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COGNITIVE CRISIS: THE ROLE OF MODERN ARMED CONFLICTS IN THE DEFORMATION OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

This scientific article provides a deep socio-philosophical analysis of the impact of modern armed conflicts and hybrid wars on individual and societal cognitive activity, as well as on the processes of deformation of social consciousness. The epistemological and axiological blows inflicted by information-psychological attacks, the post-truth environment, and virtual violence on mass consciousness are revealed. Furthermore, the article scientifically substantiates the consequences of the cognitive crisis caused by armed conflicts and the mechanisms for restoring critical thinking in society.

KEYWORDS

Cognitive crisis, armed conflicts, deformation of social consciousness, hybrid war, post-truth, epistemological shock, critical thinking.

Introduction

Armed conflicts in the twenty-first century differ fundamentally from those of the past in terms of their forms, means, and consequences [9, p. 72]. Today, military operations are no longer confined to the destruction of physical territories, military equipment, and economic infrastructure; rather, they have evolved into large-scale cognitive confrontations targeting the inner world, psychological state, and thought processes of human beings. Under conditions of armed conflict, the excessive volume and manipulative nature of information flows give rise to a profound cognitive crisis within society.

While Carl von Clausewitz emphasised the decisive role of moral and psychological factors in the ontology of war [2, p. 89], contemporary digital reality has intensified their significance, transforming them into instruments for directly deforming social consciousness. Philosophical and methodological analyses demonstrate that the stability of social consciousness and its resilience in the face of transformative processes depend on society's intellectual potential and the foundations of its fundamental worldview [8, p. 148]. Under the cognitive impact of armed conflicts, individuals' capacities to perceive reality objectively, think logically, and distinguish truth from falsehood are undermined [10]. Therefore, examining the role of contemporary armed conflicts in the deformation of social consciousness from a philosophical and sociological perspective constitutes an urgent scholarly task.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues of armed conflict, information and psychological attacks, and the transformation of social consciousness have been extensively studied in philosophy and sociology. The primacy of psychological factors in military confrontations has been substantiated in the works of Xunzi [1, p. 24] and Carl von Clausewitz [2, p. 89], while processes of alienation in society have been analysed in depth by Erich Fromm [3, p. 134], and the problem of simulated reality has been examined by Jean Baudrillard [4, p. 56].

In the post-Soviet academic sphere and contemporary research, G. G. Pocheptsov has explored the influence of information and cognitive operations on mass consciousness during armed conflicts [5, p. 215]. Manuel Castells, in turn, has investigated how the networked structure of the information society exerts pressure on social consciousness and institutions [6, p. 114]. Within Eastern philosophy, Abu Nasr al-Farabi associated spiritual decline and social crises with the deterioration of human intellectual capacities [7, p. 172]. In addition, contemporary Uzbek scholars, including Q. Nazarov [8, pp. 145, 148] and F. Bo‘riyev [9, p. 74; 10], have conducted scholarly research into the security of social consciousness, cognitive attacks, and their consequences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs an integrated set of socio-philosophical and methodological principles:

- Systems and structural approaches: These approaches were employed to identify and analyse the causal relationships between armed conflicts and the deformation of social consciousness as an interconnected whole.
- Epistemological and gnoseological analysis: These methods were used to examine the adverse effects exerted on human cognitive faculties during armed conflicts and to analyse processes of epistemic crisis [9, p. 76].
- Dialectical method: This method was applied to investigate contradictions between subjective perception and objective reality, as well as the patterns of change in mass consciousness under the influence of information.
- Axiological approach: This approach provided the basis for assessing the destructive consequences of armed conflicts for society’s system of values and its moral and ethical standards [8, p. 148].

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Contemporary armed conflicts, in terms of their scale, means, and consequences, are no longer confined to physical front lines or narrowly defined theatres of military operations. Instead, they have evolved into global networked confrontations encompassing the intellectual and cognitive sphere of humanity as a whole [9, p. 72]. In the context of network society, digital media platforms, and modern communication technologies, information flows have ceased to function merely as means of exchanging messages. They have increasingly become instruments for influencing human thought, disrupting perceptual mechanisms, and turning social consciousness into an object of systematic manipulation. As the ancient Chinese military thinker Xunzi rightly emphasised in his philosophical and strategic reflections, the highest form of military skill lies not in physically destroying the enemy, but in breaking their will, undermining their morale, and achieving their complete psychological and spiritual subjugation [1, p. 24]. Today, this phenomenon manifests itself in the form of information and psychological attacks, cognitive warfare, and sophisticated manipulative technologies. These practices

can give rise to a profound epistemological crisis that undermines society's capacity to assess reality objectively and analyse events rationally and logically. Under these conditions of epistemological crisis, individuals become not merely passive recipients of external information but also active disseminators of destructive ideas, often without being fully aware of their role.

According to Erich Fromm's theory of social character and alienation, individuals living under persistent pressure, fear, and perceived threat may gradually lose their capacity for independent critical thinking and fall into a state of "automaton conformity" [3, p. 134]. During armed conflicts and hybrid confrontations, manipulative disinformation, deliberately fabricated fake news, and highly emotionally polarising content can severely undermine the emotional and psychological stability of members of society. In accordance with Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and hyperreality, the contemporary information environment can sever individuals' connection with objective reality, confining them to a world of artificially constructed information scenarios, virtual images, and false illusions [4, p. 56]. Consequently, objective truth may lose its epistemological grounding, while subjective emotional reactions, personal fears, and destructive stereotypes take its place [9, p. 76]. It is important to note that the stability of social consciousness and its capacity to withstand external attacks have always depended on the strength of society's fundamental worldview [8, p. 148].

The destructive and corrosive impact of armed conflicts on social consciousness manifests itself in practice in the following three principal conceptual and sociological forms:

The erosion of social empathy and the normalisation of aggression. The continuous coverage of military conflicts, bloody confrontations, and scenes of violence in mass media and on social networks significantly lowers society's threshold for accepting cruelty and may foster the perception of violence as an ordinary social norm. This process contributes to the erosion of humanitarian principles.

Polarisation and the "us versus them" dichotomy. Social consciousness is artificially divided into sharply opposing camps, undermining the possibilities for constructive compromise, tolerance, and dialectical analysis. In their place, absolute antagonism and intolerance become dominant [6, p. 118]. As a result, social communication and the principles of solidarity among individuals are disrupted.

The distortion and manipulation of historical memory. Parties involved in or directing a conflict may substantially alter or falsify historical facts in order to legitimise their geopolitical interests. This can undermine the younger generation's sense of national identity [10]. The deformation of historical memory may consequently deprive future generations of a clear socio-political orientation and distance them from their historical and cultural roots.

As Abu Nasr al-Farabi rightly emphasised in his socio-philosophical thought, a society deprived of justice and enlightenment, in which ignorance prevails, inevitably faces spiritual crisis, moral decline, and intellectual stagnation [7, p. 172]. This demonstrates that strengthening society's spiritual and moral resilience is essential to its self-preservation and security in any historical period.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The socio-philosophical analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that the role of contemporary armed conflicts in the deformation of social consciousness is profoundly destructive, causing serious damage to society's intellectual and spiritual foundations. Preventing cognitive crises and protecting mass consciousness from adverse influences constitute important prerequisites for ensuring national security [9, p. 77].

The following conceptual recommendations have been developed to address this problem:

- Developing analytical and critical thinking within the education system: Specialised educational programmes should be expanded to cultivate young people's ability to evaluate information objectively and distinguish manipulation and fake news from reliable information.
- Improving socio-philosophical mechanisms for ensuring the stability of social consciousness: Scientific and methodological initiatives should be organised to strengthen constructive dialogue, tolerance, and national solidarity within society.
- Protecting national values and historical memory: Evidence-based rebuttals and analytical content should be prepared to counter information attacks aimed at distorting historical truth [8, p. 148].
- Strengthening information and cognitive security: Strategic approaches should be implemented to enhance moral and ethical resilience within the national information space and protect society from destructive influences.

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