

## China's Methods and Other Potential Hybrid Adversaries

Hybrid warfare has become a buzzword ever since it came into existence following the lightning-fast Russian occupation of the Crimean Peninsula. History shows that words getting a new meaning are usually a clear sign of a transformation. When 'asymmetry' became a similar, widely used term after the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime and the uprising against the American dominated Coalition Provisional Authority many experts raised their voices. Because the asymmetry of forces is a natural phenomenon of military conflicts. Yet hybrid warfare has stuck and seems to remain with us, at least until a new buzzword ends its trajectory the way asymmetry has mostly vanished from military theoretical scientific publications. The authors of the chapter think that lacking any better, or to be more precise more advertised term, we are stuck with hybrid "warfare" to describe the complex interest advancement in the globalised world. Be it DIME (diplomacy, information, military, economy) as defined by General Phillip Breedlove or a war "about omnidirectionality, synchronicity and asymmetry", as Chinese senior colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui have put it the common opinion is that this new form of total, yet restricted, very unusual warfare has already become part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As so aptly described by Thucydides, rising powers such as China or Russia must find a way to work around the hegemon's strengths. And as usual even the ubiquitous Clausewitz had a fitting saying about "fashions" in warfare: "Every age had its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions."<sup>2</sup>

### Definition and critics

The below 2021 description summarises the phenomenon maybe in the shortest possible way: "Hybrid warfare entails an interplay or fusion of conventional as

<sup>1</sup> Ludovika University of Public Service.

<sup>2</sup> CLAUSEWITZ 1989: 593.

well as unconventional instruments of power and tools of subversion. These instruments or tools are blended in a synchronised manner to exploit the vulnerabilities of an antagonist and achieve synergistic effects.”<sup>3</sup> Another way of nailing this form of interest advancement is by James K. Wither who wrote in his 2020 article: “There are many definitions of hybrid warfare and these definitions continue to evolve. Defining hybrid warfare is not just an academic exercise because these definitions may determine how states perceive and respond to hybrid threats and which government agencies are involved in countering them. Historians have used the term hybrid warfare simply to describe the concurrent use of conventional and irregular forces in the same military campaign.”<sup>4</sup> Many experts have had issues with the above from the very moment this buzzword has begun its stellar career. One article dared to clearly formulate that we “[...] should forget about everything “hybrid” and focus on the specificity and the interconnectedness of the threats they face. Warfare, whether it be ancient or modern, hybrid or not, is always complex and can hardly be subsumed into a single adjective. Any effective strategy should take this complex environment into account and find ways to navigate it without oversimplifying”.<sup>5</sup> Yet the gem of group thinking is the definition of hybrid threats on the homepage of the bureaucracy called European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE). It says: “The term hybrid threat refers to an action conducted by state or non-state actors, whose goal is to undermine or harm a target by combining overt and covert military and non-military means.”<sup>6</sup> Let me translate it to plain English. Anything not supportive some actor defined a hostile does. Period. It is like saying we paint using only basic colours. And the variations of them. So, we do nothing special but paint. Using all colours. Because any action in security policy can be either military or non-military. They are either overt or covert. There is no third way. To sum it up anything an adversary – defined as such – does, is hybrid. One could but wonder what were serious scientists thinking when DIME, hybrid warfare and other buzzwords were introduced into security policy discussions. Because all these are nothing new, not a single element of novelty is present when compared to the grand strategy concept by Sir Basil Liddell Hart. Especially when hybrid warfare in its early form

<sup>3</sup> BILAL 2021.

<sup>4</sup> WITHER 2019.

<sup>5</sup> VAN PUYVELDE 2015.

<sup>6</sup> See Hybrid CoE s. a.

was to focus narrowly on occupying territories. In its 2014–2015 version it was nothing but a military operation supported by public administrative and clearly propaganda efforts.<sup>7</sup> Not to mention Mark Galeotti's flop for making up the hybrid warfare's supporting and non-existing "Gerasimov Doctrine". Modern power struggle, or interest advancement encompasses all aspects of life blurring the lines of conflict. It suffices to compare the above very loose definitions with the Foreign Broadcast Information Service translation of the foreword of *Unrestricted Warfare*: "The first rule of unrestricted warfare is that there are no rules, with nothing forbidden." Not to mention that one of the authors of this paper had a very similar definition of modified 4<sup>th</sup> generation warfare theory: "Fourth generation warfare is an activity aimed at achieving clearly defined political goals. In most cases this activity is carried out through non-military means, by one or more organisations sharing a common ideology. Generally accepted rules about military activities do not confine their methods, which are applied in one or more areas simultaneously in a way that their effects strengthen or enable each other. [...] Its subareas are:

- global guerrillas
- information warfare, including cyber warfare
- economic manipulation, financial manoeuvres supported by media
- ideological, human rights and other perception-based operations
- or a combination of the above by state and non-state actors alike"<sup>8</sup>

The usual opinion about Russian hybrid warfare among western experts is that it is practised against the influence of the USA without having to face NATO militaries in a conventional conflict. Its aims to reconquer lost territories, or new ones in addition to sowing discord among NATO countries. "Russian analysts assert that a conflict only rises to the threshold of a hybrid war if the aggressor state explicitly sets reshaping the strategic orientation and "worldview" (ruling ideology) of a target state as its goal."<sup>9</sup> What is more the falsely claimed Gerasimov Doctrine, is in reality a way of defensive thinking a call to arms to raise the policymakers attention to the threat they are facing.<sup>10</sup> In Russian terminology hybrid warfare is not about the means, but a different type of armed

<sup>7</sup> DE BENEDICTIS 2022.

<sup>8</sup> SOMKUTI 2012.

<sup>9</sup> CLARK 2020: 16.

<sup>10</sup> KLIJN–YÜKSEL 2019.

conflict category, waged for influence. Deterrence also seems to be one of the most effective tools for Chinese strategists to avoid conflict. However, while in the Western concept the two main pillars for deterrence are “deterrence by denial” and “deterrence by punishment”, in the Chinese perception – similar to the Russian one – there is also an active component of coercion. This is also reflected in the Chinese term *weishe* (威慑). It is not just trying to stop an opponent, but actively making him change his behaviour. Furthermore, the Chinese concept of deterrence can involve all the capabilities and full strength of the state, such as economic power, scientific development, or even the country’s geographical characteristics.<sup>11</sup> The development of the Chinese military and the change in the means of deterrence has meant that other states have also adapted and tried to develop their own deterrence tools. Taiwan and Japan, for example, are in a similar situation. Both have relied on the United States, and now both are at a quantitative disadvantage vis-à-vis Chinese forces and are therefore forced to seek qualitative superiority. As a consequence, they have gradually developed a limited deterrence strategy designed to prevent China from quickly winning a war. A practically lost war would put the international community in a difficult situation, and make it much harder to gather support for an intervention.<sup>12</sup> The main objective of the Chinese Communist Party is to maintain internal stability.<sup>13</sup> This is even reflected in China’s defence policy. The first objective is to deter aggression. But the second batch of objectives are national political security, the security of the people and social stability. This means that the Communist Party of China wants to maintain its leading role and must stand in the way of internal unrest. The third and fourth places are occupied by preventing the separatist aspirations of Taiwan, Tibet and the Uighur-inhabited areas. Then comes maritime navigation and trade, space, electromagnetic and cyberspace defence. In the light of current crises, some objectives may be given greater emphasis, but the overriding objective remains the same: to preserve the CCP’s leadership and guarantee the unity of the country.<sup>14</sup> Documents analysing Chinese strategic culture, whether by Western or Eastern authors, often mention the difference between chess and the Chinese game of *weiqi* (围棋), commonly known as *go* after its Japanese name. One possible translation of the term *weiqi*

<sup>11</sup> CHENG 2021.

<sup>12</sup> BARTÓK 2020.

<sup>13</sup> SCOBELL et al. 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of National Defense – The People’s Republic of China 2022.

is “encircling chess”. This may shed light on the different concept that permeates the game. The main objective is to isolate and encircle the opponent’s pieces, or to put him in a position where he has only one possible way out. The ideal outcome is when the opponent is defeated without a real confrontation or battle having taken place. The same idea appears in Sun Tzu’s famous book, *The Art of War* (孙子兵法). The biggest flaws in this game are short-term thinking, a petty give-and-take approach and impatience. As the two games are different, Chinese and Western geopolitical thinking have different characteristics, goals and roots. According to some analyses, the Western approach is expansionist and hostile, while the Chinese is more peaceful and based on the principle of border protection.<sup>15</sup> As with *weiqi*, also *shi* (势) is an important element of Chinese strategic thinking. It is extremely difficult to translate, a malleable concept with many shades of meaning. There are up to 14 possible translations, such as force, momentum, energy, advantage, position, opportunity, control, formation. These meanings are not mutually exclusive but form a large cluster of meanings. The term “strategic advantage” is not an incorrect translation, but it still misses a lot. The grasp of *shi* is the ability to recognise a state of affairs influenced by many factors, and to understand the quality of a given situation. Consideration must be given to the weather, geography, the state of allies and adversaries, the political and economic situation, all of which influence the favourable situation from which appropriate action can unfold. Not the action itself, but a state of tension and possibility from which, if necessary, a range of actions can be launched. If only one possible action remains it is considered a defeat, just as in *weiqi*. From a Chinese point of view, one of the rules of engagement with other countries would be to build this favourable *shi*. A third term that often comes up in the analysis of Chinese strategic thinking is *shashoujian* (杀手锏), most often translated as “assassin’s mace”. These would be the weapons that would take down a much stronger opponent unexpectedly and in one fell swoop, rather than the established rules of conflict, presumably in a prolonged struggle. This does not necessarily mean a particular set of weapons, but rather anything that effectively enhances A2/AD capabilities and can be deployed quickly, with almost no telltale signs, and has deterrent power. A good example is the DF-21D anti-ship missile, which could pose a serious threat to aircraft carriers. However, analysing these concepts is not the right way for everyone and culture should not be given too much weight. For example, even if someone plays a lot of *weiqi*, its moves may not

<sup>15</sup> HORVÁTH 2022.

be converted easily into real-world action. Furthermore, deception, coercion or long-term planning are culture-independent parts of the strategy, and all depend to a large extent on the reactions of the opponent. Whether they are Chinese or Western strategists, everyone is looking for the ideal mix to best impose their will in a given situation. Some argue that the strategic thinking of the two cultures is more similar than different. Thus, focusing on different concepts can be misleading, as it can make the discourse too theoretical and describe not what Chinese strategy *is* in a given situation, but what it *should* be.<sup>16</sup>

## Two kinds of warfare

The theoretical framework for political warfare is provided by the concept of the Three Warfare (*san zhong zhanfa* 三种战法). Whether or not it falls under hybrid warfare is debated, but it can be an effective complement to it. The term itself appeared in the public domain in 2003 when the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Central Military Commission of the People's Liberation Army designated it as the guideline for political warfare to be followed. This strategy can be broken down into three main branches: public-media warfare (*yulunzhan* 舆论战), psychological warfare (*xinlizhan* 心理战) and legal warfare (*falüzhan* 法律战). These tools serve multiple purposes, such as controlling public opinion, diminishing the enemy's resolve, transforming emotions, psychological control, collapsing the opponent's organisation, psychological protection and restraint by law. These are closely interrelated and are not used exclusively against opponents. The control of public opinion, for example, also applies to China's own population, and state control of the media is indispensable in this. The methods used can be extremely varied and are always adapted to specific circumstances. China, for example, has taken control of the Chinese language media in many places where there is a significant Chinese minority and thus has a strong influence on communication within that community. In other cases, the "borrowed boat" method is used to publish articles in influential Western newspapers such as the Washington Post or the New York Times. These are in fact paid advertisements, but the editorial principles and the prestige of the press products that host them can make it appear to the reader as if it is

<sup>16</sup> Dickey 2017.

an opinion piece or a news report published by the newspaper.<sup>17</sup> In case of legal warfare, they can legislate that disputed territories are part of China and then present the legislation as justification for their action there, either to their own population or to foreign countries. As these tools are classified under the political work of the armed forces, it can be seen that the armed forces must also reckon with these tools and fight conflicts in more than the conventional military sense. Added to this is the new Chinese definition of national security, which now also includes China's development interests so that anything that threatens the country's development can be perceived as a security threat.<sup>18</sup> This broad and rather vague definition is not an accident but is suitable to the competition between states in all fields, where anything can be a weapon. In any case, the strategy of the three wars seems to be effective, and it may be that the methods used have also helped China to be judged more leniently for certain of its actions, or to take the accusations associated with them less seriously. For example, according to some analyses, the reason why Chinese cyber espionage has not received as much attention, and only minimal backlash, is that China has successfully presented itself as a responsible partner in cyberspace while taking advantage of the Snowden case and tarnishing the image of the United States.<sup>19</sup> The notion of hybrid warfare is often associated with General Valery Gerasimov, who in his 2013 article formulated his questions and thoughts on the nature of modern war. But similar questions were raised by an earlier Chinese work, *Unrestricted Warfare* (*chaoxian zhan* 超限战), published in 1999 and written by two generals, Qiao Liang (乔良) and Wang Xiangsui (王湘穗). Since then, Western analysts have been referring to the text and trying to draw the right conclusions. The authors' thinking is mainly similar to the neorealist school, with self-interest as the only constant factor, everything else changes. They believe that war no longer necessarily involves loss of life and that practically any means can be used since conflict takes place simultaneously on all levels, whether economic, cultural, diplomatic or military. A Machiavellian combination of skills is required in each of these areas and at different levels. More importantly, they concluded that the boundary between war and peace has disappeared, there is no sharp distinction.<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting that their writings sparked

<sup>17</sup> VUING 2019.

<sup>18</sup> JASH 2019.

<sup>19</sup> IASIELLO 2016.

<sup>20</sup> LIANG-XIANGSUI 1999.

controversy within China and, in addition to the academic disputes, offended several interest groups, so the two generals were denied further promotions and their military careers soon ended.<sup>21</sup> Some of the instruments classified under hybrid warfare had already appeared in earlier Chinese military theories. A summary analysis of Chinese sources revealed that Chinese scholars saw the United States as the first user of hybrid warfare and that it only emerged as a problem in American sources after it had been used against them. The Russians only perfected this method. The term grey zone warfare (*huise didai* 灰色地带) is used to describe actions used in a competition that are still below the borderline of conflict. A good example of this is the deployment of Chinese coastguards or fishing fleets in waters of disputed territorial waters and islands. Cyber and information operations can also be included here. Information warfare (*xinxi zhanzheng* 信息战争) is another concept that often appears in Chinese thinking. It is closely related to cyber warfare (*wangluo zhanzheng* 网络战争) but its use encompasses a much narrower area. Information warfare focuses on the acquisition or disposal of information and uses IT tools to do so, while cyber warfare is an umbrella term for everything conducted in the cyber domain.<sup>22</sup> The use of most of the tools that fall under hybrid warfare is not new, but this kind of discourse, the emergence of new concepts and doctrines, and new possibilities offered by technological developments (e.g. cyberspace or social media) or combinations of these, are new. China is trying to shape the discourse, and thus to ensure that its soft power efforts and instruments are not subsumed under the notion of hybrid warfare, which is perceived by Beijing as being of Western origin anyway. Among the principles promoted by China are such classic values as learning from others, harmony and moderation, strong governance, peaceful ascendancy, and the primacy of the community over the interests of the individual. How these ideals are achieved will largely depend on how they are judged by the rest of the world.<sup>23</sup> An often-mentioned hybrid tool is economic pressure. One example of Chinese expansion and manipulative techniques supposed to be the debt trap, which is mainly associated with the building of the One Belt One Road initiative. Under this, loans are given to a country that is unable to repay the loan and is forced to make concessions to China because of its heavy financial dependence. It would be naive to think that the great powers do not use

<sup>21</sup> BEHRENDT 2022.

<sup>22</sup> SAALMAN 2021.

<sup>23</sup> DENG 2021.



economic pressure. However, a closer examination can reveal a different picture. The development of the port of Hambantota in Sri Lanka is often cited as an example, but it can be argued that an already indebted local government, poor project management and corporate economic interests contributed more to the situation than a shadow war directed from Beijing.<sup>24</sup> Another often-mentioned tool is propaganda, which is an integral part of Chinese communication, partly based on the communist tradition, and is not a negative word from a Chinese point of view. The correlation between the different methods is well illustrated by the fact that the initial support for the Chinese space program was so substantial because Mao Zedong expected great propaganda results from it. Nowadays, technical and scientific achievements continue to be used to legitimise the CCP's rule and to boost national pride. This has been so successful that a significant proportion of the population is willing to actively support government efforts out of conviction, even on their own initiative. Individuals may sometimes carry out cyberattacks on their own, while in other cases Beijing may use their capabilities as a hired "irregular cyber force".<sup>25</sup> The term A2/AD – active defence itself is also another western shorthand for a complex Chinese, and what is more interesting, defensive concept. First coined in 2013, when China announced the establishment of an air defence identification zone over the East China Sea. In accordance with the above plan China have started to expand and build military facilities in the South China Sea, within disputed waters, turning reefs, and submerged land features into fully fledged airbases and other military installations. Quite surprisingly the West sees these capabilities as irregular, or hybrid threat. The fact that the installations are built on disputed territories is in itself a clear breach of international law, yet the installations and the Anti-Access–Area Denial means are characterised by the offensive manoeuvre, defensive tactical stance. Given the peculiarities of modern combat operations, the concept relies heavily on information gathering means, and at the same time blocking the adversary from obtaining it. Therefore, the first pillar of the concept consists of information, surveillance, recon and target acquisition methods, as well as ways of actively countering the opponents' similar efforts. In other words, space technology, and Electronic Warfare. Little is known about Chinese anti-satellite or ASAT programme, apart from the occasional official press releases, which may or may not tell the truth about the actual equipment tested.

<sup>24</sup> ESZTERHAI 2021.

<sup>25</sup> EDL 2022.

Allegedly the vehicle launched SC-19, itself based on an intercontinental ballistic missile is carried ICBM capable Chinese submarines.<sup>26</sup> Directed energy (laser) weapons offer another possibility, and allegedly have been tested on U.S. satellites. Third possible element of such a concept are interceptor, or killer satellites either in the form of kinetic micro satellites or dual use–military satellites made for this purpose. Classic electronic warfare methods, such as jamming, and other electronic countermeasures also enhance this capability. Recent Chinese military doctrines have outlined the importance of balanced and comprehensive capabilities, so based on the development of the native electronic industry one can safely assume that a strong ECM/EW supports the A2/AD effort. One thing is for sure. In the age of space-based information, communication and navigation making the potential enemy blind and deaf makes U.S. satellites a juicy target, even though President Trump has threatened with serious consequences. Using the gained information, the second pillar focuses at physically preventing the opponent from entering defended area, meaning this area contains mostly rocket weapons. Foremost of these, and at the same time the symbol of A2/AD without a doubt, is Dong Feng DF-21D, ship killer ballistic missile. While precise targeting against 30 knots moving targets at Mach 10 re-entry speeds remains a question, the 600–1,000 kg warhead has enough potential to achieve a mission kill on any warship, including the mighty aircraft carriers, rendering them unable to carry on. Another threatening aspect of A2/AD are shore, ship, or submarine launched supersonic anti-shipping YJ-12 and YJ-18 missiles. Based on the capabilities of the DF-21D, it is difficult to imagine how is the YJ-21 hypersonic anti-ship ballistic missile different, which China have allegedly tested from a Type 055 large destroyer. To counter airborne threats an air defence missile HQ-19 is under development with a never seen before 2,000 km (!) planned range.<sup>27</sup> The primary area of these measures is the South China Sea, especially the so-called “First Island Chain”, which consists mostly reefs, and shoals, such as the Spratly and Paracel Islands, and the Scarborough Shoal.<sup>28</sup> But what is more important, Taiwan lays in the centre of this imaginary line overlooking one of the busiest naval trade routes of the world. It is a typical chicken or egg question whether the need to control led to the formulation of A2/AD and other hybrid solutions, or a ready concept was applied to the existing problem.

<sup>26</sup> SC-19 ASAT s. a.

<sup>27</sup> China’s Anti-Access Area Denial 2018.

<sup>28</sup> GADY 2019.

Judging from the first appearance of this concept in 2013, the former is more likely. The doctrines and theories have been translated into concrete steps in China's military reform. These include the creation of the Strategic Support Force (*Zhanlue Zhiyuan Budui* 战略支援部队) in 2015. The aim was to bring together the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army to conduct space, cyber, electronic, information, communications and psychological operations. In the same year, the Chinese military was ordered to reach a level of winning an informationised local war (*xinxihua zhanzheng* 信息化战). Gaining the necessary information superiority is impossible without the effective support of the Strategic Support Forces, especially cyber and space capabilities.<sup>29</sup> China's already demonstrated ability to destroy U.S. satellites could act as a deterrent to the U.S. precisely because of the extent of its reliance on space capabilities. The organisation is structured along two main lines. The first is the Space Systems Department (*Hangtian Xitong Bu* 航天系统部) and the second is the Network Systems Department (*Wangluo Xitong Bu* 网络系统), under which all non-space capabilities are ordained. The Space Systems Department is responsible for virtually all space-related activities of the Chinese armed forces, including rocket launches, space observation, all support functions and space warfare.<sup>30</sup> The development of Chinese cyber and space capabilities has been quite spectacular in recent years. The first wake-up call was the anti-satellite (ASAT) test carried out in 2007, and ever since multiple other tests were conducted. The current space capabilities include not only kinetic ASAT weapons but also orbital manoeuvrable interceptor satellites, advanced jamming capabilities or directed energy weapons. The SSF will also play an important role in any pre-emptive strikes that may be required against a technologically more advanced and powerful adversary. One of the main functions of space capabilities will be to identify targets and to assist in the navigation and communication of own forces. Meanwhile, the forces under the Network Systems Division will seek to disrupt the information structures of the adversary based on the principle of network-electronic warfare (*wangdian yitizhan* 网电一体战).<sup>31</sup> Based on China's assumed capabilities, a space war game conducted in 2021 was built around the Taiwan conflict. The U.S. and its allies won, but the outcome was close. This raised alarms in the Pentagon yet again and gave considerable support for

<sup>29</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense 2018.

<sup>30</sup> WEEDEN-SAMSON 2022.

<sup>31</sup> KANIA-COSTELLO 2021.

budgetary requests. The means employed by the two sides during the wargame exercise did not generate another cloud of space junk, but they did make ample use of their cyber capabilities, used lasers to temporarily blind their opponents' satellites and deployed manoeuvring satellites capable of forcing targets out of their orbits. The lessons learned suggest that the United States needs to cooperate much more closely with its allies.<sup>32</sup>

### Reactions to Chinese hybrid methods

The Taiwan issue has long been a challenge for Beijing. After the civil war of 1946–1949, the defeated *Guomindang* (国民党) forces fled to Taiwan and the government still considers itself the successor to the republic proclaimed in 1912, while the People's Republic of China considers the island its province. Beijing envisages reunification by essentially peaceful means. It has been suggested that Taiwan could retain a degree of autonomy on the basis of the “one country, two systems” principle, as Hong Kong and Macao have done. However, the idea of independence, which has periodically gained strength in Taiwanese politics, led to the adoption of a law in 2005 that would give Beijing the right to use military force in the event of a declaration of Taiwanese independence. There is also a strong U.S.–China rivalry in the background. An important element of this is the deliberately vague wording of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979, which allows the sale of defence equipment to Taiwan.<sup>33</sup> Beijing's clear aim is to guarantee its own security and promote its interests, while Washington has the same objective, but interests may clash in certain areas. While the United States is currently seen as the strongest power, China is seen as an emerging power with the potential to become a new hegemon. Politicians and strategists in both countries are raising the question of how to deal with the other. Some call for cooperation, others for confrontation or a mixture of the two. Analysts try to draw on patterns of past events to help them find a solution. One well-known concept is that of the Thucydides trap, proposed by Graham Allison, whereby an emerging, revisionist power clashes with a hegemon, who is interested in maintaining the status quo. Another potential threat is the Kindleberger trap. The essence of this is that while the hegemon can no longer (or only partially) maintain

<sup>32</sup> SOKOLSKI 2021.

<sup>33</sup> SALÁT 2019.

the world order, the emerging power does not want to participate in maintaining it, but simply uses it for free, like other smaller states do. However, a greater responsibility would presumably mean a greater say, so it is questionable how much the hegemon would support this. Bergsten considers these two potential pitfalls and believes that China cannot be isolated because it is too powerful and dynamic. In addition, isolation is not necessary, because Beijing does not want to subvert the world order, but to revise it, and the right approach would be a “conditional competitive cooperation”.<sup>34</sup> Friedberg and others argue that this is simply naive. The reality is quite different, China is led by a ruthless party that wants to retain power and whose leadership believes a confrontation with the United States is inevitable and will do whatever it takes to win. Friedberg believes that the United States needs to close ranks with its allies against China, step up the decoupling of the economy and supply chains, and prepare the military for conflict.<sup>35</sup> This is in line with Pillsbury’s view that China is only waiting for the right moment to make its move. It is hiding its forces and real intentions until it is too late for the U.S. to take effective countermeasures.<sup>36</sup> But looking at the phenomena in this way, it is easy to take a paranoid view in which even well-intentioned steps can be seen as a cunning disguise. Current trends suggest that more pessimistic, confrontational voices may predominate. The Chinese official position is that Washington is responsible for the deterioration in relations and that this is largely due to their perception of China’s rise and their relative decline in power. However, there have been Chinese voices willing to acknowledge that the U.S. reaction is also largely dependent on China’s actions. It is noteworthy that Chinese leaders and scholars in 2021 predicted in unison that the Biden Administration’s China policy would not be fundamentally different from the Trump Administration’s and would be fundamentally confrontational. This has so far proved to be correct. And although China is becoming increasingly assertive globally, its main interests are strengthening its regional power and influence, reducing its dependence on the United States, strengthening the world’s dependence on China and ensuring a peaceful environment for its further development.<sup>37</sup> It is of course a valid question how this Chinese approach differs from the methods that have been used in the past. It can be observed that in the

<sup>34</sup> BERGSTEN 2022.

<sup>35</sup> FRIEDBERG 2022.

<sup>36</sup> PILLSBURY 2016.

<sup>37</sup> HASS 2021.

discourse in the West, the concept of the Chinese hybrid threat is well applied and used to draw attention to the Chinese gains, but also to attribute insidious intentionality. The proposed responses are numerous: supplying arms to Taiwan, diplomatic action, restructuring goals and developing new strategies. The lack of unified leadership and administration is cited by several authors as one of the major obstacles to a successful U.S. response. Somewhat idealistic authors argue that the needs of allies and potential partners should be addressed in a way that maintains a moral and ethical high ground compared to a dishonest China.<sup>38</sup> The countering of the Chinese hybrid threat is also reflected in government documents. The public version of the 2022 National Defense Strategy was not yet available at the time of the submission of this chapter. But it is already known that integrated deterrence is one of the key concepts that appear in the document. The U.S. aims to develop a full-spectrum, all-around deterrence that requires the involvement of allies. Among the various proposals in the discourse around the document, we can find the launching of offensive hybrid operations as the only way to deter China and Russia.<sup>39</sup> From a military point of view, the United States realised the threat posed by China's A2/AD capabilities and the new risks it posed quite early. Even in 2010, the formulating A2/Ad strategy 2010 has already made its way into the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). 2014 QDR restated that U.S. military forces need to be able to maintain power projection in anti-access regions, thus maintaining global reach of the U.S. Past U.S. efforts planned to counter China's A2/AD have pressed enhanced joint force cooperation and allied nations cooperation in contested regions, along with more cost-effective air defence system for long range, regional and theatre defence. It was probably not a coincidence that in 2013, the United States deployed a Theater High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) battery to Guam. Further strengthening its air defence capabilities Patriot/PAC-3 batteries have been permanently deployed to U.S. military bases in Okinawa, further capabilities provided by sea-based assets. Although Aegis system equipped vessels (SM-2, SM-6, ESSM interceptors) provide a layered missile defence, these shipborne systems are not designed to counter large ballistic or cruise missile salvos. Thus, the old saturation attack surfaces again.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> FOGEL 2022.

<sup>39</sup> STARLING et al. 2021.

<sup>40</sup> China's Anti-Access Area Denial 2018.

## Conclusion

Hybrid warfare as such is a buzzword coming to life after the events of 2014, especially the lightning quick occupation of Crimea, and the coming of the “little green men”. Yet, this phenomenon so hotly embraced by western experts is nothing but the millennia old grand strategy, where every means of state, including clearly non-military ones such as culture, media and social tools are employed to achieve politico-military goals.

Not surprisingly it was two Chinese senior colonels who first wrote about a new type of warfare which conforms to contemporary international relations, and their book *Unrestricted Warfare* is still the handbook of players looking for unusual solutions. Contrary to Russian understanding of the phenomenon, Chinese see irregular solutions purely as defensive, within a geographically limited area. Economic, legal, diplomatic and other non-military means are used successfully by China to promote its interests. Yet the most famous hybrid warfare method is definitely A2/AD, which in itself is again nothing new, but a classical layered and complex defence.

## Questions

1. What are the main concepts of Chinese strategic culture and why should we be wary of over-examining them?
2. How does the Chinese concept of hybrid warfare differ from Russian ideas? (Does hybrid warfare even exist?)
3. What is the essence of the A2/AD strategy and what are its main tools?
4. What is the role of the different branches of the Strategic Support Forces?
5. How can the U.S. and China be characterised in their confrontation?

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