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ATTACKS IN THE COGNITIVE SPACE: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FORMS OF MENTAL WARFARE

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Abstract
This article analyzes attacks in the cognitive space and forms of mental warfare in the context of the modern information society from an epistemological perspective (theory of knowledge). The author highlights the impact of cognitive warfare on the human psyche, worldview, and cognitive processes through the prism of epistemological theory. The study formulates scientific conclusions and practical proposals regarding the methodological foundations of cognitive manipulation, differences between objective and subjective reality, logical-semantic traps, and mechanisms for ensuring epistemological security in society.

Keywords: cognitive space, mental warfare, epistemology, theory of knowledge, cognitive manipulation, cognitive attack, post-truth, epistemological security, subjective reality, cognitive dissonance.

Introduction

In the 21st century, as a result of the rapid development of information and communication technologies, the deep penetration of neural networks and artificial intelligence systems into social life, and the increasing complexity of globalization processes, the nature of international relations and geopolitical confrontations has fundamentally changed. Traditional methods of applying military and economic force are increasingly being replaced by "soft power" and hybrid warfare aimed at exerting continuous, covert, and systematic influence on human consciousness, modes of thinking, and value systems [1, p. 12; 12, p. 73]. The highest, subtlest, and most complex stage of this process comprises attacks in the cognitive space and mental warfare. At the current stage of human development, geopolitical powers prioritize controlling the cognitive resources of society and the individual (the capacity for

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thinking and perception) over seizing territorial or material resources. Attacks conducted within the cognitive space target human subjectivity, thereby generating fundamentally new forms of threats to national and spiritual security.

There is a growing demand for a deep and systematic analysis of attacks in the cognitive space and forms of mental warfare from an epistemological standpoint, uncovering their mechanisms for distorting truth in human consciousness as well as their logical-cognitive traps, and strengthening scientific and practical measures to ensure the epistemological security of society and the individual.

In the post-truth era, fake news, deepfake technologies, and manipulative algorithmic influences severely impede individuals' ability to perceive objective reality accurately and impartially. By weakening a person's capacity to receive information, subject it to logical and critical analysis, and draw objective conclusions, the risk of inducing spiritual, ideological, and civilizational disarray in society is escalating. Therefore, comprehending mental warfare not merely at the level of information technologies, but at a profound philosophical and epistemological level, acquires paramount theoretical and practical significance [2, p. 45].

LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem of the cognitive space and mental warfare has been studied by various domestic and foreign scholars at the intersection of philosophy, sociology, psychology, and political science. The theoretical and methodological foundation of epistemological analysis traces back to the theories of knowledge and conceptions of truth developed by representatives of classical philosophy. While Immanuel Kant delineated the relationship between the knowing subject and the object as well as the boundaries of human cognitive structures [3, p. 89], Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel uncovered the dialectical and historical laws governing the development of cognition [11, p. 140]. Representatives of post-structuralism and postmodernism (Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard) investigated the substitution of truth with hyperreality in the information society and the mechanisms through which power shapes human consciousness via information [4, p. 112; 10, p. 95].

In contemporary military-philosophical and sociological research, the concepts of "cognitive warfare" and "mental warfare" have been thoroughly examined in the works of A. Dugin, I. Panarin, as well as Western researchers such as C. Anthony and P. Bernoulli. Specifically, C. Anthony defines cognitive warfare as a type of warfare

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that directly targets the human psyche and cognitive apparatus [5, p. 103]. A. Dugin evaluates mental warfare as a long-term hybrid strategy aimed at destroying a society's code of self-awareness, historical memory, and moral-value system [6, p. 78]. Among Uzbek scholars, Q. Nazarov, J. Yaxshilikov, Sh. Madayeva, and N. Muhammadiyev have comprehensively explored issues of national idea, information security, protecting youth spirituality from cognitive attacks under globalization, and preserving national identity [7, p. 67; 8, p. 142]. Recent studies also examine psychological strategies of influencing consciousness [12, p. 75] and socio-philosophical factors affecting social consciousness [13, p. 40]. Nevertheless, a systematic and comprehensive analysis of mental warfare directly through epistemological categories (truth, cognition, subject-object relationship, cognitive illusion, and logical-semantic manipulation) still requires broader and deeper coverage as a distinct research direction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To investigate attacks in the cognitive space and forms of mental warfare from an epistemological standpoint, an interdisciplinary methodological complex was utilized in this study:

Dialectical Method: Enabled the examination of cognitive processes and external influences exerted upon them as a unity of continuous change and contradictions–specifically within the dialectical interconnection between objective reality and subjective comprehension.

Hermeneutic Analysis: Applied to understand and interpret the latent content of information flows, their manipulative ideas, and their adverse effects on the human cognitive apparatus (perception, imagination, and logical thinking).

Systemic-Structural Approach: Served to examine the cognitive space and mental warfare as an integrated system, identifying functional dependencies among its structural elements (subject, object, instruments, logical-semantic traps, and final outcomes).

Socio-Philosophical Analysis: Employed to evaluate the practical impact of modern information and communication technologies on societal mentality and the formation of mass and individual cognitive structures.

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ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

An epistemological analysis of attacks in the cognitive space and mental warfare requires, first and foremost, identifying how and at what levels the relationship between the "knowing subject" (the individual or society) and the "object of knowledge" (objective reality) is being disrupted.

Disruption of the Cognitive Chain and the Post-Truth Mechanism

In traditional epistemology, truth is defined as the correspondence of human consciousness to objective reality (the correspondence theory of truth). Under conditions of mental warfare, however, the attacking subject aims not to alter objective reality itself, but to manipulate perceptions of reality as well as the criteria for evaluating cognition and truth [9, p. 115]. Within human consciousness, objective reality is replaced by its artificially constructed simulacrum. Consequently, the subject begins to perceive reality not as it genuinely exists, but through pre-packaged mental and cognitive templates implanted via cognitive manipulation.

Based on the conducted analysis, the following core epistemological forms and mechanisms of attacks employed within mental warfare have been identified:

Axiological Disorientation (Distortion in the Cognition and Evaluation of Values): Achieving the rejection of an individual's value system (nihilism) by misinterpreting or negatively framing a society's historical memory and national-moral and spiritual values.

Formation of Cognitive Dissonance: Paralyzing logical thinking mechanisms and inducing psychological disorientation by simultaneously introducing mutually contradictory pieces of information into human consciousness [13, p. 40].

Logical-Semantic Manipulation: Deliberately altering the semantic meaning of concepts and terms (for example, labeling aggression as "liberation," or valuelessness and immorality as "freedom"). This represents one of the most perilous epistemological traps in the cognitive process [10, p. 88].

Epistemic Bubbles and Echo Chambers: Utilizing social media algorithms to confine the subject within an informational environment that solely validates existing misconceptions while blocking logical and alternative knowledge.

Preserving Epistemological Security and Subjectivity

The analysis demonstrates that the acute danger of mental warfare lies in the fact that it targets not physical infrastructure or material objects, but the human thinking apparatus, critical perception, and capacity for logical deduction. If an individual or

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society loses independent control over its own cognitive processes, it forfeits its status as an active subject and becomes a mere instrument and object of alien cognitive projects [11, p. 201].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attacks in the cognitive space and mental warfare are not merely technical or information-technology confrontations, but profound epistemological, logical, and philosophical phenomena. Encompassing all stages of the cognitive process (sensation, perception, representation, and logical thinking), they aim to substitute objective truth with subjective illusions and pre-fabricated templates. These threats cannot be effectively countered solely through technical or administrative prohibitions; the problem demands fundamental epistemological, logical, and educational solutions.

Systematically Strengthen Epistemological (Logical-Analytical) Education: Broadly introduce specialized courses titled "Cognitive Culture, Logic, and Information Hygiene" into higher and secondary specialized education systems to develop students' critical and logical thinking skills.

Establish Mechanisms for Cognitive Immunity and Information Filtering: Develop scientific and practical methodologies for logical information analysis and enhancing cognitive immunity in society, while continuously promoting analytical literacy through mass media.

Establish Scientific Centers for Logical-Semantic and Cognitive Analysis: Launch a scientific-philosophical monitoring system capable of timely detection of cognitive manipulations, information attacks, and semantic traps in mass media and social networks.

Reinforce the Epistemological Foundation of National and Spiritual Values: Transmit national identity and historical memory to future generations not merely as transient emotions, but as systematic knowledge grounded in rigorous scientific-philosophical, logical, and empirical evidence.

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