***Title: AMERICA’S COGNITIVE WARFARE AGAINST CHINA: TRENDS, IMPACTS, AND RESPONSES (EXCERPTS)***

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***I. Introduction***

“Following advances made in cognitive psychology alongside information and communications technology, cognitive warfare [认知战] has gradually become a key way in which great powers contest each other [博弈] in the realm of ideology. In its 2022 National Security Strategy, the United States elevated cognitive warfare to a strategic level on par with physical combat.”

“With strategic competition between China and the U.S. intensifying, Washington has stepped up its ideological infiltration [意识形态渗透] and propaganda against China at the cognitive level. [Washington] is making vain attempts at using 'political correctness’ [政治 正确模式] to forcibly draw ideological boundaries, to isolate and contain China, and to seize a position of ideological dominance [意识形态的主导权]. Since the Biden administration took office, the U.S. has launched comprehensive cognitive warfare offenses in areas that touch upon China's core interests. The negative impacts of [these moves] on China's ideological security and national image cannot be ignored.”

***II. On the Definition and Historical Origins of Cognitive Warfare***

“Cognitive warfare refers to political activities in which a particular country, political group, military force, or social group attempts to secure their own political goals and interests by utilizing a cognitive approach [认知域的角度] via modern information technology to purposefully and systematically infiltrate other countries' thoughts, cultures, and values with the explicit intention of influencing their cognition and ideologies. Cognitive warfare is a completely new field of operations that combines political operations [政治战] with public opinion operations [舆论战], psychological operations [心理战], information operations [信息战], intelligence operations [智能战] and cyberspace operations [网络空间 战] into a single-integrated form [一体的作战形态].”

“The idea of cognitive warfare has deep historical roots in China that can be traced back to the Warring States Period. Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* contains the roots of this idea [萌芽思想 ] of cognitive warfare. For example, Sun Tzu writes, 'a whole [enemy] army may [thus] be robbed of its spirit; a commander-in-chief may be robbed of his presence of mind', and ‘hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting’.”

“In the West, the origin of the theory of 'cognitive warfare' can be traced back to the 19th century Prussian military theorist [Carl Von] Clausewitz’s 'On War’, in which he proposed that war should be fought through violent means to defeat the enemy's will and destroy their spirit [精神力量].”

“America’s cognitive operations against China have developed through an historical process of germination, growth and continuous maturation. Cognitive warfare and psychological warfare [心理战] have the same root and source [同根同源]. The U.S. National Security Council put forward the goal of psychological warfare in [the document] NSC74 [which states]: 'the planned use of propaganda and other psychological actions to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, and behavior of hostile foreign groups in such a way as to support the achievement of national objectives.' In the early years after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, especially after the outbreak of the Korean War, the Truman administration intensified its deployment of psychological warfare operations against the PRC.”

“Take [American] psychological warfare in Tibet as an example. The Policy Coordination Committee of the US National Security Council (NSC) conducted a strategic assessment of the 1959 insurgency of upper-class reactionary factions [上层反动集团] in Tibet and determined that the strategic goal of its propaganda strategy was to 'maximize propaganda about the Tibetan insurgency throughout public media'.”

“Declassified files show that in the aftermath of the insurgency, the United States Information Agency (USIA) consolidated various news sources from around the globe to provide an overwhelmingly [铺天盖地] distorted account of events. The American mainstream media outlet The New York Times published several editorials blaming the Chinese government. The newspaper also compared the quelling of the Tibetan insurgency to the 'Hungarian Uprising' at the time. On October 8, 1959, with the financial support of the Central Intelligence Agency, Lowell Thomas, Jr. published a book entitled *The Silent War in Tibet*, which intentionally distorted history and smeared the Communist Party of China’s so-called 'invasion' of Tibet. More than half a century later, especially through the presidencies of Trump and Biden, the underlying motivations and essence of America’s cognitive operations against China on Tibetan issues are the same as in the 1950s.”

***III. How New Technologies Change and Accelerate Cognitive Warfare***

“Cognitive warfare integrates cyber, informational, psychological and social engineering capabilities to achieve its targets. Cognitive warfare uses the internet and social media to selectively and continuously target influential people in society, specific groups and large numbers of citizens in an attempt to sow seeds of doubt, introduce conflicting narratives, polarized views, radicalize groups and motivate them to take actions that undermine or divide an otherwise cohesive society.”

“As artificial intelligence, Big Data, AI-assisted search and other new technologies accelerate the evolution of the 'Smart+' era [‘智能+’时代], America has become increasingly aware of the importance of emerging technologies in influencing how humans perceive and construct ideas. With this has come a change in their understanding of war.”

“As the usage of AI for military [purposes] has become more extensive, modern warfare has gradually manifested itself as psychological operations [心理战], informational operations [信息战], public opinion warfare [舆论战], trade wars [贸易战], and so on. Furthermore, a brand new area of confrontation has now emerged — the realm of cognition [认知域]. The great advantage of AI-enabled cognitive warfare is that it is ubiquitous, pervasive and highly automated. It can infect and shape the cognition of opponents with high efficiency and without their being aware of it.”

“If the U.S. uses ChatGPT as a means to engage in cognitive operations, the penetrative ability of its anti-China discourse will grow even stronger. In this current moment of fierce competition between Washington and Beijing, ChatGPT provides search answers that essentially support America’s vilification of China. As the militarisation of AI accelerates, the role of AI, Big Data and cloud computing in cognitive warfare will become all the more important.”

***IV. Motivations Behind America’s Cognitive Warfare Against China***

“The world is undergoing major changes not seen in a century. The ebb and flow of power between the established great powers and the emerging powers has not only stimulated the competition between the systems of capitalism and socialism, but it has also intensified the struggle between Chinese and Western approaches to modernisation. As the economic gap between China and the United States gradually narrows, China's influence on the international political stage is increasing. [Consequently,] the United States feels that its claim to global hegemony is threatened.”

“Under the Biden administration, the American strategic community and [certain] segments of the public who are opposed to China have been further emphasizing the political, economic and military dimensions of the so-called ‘major threat’ [重大威胁] posed by the PRC. In 2022, Biden even brought high-level focus to the so-called 'China Threat’ [中国威胁] in his first National Security Strategy report.”

“To this end, the U.S. has strengthened its comprehensive suppression of China in the fields of trade, science, technology, military and diplomacy. [However,] in terms of [its] actual impact, Washington’s methods of containment can hardly obstruct [难以阻挡] China's developmental momentum. As China implements various strategies and measures to prevent major social crises and safeguard its national security with efficiency, it is [becoming] particularly difficult for the US to increase the harm of its ideological infiltration of China by relying on its original [methods] of political isolation, military siege, interference [in the realm of] human rights and so on.”

“Therefore, the U.S. has changed its methods of [ideological] infiltration to become more covert in content [内容更加隐蔽], more diversified in form [形式更加多样], and more diffuse in method [方法更加弥散]. Using cognitive warfare, the U.S. has engaged in [ideological] infiltration through films, television, and other forms of media [具象化渗透], sensationalist and misleading news reporting [炒作性渗透], through subversion and coercion of influential individuals [诱导性渗透] and by controlling academic exchanges and scholarly norms [学术性渗透]. [All have been] vain attempts aimed at destroying the cognitive, value and belief systems of the Chinese people and at instigating a 'color revolution’ [颜色革命].”

***V. How American Cognitive Operations Target China’s Core Interests***

“Since the Trump administration, the United States has launched frequent cognitive warfare operations against China's territorial integrity, national security, political system and other core interests in the South China Sea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet, and many other areas concerning [China’s] military security.”

**A. The South China Sea**

“The U.S. has deliberately misled the world into believing that China's 'aggressive behavior’ [侵略行为] poses a 'serious threat' to maritime and air security. First of all, the U.S. uses ‘territorial sea rights’ [领海权] to help shape a hegemonic image of China.”

“The United States deliberately exaggerates the supposed 'military threat’ [军事威胁] [posed by China] in the South China Sea. In February 2022, the Biden administration released a new version of its 'Indo-Pacific Strategy' report, which claimed that China's so called 'coercion' and 'aggression' are spreading all over the world, and were most serious in the Indo-Pacific region (including the South China Sea). [Further,] this behavior was [said to be] 'undermining human rights and international law, including freedom of navigation, as well as other principles that have brought stability and prosperity to the Indo-Pacific.' In May 2023, John C. Aquilino, Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, repeatedly smeared China in a speech at a public event of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations (NCUSCR), accusing China of 'militarizing' the South China Sea which 'violates' international norms. In March 2023, at a seminar on Indo-Pacific security organized by the Hudson Institute, a Washington think tank, Ely Ratner, Assistant Secretary of Defence for Indo-Pacific Affairs, stated that the PLA was not only becoming more powerful, but more adventurous in its decision-making. He [then] mischaracterised China’s legitimate law enforcement operations in the South China Sea as 'unsafe military intercepts’ [不安全军事 拦截]. [He also] falsely claimed that China intends to change the existing international order and has supposedly taken 'aggressive' actions in the South China Sea.”

**B. Hong Kong and Taiwan**

“Hong Kong and Taiwan are also important areas in which Washington engages in cognitive warfare against China. Since the storm over Hong Kong's legislative amendments, the U.S. has been playing the 'Hong Kong card' again. Their intention to 'use Hong Kong to destabilize China’ [以港乱中] is self-evident [不言而喻]. Taiwan has always been a sensitive issue between China and the United States. Washington has been trying to support the Taiwanese authorities through political and economic means so as to counter Chinese influence in Asia. First, the United States has stigmatized [our] great practice of 'one country, two systems’ [一国两制] and has demonized Hong Kong, [depicting it] as a region without 'democracy' or 'human rights'.”

“On the issue of Taiwan, the United States has also repeatedly and maliciously exaggerated the ‘assertive China theory’ [中国强硬论] at the cognitive level to obstruct the great undertaking of China's reunification. Fake news has been rampant [甚嚣尘上] on the likes of Facebook and Twitter. US government officials have openly lied on these platforms when claiming that the Mainland has committed 'acts of aggression' against Taiwan. Twitter has even shut down what they labeled as 'Chinese government-affiliated' accounts in an attempt to disrupt international public opinion and go further in shaping a perception of China being so-called 'aggressive' [攻性].”

**C. Tibet and Xinjiang**

“For a long time, hyping up [炒作] Tibet- and Xinjiang-related issues has been a key area in which the U.S. shapes negative perceptions of China. First, it has portrayed China as a so called 'authoritarian country’ [威权] that is 'opposed to human rights’ [反人权]. In the cognitive war surrounding Tibet, America’s mainstream media, the executive branch, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have all participated in this.”

“On the issue of Xinjiang, American political circles, academics and the media have in recent years worked closely together to fabricate claims of so-called 'forced labour', 'concentration camps', 'genocide’, 'forced sterilisation' and other lies to demonise [us in] Xinjiang. Among these, 'forced labor' is a quintessential concept of cognitive warfare concocted by the U.S., the West and Xinjiang's separatist forces.” “People outside China have a high level of interest in, and emotional identification with, 'democracy’ [民主] and 'freedom [自由]’. However, they lack a basic understanding of Xinjiang itself. Through its cognitive warfare, the U.S. has forced foreign audiences to relinquish control over the dissemination of information related to Xinjiang to the media and thus to fall into the pre-established quagmire of public opinion set in advance by various actors.”

***VI. Negative Impacts For China***

“The most direct impact of the cognitive war launched by Washington has been the damage done to China's international image. Given the similarity of ideologies and close cooperation between the U.S. and [other] Western countries, it is easier for the U.S. to gain their trust by smearing and blackening China’s name [抹黑污蔑]. The U.S. maintains formidable discursive power [话语权] in the international system. The U.S. has constructed specific rhetoric around so-called 'human rights', the COVID-19 pandemic, military security and other [issues] and labeled China as 'irresponsible', 'dangerous', 'threatening' and as 'not respecting human rights'. This has had a negative impact on China's international image.”

“America’s cognitive warfare against China, as a concrete manifestation of ideological infiltration, has the power to attack, influence, damage and harm mainstream ideological education in China, Chinese citizens' political discernment, national cohesion as well as the political security and social stability of our country.”

“To this day, American values, outlook on life and cognition have brought forth the continued existence of non-mainstream thoughts and behaviors [in China] such as consumerism, post-modern lifestyles, historical nihilism [历史虚无主义], the worship of money [拜金主义], hedonism [享乐主义] and extreme egoism [精致利己主义]. These cannot be separated from the ideological infiltration of the United States.”

“Such ideas may even lead some Chinese people to question [our] Great Motherland, Chinese nationality, Chinese culture, the CPC and Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. This will undoubtedly have a damaging effect on [Chinese] national unity.”

***VII. How Should China Respond?***

**1. Raise Cognitive Warfare to the Forefront of National Security Strategy**

“In order to respond effectively to Washington’s cognitive warfare, it is essential to raise [this issue] to the forefront of China’s national security strategy, normalize the integration of cognition into [our] analyses of security and strictly promote the prevention of cognitive risks at all levels of government departments, enterprises and institutions as well as in other key areas.”

**2. Guide International Public Opinion On China**

“As a large socialist country, China must strengthen its own ability to speak out internationally, occupy the high ground in the shaping of public opinion on China-related matters and take a leading role in guiding the public’s view of China. First, China must strengthen the influence of its mainstream media by investing more resources [in them] and expanding [their] influence through acquisitions, cooperation and so on. [These steps] can increase the coverage and influence of Chinese reporting. [China] must spread its own voice and perspective more widely.”

“Secondly, foreign propaganda work must be strengthened. [China should] actively publicize and exhibit its developmental achievements, cultural traditions and international contributions in order to improve its national image. Chinese culture should be integrated into international publications, movies and music.”

**3. Expand [China’s] 'Ideological Security Firewall'**

“The internet is the main battlefield of cognitive warfare. Therefore, all efforts must be taken to construct an ideological security ‘firewall’ [意识形态安全‘防火墙] on the internet. First, the core technological means [that we use] on the internet must be continuously optimized. We must strengthen the R&D and application of core internet technologies and security equipment. [In addition], advanced network monitoring and filtering systems must be established to prevent the spread of false and harmful content. It is essential to have a deep awareness of the significant role that core internet technologies [play] in cognitive warfare. The formulation of medium and long-term development strategies for these technologies must be sped up.”

“At the same time, we should use [online] harvesting technology in real-time to mine, correlate, quantify and aggregate keywords on search engines relating to China, to negative comments [about our country] on overseas social media and to the latest reports on China published by various parties. [We should] respond rapidly to such [negative] opinions. Work must be done to trace their origin as soon as they are published. And we should make use of [geographic] time differences to block subsequent reactions from occurring after the first instance of a public opinion attack [舆论攻势] against China.”

**3. Seize the Strategic High Ground on AI**

“Now that Washington has used cognitive means to escalate its siege and containment of China in the frontiers of science and technology, we must do our utmost to enhance research and development in core areas. We must seize the strategic high ground of AI, which is an important frontier technology in the cognitive domain. AI is a ‘force multiplier’ [ 力量倍增器] which will fundamentally reshape the future of warfare. Therefore, accelerating our R&D with regards to core AI algorithms is also a way for us to strive for the strategic high ground in cognitive warfare. It is necessary for us to make great efforts to develop cutting-edge technologies in the cognitive domain, strengthen the nurturing and protection of talents in frontier fields, establish an interdisciplinary innovation body for offensive and defensive technologies and create a platform for the simulation and experimentation of operations with regards to cognition in the cybersphere. [All of this] will enhance our level of control over relevant core technologies.”

**4. Forge a Stronger Sense of Common Identity Amongst the Chinese people**

“We must promote knowledge and strengthen education [that contributes] to forging a collective sense of identity for the Chinese nation. We must establish educational mechanisms that regularly serve to unite all ethnicities together towards progress, that deeply root unity in the hearts of the people and that enhance the people’s sense of belonging to their national community.”

***VIII. Conclusion***

“The U.S. has repeatedly interfered in our nation’s domestic affairs. [They have] seized every opportunity to stir up disputes [挑起争端]. Washington has recklessly smeared our national system, our ruling party and our People’s Army. They have maliciously incited ethnic separatists. They have vainly attacked our people’s confidence in the CPC and our system of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Forging a stronger sense of common national identity amongst the whole of society is an effective response to America’s cognitive operations. China has already thwarted American and Western conspiratorial plots of 'Peaceful Evolution’ [和平演变的阴谋]. We are now faced with a new wave of American cognitive warfare against China. It is going to be a long fight.”