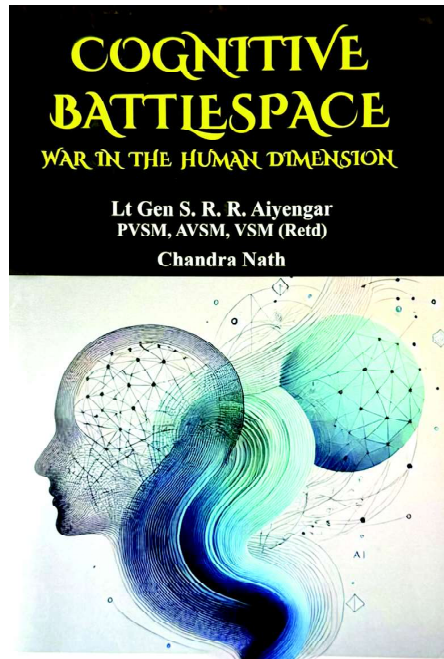


Review Articles

Review Article 1

Cognitive Battlespace: War in the Human Dimension

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Introduction

C*ognitive Battlespace: War in the Human Dimension* is a timely, ambitious, and conceptually rigorous examination of the cognitive domain as an emergent and decisive arena of modern conflict. During contemporary times, as warfare is increasingly shaped by Artificial Intelligence (AI), information saturation, and hybrid warfare below the threshold of armed conflict, the authors argue persuasively that the human mind has become the primary battlespace. Moving beyond traditional understandings of information warfare and perception management, the book reframes cognition—perception, belief, emotion, identity, and decision-making—as an

Cognitive Battlespace: War in the Human Dimension by Lieutenant General SRR Aiyengar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) and Chandra Nath; Pages 339; Price INR 850/-; ISBN 978-93-93402-31-8

Journal of the United Service Institution of India, Vol. CLVI, No. 644, April-June 2026.

operational domain that demands doctrinal clarity, ethical scrutiny, and institutional preparedness.

Authored by senior military practitioners with deep experience in strategy, technology, and doctrine, the book bridges theory and practice in a rare way in contemporary strategic literature. It speaks simultaneously to military professionals, policymakers, scholars, and informed citizens, positioning cognitive warfare not merely as a military concern but as a whole-of-nation security challenge.

Conceptual Contribution and Structure

One of the book's most significant strengths lies in its systematic conceptual architecture. Rather than treating 'Cognitive Warfare' as a buzzword or an extension of information operations, the authors take define the cognitive domain with analytical precision.

Early chapters carefully distinguish between the physical, information, and cognitive domains, clarifying that while information concerns data and transmission, cognition concerns interpretation, meaning-making, and decision-making. This distinction is foundational, and the authors argue that strategic outcomes increasingly hinge not on who controls information flows, but on who shapes information, and how is it perceived and acted upon.

The book's structure is amenable to rational assimilation. Part I establishes conceptual and psychological foundations, explaining why cognition has emerged as a warfighting domain and how human decision-making operates under conditions of uncertainty, stress, and information overload. Part II moves into tools, tactics, and case studies, grounding abstract theory in operational reality. Part III provides a comparative survey of global doctrinal models, while Part IV focuses on India's specific cognitive security landscape. The final section looks ahead, exploring the future trajectory of cognitive conflict in an AI-saturated world.

Owing to its layered design, the book functions not only as a comprehensive monograph but also as a versatile reference for professional military education, policy formulation, and academic inquiry.

Human Cognition as Decisive Terrain

At the heart of the book is a compelling argument: war has always been fought in the human mind, but contemporary technologies have made deliberate, scalable, and persistent cognitive operations

possible in unprecedented ways. Drawing on behavioural economics, neuroscience, and military decision-making theory, the authors demonstrate how cognitive biases, emotional triggers, identity dynamics, and trust relationships create structural vulnerabilities that adversaries can exploit.

The discussion of cognition is notably sophisticated. Rather than portraying humans as irrational actors who could be manipulated, the authors emphasise on the bounded rationality of decision-makers and the cognitive load imposed by modern operational environments.

Concepts such as attention control, emotional priming, memory shaping, and trust erosion are treated not as abstract psychological phenomena but as operational variables that can be deliberately targeted or defended.

The integration of the observe, orient, decide, and act loop as a cognitive framework is particularly effective. By emphasising the 'Orientation' phase as the most vulnerable and decisive element of decision-making, the book demonstrates how cognitive warfare seeks to misalign perception and reality, inducing adversaries to make suboptimal or self-damaging choices. This framing provides a clear bridge between classic military theory and contemporary influence operations.

Technology, Artificial Intelligence, and Cognitive Amplification

Another major contribution of the manuscript is its treatment of AI as a cognitive amplifier rather than merely a technical enabler. The authors argue that AI does not simply speed up information processing; it restructures the cognitive terrain itself.

Recommendation algorithms, behavioural analytics, synthetic media, and automated influence agents shape what individuals see, feel, and believe at scale, often invisibly and continuously.

The book excels in explaining how behavioural data—digital traces left by everyday online activity—has become a strategic resource. By analysing clicks, shares, engagement patterns, and network relationships, AI systems can infer psychological profiles and predict decision tendencies with remarkable accuracy. When combined with generative AI, this enables hyper-personalised influence campaigns capable of operating at machine speed.

It must be noted that the authors do not present these developments in a deterministic or alarmist manner. They acknowledge the military and societal benefits of AI-enabled decision support, human–machine teaming, and enhanced situational awareness, while also highlighting the risks of over-reliance, algorithmic bias, opacity, and adversarial manipulation. The discussion of dual-use ethical risks is balanced and nuanced, underscoring the need for safeguards, transparency, and human oversight.

Comparative Doctrinal Analysis

The survey of global cognitive warfare models adds significant value to the book. By examining North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United States (US), China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Israel, and India's approaches, the authors reveal both convergence and divergence in how major powers conceptualise cognition as a strategic asset.

The analysis of the NATO and US doctrine highlights an emphasis on resilience, decision superiority, and ethical restraint within democratic norms. In contrast, the discussion of China's 'Intelligentised Warfare' and the 'Three Warfares' framework illustrates a more instrumental approach to cognition, tightly integrated with AI, data dominance, and pre-kinetic shaping. The treatment of Russian reflexive control is particularly insightful, tracing its roots in Soviet operational theory and showing how it seeks to induce adversaries to choose actions favourable to Russian objectives while leading them to believe those choices are autonomous.

The authors critically examine how political systems, strategic cultures, and technological priorities shape doctrinal choices. This analysis strengthens the book's central argument: cognitive warfare is not monolithic, and democracies must develop indigenous, ethically grounded frameworks rather than simply imitating authoritarian models.

India's Cognitive Warfare Framework

The India-specific sections of the book root the country's cognitive-security framework in its civilisational heritage, democratic values, and contemporary challenges. The integration of classical Indian strategic thought—drawing on texts such as *Arthashastra* and

Bhagavad Gita—is treated with intellectual seriousness. Concepts such as *mantra-shakti* (power of counsel), *dharma* (righteousness) as legitimacy, and disciplined clarity of mind are linked creatively to modern concerns about cognitive resilience, ethical restraint, and decision-making under stress. This synthesis demonstrates that indigenous intellectual traditions can meaningfully inform contemporary doctrine.

At the same time, the authors are clear-eyed about India's vulnerabilities: digital fragmentation, social media-driven polarisation, cross-border influence campaigns, and the scale of India's information ecosystem. The proposed framework emphasises integration across military, civil, technological, legal, and communicative institutions, reinforcing the idea that cognitive security is a national responsibility.

Ethics, Law, and Democratic Resilience

A particularly commendable aspect of the book is its engagement with ethical and legal questions. The deliberate manipulation of cognition raises profound concerns about autonomy, accountability, freedom of thought, and democratic integrity. Rather than merely paying token attention to this facet, the authors weave ethical considerations throughout their discussion of technology, doctrine, and operations.

The book argues convincingly that democratic states face a dual challenge: defending societies against cognitive attack while avoiding the temptation to adopt coercive or manipulative practices that undermine their own values. Transparency, oversight, accountability, and human primacy in decision-making are presented not as constraints, but as sources of long-term strategic legitimacy and resilience.

Overall Assessment

Cognitive Battlespace: War in the Human Dimension is a substantial and intellectually mature contribution to the emerging literature on cognitive warfare. Its strengths lie in conceptual clarity, interdisciplinary integration, and deep and incisive analysis of various themes. The authors succeed in demonstrating that cognitive warfare is neither a speculative future threat nor a rebranding of propaganda, but a present and persistent feature of geopolitical competition with strategic consequences. The inclusion of critical thinking questions,

comparative tables, and modular design enhances its utility as a teaching and reference text.

In sum, this book deserves serious attention from military professionals, policymakers, scholars, and anyone concerned with how power is exercised in the 21st Century. By clarifying the nature of the cognitive battlespace and outlining a democratic, ethically grounded path forward, the authors make a compelling case that future conflicts will be decided as much by contests over meaning and belief as by force of arms. Understanding—and defending—the human dimension of war has never been more urgent.

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