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The Role of the Value Basis in the Context of Waging Non-Kinetic Wars: Methodological Prerequisites for Analysis

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Abstract. The relevance of the topic presented in the article is determined primarily by the current foreign policy situation, namely the hybrid war unleashed by the collective West against the Russian Federation, a significant component of which are the so-called non-kinetic wars: informational, organizational, mental, cognitive, etc. In the article, the author focuses specifically on cognitive wars, which are the least studied in the social sciences. Hence, the main purpose of the article is to consider possible methodological foundations for the analysis of cognitive wars in the context of the high turbulence of the world order and the growing dynamics of digital transformations in the economy, politics, and social spheres. As the core of such a methodology, the author suggests considering social synergetics, the key postulates of which are openness, non-linearity of self-development, and the non-equilibrium nature of systems of various natures, which are most consistent with the current context of public relations. Special attention is paid to the role of the system of spiritual and moral values, or the social value basis, in ensuring the stability of the political system and effective counteraction to cognitive aggression. The author revealed its main functions, such as ensuring communicative effectiveness, overcoming the social atomization of modern society, and ensuring the cognitive stability of society by increasing resistance to cognitive and mental aggression.

Keywords: digitalization, cognitive, mental, hybrid wars, attractors, fluctuations, communicative effectiveness

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Роль ценностного базиса в условиях ведения некинетических войн: методологические предпосылки анализа

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Аннотация. Актуальность представленной в исследовании темы определяется прежде всего текущей внешнеполитической обстановкой, а именно развязанной коллективным Западом против Российской Федерации гибридной войной, значительный компонент которой составляют так называемые некинетические войны: информационные, организационные, ментальные, когнитивные и др. Автор делает акцент именно на когнитивных войнах как наименее изученных в социальных науках. Отсюда основная цель статьи заключается в рассмотрении возможных методологических оснований анализа когнитивных войн в контексте высокой турбулентности мирового порядка и растущей динамики цифровых трансформаций экономики, политики и социальной сферы. В качестве ядра такой методологии автор предлагает рассмотреть социальную синергетику, ключевые постулаты которой: открытость, нелинейность саморазвития, неравновесный характер систем различной природы — в наибольшей степени соответствуют текущему контексту общественных отношений. Особое внимание в статье уделено роли системы духовно-нравственных ценностей или общественному ценностному базису в обеспечении устойчивости политической системы и эффективному противодействию когнитивной агрессии. Автор раскрыл его основные функции, как то: обеспечение коммуникативной эффективности, преодоление социальной атомизации современного общества, обеспечение когнитивной устойчивости социума за счет повышения резистентности к когнитивной и ментальной агрессии.

Ключевые слова: цифровизация, когнитивные, ментальные, гибридные войны, аттракторы, флуктуации, коммуникативная эффективность

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Introduction

The technological revolution of recent decades, based on the digitalization of all spheres of human activity, annually changes our usual way of life, introducing significant innovations into both the material and spiritual worlds of human existence.

And if in the material world these innovations most often effectively solve the problem of facilitating the organization of our work and well-being, improving the quality of life and comfort, then in the spiritual and social world such progress is by no means obvious. Precarization and Uberization of the labor market, the gradual elimination of human beings from the process of production of goods and services, the loss of control of the process of technological development, the emergence of various types of non-kinetic wars—these are just a few examples of new challenges generated by ultra-fast technological development. There is also an acute problem of uneven access to the benefits of digital civilization and, accordingly, the widening of the digital divide both between individual socio-demographic groups and states or macro-regions of the world. One of the important consequences of the digital divide is the threat of loss of digital sovereignty, which, under the conditions of total digitalization, turns out to be tantamount to the loss of economic independence and therefore the sovereignty of the national state as a whole.

Cognitive warfare as a new challenge to the stability of the political system

In the context of ever-increasing international competition for progressively scarce material and social resources, these challenges entail the outbreak of information, organizational, mental, and cognitive wars, the main target of which today is the human mind. We are talking about a new mental enslavement of nations, which, according to the aggressor's plan, should turn into an obedient crowd devoid of will, incapable of reflection and independent decision-making. This is precisely what the zealous adherents from the North Atlantic Alliance see as the key task of cognitive wars, emphasizing that “the goal of cognitive warfare is to implement changes in the goal-setting of community policy, through the cognitive process, to achieve advantages for the attacking state (or non-state actor)” (quote from: Medushevsky 2023)¹. It can also be defined as “a special type of war—a non-conventional form that uses cybernetic tools to alter the cognitive process of an enemy by exploiting mental tendencies or reflexive thinking²... Its purpose is to sow dissonance, provoke contradictory narratives, polarize opinions, and radicalize groups. Cognitive warfare can motivate people in ways that can fragment cohesive societies”³.

Thus, in contrast to information warfare, aimed at disinformation of the enemy and propaganda from a point of view favorable to the aggressor through mass media, and mental warfare, whose goals are primarily related to the change (paralysis) of individual and mass consciousness and the demoralization of the armed forces,

¹ Bjorgul, L. (2021). Cognitive Warfare and the Use of Force. *Stratagem*. 03.11.2021. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from <https://www.stratagem.no/cognitive-warfare-and-the-use-of-force/>

² Claverie, B., & du Cluzel, F. *The Cognitive Warfare Concept*. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.innovationhub-act.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/CW%20article%20Claverie%20du%20Cluzel%20final_0.pdf.

³ Northon, B. *Behind NATO's 'cognitive warfare': 'Battle for your brain' waged by Western militaries*. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from <https://thegrayzone.com/2021/10/08/nato-cognitive-warfare-brain/>

cognitive warfare deals with cognitive processes that ensure the acceptance or non-acceptance of a particular decision.

There is hardly any doubt about the thesis that the destructive consequences of cognitive war are significantly deeper and more severe than the material and physical damage of traditional kinetic wars. Hence, the task of ensuring effective counteraction to cognitive aggression becomes one of the most important for the national security of any state.

For Russia, which today is experiencing unprecedented pressure from the collective West on all fronts, its decision turns out to be even more significant.

Methodological basis for studying the content and strategies of cognitive warfare

For the purposes of this study, it is firstly important to determine those methodological foundations that could serve as the basis for a comprehensive analysis of strategies and technologies for waging non-kinetic wars (primarily cognitive ones) and would ultimately contribute to the development of specific practical recommendations for their effective prevention or the development of strategies for protecting from aggression.

In this regard, social synergy attracts attention. The prerequisites and principles of synergetic methodology turn out to be important not only for the purposes of studying cognitive processes and studying the functioning of the human brain (to which, for example, H. Haken's famous work "Principles of Brain Functioning" was devoted), but also for analyzing how the process of resistance to external cognitive aggression should be structured at various levels of organization of the social and political system. In this sense, it is essential to take into account the specific characteristics of this kind of systems, updated in the synergetic methodology: nonlinearity, which is expressed primarily in its selective "response to external influences, when the "corresponding" influence has a greater influence on the evolution of the system than a stronger, but more organized influence inadequate to its own tendencies" [Baksansky, Kucher 2010: 71], which occurs primarily due to the presence in it of a nonlinear feedback mechanism, the effective functioning of which is predetermined by the next important property of the system—its openness, which allows the constant exchange of information and energy with its environment.

Russian researchers O.E. Baksansky and E.N. Kucher rightly emphasize the special importance of microprocesses, the influence of fluctuations that are insignificant in strength and resource intensity on macrostructures, and the possibility of their phase transition: "Synergetics shows that the behavior of complex systems near points of instability significantly depends on the microprocesses in them: near bifurcation points, microfluctuations determine the choice of attractor" [Baksansky, Kucher 2010: 71].

This reveals one of the key qualities of nonlinear, open systems: dissipativity, which can be defined as "a macroscopic manifestation of chaotic processes occurring at the micro level and leading to the dispersion of energy, matter,

information... In fact, this is an analog of diffusion of various kinds, including the transfer of knowledge and dissemination of scientific and cultural information” [Baksansky, Kucher 2010: 71].

From the point of view of the effectiveness of information influence, this provision of the synergetic methodology can be interpreted as follows: subjects of information influence that are relatively small in terms of available resources (for example, Telegram channels or video blogs with no more than 10–15 thousand subscribers) are capable of having a significant impact on the psycho-emotional state and cognitive attitudes of the target audience (comparable to the impact of the state propaganda machine, using the full power of electronic media) due to the verified topology of such impact, which allows launching a powerful resonance effect. Of course, the network structure of information exchange contributes to the emergence and strengthening of such an effect in the best possible way.

The role of the value basis in the prevention of cognitive aggression

The value basis that unites and solidifies society is of particular importance in the course of countering cognitive aggression. In the context of synergetic methodology, the value basis can be interpreted as the spiritual basis of the attractor of self-development in the social system. If we supplement the synergetic paradigm with the theoretical postulates of new institutionalism, then we can consider the value basis as well as a meta-institution that determines the stability of the socio-political system, understood here as “the ability of the political-administrative system, adequately responding to external influence, to keep structural changes within given parameters, quickly restore balance, and maintain one’s own integrity and identity” (Kurochkin 2023). One can also interpret the value basis as the basis of the cognitive stability of society and therefore a key goal for information, mental, and cognitive wars.

Considering the case of the Russian Federation, it should be noted that after 2014, when, on the one hand, due to the de facto coup in Ukraine, the neo-Nazi regime received power tools to implement its political agenda, and on the other hand, due to the return of the Republic of Crimea to Russia, the collective West unleashed a total sanctions war against the Russian Federation, the task of clarification, systematization, and popularization of national spiritual and moral values has become extremely urgent. One of the key stages of its implementation is the process of institutionalizing the value basis of Russian society.

Active practical work on institutional consolidation of the system of Russian spiritual and moral values at the current stage of development began in 2020, on the initiative of the President of the Russian Federation, V.V. Putin, during the development and adoption of amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation. It was then, within the framework of the activities of a specially created working group headed by the head of the Federation Council Committee on Constitutional Legislation and State Building A. Klishas, the Chairman of the State Duma Committee on State Building and Legislation P. Krasheninnikov,

and the Director of the Institute of Legislation and Comparative Law under the Government of the Russian Federation T. Khabrieva, that, in addition to the new norms of the Constitution concerning changes in the status, functions, and balance of powers of key elements of the political system, several amendments were also proposed to define the value basis of the modern Russian state and society. These are amendments: in Art. 67.1, part 2, “The Russian Federation, united by a thousand-year history, preserving the memory of our ancestors who passed on to us the ideals and faith in God, as well as the continuity in the development of the Russian state, recognizes the historically established state unity”, in Art. 67.1, part 3, “The Russian Federation honors the memory of the defenders of the Fatherland and ensures the protection of historical truth. Decreasing the significance of the people’s feat in defending the Fatherland is not permitted”, in Art. 68, part 4, “Culture in the Russian Federation is the unique heritage of its multinational people. Culture is supported and protected by the state”, in Art. 69, part 2, “The state protects the cultural identity of all peoples and ethnic communities of the Russian Federation, guarantees the preservation of ethnocultural and linguistic diversity,” and a number of others.

Some experts and public figures then noted the “non-binding” nature of such amendments, considering them a mere formality. However, the results of the popular vote on July 1, 2020, clearly demonstrated the correctness of the expert group and legislators who proposed these amendments and subsequently formalized them in a constitutional format.

The next necessary step towards systematization and institutionalization of the spiritual and moral values of modern Russia was the adoption of Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of November 9, 2022, No. 809, “On approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values”⁴. It specifies the functions, risks, and content of destructive ideologies and shows their main sources and target groups of influence. The goals of state policy are outlined, as are tools and measures to prevent the penetration and spread of ideologies of this kind, including those of a strategic nature, and a clear list of traditional spiritual and moral values that form the basis of Russian statehood and the identity of Russian society.

The adoption of this decree should be considered a major step towards: a) *clearer articulation*; b) *systemic generalization*; and c) *institutional consolidation* of the system of spiritual and moral values.

In the aspect of countering mental and cognitive aggression and protecting the national sovereignty of the Russian Federation, the institutional consolidation of a system of spiritual and moral values will provide the necessary semantic and emotional-psychological foundation or a kind of “shield” against the

⁴ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of November 9, 2022 No. 809 “On approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/405579061/>

implementation of the key tasks of mental and cognitive war, namely: the destruction of cultural and historical foundations of Russian statehood, “erasing” national identity, instilling distorted thinking, etc. In this context, it is absolutely correct that these Fundamentals in Paragraph 1 are called “a document of strategic planning in the field of ensuring the foundations of the national security of the Russian Federation”⁵.

Hand-in-hand with the process of institutionalizing the system of spiritual and moral values in the Russian Federation, an equally important process of their popularization has begun. Primarily, it concerns the younger generation; through the inclusion of new and special courses in the educational programs of universities, a significant amount of material is devoted to the analysis of the historical prerequisites for the formation of the system of spiritual and moral values, disclosure of their ethical content, etc. The federal project “DNA of Russia” began to play a key role in the making and implementation of such materials, within the framework of which the development and methodological debugging of the course “Fundamentals of Russian Statehood” took place, providing an interdisciplinary, substantive justification for the concept “Russia as a country-civilization”. The theoretical basis of this concept was largely formed by the model of the relationship between the basic factors and structures of the socio-historical development of Russia, presented in the form of the so-called pentabasis: “Individual-Family-Society-State-Country”. Today, the implementation of the provisions of this concept is already being actively analyzed in various spheres of politics, economics, and social life (see, e.g., Grishanin, Minevich, Merkusheva, 2023). It should be especially noted that the authors of the concept identified not only the content and structure of the specified ideological pentabasis but also outlined, on the basis of the research conducted, its clear semantic connections with the choice of the image of the future for Russia.

Without explicitly defining the postulates of synergetic methodology as methodological principles or guidelines, they nevertheless note: “Today, hardly anyone would argue with the statement that the stability of a political system is largely determined by its openness, flexibility, and the ability to use various technologies in making and implementing political decisions. It is fundamentally important that these technologies and these solutions find their actualization in the context of the value dominants of Russian society identified during the study” (Kharichev et al. 2022: 19).

In the space of network communications, which is today the main battlefield for minds and hearts, the following key functions of the spiritual and moral value basis can be identified:

⁵ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of November 9, 2022 No. 809 “On approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values”. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/405579061/>

- Ensuring the communicative efficiency of network interactions (by which the author understands “the resulting minimization of transaction costs of interaction” in the network (see for more details: (Kurochkin 2023: 50));
- Overcoming the social atomization of the network space and the formation of network solidarity and, as a consequence, higher consolidation of society;
- Increasing the degree of resistance of society to cognitive and mental aggression.

In conclusion, we note that when defining social synergetics as a promising methodological foundation for the analysis of strategies and tools for non-kinetic wars, as well as their prevention, one cannot help but understand and take into account certain limitations that it inherently contains. For example, it is difficult to disagree with the opinion of the domestic researcher Buzsky M.P. that “the absolutization of synergetics is not just a methodological “distortion”, but a reflection of the real situation in which modern humanity finds itself: with the explosive development of technology and telecommunications that swept the planet, with an independently organized space of influences and rhythms, people found themselves isolated, disconnected, and unable to develop those forms in which they could “build” the technosphere into the framework of their subjectivity”⁶.

Hence, the inclusion of the value aspect in the framework of the methodology of social synergetics seems to be an extremely urgent task today, including in the aspect of developing effective strategies to counter new forms of non-kinetic aggression.

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⁶ Buzsky, M.P. Modern concepts of social synergetics. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from <https://spkurdyumov.ru/globalization/sovremennye-koncepcii-socialnoj-sinergetiki/>

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