between nations a public centralization of power similar to that which is established between men, and that international anarchy will always be the constant in the mutual relations of sovereign states [5].” In such a state of anarchy, where each state actor adopts the principle of self-help to pursue its own interests, it is difficult to generate trust between states, especially with regard to adversaries whose interests are in conflict with their own, suspicion and mistrust are constantly expanding, and uncertainty about each other's strengths is accompanied by a certain degree of fear, as embodied in the “Thucydides trap” [6]. As strategic miscalculation suggests, such miscalculations of the other side's strengths or intentions and overreactions are commonplace. Such miscalculations apply equally to other non-state war actors. Therefore, the first thing that should be taken into account when considering the factors affecting cultural heritage protection is the subjective estimation of the strength ratio between the two sides.

This point also encompasses an assessment that includes the ability of the other side to counterattack, as well as the economic and human losses expended in the war. This is because in actual combat, war actors take into account not only the contrast in power between the two sides, i.e. their own advantage over the other side, but also how to maintain this contrast in power and how to expand their own advantage. The purpose of expanding one's advantage when victory in war favours one's self is to reduce the losses, including money and personnel, brought about by the war. Consideration of the ability of the other side to counterattack is also motivated by the fear that the war will not end as expected, that the war will be prolonged or that the other side will recover quickly after the war and then break out into a new war due to factors such as the other side's persistence or a solid military base. Therefore, when considering the overall comparison of power, the war actors will include all possible factors so that their superiority becomes a clear and definite fact. For example, in World War II, the US military's behaviour of bombing several times and dropping two atomic bombs in the Pacific despite having a large advantage in the battlefield was based on the idea of

speeding up the war process in order to reduce depletion and lower the possibility of counterattacks by the other side.

3.2. Whether the cultural heritage is used for military purposes

The use of cultural heritage for military purposes is a special factor in military considerations, firstly, because it is more relevant than other factors, i.e. it clearly indicates that the protection of cultural heritage is a consideration for war actors.

Secondly, the specificity of this factor lies in the fact that, even if one side has a significant advantage in a war, when an opponent's cultural heritage is used for military purposes, i.e., generally as a strategic location, the war actor assesses the potential casualties in this case, and the cultural heritage will most likely still be destroyed.

Moreover, in practice, it is often the case that cultural heritage is destroyed on this pretext by one of the combatants and on the contrary by the other, whereas it is difficult to examine whether it was actually used for military purposes or whether it was destroyed before it could be examined. It is undeniable, however, that there are cases in which it has been used as a pretext to achieve other objectives, such as the upliftment of people's morale, the undermining of the confidence of the other side, or religious conflicts, among others. At the same time, this excuse can to some extent reduce the international community's moral criticism of itself and create a more favourable international public opinion environment for itself.

This factor has a special character in that it can be analysed to a certain extent as an independent factor affecting the destruction of cultural heritage, without taking the estimation of the balance of power as a prerequisite.

3.3. Political considerations at home and abroad

This factor is a political level consideration, which is often taken into account only after a subjective estimation of the balance of power. In particular, war actors do not resort to carpet bombing or indiscriminate attacks when they are subjectively convinced that they are in a clearly superior position in a war, and it is on this premise that war actors often begin to take into account the protection of cultural heritage from a political point of view.

At the domestic level, war actors take into account the voices of their supporting populations and try to align themselves with them in order to maintain unity and stability within themselves and to be better prepared for external operations. This can be seen in the protection of cultural heritage, when the domestic population is generally humanitarian, e.g. by spontaneously creating civil society organisations for the protection of cultural heritage and the environment, and when the war actor making the decisions tends to take a cautious approach to strategic bombing, which is a highly destructive method of warfare, in order to stabilise the population and to secure its political position at home. On the other hand, when the domestic population, for various reasons such as religion and history, is in a state of hatred and anger towards the enemy, war actors tend to take more aggressive decisions, which on the one hand can be used to boost the morale of the people and on the other hand can serve as a deterrent to the opponent. In the Pacific Theatre of World War II, the United States Army repeatedly used bombs such as incendiary bombs to bombard the Pacific Theatre of World War II, to a certain extent under the influence of the domestic public's sentiment of vengeance, in retaliatory response to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

At the international level, the considerations of war actors are generally based on international law, international morality, their own international reputation, and so on. This is also a clearer indication that political considerations are more flexible than military imperatives, and in another way they are more subjective, i.e. they are less linked to objective circumstances and rely more on the active

choices of war actors to influence the protection of cultural heritage. The importance of this, however, is that even in war, human nature and morality often drive decision-makers to make judgements to protect cultural heritage. Another scenario has a stronger political purpose in terms of international reputation considerations. Protecting cultural heritage in times of war, as the case may be, creates a strong international public opinion for oneself at the international level, which is to some extent conducive to obtaining the support of the population of the other country or of other acting entities as allies at the international level. In this way, the protection of cultural heritage in some cases can also serve to increase one's advantage.

4. Specific manifestations of cultural heritage protection in the Second World War

4.1. Military considerations

War actors prioritise the power gap between the two sides and the ability to counterattack against their opponents. In World War II, Germany's Cologne Cathedral suffered multiple bombings during World War II[7]. This was because the Allies did not have a large gap with Germany's military power at that time, while Germany had a strong strategic counterattack capability. Therefore, during the bombing of important cities such as Cologne, the Allies had no time to protect cultural heritage.

When a cultural heritage is used for military purposes, it is not considered by the war actors as a mere building of cultural value, but rather as a military facility with an impact on the war effort, as in the case of the Monastery of Monte Cassino in the Second World War. The Monastery of Monte Cassino is situated at a high altitude overlooking the town of Cassino and the valleys of the Liri and Rapido rivers. As the Allies were repeatedly hit by accurate German artillery during the war, Allied commanders suspected that the Germans were using the monastery as an artillery observation point [7]. At the same time, the strong fighting capability of Germany as an Italian ally and the present state of heavy losses eventually led the Allies to target the abbey for destruction.

Another example demonstrates that cultural heritage is more likely to be preserved when it is not used for military purposes. By 1945, Japan's defeat in the Second World War was predictable, but the Japanese government always chose to resist. In March of the same year, the Japanese government passed a resolution to convert civil mobilisation groups of official background into militias for military training. Therefore, in order to accelerate the surrender of Japan as well as to reduce the time and the consumption of personnel and money, two bombing raids on 10 March and 25 May 1945, as well as the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki respectively, which were decided by Truman and the military, were commanded by the American commander, Curtis LeMay.

And during this period of air raids, most of the ancient architecture of Japan's two ancient cities of great cultural value, Kyoto and Nara, survived, in large part because of their lack of military and industrial value. Therefore when they were not used for military purposes, they were not targeted for destruction.

4.2. Political considerations

After considering whether cultural heritage is being used for military purposes, war actors often consider political factors. On the one hand, there are domestic political factors, and cultural heritage is often destroyed when the domestic population is highly hostile to the adversary.

The United States began planning an air attack on Tokyo in January 1942 onwards. Since any American base in the Pacific was too far away from Japan, the attack had to be carried out by naval aircraft carriers and required bombers to have a precise idea of the range to and from Tokyo. Even though it was difficult, the U.S. military decision was made because the U.S. had assumed responsibility for the entire Pacific, except Sumatra, by early April 1942, and had calculated the cost of time and the cost of its own landings in terms of manpower and money, as well as the Japanese

ability to counterattack. In addition, the American side would take into account the spiritual significance of the operation in avenging Pearl Harbor and the moral boost it would give to the people and to the soldiers involved in the war. Therefore, on the morning of 18 April, bombers dropped a variety of bombs, including incendiary bombs, on Tokyo, Nagoya and Kobe. Since the purpose of this air raid was to weaken the Japanese military to reduce its ability to counterattack and to counter the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, several important cities were selected as targets for the attack, and the incendiary bombs, which had great destructive power, were chosen in conjunction with the fact that Japan was mostly made of wooden buildings. [7] In terms of the results of the air raids, the American plan was more successful. It was an important point in motivating American morale since the Pearl Harbor Incident. At the same time, the attack forced Japan to keep four Army fighter brigades at home for air defence of Tokyo and other cities. This decision to disperse forces also objectively reduced the burden of American operations in the Pacific.

On the other hand, there are international political factors, i.e. considerations of international spirit, international morality and international reputation. With the advantage of war, cultural heritage has a better chance of being preserved when war actors consider the destruction of cultural heritage to their own international reputation and see its preservation as an important one.

In 1943, American forces, in conjunction with British forces, launched a fierce offensive against the German forces occupying southern Italy. Several villages were razed to the ground, and local officials complained that Allied soldiers were stealing specimens, coins, and so on from museums, a common phenomenon at the time, and one that caught the attention of army commanders. General Eisenhower feared that such misbehaviour would attract bad publicity, and he also discovered that troops under his command were even threatening to deliberately destroy Italian art monuments. As a result, he ordered all field commanders to do all they could to respect the monuments as far as the circumstances of the war would allow.

This view is also evident in another protection of cultural heritage. Allied bombing avoided the Florence Cathedral in Italy to protect this architectural masterpiece of the Renaissance [8]. This was due to the difference in the estimation of their own and the enemy's strength. Protection was due to the fact that the Allied armies were far stronger than Italy at the time. Therefore, the Allies took into account the international spirit of protecting the cultural heritage and provided the crews involved in the bombing in advance with important monuments to be avoided during the bombing. Thanks to this human attention and the precision with which the bombs were dropped, the monuments of Florence remained virtually untouched.

In the Second World War, the United States also made a conscious effort to protect cultural heritage. On 27 April 1944, the U.S. Navy recommended that the Far East be included in the protection of cultural objects, and established the Roberts Commission, a 'Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historical Monuments in the Theater of Operations [9].' Wahlner, along with other scholars, assisted each other in making lists of cultural heritage in Europe and Asia so that cultural preservation could be effective during and after the war.

After losing the war, Hitler proposed the Scorched Earth Plan, in which he ordered the German army to completely destroy all important occupied cities before abandoning them. He told Dietrich von Scholtitz, commander of the Wehrmacht's Paris city defences, that '(Paris) must be completely destroyed, leaving nothing behind, neither churches nor art museums.' By August 1944, explosives had been piled up at various key locations in Paris. But Commander Scholtitz ultimately refused to give the order to detonate the bombs, saying, 'To raze Paris would be to commit a crime that history will never forgive.' So at noon on 25 August, Scholtitz announced his unconditional surrender, signing it on behalf of the German forces in Paris in the presence of the French commander, General Leclerc, and much of the cultural heritage of Paris was preserved. This was the effect of international political factors on the destruction of cultural heritage.

5. Conclusion

With the overall increase in the level of civilisation in the international community, the importance attached to the protection of cultural heritage has gradually increased. However, the analysis of the factors affecting the destruction of cultural heritage in war is still lacking from the perspective of political science and international politics, which is not conducive to analysing the protection of cultural heritage from a comprehensive perspective, and thus is not conducive to the implementation of more effective measures in the protection of cultural heritage. Therefore, this paper combines these eight specific operations in the European and Pacific theatres of the Second World War to explore the factors that constrain the protection of cultural heritage in war and draws the following conclusions:

The factors affecting the destruction of cultural heritage in war are divided into two levels and three factors, and are developed according to the consideration that the military level is prioritised over the political level.

On the military level, analysing the strengths of the Western Front against Italy and Germany, and Japan in the Pacific Theatre, it is often the case that fewer cultural artefacts are destroyed when there is a greater difference in strength between the two sides. In addition, the destruction of the Monastery of Monte Cassino in Italy and of cultural monuments in Japan shows that cultural heritage used for military purposes is targeted for destruction.

It is based on the premise of the enormous advantages of war that war actors engage in political level considerations, which are divided into domestic and international components. In the Pacific theatre, the United States took a strong retaliation against the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which included the domestic popular sentiment of revenge. On the other hand, in the attack on Italy, some of the officers of the Allied and German armies, actively considered the international reputation as well as the international morality, and took effective measures to protect their cultural heritage.

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