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**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

### **Cognitive Warfare; A New Arena in Political Communication**

**Hatef Pourrashidi**<sup>1</sup>  | **Javad Alipoor**<sup>2</sup> 

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Communications, University of Religions & Denominations, Qom, Iran. E-mail: [h.pourrashidi@urd.ac.ir](mailto:h.pourrashidi@urd.ac.ir)
2. Corresponding author, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran. E-mail: [alipor@tabrizu.ac.ir](mailto:alipor@tabrizu.ac.ir)

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### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

#### **Introduction:**

Cognitive science studies the mind and the ways to influence it and soft power implies the influence of other's will by attraction rather than coercion. While "cognitive warfare" means influencing minds using concepts and theories from the fields of cognitive science, soft power and media. The goal of both political communication and cognitive warfare is to influence minds and hearts. Therefore, the goal of this article is to understand the relationship between cognitive warfare and mastery of perception through cognitive science and soft power tools as a new approach to political communication. This article attempts to answer this question that how cognitive warfare changes fundamentally political communication, the functioning of the media, and their strategies.

### **Method:**

The research method of this article is secondary analysis as a qualitative method, in which existing data are used to answer the new questions of the research. The method of secondary analysis is carried out in several stages: In the first stage, the research objectives were identified. In the second stage, existing data were searched, and in the third stage, the quality of the existing data was evaluated. In the fourth stage, among the existing data, approximately twenty articles and books were selected as appropriate data in the fields of media, soft power, political communication, and cognitive warfare. In the fifth stage, these data were evaluated and finally, conclusions were drawn by analyzing and interpreting the data.

### **Results:**

Cognitive warfare is a new concept in interdisciplinary studies of cognitive science, communication, and political science. The emergence of this concept has transformed the views of thinkers and politicians about political communication. While political communication uses the cognitive effects of mass media to improve the relations between politicians, the public, and the media, cognitive warfare theorists have a similar goal; the main difference between them is the way within that they view and utilize the power of the media, the first seeks to create real and effective communication between the public and politicians through advertisement and accurate information, while the second attempts to exploit the communication gap between the rulers and the public and create conflict and destroy intellectual ties between the public and politicians.

### **Conclusion:**

Cognitive warfare is classified as a soft war to threat and influence public minds and opinions. In this war, the tools of cognitive science, new media technologies and artificial intelligence are used in order to smart manipulation and further destroying of minds and hearts. As a result, cognitive warfare is considered a new arena in political communication in which the media has acquired a cognitive function.

Also, the inability to properly recognize the threats of this war and the necessary measures to determine countermeasures has revealed the potential and actual ability of this war. Given the importance of this issue, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in cooperation with various American universities, including Harvard and John Hopkins, has taken the initiative to provide a new definition of this war and introduce it in order to discover and identify countermeasures in cooperation with scholars from various sciences. Moreover, studies have been conducted on the actions of some countries in their areas of influence and the dimensions of these countries' cognitive warfare. The Islamic Republic of Iran has also faced this threat seriously in recent years, and it is necessary to take fundamental measures based on this kind of threats. The strength of this conflict lies in utilizing the power of nations and influencing their minds at various levels, and in practice, governments are not directly and seriously considered as in the conventional wars. Therefore, the measures must be comprehensive and scientific in this battle. Hence, this research presents the following suggestions to confront this war:

1. Raising awareness among different classes of society of the consequences of cognitive warfare, especially among elites, intellectuals, media activists, and students.
2. Expanding media literacy and training in the use of media for all members of society.

3. Explaining the different dimensions of cognitive warfare in society, especially journalists and content producers.
4. Finding a solution to identify and warn about false and fake activities and news to influence minds using advanced algorithms and utilizing the power of experts in various fields of social sciences.
5. Integrating the members of society and strengthening people's trust in the media and rulers.
6. Refraining and avoiding any hasty, inaccurate and expedient comments by officials and politicians.

In brief, if previously the discussion of political communication was about how to establish communication between politicians and the people (public opinions) through the media and how the media, as an important part of civil society, can link the people and the agents, the media guide people's perceptions and impressions in cognitive warfare. As a result, cognitive warfare is a new arena in political communication in which the media has found a cognitive function and those who will prevail in this new arena will be those who master the three categories of cognitive science, cognitive warfare, and advanced neuroscience and communication technologies, and who will formulate their political communication strategies in accordance with these new realities.

**Data Availability Statement**

Data available on request from the authors.

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**Ethical considerations**

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**Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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