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INFORMATION-PSYCHOLOGICAL THREATS IN INFORMATION WARFARE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF MILITARY CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the nature of modern information warfare, its manifestation as an information-psychological threat, and its transformative impact on the consciousness of military personnel. It addresses the issues of ensuring the stability of military consciousness and equipping personnel with "ideological immunity" in the face of internal and external ideological threats.

Keywords: Information warfare, information-psychological threat, military consciousness, transformation, ideological immunity, cyberspace, psychological stability.

Information warfare is a set of actions undertaken by a state or specific forces to achieve strategic superiority by systematically influencing an adversary's information systems, as well as the minds of its population and military personnel. Nowadays, wars begin in the information space long before they escalate to an armed phase. Today, geopolitical struggles are being waged intensely not only on traditional battlefields but also within virtual and information domains. A primary characteristic of modern conflicts is the prioritization of information-psychological operations—aimed at subjugating an adversary's consciousness, worldview, and value system—over their physical destruction. In this context, the transformation of the military—the cornerstone of national security—and the mindset of those within it has become one of the most pressing issues.

The rapid global development of information technologies and digital communications is fundamentally altering the nature of social relations, national security, and military strategy. Contemporary warfare is conducted not merely through military force and hardware, but by exerting influence over information, meaning, perception, and the collective social consciousness. In particular, threats directed at the consciousness of military personnel—affecting their sense of duty and loyalty, collective responsibility, and national identity—through information-psychological influence have become a pressing global issue.

Foreign research suggests that, in the context of information warfare, the effectiveness of the military factor is determined not only by military-technical capabilities but also by the stability of the consciousness of military personnel. Our analysis indicates that military systems lacking resilience against information-psychological influence may experience increased hesitation in decision-making, crises of confidence, and instances of merely formal (superficial) obedience. Consequently, in developed nations, the protection of military consciousness is regarded as a key socio-spiritual priority within national security strategies.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, ensuring national security, maintaining societal stability, and strengthening the "spiritual immunity" of military personnel have been elevated to the level of state policy. Specifically, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Defense" (July 3, 1992) and the Law "On National Security" (July 29, 2021) underscore the critical importance of the human factor, spiritual stability, and the protection of consciousness in ensuring the security of both the state and society [1]. Furthermore, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-60, dated January 28, 2022, "On the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026," identifies information security, ideological stability, and the protection of national consciousness as priority tasks [2].

In addition, the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-3833, dated July 5, 2018, "On Measures to Ensure Information Security," along with various resolutions from the Cabinet of Ministers concerning information security and cybersecurity, have established legal mechanisms for protecting the interests of the state, society, and the individual within the information space [3]. These regulatory and legal documents form the legal foundation for safeguarding the consciousness of military personnel against information-psychological threats.

At the same time, despite the legal reforms that have been implemented, the socio-philosophical essence of military consciousness—within the context of information warfare—as well as the patterns of its transformation and the mechanisms for its legal protection, have not yet been subjected to a sufficiently comprehensive study. There is a particular need for a philosophical analysis of the subtle influences—exerted through meaning, perception, and identity—that occur within the information space, as well as for the development of a conceptual model to ensure the stability of the military consciousness.

In the current era, characterized by accelerated digital transformation and global information exchange, all spheres of societal life are becoming inextricably linked to the information space. This process has altered the traditional understanding of war and security, giving rise to new forms of confrontation that extend beyond physical conflict to target human consciousness, value systems, and social perception. Consequently, information warfare has emerged as an integral component of contemporary social reality, becoming one of the most effective instruments for influencing social consciousness. In the context of a "New Uzbekistan," the necessity of re-examining pressing issues related to values and philosophical disciplines is specifically highlighted in academic literature [4]. In the context of information warfare, while various forms of social consciousness are affected in different ways, military consciousness holds a distinct strategic significance. This is because military consciousness serves as a socio-spiritual resource that underpins societal security, state sovereignty, and social stability. Information-psychological threats undermine the stability of military consciousness by relativizing core values such as duty, loyalty, responsibility, and collective identity. This can lead to negative outcomes, including hesitation in decision-making, a crisis of confidence, and mere formal compliance. The development of a military-historical consciousness and professional ethical qualities within the military education system is addressed in specialized educational literature [5]. Although research exists in Uzbekistan concerning national security, ideological stability, and spiritual immunity, the socio-philosophical essence of military consciousness—along with the mechanisms of its transformation and methods for its protection—has not yet been systematically or sufficiently studied within the context of information warfare. In particular, a philosophical analysis of the covert influences exerted within the information space—operating through meaning, perception, and identity—is of pressing importance. The role of the information factor within the system of elements affecting national security has been specifically examined [6].

In the context of information warfare, the concept of a "threat" transcends traditional military-political boundaries, evolving into a socio-philosophical phenomenon that targets human consciousness and perception. Today, the information-psychological threat manifests as a new type of danger—one that operates without physical violence yet carries an impact equivalent to the consequences of such violence. In philosophical research within Uzbekistan, the concept of a threat is interpreted not merely as an external danger, but also as a state of distortion arising within social consciousness. Information-psychological threats can be categorized into two levels: the information threat—involving the corruption or falsification of content—and the psychological threat—affecting perception, beliefs, and decision-making. The essence of an information-psychological threat lies not in the information itself,

but in how it "functions" within the human mind; the same piece of information can manifest as different types of threats depending on the individual consciousness it encounters.

1-Table

The difference between information and psychological threats

Criterion	Information threat	Psychological threat
Object of impact	Information	Perception and trust
Primary instrument	False or partially true	Fear, doubt
Result	Misconception	Wrong decision
Form	Appears	Invisible

The third characteristic is invisible influence. The invisibility of a threat enhances its effectiveness, as the individual remains unaware that they are being influenced. A modern threat is dangerous not because of its sheer power, but because it is constant and imperceptible—leaving the mind no time to mount a defense.

Identifying the sources and agents behind information-psychological threats is crucial for understanding who is targeting the human consciousness in information warfare, and what methods they employ. Contemporary analysis reveals that today's threats do not stem from a single, identifiable source; rather, they are executed through a multi-layered, networked system of actors.

In Uzbek philosophical research, information threats are viewed as a new form of inter-societal competition. In this context, the information struggle between states is characterized as a manifestation of modern political conflict that has shifted into the spiritual-informational sphere. Within this process, the "military consciousness"—or the mindset regarding security—becomes a direct target, as it shapes how security itself is perceived.

Transnational media and digital platforms are emerging as the primary conduits for these threats. Within the global media landscape, national information boundaries are dissolving, allowing external meanings to penetrate directly into the consciousness of individuals. This phenomenon places such information-based influence beyond the reach of institutional control. Informal networks—such as messaging apps and closed groups—emerge as the most dangerous source of threats. The primary source of information-psychological threats is not a foreign state, but rather a chaotic and uncontrolled information environment. It is precisely this environment that lends an air of legitimacy to such threats.

2-Table

Sources of information-psychological threats

Source	Key characteristic	Influencing the military mindset
Interstate struggle	Strategically targeted	Reinterpreting values
Transnational media	Popular, algorithm-driven	Distorting reality
Informal networks	Trust-based	Amplifying doubt and fear

Entities that carry out information-psychological threats possess varying degrees of influence. In this context, agents of social influence can be categorized into institutional and informal groups, each affecting the human consciousness through distinct mechanisms.

Institutional entities—such as state structures and media centers—execute threats based on strategic planning. Informal groups and influencers, by contrast, exert influence through personal trust and emotional closeness. Meanwhile, algorithmic information systems (including targeted delivery and recommendation algorithms) direct information consumption, often bypassing human volition. Consequently, this algorithmic environment can be viewed as a new social actor that indirectly governs human consciousness. It follows that, in the realm of information warfare, the most dangerous entity is not a human being, but an algorithm; it exerts influence without accountability and makes decisions on behalf of humans [7]. The effectiveness of information-psychological threats lies not in their source, but in the opaque, multi-layered structure of the mechanisms through which they exert influence. In the modern information environment, influence is exercised not through overt coercion, but through the manipulation of meaning, emotion, and cognitive load. Therefore, to understand the transformation of military consciousness, it is necessary to analyze these mechanisms from a socio-philosophical perspective.

In Uzbek philosophical research, disinformation is understood not as a complete denial of truth, but as a form of influence exerted by altering the meaning of truth. This distortion of meaning is characterized as a process that creates a misguided orientation toward reality within the social consciousness. Within the military consciousness, in particular, altering meanings associated with the categories of "truth" and "duty" leads to significant consequences.

The "partial truth" method is considered the most effective form of disinformation. Its efficacy lies in the fact that a portion of the truth is preserved, while another part is distorted within a moral or political context. This sows doubt in the mind of a military individual, yet it is not dismissed outright as a complete falsehood.

Symbolic substitution, meanwhile, serves to alter meaning not explicitly, but through images and symbols. Such symbolic influence limits rational analysis within the human mind, accelerating the acceptance of pre-packaged conclusions. Consequently, disinformation transforms military consciousness—not through overt lies, but by gradually shifting the underlying meaning. This process goes unnoticed, yet it becomes decisive at the point of decision.

3-Table

Disinformation mechanisms

Mechanism	Primary method	Influence on the military mindset
Partial truth	The fact is preserved, the meaning changes	Doubt and hesitation
Symbolic substitution	Primacy of imagery	Decline in critical analysis
Contextual substitution	The event is transposed to a different setting	Relativization of duty

Manipulation is the central mechanism of information-psychological influence, aimed at controlling human consciousness without the use of overt pressure. It is defined as a process that directs decision-making by acting upon the emotional layer of consciousness.

In manipulation, fear, doubt, and a lack of confidence serve as primary emotional triggers. Through fear, consciousness can be driven into a restricted state; in such a condition, an individual makes decisions focused not on ensuring security, but on escaping the situation [8].

In the modern information environment, the most persistent mechanism for influencing military consciousness is information overload. Information overload is considered a factor that weakens the defensive mechanisms of consciousness. An excess of information leads an individual not necessarily to an incorrect conclusion, but rather to the abandonment of the very act of drawing a conclusion. Under conditions of increased cognitive load, analytical thinking diminishes, and the individual begins to rely on simplified informational templates. This state reduces the capacity for the critical evaluation of orders and decisions within the military consciousness. In information warfare, it is not necessary to persuade the mind in order to break it; it is sufficient to exhaust it—an exhausted mind offers no resistance [9].

Information-psychological threats alter military consciousness not instantaneously, but through a process of layer-by-layer transformation. This transformation encompasses the entire architecture of consciousness—from cognitive decisions to value systems and identity. In the modern digital environment, these changes are accelerated, fragmented, and often imperceptible in nature.

Cognitive transformation manifests within the military mind through the distortion of threat perception and decision-making processes. Linking shifts in cognitive perception to the fragmentation of meaning within the information environment, several scholars have noted that individuals may transition from perceiving reality itself to perceiving a "mediatized" interpretation of it.

The misassessment of threats is the primary indicator of this transformation. It has been argued that, under conditions of information overload, heuristic (shortcut-based) thinking tends to prevail, leading to the abandonment of complex analysis. This state fosters either unwarranted anxiety or, conversely, negligence in military decision-making. Hesitation in the decision-making process is a direct consequence of cognitive pressure. Such hesitation can be viewed as a result of cognitive fatigue, as constant exposure to information diminishes confidence in making decisions. Ultimately, this cognitive transformation leads the military mind not necessarily toward making the wrong decision, but toward failing to make a decision at all. This situation is considered the most effective mechanism for inducing paralysis in information warfare [10].

Information-psychological threats target the core values within the military consciousness. Values serve as a stabilizing mechanism for social consciousness; when they become relativized, one’s moral orientation can be lost. Consequently, the relativization of duty and loyalty—driven by information-based influence—can disrupt the balance between "personal interest" and "collective duty." Moral disorientation manifests as the loss of a clear hierarchy of values; in essence, such disorientation represents the erosion of this value hierarchy. This state drains the internal sources of motivation within the military consciousness. In information warfare, the concept of duty is not outright denied; rather, it is transformed into a "subject for negotiation." It is precisely this process of relativization that gradually erodes the military consciousness.

In conclusion, the transformation of military consciousness in the era of modern information warfare is a strategic issue that directly impacts a state’s defensive capability. The most effective

defense against an adversary's information-psychological threats is to cultivate military personnel who are psychologically sound, committed to the national idea, and possess a robust ideological immunity. Today's soldier must perfectly master not only modern weaponry but also methods for self-defense and counter-attacks within the information space.

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