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# Adversarial Tactics to Undercut US Interests in New Generation Warfare 2019

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## James P. Farwell



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An attorney, Farwell is Of Counsel to Elkins PLC in New Orleans specializing in cybersecurity and holds the advanced CIPP/US certification in cybersecurity. He writes regularly for journals and newspapers, including *Parameters*, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, *The National Interest*, *Survival*, and other publications. He is the author of *The Pakistan Cauldron* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2011); *Persuasion & Power* (Washington: Georgetown U. Press, 2012); *Communication Strategy* (Tampa: Joint Special Operations University, 2015)(Co-author: Darby Arakelian); *Revitalizing Cities*(Lafayette: U. of Lafayette Louisiana, 2016); *The Architecture of Cybersecurity* (co-authors V. Roddy, G. Elkins, Y. Chalker)(Lafayette: Sans Souci/U. of Lafayette Louisiana, 2017) and *Information Warfare* (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2019 (forthcoming)). He has written an opera, *The Fabulist*, to be produced at the Charing Cross Theatre in London by Tony Award-winner Steven Levy in late 2019; and a comedy, *Legal Insanity*, to be produced by Steven Levy in the United Kingdom in 2019.

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# Adversarial Tactics to Undercut US Interests in New Generation Warfare

James P. Farwell<sup>1</sup>

This report addresses the elements of narrative that lend coherence to US military activities that could help shape Chinese and Russian behaviors. From there, the paper looks at kinetic and non-kinetic tactics that are and will be used by competing powers domestically and abroad to undercut US interests over the coming decade. These responses do not factor in the potential impact of emerging technologies, including G5, Artificial Intelligence, and Quantum Computing. These seem likely to have a significant impact and the Pentagon would seem well advised to conduct new research that anticipates the scope and capacity of each technology and how each or all of them confluentally affects tactics, strategies, and operations.

This essay focuses on tactics, not the broader questions of operations or strategy as the United States wrestles with the implications of New Generation Warfare (NGW). Russia's term is "hybrid warfare." China's approach is expressed in its Three Warfares concept. The West talks about "Gray Zone" warfare.

NGW is usually discussed in military circles. But it is more distinctly a political notion, not a military one, although its strategies incorporate military aspects and, especially for Russia, kinetic activity. All three nations' notions think of NGW as action short of warfare.

The Russian notion of hybrid warfare emanates from the "active measures" employed by Russian intelligence during the Cold War and preceding it. Its approach seeks to create disruption, chaos, fear, uncertainty, and loss of confidence in the media as well as in public and private institutions. The approach includes weaponized social media, coercion, bribery, disinformation, intimidation, and unattributed kinetic action.

The Chinese notion is more sophisticated and builds upon a late 1990s concept of combination warfare that was adapted from its perception of US approaches, based on observations about how the United States operated during Desert Storm in Iraq. China has evolved its approach into a "Three Warfares" concept that confluentally employs lawfare, psychological warfare, and media warfare.<sup>2</sup> China leverages the state's authoritarian power to integrate its concept with diplomatic, intelligence, and economic strategies such as the Belt and Road Initiative. China is vigorously promoting its version of 5G for the Internet, tying it to Huawei, and requiring users to employ Chinese standards and technology. It has been well observed that China's "aid" turns nations into debtor states, could hamper free trade, and

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<sup>2</sup> Legal Warfare (or 'lawfare') exploits the legal system to achieve political or commercial objectives.

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“could set global and regulatory and technical standards for new technology that could provide advantages to Chinese companies over others.”<sup>3</sup> Its use of media warfare and other tactics helps present Chinese actions in a deceptive light that the United States and its partners should expose, discredit, and de-legitimize.

This report proceeds to examine the Russian hybrid warfare and the Chinese Three Warfare concepts in depth. It suggests elements both of a US and a multilateral allied narrative that could lend coherence to US military activities and could help shape Chinese and Russian behaviors in a manner that better serves US national interests. Understanding how to address their concepts and forging new strategies and tactics that leverage our unique strengths to gain a competitive edge is vital to our current and future security.<sup>4</sup>

## Russia and Hybrid Warfare

The Russian approach is credited to a 2013 article ghost-written by two colonels, but published under the name of General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff. Writing from a defensive posture,<sup>5</sup> Gerasimov argued that Russian adversaries possess a “hybrid” capability. Hence, Moscow needed a similar capability using military and non-military responses short of war to counter internal and external threats. The internet is one tool for doing so.<sup>6</sup>

His commentary should be placed in the context of prior Russian doctrines and strategies, including active measures. Last published in 2000 but being updated, the Russian Information Security Doctrine refers to US/NATO threats and provides justification for a Russian response in the information space.<sup>7</sup> The Russian Strategy for Counteracting Extremism defines the internet as a dangerous tool for terrorists.<sup>8</sup> Russian State National Security Policy<sup>9</sup> ordains that the state will support media and online operations.<sup>10</sup> The Concept for the Russian Armed Forces’ Activities in the Information Space envisions using cyberspace to respond to threats.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See: James Dobbins, Howard J. Shatz, and Ali Wine, “Russia is a Rogue, Not a Peer; China is a Peer, Not a Rogue,” *Rand Corporation*, October 2018. They excellently analyze this challenge.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Joe Miller, Monte Erfurth, Jeremiah Monk and Ryan Oliver, “Harnessing David and Goliath: Orthodoxy, Asymmetry, and Competition,” *Small Wars Journal* (2019): <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/harnessing-david-and-goliath-orthodoxy-asymmetry-and-competition>. The authors, who serve with the U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, provide an excellent idea for breaking out of conventional orthodoxy that too often permeates military thinking, and the new to leverage orthodox and unorthodox applications of power through a compound approach to achieve outcomes in competition short of war.

<sup>5</sup> Roger N. McDermott, “Does Russia Have a Gerasimov Doctrine?” *Parameters* (Spring 2016), p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> Prof. A. Spruds, Assoc. Prof. A. Rozukalne, Dr. K. Sedlenieks, M. Daugulis, D. Potjomkina, B. Tolgyesi, and I. Bruge, “Internet Trolling as a tool of hybrid warfare: The Case of Latvia,” *NATO Center of Excellence*, July 30, 2015. <http://www.stratcomcoe.org/internet-trolling-hybrid-warfare-tool-case-latvia-0>

<sup>7</sup> NATO Center of Excellence, “Internet Trolling as a tool of hybrid warfare: The Case of Latvia,” *supra*, pp. 12-13, citing Russian sources.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*, citing *Russian Federation Security Council*, December 19, 2012, <http://goo.gl/FnnQhA>

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*, p. 13.

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Hybrid Warfare is a strategy, not a new form of warfare. Russia’s approach aims to advance political goals by applying military force subversively.

### Reflexive control

Russia employs the Soviet notion of *Reflexive Control* through which information conveyed motivates the target to make a predetermined decision. The goal is to manipulate information to compel an enemy to take desired actions. The conditions for using reflexive control require strong target audience analysis, which enables anticipating enemy action and using harsh forms of pressure that take social elements as well as intellectual, psychological, theological, and ideological factors into account.<sup>12</sup> The theory holds that using armed force requires a psychological campaign. As Carl von Clausewitz had done, reflexive control frames war as politics by other means.<sup>13</sup>

National security expert Timothy Thomas notes that reflexive control emphasizes disorganizing the enemy as much as achieving information superiority, and that the former produces the latter.<sup>14</sup> Applying strong psychological pressure and driving messages that provoke emotional responses and disadvantage the enemy require influence operations that go beyond traditional military deception or military information support operations.

Some American military public affairs officers may frown upon these tactics, but information warfare is about influence operations. Concerns that these operations will undercut credibility through deceptive tactics are misguided.<sup>15</sup> Operations should disrupt and demoralize the enemy. Political and corporate communication campaigns achieve this goal all the time. Our military must do so as well.

Russia also employs *maskirovka*, or strategic deception, a notion dating from 1380 AD when Russian soldiers defeated the Mongols at the Battle of Kulikovo. The stringent campaign to deny that Russia shot down a Malaysian Airlines passenger plane over Ukraine offers a modern illustration, although this tactic also qualifies as disinformation (*dezinformatsia*). Russia used its social and broadcast media to communicate fictitious explanations to deflect blame and create confusion so that audiences were not certain whether Russia bore fault.

At USSOCOM’s 2018 Sovereign Challenge program annual conference, Russian independent journalist Andrei Soldatov illuminated another aspect of *maskirovka*, plausible deniability provided by independent hackers who share the Kremlin’s political vision. According to Soldatov, these proxy hackers have been far superior to state-run personnel, yielding a dramatic improvement to the scope, scale, and deceptiveness of the Kremlin’s information strategy.

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<sup>12</sup> Timothy L. Thomas, “Russian Information-Psychological Actions: Implications for US PSYOP,” *Special Warfare* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 12-19.

<sup>13</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Translated by Col. J.J. Graham), Kindle Loc. 416/4382.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy L. Thomas, “Comparing US, Russian and Chinese Information Operations Concepts,” (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, February 2004), 3-4. See also: James P. Farwell and Darby J. Arakelian, “Using Information in Contemporary Warfare,” *US Army War College, Parameters*, 46(3) Autumn 2016:

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b979/9d25ee391cdb6dd8fbc02e08a39c0643a1b.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> See: James P. Farwell, *Persuasion & Power* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2012), Chapter 3. The chapter offers a critique of the attitude of Public Affairs in the US military towards influence operations.

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Some term Russia's doctrine as irregular warfare. But the United States employs that notion differently,<sup>16</sup> mostly in the context of how military forces are used in unconventional or irregular ways, such as waging guerilla warfare.

Russia's approach embraces low levels of violence. It avoids direct confrontation between militaries. The belligerent threatens escalation to deter retaliation. It seeks to engage and defeat a target by (i) undermining territorial integrity, (ii) subverting internal political cohesion, and (iii) disrupting a target's economy. Success requires satisfaction of four conditions:<sup>17</sup>

- belligerent has weak neighboring state that lacks robust civil society and has local ethnic or language divisions that can be exploited,
- weak neighbor has ethnic or linguistic ties to belligerent,
- belligerent has local escalation dominance, and
- belligerent seeks to revise the status quo.

## Competing Descriptions

Different scholars describe Russia's approach differently.

### Janis Berzins

Janis Berzins identifies eight phases of that define a new Russian doctrine:<sup>18</sup>

*First Phase:* non-military asymmetric warfare (encompassing information, moral, psychological, ideological, diplomatic, and economic measures as part of a plan to establish a favorable political, economic, and military setup).

*Second Phase:* special operations to mislead political and military leaders by coordinated measures carried out by diplomatic channels, media, and top government and military agencies by leaking false data, orders, directives, and instructions.

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<sup>16</sup> "Irregular warfare" is "a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)." US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, 8 November 2010 as Amended through 15 February 2016, p. 118: [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new\\_pubs/jp1\\_02.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe," *International Affairs*, 92: 1 (2016) 175-195, at 189. <http://www.alexlanoszka.com/LanoszkaIAHybrid.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Janis Berzins, "Russia's new generation warfare in Ukraine: implications for Latvian Defense Policy," Policy Paper No. 2 (April 2014), p. 4: <http://www.naa.mil.lv/~media/NAA/AZPC/Publikacijas/PP%2002-2014.ashx>

He agrees that Russian thinking draws upon prior Soviet military theory. The guidelines are to develop military capabilities: (1) from direct destruction to direct influence; (2) from direct annihilation of opponent to its inner decay; (3) from war with weapons and technology to a culture war; (4) from war with conventional forces to SOF and irregular forces; (5) from traditional battleground to PSYOP/INFO WAR; (6) From direct clash to contactless war; (7) from superficial, compartmented war to war in the human consciousness and cyber space; (8) from symmetric to asymmetric war through political, economic, information, technological, and ecological campaigns; and (9) from war in a defined period of time to a state of permanent war as the nature condition in national life; and (10). Id., p. 5.

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*Third Phase:* intimidation, deceiving, and bribing government and military officers, with the objective of making them abandon their service duties.

*Fourth Phase:* destabilizing propaganda to increase discontent among the population, boosted by the arrival of Russian bands of militants, escalating subversion.

*Fifth Phase:* establishment of no-fly zones over the country to be attacked, imposition of blockades, and extensive use of private military companies in close cooperation with armed opposition units.

*Sixth Phase:* commencement of military action, immediately preceded by large-scale reconnaissance and subversive missions. All types, forms, methods, and forces including special operations forces, space, radio, radio engineering, electronic, diplomatic and secret service intelligence, and industrial espionage.

*Seventh Phase:* combination of targeted information operation, electronic warfare operation, aerospace operation, and continuous air force harassment combined with the use of high precision weapons launched from various platforms (long-range artillery and weapons based on new physical principles including microwaves, radiation, and non-lethal biological weapons).

*Eighth Phase:* roll over the remaining points of resistance and destroy surviving enemy units by special operations conducted by reconnaissance units to spot which enemy units have survived and transmit their coordinates to the attacker's missile and artillery units; fire barrages to annihilate the defender's resisting army units by effective advanced weapons; airdrop operations to surround points of resistance; and territory mopping-up operations by ground troops.<sup>19</sup>

Berzins sees guerilla warfare as distinct, but a possible, element of hybrid warfare. Guerilla forces are irregular forces organized in small, mobile units, lightly armed, preferring protracted warfare, and hiding among the population. In hybrid warfare, belligerents might avoid protracted warfare.

### **Alexander Lanoszka**

Alexander Lanoszka segments the Russia approach this way:

- Propaganda to dampen the target's popular support and increase discontent.
- Espionage to gain intelligence that confers a bargaining advantage or spreads false information about belligerent activities and intent.
- Agitation to create dissension and discord.
- Criminal discord for hit-and-run attacks, cyberattacks, sabotage, and kidnapping.

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<sup>19</sup> Janis Berzins, "Russia's new generation warfare in Ukraine: implications for Latvian Defense Policy," supra, p. 5.

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- Fifth columns: covert groups embedded in the population to agitate or wait for hostilities to break out.<sup>20</sup>
  - Insert unmarked soldiers to establish and operate checkpoints, occupy buildings, seize military assets, and clear an area ahead of an overt military operation.
  - Border skirmishes: short of military confrontation used to probe target's weaknesses and sap its resources.

### **James van Velde**

James van Velde identifies six characteristics of Russia's strategic approach:<sup>21</sup>

Information confrontation (Soviet 'active measures'): disinformation and planted information. Soviet-like themes of anti-Nazism, the threat to Russian civilization, and the struggle against Western "informational aggression" and "destabilization strategy" are delivered via television, newspaper, movies, social networks, internet trolls, 'experts,' and select political cronies.

Physical, clandestine, destabilizing operations 'that focus on small sectors of a targeted country's political apparatus by seizing certain public media and state communications, attacking certain facilities, and smearing them as oppressive agents of an illegitimate state, and supplying weapons to separatists, the allegedly suppressed Russian minority of the targeted state' (e.g., Estonia in 2007, Georgia in 2008, and Ukraine in 2014).

Russian conventional forces posture along the border to intimidate the targeted country's military, supply the separatists, and occasionally intervene directly inside its borders. The target compromises and sacrifices elements of its sovereignty. Russia pockets the political victory and repeats the process.

No full-scale warfare with a targeted country. Russian efforts begin and end in early phases of warfare without reaching kinetic conflict with powerful adversaries. Its aims: break international norms, create indistinct and new borders, and lower international expectations about behavior.

Make the conflict politically ambiguous, claim no direct involvement, and keep hostilities small and protracted. In Europe, keep outside players like NATO and the United States weak, off-balance, and confused. Fuse psychological with kinetic operations to cloud its adversaries' and Western perceptions of the conflict. This strategy complicates the arrangement of an appropriate and timely response from the international community.

Cyberspace operations are integrated into all aspects of Russian military operations. Cyber operations embrace three categories: 1) psychological effect—employing diplomats, 'experts,' and academic elites to influence opinions and perceptions; 2) information operations—controlling the message; and 3) technical effects—offensive cyber operations against

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<sup>20</sup> Example: Sudeten-German Free Corps in Czechoslovakia in 1930's. Ethnically German, pro-Nazi. Launched terrorist attacks to provoke Czech government into a military of political response that would precipitate Nazi actions to rescue co-ethnics and annex the Sudetenland into the Third Reich.

<sup>21</sup> James Van De Velde, "War in Peace," *The American Interest*, September 6, 2016: <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/09/06/war-in-peace/>



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computer and communications systems. Information is not used to persuade but to confuse, paralyze, and subvert. Russia maintains its power not by persuasion, but by making it clear that it can manipulate what it considers to be the truth.

### Trolling Strategy and Operations

Trolling—a form of weaponizing social media—lacks a precise definition. A troll is a person who poses a deliberately provocative message to a newsgroup or message board with intention of causing maximum disruption and argument.”<sup>22</sup> Buckels, Trapnell, and Paulhus define online trolling as “the practice of behaving in a deceptive, destructive, or disruptive manner in a social setting on the internet with no apparent instrumental purpose.”<sup>23</sup>

Trolling is not about persuasion. In the Russian context, hybrid trolls have an ideological intent whose activities aim to subvert, confuse, deceive, misrepresent, overwhelm, or lie. It complicates informed journalism by polluting the public domain with false or useless information.<sup>24</sup>

Trolling has played an important role in Russian activity in Ukraine. Some argue that Russian messaging seems amateurish by Western standards,<sup>25</sup> but the social media ads that it posted during the US 2016 elections were adroit.

Examples:

- a. One day before the Ukraine snap election on 26 October 2014, hackers accessed an electronic billboard in Kiev and broadcast gruesome images of what they portrayed as civilian losses caused by Ukrainian forces fighting pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. Actually, the images were old and included images from Chechnya in 1995.<sup>26</sup>
- b. A 2010 social cyber-attack in Assam, East India featured pictures of a fictitious pogrom against Muslims and caused panicked mass exodus.<sup>27</sup>
- c. Russia hacked French President Emmanuel Macron’s campaign computer system, leaking thousands of emails online and mixing real with fake ones.<sup>28</sup> *Global Sputnik* news carried a story calling him a “US agent,” hardly a positive attribute for French voters.<sup>29</sup> Russia also tried to

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<sup>22</sup> “Troll,” *Urban Dictionary*, Sept. 22, 2002: <http://goo.gl/u4bnJC>.

<sup>23</sup> Erin E. Buckels, Paul D. Trapnell, Delroy L. Paulhus, “Trolls just want to have fun, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 67 (2014): 97; cited in NATO Center of Excellence, “Internet Trolling as a tool of hybrid warfare: The Case of Latvia,” *supra*, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Max Seddon, “Documents Show How Russia’s Troll Army Hit America,” *BuzzFeed News*, June 2, 2014: <http://goo.gl/lhGE7g>; NATO Center of Excellence, “Internet Trolling as a tool of hybrid warfare: The Case of Latvia,” *supra*, p 16.

<sup>25</sup> The content is often transparent. Despite using lies and some abusive rhetoric, anyone who wants to see what inflammatory media is like and how toxic it can be to political discourse might take a look at US-based talk show television or radio. See: Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> NATO Center of Excellence, “Internet Trolling as a tool of hybrid warfare: The Case of Latvia,” *supra*, p 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> Arkady Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia: The Rise of Putin and the Age of Fake News*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2015, 2017), p. vii.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Meyer, Carol Matlack, and Stefan Nicola, “How the Kremlin’s Disinformation Machine is Targeting Europe,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, February 15, 2017: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-02-16/how-the-kremlin-s-disinformation-machine-is-targeting-europe>.

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smear Macron as a homosexual.<sup>30</sup> Over 17,000 news sites picked up and repeated the social media story. Macron called a press conference and mocked the Russians. After winning the election, he confronted Russian President Vladimir Putin about its actions. His tough-minded approach earned favorable media coverage that discredited Kremlin efforts to undercut his campaign a.<sup>31</sup>

- d. Russia tried to influence the outcome of the 2017 British Parliamentary elections.<sup>32</sup> The media also reported that a “passionate Brexit supporter” with over 100,000 Twitter followers might be a paid Russian agent of influence engaged in an international disinformation campaign for the Brexit referendum.<sup>33</sup> Prime Minister Theresa May had urged European allies to step up their resistance to Russian aggression. Whitehall sources have charged that Russia is behind a drive to undermine the UK through fake news, espionage, and cyberattacks.<sup>34</sup> In the meantime, British politics has melted down. This author believes that Russian meddling may have altered the outcome of the Brexit vote, although former Prime Minister James Cameron shares part of the blame for his dishonest, incompetent campaign for the Remain side of the issue.
- e. The “Liza” case in Germany illustrates the Russian approach of bootstrapping a false story into mainstream media coverage to achieve propaganda goals. The flow of refugees from the Middle East has created seam issues that divide Germans. Russian propaganda planted false stories in social media that alleged the abduction and rape of a Russian girl, “Liza,” by Arab migrants in Berlin. Lisa was a 13-year old who disappeared for 30 hours then resurfaced to file a police report. <sup>35</sup> Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov demanded a full explanation from German authorities. Russian media bumped up Lavrov’s comments to provide an international spotlight. Prodded by Russian media such as Russian Channel One and NTV, Russian media and members of the far right in Germany accused the German police of a cover up. NTV even

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<sup>30</sup> One must be cautious about branding political leaders as liberal or conservative, left-wing or right wing. Critics denounced Le Pen as a right-wing extremist as if she were a member of the Republican Freedom Caucus in Congress. Le Pen’s reputation rests primarily on her anti-immigrant stance, and charges of anti-Semitism against her father. On most issues, she’s probably to the left of Socialist US Senator Bernie Sanders, and would be greeted at a Freedom Caucus meeting about as warmly.

<sup>31</sup> Henry Samuel, “Macron slams Russian media ‘lies’ during muscular exchange with Putin at Versailles,” *Telegraph*, May 29, 2017: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/29/macron-putin-share-perfunctory-handshake-embarking-diplomatic/>; and Isaac Arnsdof, “Pro-Russian Bots Take Up the Right-Wing Cause After Charlottesville,” *ProPublica*, August 23, 2017: <https://www.propublica.org/article/pro-russian-bots-take-up-the-right-wing-cause-after-charlottesville>.

<sup>32</sup> Mikey Smith, “Russia is trying to interfere with UK general elections, says top US intelligence official,” *Mirror.co.uk*, May 23, 2017: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/russia-trying-interfere-uk-general-10485024>; and Robert Owens, “Were Brexit voters Brainwashed by Russia?,” *The London Economic*, March 15, 2017:

<https://www.thelondoneconomic.com/news/brexit-voters-brainwashed-russia/15/03/>. Director of National Intelligence Dan Coates advised Congress that Russia was also interfering in French elections, and in Ukrainian politics.

<sup>33</sup> Lizzi Dearden, “Pro-Brexit Twitter account with 100,000 followers could be part of Russian ‘disinformation campaign,’” *Independent*, August 30, 2017: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/russia-trying-interfere-uk-general-10485024>.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Wheatstone, “Russia ‘waging a campaign of propaganda and cyberattacks against Britain,” *Mirror*, December 16, 2016: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/russia-waging-campaign-propaganda-cyberattacks-9472410>.

<sup>35</sup> “The ‘Lisa case’: Germany as a target of Russian disinformation,” *NATO Review Magazine*, 2016:

<https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2016/also-in-2016/lisa-case-germany-target-russian-disinformation/EN/index.htm>.

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claimed that “in Germany and in Sweden, residents are regularly raped by refugees...but the local authorities and police hides these facts and do not open criminal investigations.”<sup>36</sup>

Russia’s gambit backfired. Germans did not believe the story. Lavrov’s involvement in the operation turned it into an event of national importance. The German press and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier—normally known for his Russia-friendly posture—jumped down Russia’s throat.<sup>37</sup>

How successful have Russian efforts been in Germany? German opinion on Russia is divided. According to a 2016 survey, 39% of residents in western Germany saw Russia as a threat, while only 32% of eastern Germans did. Most Germans see Putin as an unreliable partner and oppose closer cooperation with him. German opinions are nuanced in different ways. Ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union who settled in Germany number 2-3 million people, but the Liza incident roused them.<sup>38</sup>

- f. The term *Russlandversteher* (person who understands or sympathizes with Russia) is commonly used and includes people from the political left to right. Former Social Democratic Party Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, whom Russian energy company Gazprom has employed as a board member and who serves as an independent director on the board of Rosneft, Russia’s largest oil company, is part of that group. He regularly criticizes the United States.<sup>39</sup> Former Federal President Roman Herzog of the Christian Democratic Union also identifies with this group.<sup>40</sup>
- g. Polish observers have noted increased Kremlin use of disinformation tactics. These include creating fake news organizations in which Russians pretend to be Poles, holding provocative conferences, expanding pro-Russian networks in Poland, and providing political, organizational, and financial support to sympathetic organizations and individuals in order to influence Polish society. A terrorist attack on the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Lutsk, Ukraine is attributed to Russia.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, March 2016 data from the Bertelsmann Stiftung and its Polish partner, the Institute of Public Affairs, reveal that Poles and people from the Baltic states recognize the Russian threat. They suffered under the Soviets. They have not forgotten.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “Russia wants explanation of Germany’s handling of ‘teen rape’ case,” *DW*, January 1, 2016:

<http://www.dw.com/en/russia-wants-explanation-over-germanys-handling-of-teen-rape-case/a-19005535>.

<sup>37</sup> Nikolai Klimentiouk, “How ‘Operation Liza’ failed,” *ODR*, February 19, 2016: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/nikolai-klimentiouk/how-operation-liza-failed>.

<sup>38</sup> Gabriele Scholer, “Russia – Threat to European Security? A View from Germany,” *BFNA.org*, October 2016:

<http://www.bfna.org/publication/newpolitik/russia-a-threat-to-european-security>. The March 2016 survey was taken by Bertelsmann Stiftung and its Polish partner, Institute of Public Affairs.

<sup>39</sup> Rick Noack, “He used to rule Germany. Now, he oversees Russian energy companies and lashes out at the US,” *Washington Post*, August 12, 2017: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/08/08/he-used-to-rule-germany-now-he-oversees-russian-energy-companies-and-lashes-out-at-the-u-s/?utm\\_term=.277549cfafc9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/08/08/he-used-to-rule-germany-now-he-oversees-russian-energy-companies-and-lashes-out-at-the-u-s/?utm_term=.277549cfafc9)

<sup>40</sup> Gabriele Scholer, “Russia – Threat to European Security? A View from Germany,” *supra*.

<sup>41</sup> “Forecast: Primary Goals of Russian Propaganda for Russia for 2017,” *Centrum Analiz Propagandy I dezinformacji (CAPD)*, April 25, 2017: <https://capd.pl/en/forecasts/177-forecast-primary-goals-of-russian-propaganda-in-poland-for-2017>.

<sup>42</sup> Gabriele Scholar, “Russia – A Threat to European Security? A View from Germany,” *BFNA.org*, October, 2016:

<http://www.bfna.org/publication/newpolitik/russia-a-threat-to-european-security>. The survey revealed that 76% of Poles surveyed were convinced that Russia is a threat. Perceptions in Latvia and Estonia, with over 30% Russian populations,

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- h. One common thread in Russian efforts in Europe lies in Russian support for anti-EU, anti-US political parties: Jobbik and Fidesz (Hungary); UKIP and BNP (UK); Golden Dawn and Syriza (Greece); AfD and PEGIDA (Germany); ATAKA (Bulgaria); and the National Front (France). In the European Parliament, Moscow provides support to the Europe of Nations and the Freedom Group, which holds 25% of the vote and consists of 35 far-right, anti-EU parties, 32 of which are pro-Russian.<sup>43</sup>

Dartmouth Professor Brendan Nyhan reports that during 2016, more people saw fake news than mainstream news, with the number growing.<sup>44</sup> An Ipsos survey found that high numbers of people were exposed to fake news during the 2016 election and believed it somewhat or very accurate.<sup>45</sup> Echoing Tony Schwartz,<sup>46</sup> Nyhan contends that people believe news stories that affirm existing values and beliefs, especially when they reinforce negative emotions about other people.

Russia designs disinformation to arouse hostile emotions and, according to Soldatov, to sow confusion and a climate of distrust within the United States and Europe's democracies. Fact-checking will not necessarily counter the effect of well-honed emotional appeals that channel deep-seated, emotionally charged values and beliefs.

A 2017 University of Oxford study examined the growing use of bots and fake accounts for social media posts targeting individuals or groups. The study found that Russia employs abusive posts on the Internet.<sup>47</sup> In American politics, political parties or candidates use fake accounts and retweets to

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divide along ethnic lines, with 59% of Estonian respondents and 43% of Latvian respondents feeling threatened militarily by Russia. Broken down ethnically, non-Russians overwhelmingly perceive a threat, while few Russian residents of those countries do.

<sup>43</sup> Graeme P. Herd, "Russian information operations seek strategic realignment in Europe," an essay in "Countering Russian Propaganda," *Per Concordiam: Journal of European Security and Defense Issues*, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies (2016), p. 7:

<https://globalnetplatform.org/system/files/Per%20Concordiam%20V7%20Special%20Edition%20ENG.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Dr. Brendan Nyhan, "Echo Chambers? Fact-checking and fake news in 2016,"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8etTsRJxCz0&feature=youtu.be>.

<sup>45</sup> See: Craig Silverman and Jeremy Singer-Vine "Most Americans Who See Fake News Believe it, New Survey Says,"

*BuzzFeed News*, December 6, 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8etTsRJxCz0&feature=youtu.be>. Headlines people saw and which they expressed the belief were somewhat or very accurate included: included false stories that people saw and believed the headline was "somewhat or very accurate. (i) an FBI agent suspected in Hillary Email leaks was found dead in an apparent suicide; (ii) A Donald Trump protests said he was paid \$3,5000 to protest Trump's rally; (iii) Pope Francis endorsed Trump; (iv) Trump sent his own plan to transport 200 stranded Marines; and (v) FBI Director just put a Trump sign on his front lawn. Dr. Nyhan also discusses this survey in his lecture.

<sup>46</sup> Tony Schwartz, *The Responsive Chord*, (Mango, 2017). Originally published 1973. See also: James P. Farwell, *Persuasion & Power*, (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2012) and Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). The latter examines the impact of talk radio and talk television shows and the raw emotional appeal these shows invoke to anger, arouse, and motivate audiences. Most of their audiences watch these to confirm their biases or beliefs, not to learn. That principle drives Russian strategy in exploiting fake news stories across different media channels.

<sup>47</sup> Id., p. 8-10, 17. See also: Ben Nimmo, "From Russia with #Hate Group?", Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (no date provided): <https://medium.com/dfrlab/from-russia-with-hategroup-ae6ee4318b5b>

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“artificially inflate the number of followers, likes, shares, or retweets a candidate receives, creating a false sense of popularity.”<sup>48</sup>

What impact did Russia’s use of weaponized social media have on the elections? That remains unclear. It seems evident that it created chaos and made the process more dysfunctional. But in the polarized American political environment in which the candidates of both major parties amassed high “unfavorable” opinions among voters, assessing the real impact is difficult and this commentary offers no conclusion.

## Operational Shock

Less commented upon but a major challenge rooted in Soviet doctrine is the potential for Russia to employ hybrid warfare to achieve operational shock. Shimon Nivah, a retired Israeli Defense Forces Brigadier General, draws upon Russian theories of deep operations that inflict shock and unhinge an adversary’s equilibrium.<sup>49</sup> Operational shock may dampen enemy morale, create doubt, sow confusion, discourage potential donors, rattle leadership, destroy cohesion, and force mistakes. Russia displayed this tactic in dealing with Crimea and Ukraine. Mounted continuously and simultaneously against key targets, such tactics can induce operational shock, wear down hostiles, and throw them on the defensive.<sup>50</sup>

Russia’s hybrid warfare strategy was developed in defensive reaction to perceived Western affronts; it builds upon a longstanding, pre-existing Soviet- and Tsarist-era tradition of active measures designed to achieve reflexive control that has little truck with Western ethical concerns. The strategy is potent. It can only be employed when the right enabling conditions are present. When they are present, it is executed in a number of phases that culminate in powerful acts of subversion and violence, but not in open warfare.

Trolling and fake news are tactics that play important roles in the execution of the strategy. Trolling is used to sow confusion and as an accelerant with which to stoke anti-US and anti-EU attitudes. Fake news is employed to tap into deep-seated preexisting values amongst the audience. It is designed to generate emotional responses that reinforce the audience’s preexisting views. This makes fake news particularly difficult to counteract.

It is unclear whether the use of these tactics has changed the outcome of US elections. Hybrid warfare might be used to achieve operational shock that could yield Russia a significant operational advantage in a future conflict. That said, Russia’s hybrid warfare strategy remains unsophisticated when compared with China’s Three Warfares concept.

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<sup>48</sup> Id., p. 15.

<sup>49</sup> Shimon Naveh, In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory, (London: Frank Cass. 1997), 12-13 and Chapter 6, 209.

<sup>50</sup> For a good illustration of the cumulative impact of forces inflicting operational shock, see the 2010 CNN news broadcast documentary by Paul Refsdal that took viewers behind Taliban lines in Afghanistan. The confidence and cohesiveness of Taliban fighters disintegrated into sheer panic when the noise of approaching helicopters signaled the apparent arrival of US Special Operations forces. See Paul Refsdal, CNN, “Inside the Everyday Life of the Taliban,” December 11, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VDNArLotuQ>.

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## China's Three Warfares Concept

China's Three Warfares concept is rooted in Chinese nationalism and its concept of sovereignty. China claims a superior status among nations. Endorsed in 2003 by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and the Central Military Commission as a force enabler,<sup>51</sup> the concept includes three confluent elements: legal warfare, media (public opinion) warfare, and psychological warfare. Rooted in ideas espoused by Sun Tzu,<sup>52</sup> it seeks to gain and employ information dominance to achieve strategic effects without engaging in kinetic operations. Chinese strategy employs "the three concepts in unison, especially during the early stages of a crisis, as they tend to bolster one another."<sup>53</sup>

The concept leverages economic, political, and diplomatic power to conduct warfare by other means. Sun Tzu's precepts are gospel to the Chinese military. The PLA University of Science and Technology (PLAUST)'s motto is drawn from Chapter 5 of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War: use the normal force to engage; use the extraordinary to win*.<sup>54</sup> The PLA has issued 100 examples each for psychological, media, and legal warfare, often citing Sun Tzu. The most cited phrase is *to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill*, followed by *all warfare is based on deception*.<sup>55</sup>

China attunes itself to high technology and, understanding its potentially destructive power, seeks to achieve its goals while avoiding that destructiveness. Its doctrine is noted in the idea of "Local War Under Modern, High-Tech Conditions," which became the basis for PLA operational planning in 1993.<sup>56</sup> Today it is "Local Wars Under Informationalized Conditions."<sup>57</sup>

The three forms of warfare include:

*Psychological Warfare* tries to dictate the strategic terms of a conflict by influencing domestic opinion, opposition will, and third-party support. The Three Warfares concept can play out at the tactical level. But the Chinese focus is upon the strategic level, at which China hopes to undermine the enemy's will to resist. Psychological warfare "seeks to influence and/or disrupt an opponent's decision-making capacity, to create doubts, foment anti-leadership sentiments, to deceive opponents, and to attempt to diminish the will to fight among opponents. It employs diplomatic pressure, rumor, false narratives, and harassment to express displeasure, assert hegemony, and convey threats. China's economy is utilized to particular effect: China threatens the sale of US debt, pressures US businesses invested in China's market, employs boycotts, restricts critical exports (rare earth minerals), restricts imports, and employs predatory practices to expand market share, etc.

*Media Warfare* looks inward and outward. It seeks to shape domestic and foreign opinion, using mass information channels including the internet, television, radio, newspapers, and social media to generate support at home and abroad as well as opposition to the enemy. Public opinion represents a distinct battlespace, independent of the physical ones. The PLA believes that energizing the Chinese public signals resolve and deters foreign incursions on Chinese interests.<sup>58</sup>

This warfare is a 'constant, on-going activity aimed at long-term influence of perceptions and attitudes.' It leverages all instruments that inform and influence public opinion including films, television programs, books, the Internet, and the global media network (particularly Xinhua and CCTV) and is undertaken nationally by the PLA, locally by the People's Armed Police, and is directed against domestic populations in target countries. Media warfare aims to preserve friendly morale, generate

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public support at home and abroad, and weaken an enemy's will to fight and alter an enemy's situational assessment. It is used to gain 'dominance over the venue for implementing psychological and legal warfare.' Media warfare ties into Chinese diplomacy. At the UN and in other venues, China promotes the use of phrases that align with its diplomatic vision, such as "win-win cooperation," "people to people connectivity," and "creating a community of shared future for mankind."<sup>59</sup>

*Legal Warfare* (or 'lawfare') exploits the legal system to achieve political or commercial objectives. China uses legal warfare to justify actions in law and build support internally and externally. It cites domestic law to signal Chinese intentions.<sup>60</sup> It employs domestic law, the laws of armed conflict, and international law to argue that China is obeying a law that its adversary is violating, to cloak actions in legal legitimacy, while discrediting adversaries. For example, in a distorted application of a point of domestic law, Beijing designated the village of Sansha on the Paracel Islands, as a Hainan Prefecture to extend China's administrative writ into the South China Sea. China also uses UNCLOS provisions and other legal conventions for unintended purposes.<sup>61</sup>

Chinese efforts in the South China Sea, notably its claim to the area enclosed by the Nine Dash Line, arguably is what sparked the current conversation about the Three Warfare doctrine. Its use of the Three Warfares is integral to strategies for Anti-Access/Area Denial to the South China Sea. The objective is to cause the United States to doubt whether it could successfully intervene in a claimed territorial area.

An *India Foundation Journal* commentary aptly summarizes the combination of the Three Warfares:

[I]t constitutes a form of defense-in-depth, but one that is executed temporally (in order to delay an opponent) and politically (by fomenting public disagreement and doubt), rather than physically. It is aimed not only at an opponent's leadership and public support, but also that

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<sup>51</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2011*, (Washington: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2011), 26: [https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2011\\_CMPR\\_Final.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2011_CMPR_Final.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Fumio Ota, "Sun Tzu in Contemporary Chinese Strategy," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 73, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014: [https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-73/jfq-73\\_76-83\\_Ota.pdf?ver=2014-03-26-120732-250](https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-73/jfq-73_76-83_Ota.pdf?ver=2014-03-26-120732-250)

<sup>53</sup> *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2011*, supra, 26.

<sup>54</sup> J.P. London argued in "Made in China," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* 137, no. 4 (April 2011), 59, that the Chinese concept of cyber attack is based on that phrase. See: Fumio Ota, "Sun Tzu in Contemporary Chinese Strategy," supra, noting that point.

<sup>55</sup> Fumio Ota, "Sun Tzu in Contemporary Chinese Strategy," supra.

<sup>56</sup> Dean Cheng, "The US Needs an Integrated Approach to Counter China's Anti-Access/Area Denial Strategy," *Heritage Foundation*, July 9, 2014: <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-us-needs-integrated-approach-counter-chinas-anti-accessarea-denial-strategy>.

<sup>57</sup> Maj. Gen. Dhruv C. Katoch, "Three Warfares: A Prong of China's Military Strategy," *India Foundation Journal*, September-October 2017: <http://indiafoundation.in/three-warfares-a-prong-of-chinas-military-strategy/>

<sup>58</sup> Peter Mattis, "China's 'Three Warfares' in Perspective," *War on the Rocks.com*, January 30, 2018: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/chinas-three-warfares-perspective/>.

<sup>59</sup> See: Colum Lynch, "Bolton Builds Anti-China Campaign at U.N.," *Foreign Policy*, April 3, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Mattis, "China's 'Three Warfares' in Perspective," supra.

<sup>61</sup> China: The Three Warfares," for Andy Marshall, Director, Office of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Prepared by Professor Stefan Halper (May 2013): 12-13; 23-101.

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of third parties. The goal remains anti-access/area denial; it is simply the means and the battlefields that have shifted. The above fits in with the Chinese concept as enunciated by Sun Tzu of winning without fighting.<sup>62</sup>

China maneuvers for psychological advantage. It views information warfare as a tool in multi-dimensional spaces to paralyze an adversary and force an enemy to submit to one's will.<sup>63</sup> One overwhelming strategic goal drives the Three Warfare concept: preserving the Communist party's power. Ideas, not guns, define the battle space for application of the doctrine. Thus, the Chinese take a hard line towards Taiwan partly because the concept of Taiwan challenges the party narrative that it represents all the Chinese people. Ethnic separatism challenges the CCP's portrayal of a multi-ethnic society.<sup>64</sup>

The concept aims to neutralize concerns and gain support among regional governments, business communities, and the public for its ambitions. The Three Warfare concept seeks to hinder US Offshore Control Strategy<sup>65</sup> by creating a naval blockade that establishes a no-man's sea between the Chinese mainland coast and the First Island Chain. China's success will depend upon the cooperation of third parties in acquiescing to its claims. As part of this strategy, China is trying to condition public opinion in states including the Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, and Malaysia to inhibit those governments from providing the facilities and support needed to service US naval operations in the South China Sea and to deny the United States a favorable regional political environment.

China applies its concept to employ coercive economic measures against regional nations in order to counter US naval presence. Beijing justifies its position through a restrictive interpretation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), adopted and signed in 1982.<sup>66</sup> China pressures foreign businesses on trade to inspire American companies to ask the US government to go easy on China. Businesses may respond out of fear of getting cut out of Chinese markets.

China's Belt and Road Initiative, an ambitious trade and infrastructure program connecting China to Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia, and other regions through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

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<sup>62</sup> Maj. Gen. Dhruv C. Katoch, "Three Warfare: A Prong of China's Military Strategy," *India Foundation Journal*, September-October 2017: <http://indiafoundation.in/three-warfares-a-prong-of-chinas-military-strategy/>.

<sup>63</sup> Col. Qiao Liang and Col. Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, published by the People's Liberation Army, Beijing (Natraj Publishers, Indian Ed., 2007). As with this book, its footnotes are important. The book was written in reaction to the US success in Iraq during DESERT STORM. Some argue that it represents neither a revolution in military thought nor an executable doctrine for future warfare, but a collection of tactics, techniques, and procedures that have been used before and will be used again. See: Maj. Johan A. Van Messel, USMC, "Unrestricted Warfare: A Chinese doctrine for future warfare?", a paper for the United State Marine Corps School of Advanced Warfighting (2005): <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a509132.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Mattis, "China's 'Three Warfare' in Perspective," *War on the Rocks.com*, January 30, 2018: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/chinas-three-warfares-perspective/>.

<sup>65</sup> See, e.g., "T.X. Hammes, "Offshore Control: A Proposed Strategy for an Unlikely Conflict," *National Defense University Strategic Forum*, June 2012: <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-278.pdf>. Hammes offers a thoughtful explanation of the notion and an insightful examination of what US strategy should embrace, such as denying China the use of the sea inside the first island chain, defends the sea and air space of the first island chain, and dominations the air and maritime space outside the island chain.

<sup>66</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea: [http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf)



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illustrates a collateral strategy that operates in tandem with the Three Warfares concept. China is leveraging its economic power to forge ties with other nations while forcing them into onerous debtor relationships. CPEC finances infrastructure. But it is economic imperialism, persuading partner nations to pile up high levels of debt to China that they may not be able to afford.

While China provides the “loans” for projects, the construction jobs go to Chinese, not local, workers. The United States should aggressively expose this tactic and frame it to discredit Chinese efforts. The emergence of 5G for the Internet illustrates how China cohesively integrates its economic leverage by requiring nations who use its products to employ companies, like Huawei, and Chinese technical standards and technology. One needs to assess Chinese strategy by looking at all of its strategies as a cohesive whole, rather than focusing on one aspect of them, such as the Three Warfares concept, the Belt and Road Initiative, or promoting its technology. Countering its efforts to protect US interests requires a broad, holistic approach that considers how Chinese actions interact to further its goals.

China’s Three Warfares concept is more cohesive and multi-dimensional than Russia’s declaratory hybrid warfare strategy; its overriding goal is to preserve the Communist Party of China’s hold on power. It is inspired by Sun Tzu’s dictum that *to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill*.

The strategy is implemented along three principle azimuths: lawfare, media warfare, and psychological operations. Lawfare exploits and even abuses the legal system to achieve political and commercial goals. Media warfare is considered a distinct battle space and is used to shape mass information channels in order to generate support at home and opposition to the enemy. Whereas psychological warfare is used to undermine the enemy’s will to resist. The Three Warfares concept has been used in part to create a no-go buffer zone in the South China Sea that denies the US access to the areas of the Western Pacific within the first island chain. China has also employed its growing economic strength to extend its regional and international influence.

It is doing so in a manner that saddles partners with unsustainable levels of debt, creating the impression that Beijing’s goal is to create a new form of neo-imperialist economic serfdom. As the United States wrestles with the implications of New Generation Warfare, it is being confronted by two different flavors of what Western authors sometimes term “Gray Zone” warfare: Russia’s “hybrid warfare” strategy and China’s Three Warfares concept. US military and political leaders face a challenge in designing reactions to these developments that can shape Russian and Chinese behaviors in a manner that protects the United States and serves its national interests.

## Elements of a Narrative that Lend Coherence to US Military Activities and Can Help Shape Chinese and Russian Behaviors

### Overview

One should start by taking stock of the tools that the United States possesses, which it can leverage to achieve a desired strategic effect. These lie in the political and diplomatic realm under the direction of the White House. They have less to do with any specific narrative that the US military might articulate than with the clout that the United States as a whole can bring to bear.

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For Russia and China, step one is to develop a cohesive doctrine of New Generation Warfare that provides a foundation for strategies, operations, and tactics. The United States currently lacks a cohesive doctrine. The “team of teams” concept noted above is an ideal instrument by which to implement such a doctrine.

## Russia

Countering Russian hybrid warfare should include four broad considerations.

- The United States has made clear this nation’s commitment to uphold Article V of the 1949 Washington Treaty, which is the foundation of the NATO collective security system. The current administration may have ruffled feathers in being so outspoken in calling on NATO members to bear their share fair of the burden of mounting a collective defense, but substantively this view is consistent with those taken by prior Presidents. Unequivocal commitment to collective security is pivotal to European perceptions of whether the United States will stand by its promises and in stiffening their own resistance to Russian hybrid warfare. Central to this approach is the recognition that multilateral cooperation, not unilateral action, is vital, in countering Russian hybrid warfare.
- As recommended by Andrei Soldatov and Ukrainian experts Yarema Dukh and Maxim Eristavi at the 2018 USSOCOM Sovereign Challenge annual conference, developing stronger and more resilient US and European narratives for domestic consumption and transmission into Russia will be more effective than attempting to “counter” Kremlin-inspired narratives appearing in the United States and Europe. They also strongly recommend that the United States and Europe refrain from labeling Kremlin-inspired propaganda as “Russian.” Using the latter descriptor unites the Russian populace behind President Putin and his policies, when many Russian citizens actually have serious questions about his leadership.
- The United States might be able to establish with Russia a “rules of the road” by which all sides refrain from meddling in election infrastructure and, potentially, one another’s domestic political affairs.<sup>67</sup> Establishing that framework will require strategic military input as well as an evaluation of political and diplomatic considerations. The task seems daunting, but it arguably is what Russia actually wants. Putin was infuriated by what he perceived as US meddling in Russia’s 2012 presidential elections and was notably outraged by comments about him uttered by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. One competing school of thought believes that Putin cannot be trusted and that no deal on this is plausible. A second argues that any such notional agreement is inherently unverifiable and, hence, unenforceable.
- The United States can use cyber weapons punitively. The *Washington Post* reported that President Barack Obama “authorized planting cyberweapons in Russia’s infrastructure, the digital equivalent of bombs that could be detonated if the United States found itself in an escalating exchange with Moscow.”<sup>68</sup> While well aware that the Russians were meddling in the

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with George Beebe by author on March 23, 2018 in preparation for the author’s commentary published by *Parameters* in 2018.

<sup>68</sup> Greg Miller, Ellen Nakashima and Adam Entous, “Obama’s Secret Struggle to Punish Russia for Putin’s Election Assault,” *Washington Post*, June 23, 2017.

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2016 elections, he refrained from using this tactic to retaliate. A decision to use malware offensively raises complex strategic questions. The magnitude of the intended and unintended consequences arising from employing malware mandate considerable thinking about potential scenarios and effects before approving cyberaction. *The Washington Post* subsequently reported that the Trump administration was willing to take long overdue action, and blocked internet access of the Internet Research Agency's troll factory to keep IRA from meddling in the 2018 elections.<sup>69</sup>

- The United States could explore the plausibility of cutting Russia off from the Internet. How actionable that is seems unclear to this author but it merits consideration.
- The United States can impose additional sanctions, targeted at the Kremlin and the circle of close advisers, oligarchs, and supporters whose views matter to the Kremlin.
- The ultimate weapon that the United States can bring to bear against Russia may be to leverage our power to cut it off from the international banking system.<sup>70</sup> Acknowledging that this potential strategy exists is imperative, but actually employing it carries significant strategic risks. Carrying out this strategy might cause Russia's economy to collapse and it may consider such a step to be an Act of War.<sup>71</sup>

For further elaboration, please read "Countering Russian Meddling in US Political Processes."<sup>72</sup> The commentary lays out a detailed set of steps that define what the United States can and should do for active defense and offense against meddling in US elections. It proposes using a "team of teams" approach—with a military face—that empowers a specialized team reporting to the President through the National Security Council that would have full power, authority, and resources to coordinate a whole-of-government effort to address Russian meddling. The same structure could be used in countering the broader spectrum of Russian hybrid warfare.

## China

Dealing with China seems more problematic. Chinese strategic approaches avoid kinetic conflict in favor of political, economic, and diplomatic initiatives. Chinese ambitions seek to expand its power and influence: first, within its geographic sphere in Asia and, second, amongst other things through the

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<sup>69</sup> Ellen Nakashima, "US CYBER COMMAND operation disrupted Internet access of Russian troll factory on day of 2018 midterms," *Washington Post*, February 26, 2019: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-cyber-command-operation-disrupted-internet-access-of-russian-troll-factory-on-day-of-2018-midterms/2019/02/26/1827fc9e-36d6-11e9-af5b-b51b7ff322e9\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.d4a3c2fe3e57&wpisrc=al\\_news\\_alert-national--alert-world--alert-politics&wpmk=1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-cyber-command-operation-disrupted-internet-access-of-russian-troll-factory-on-day-of-2018-midterms/2019/02/26/1827fc9e-36d6-11e9-af5b-b51b7ff322e9_story.html?utm_term=.d4a3c2fe3e57&wpisrc=al_news_alert-national--alert-world--alert-politics&wpmk=1),

<sup>70</sup> See: King Mallory, "New Challenges in Cross-Domain Deterrence," RAND, 2018: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE259.html>. Mr. Mallory itemizes a number of cogent measures that could be employed to counter Russian hybrid warfare. One can plausibly argue that this "ultimate weapon" only works so long as the US Dollar remains the world's reserve currency. The emergence of blockchain and cryptocurrencies provides alternative intermediation vehicles that allow parties to avoid the US-dominated international financial system.

<sup>71</sup> Historically, it is worth noting that the decision by the US to deny oil, and scrap oil and steel, led directly to Japan's decision to launch the Pearl Harbor attack.

<sup>72</sup> Farwell, J. "Countering Russian Meddling in US Political Processes"<sup>72</sup> US Army War College, *Parameters* 48(1) Spring 2018: [https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/issues/Spring\\_2018/7\\_Farwell\\_CounteringRussianMeddling.pdf](https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/issues/Spring_2018/7_Farwell_CounteringRussianMeddling.pdf).

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Belt & Road Initiative, by forging economic ties with other nations. China employs the Three Warfares concept to support these.

**Any strategy for countering China’s Three Warfares concept should include four broad strategic initiatives:**

- Adapt the Chinese Three Warfares concept, align it with US values that employ fact and truth, not deception or fraud, and turn it against China. It is an excellent concept. Let us apply it to advance US interests. Thomas X. Hammes has astutely urged integrating diplomatic warfare as a fourth prong.<sup>73</sup>
- Seize the moral high ground in any controversy. China’s posture assumes that it will do that. Knocking China off that perch will undercut Chinese efforts and help deter its actions.
- Employ a multi-lateral approach among allies. Discrediting and de-legitimizing Chinese actions requires cooperation and coordination among allies.
- While discouraging nations from succumbing to Chinese Trojan Horses that create debt traps in the name of building up infrastructure like its Belt and Road Initiative and its promotion of Huawei’s technology and services,<sup>74</sup> the United States should try to shape the response of nations who accept Chinese aid to advance US interests.

## Elements of an effective narrative

Story gives rise to narrative, from which flow theme and message.

### **Narrative, theme, and message**

**Story and narrative** provide historical, political, military, and cultural context and dimension. Narrative explains who you are, what you are doing, your cause, how you pursue it, why target audiences should be interested, and what it means for them.<sup>75</sup> Narratives bind together players, actions, and objectives in related stories so audiences can make sense of events. Events woven together may be deeply embedded in culture and serve as common knowledge for the society. Narrative expresses ideas about what people should or should not do and what rewards or penalties a particular action may produce, forming a basis for arguments. Circulating in social and political environments, narratives create a landscape that embraces a complex array.<sup>76</sup> Different narratives may resonate differently with each target audience.

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<sup>73</sup> T.X. Hammes, “Offshore Control: A Proposed Strategy for an Unlikely Conflict,” supra.

<sup>74</sup> For its actions, the United States Department of Justice has indicted Huawei and affiliated parties for fraud – including conspiracy to defraud the United States of America—and obstruction of justice. *United States of America vs Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd., et al*, Cr. No. 18-457 (S-2)(AMD), US District Court (E.D.N.Y.)(2019):

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1125021/download>

<sup>75</sup> James P. Farwell, *Persuasion & Power*, supra, 163-164.

<sup>76</sup> Narratives share story elements, cultural reference, and a rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by structuring audience expectations and interpretations. See D. L. Bernardi, P. H. Cheong, C. Lundry, and S. W. Ruston, *Narrative Landmines* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

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**Themes and messages** flow from story and narrative. These require testing to redefine, refocus, reframe, and redirect adversarial narratives, themes, and messages. Testing can also reinforce our themes and messages and determine if we are achieving our goals to undermine, discredit, and delegitimize an adversary.

#### **Narrative, Theme, and Message Considerations in countering Russian and Chinese NGW**

- Seize control of narratives particular to each situation. Broadly, the United States should drive the theme and message that the US stands together with regional and global partners to uphold core values of freedom of speech, democracy, the dignity of each individual, respect for women, respect for the rule of law, tolerance, international stability, and peace. Driving this narrative entails employing a confluence of lawfare, media warfare, and psychological warfare tactics.
- Respect fact and truth. When China cites bogus legal precedents, the US should work closely with its counterparts to expose bogus Chinese rationales for what they are and to articulate correct legal precepts. **Example:** The United States should step up pressure on China for ignoring an international arbitration decision against China in its dispute with the Philippines rendered under Annex VII to the 1982 United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea. That communication campaign should target populations in the region and Chinese residents within China. The US needs to show strength and to demonstrate to China that its Three Warfares concept can inflict substantial political damage on China.
- Develop the capacity to act flexibly and rapidly. Example: Russian proxies, operatives, or military have seized Ukrainian vessels and crew,<sup>77</sup> shot down civilian aircraft,<sup>78</sup> and disguised its military forces as civilians. Moscow deploys Russian military without markings. It calls its proxies members of sports clubs.<sup>79</sup> Discrediting such actions requires rapid action that flows from a coherent overarching doctrine and associated implementing strategies.
- Hold China and Russia accountable and responsible for their behavior. Employ traditional media and social media to drive home narrative, themes, and messages that capture the moral high ground and discredit and de-legitimize Russian or Chinese action.
- Identify pressure points that enable the United States to leverage multilateral efforts to discredit and de-legitimize Russian and Chinese action in an asymmetric fashion. Examples may include:

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<sup>77</sup> "Russia's Seizure of Ukrainian Ships Is An 'Outrageous Violation,' Haley says at U.N.," *National Public Radio*, November 26, 2018: <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/26/670746252/ukraine-considers-martial-law-after-russia-seizes-its-ships-near-crimea>.

<sup>78</sup> Tom Barnes, "Flight MH17: Netherlands and Australia say Russia is responsible for shooting down of passenger plane," *Independent*, May 25, 2018: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/flight-mh17-latest-russia-missile-malaysia-airlines-netherlands-australia-ukraine-a8368566.html>.

<sup>79</sup> See: Mikhail Zygar, *All The Kremlin's Men*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2016). Zygar offers an insightful view about Putin's decision-making, which he portrays as more chaotic than many might surmise.

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(a) Brand China as a pirate state for its wanton theft of intellectual property. That should be done as part of a coordinated effort with allies, integrating diplomacy, politics, and legal action that takes China to the World Trade Organization under the TRIPS Agreement and obtains a legal judgment against it. The WTO does not permit class actions, but nations can coordinate individual suits.<sup>80</sup>

(b) Brand China a pirate state for its role in illegal fishing and human trafficking. It ranks at the top of nations responsible for such activities.

(c) Brand China a repressive, dictatorial state for its treatment of its Muslim minority. The United States should drive that message in Muslim-majority countries. China's treatment of Uighurs contrasts with efforts by the United States to support partner states in fighting violent extremism.

(d) Brand China for hypocrisy in its deployment of naval military assets in the Miyako Strait or other disputed waters and point out that China performs the same actions for which it criticizes others.<sup>81</sup>

(e) Brand China an outlaw state for using its economic power to gain entry into the management of technology companies for the purpose of stealing their propriety information and trade secrets.

(f) Expose Chinese efforts in European Union member states to gain influence over their companies, politicians, and political structures to serve Chinese interests at the expense of those of EU members.

(g) Expose Chinese efforts to turn African nations into economic slaves through its loans programs.

## Conclusion

This memorandum has set forth a description of the elements of New Generation Warfare employed by Russia and China. It has defined operational and substantive elements of forging and executive effective narratives, in which the US military must play a key role to advance US security interests and counter adversarial action by Russia and China.

In both the latter cases, a whole-of-government approach is required. A team-of-teams directed by the White House must execute a cohesive, well-articulated, and multilaterally-agreed doctrine of New Generation Warfare. That doctrine must specify an over-arching narrative for allied communication themes and messaging. Namely, that the United States and its allies will stand together in collective defense of our core values. They will act with agility to seize the moral high ground in any future conflict or altercation by exploiting opponent pressure points in an asymmetrical fashion. Those pressure

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<sup>80</sup> See: James P. Farwell, "Take Chinese Hacking to the WTO," *The National Interest*, March 15, 2013: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/take-chinese-hacking-the-wto-8224>.

<sup>81</sup> This is a point Deng Cheng echoes, *supra*.

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points include opponent mendacity, repressiveness, hypocrisy, and criminal and neo-imperialist behaviors.