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CHINA'S COGNITIVE WARFARE FOR THE PEACEFUL RECOVERY OF TAIWAN

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Cognitive warfare – controlling the behaviours and mental states of others by manipulating environmental stimuli – is becoming an increasingly common topic of interest in the global security landscape. China's cognitive war on Taiwan, following the exploitation of Taiwan's vulnerabilities and the capitalization on conflicting ones, leaves Taipei with a finite number of cognitive interventions.

Neuro-strike, a weapon in the arsenal of the People's Liberation Army, falls within the realm of intelligent warfare or Chinese algorithmic cognitive warfare. Alongside scalar weapons that use longitudinal electromagnetic energy, they have the ability to disrupt the brain functions of opponents and alter their opinions in the direction pursued by the People's Republic of China.

Keywords: Chinese cognitive warfare; intelligent warfare; algorithmic cognitive warfare; scalar weapons; Neuro-strike;

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive warfare poses a real threat to democracies by circumventing freedom of expression and spreading disinformation. While information warfare is comprised of electronic warfare, command and control warfare, psychological warfare using manipulation, information-based warfare, economic information warfare, hacker warfare and cyber warfare (Libicki, 1995), the cognitive element is essential in the information and cyber space (Hung, Hung, 2022). Public relations, propaganda and public diplomacy have also been used over time to manipulate knowledge. Information warfare aims to control the flow of information through social networks to human decision-makers, influencing them emotionally and epistemically. Cognitive warfare aims to control the reactions of individuals and groups to the information presented, manipulating environmental stimuli to induce mental states and desired behaviours in both enemies and allies.

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Cyber warfare can attack critical infrastructures, spread disinformation or access and take over enemy information through distributed denial-of-service attacks. More than information warfare, cognitive warfare aims to overcome the control of mass communication techniques, interfering with the brain and accessing neurological resources. The flow of information, the change in behaviours through manipulation and coercion are pursued to distort the perceptions of enemies, integrating economic warfare, diplomacy and military operations specific to hybrid warfare. Although information warfare, cyber warfare, cognitive warfare, and hybrid warfare all contain operations of influence that affect human cognition (see *figure 1*), only cognitive warfare aims to control the brain through weapons provided by neuroscience (Ib.)

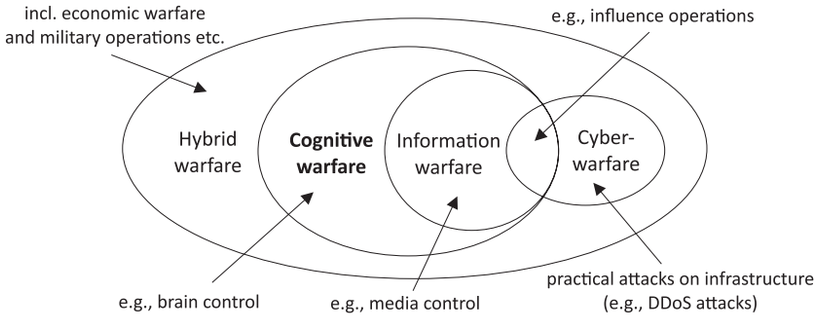

Figure 1: The relationship between cognitive, hybrid, information and cyber warfare (Ib.)

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The purpose of this article is to popularize some concepts that are less frequently addressed in the specialized literature: intelligentized warfare or algorithmic cognitive warfare; Neuro-strike, the weapon developed by China, intended for brain control, based on directed energy with electromagnetic beams or microwaves; the stealth capability and the ability to pass through matter and any medium of scalar weapons, a type of non-kinetic weapons that propagate longitudinal electromagnetic waves or zero-energy waves; the final part will address the case study method, having as subject the cognitive warfare waged by the People's Republic of China (PRC) against Taiwan.

The objectives of the article consist in presenting some recent military notions that have emerged as well as in bringing to public knowledge the current state of Chinese technology and the way the PRC is waging cognitive warfare in the 21st century. The research method is qualitative, analysis based on specialized literature on the latest developments necessary for waging a war in the 21st century. The case study is focused on an area of maximum interest, namely Taiwan, due to its geostrategic position between the East China Sea and the South China Sea (Taiwan Strait, international waterway, important in the transport of goods worldwide), due to the chip and semiconductor industry (Taiwanese companies TSMC and United Microelectronics Corporation (UMC) are the largest chip producers in the world), and last, but not least, due to China's ambitions to reunify with Taiwan, declared Chinese territory through the *One country, two systems Policy.*

THE INTELLIGENTIZED WARFARE – COGNITIVE ALGORITHMIC WARFARE

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Since 2019, the PRC Defence White Paper has emphasized the emergence of intelligentized warfare and the need to shift from mechanized to informational force through intelligent network capabilities (5G, Cloud Computing, Big Data) and intelligent weapons (AI-enabled weapon systems). The People's Republic of China is adding the cognitive domain as a future battle domain to the maritime, land, space, air, cyber, and electromagnetic domains; it is also adding the cognitive dimension to the other dimensions of warfare, namely the physical and informational dimensions (Center for Joint Warfare Studies, 2022).

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The intelligentization of warfare refers to the modification and domination of the battlefield by Artificial Intelligence and emerging and disruptive technologies, such as robotics and neuroaugmentation. Brain-machine interfaces, wearable devices, exoskeletons, gadgets implanted in human bodies will enhance intelligentized warfare, a military concept introduced by the Chinese Communist Party in 2019 to define the replacement of war waged exclusively by humans against other humans with war waged by robots/machines against humans or war between machines/robots (Gadzala Tirziu, 2024). The four defining features of the intelligentized warfare are: *cognitive warfare, the use of swarm tactics, improved information processing capabilities* and *rapid decision-making* (Ib.), used to achieve a first objective, bringing Taiwan under the control of the People's Republic of China without resorting to conventional conflict. If successful, the achievement of other more ambitious goals, such as world hegemony, could follow.

Although the party has not given an official definition of intelligentized warfare, Chinese military strategists have described it as *"integrated warfare conducted on land, sea, air, space, electromagnetic, cyber, and cognitive arenas, using intelligent weapons and equipment and their associated operating methods, supported by the Internet of Military Things (IoMT) information system"* (Ib.). The operationalization of this concept could combine military intimidation with information warfare. Chinese strategist Pang Hong Liang has proposed infiltrating advanced unmanned systems, resembling small animals, into the premises

of opposing presidents or commanders (about whom detailed personal information would have been collected in advance), in order to intimidate or annihilate them. Beijing already holds the personal data of 21.5 million American citizens from the US Office of Personnel Management, as well as sensitive data on 100,000 US Navy officers. Through the data of thousands of European officials, discussions about Europe-China ties have been influenced (Ib.). If data from the Global South is less accessible, similar volumes of personal information may have been gathered, taking into account the Chinese modus operandi. The US Naval Institute's monthly magazine, *Proceedings*, published a *"2026 War Scenario"* showing that the US Navy will be cognitively outmatched, as thousands of US Navy servicemen, using Chinese-influenced TikTok, could be manipulated into refusing to fight (Ib.).

Each individual's thoughts, information, and beliefs inform the decisions they make and have the power to change the outcome of the battle. That is the reason why, after the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022, People's Liberation Army strategists and Chinese national security leaders updated cognitive warfare, coining the term "algorithmic cognitive warfare".

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Through the enormous amounts of data (either stolen or bought from data providers) that are fed to algorithms to monitor and exploit the relationships, mental state and preferences of individuals, it is possible to deliver the exact content capable of influencing the people being watched at any given time. Many Chinese influence operations have not had the intended result, as the ideological content does not resonate with the general public, but rather the content related to the daily lives of voters, such as those released during Taiwan's January 2024 elections, or the divisive ones with alleged users arguing about political topics, such as the Chinese state security services pretending to be American users arguing on various political topics in a TikTok video watched for over 1.5 million times (Ib.).

Operators can evaluate the outcome and effectiveness of the operation by collecting data and creating content. The social media recommendation algorithm itself ensures that the desired content

reaches the target audience at the desired time. The concerns about the cybersecurity risks of Chinese social media apps such as TikTok have led to TikTok being banned in the USA and some countries in Europe and Asia, ByteDance being in close contact with the Chinese government. NATO and the European Commission have banned members and employees from using TikTok on work phones, as have other governments around the world (Navlakha, 2024).

Human knowledge is the epicentre of future warfare as, through direct interference or subconscious control of the adversary's mind, confusion, mental damage or hallucinations, enemies could be led to surrender or accept Beijing's demands without negotiation or fight. Powerful weapons are being built or are already in use for total cognitive domination, among which Neuro-strike holds a privileged place.

NEURO-STRIKE

The People's Liberation Army is considering manufacturing high-tech weapons to disrupt the brain functions of opponents and change the opinions of foreign rulers or other populations to serve its interests. Attack or brain control weapons use microwaves or directed energy with electromagnetic beams (Barbu, 2024), ranking the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Liberation Army as world leaders through the Neuro-strike Program. In December 2021, the US Department of Commerce imposed sanctions on China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences and 11 other related entities for allegedly using brain control weapons (Gertz, 2023).

Neuro-strike, based on non-kinetic technology, impairs cognitive functions, reduces awareness and can cause neurological damage. The People's Republic of China places psychological warfare and neurological attack at the core of its asymmetric warfare strategy against the United States of America and its allies in the Indo-Pacific, the Sino-Indian border, Taiwan, the South and East China Seas.

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Not only electromagnetic or microwave weapons form the neuro-strike spectrum, but also human-computer interfaces to control populations and weapons capable of inducing cognitive damage, all working to achieve Xi Jinping's desire to implement a new world order. The US military predicts a Chinese military assault on Taiwan by 2027,

an assault in which brain warfare weapons would be used in the short term as part of China's *anti-access/area denial* military strategy for the Indo-Pacific (Ib.).

Another scenario is immunizing PLA troops with a bacterial strain propagated to enemy forces to eliminate resistance, followed by neurological strikes that cause fear or cognitive incoherence leading to inaction, like the US *Wandering Soul* operation in the Vietnam War. This propaganda and psychological warfare operation sought to induce the desertion of Việt Cộng soldiers. Tapes of recordings of Buddhist funeral music, altered voices, simulating those of deceased comrades-in-arms, unable to find peace in the absence of funeral rites, haunting like ghosts urging them to go home to avoid being killed, were broadcast from American helicopters at night to deprive the Việt Cộng soldiers of sleep (Humphrey, 2023).

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The Strategic Support Force (SSF), a special unit of the Chinese military created in 2015 and tasked with conducting cerebral warfare, was disbanded in 2024 by President Xi to integrate the cyber, space, electronic, psychological warfare capabilities of the People's Liberation Army. Instead of the Strategic Support Force, President Xi inaugurated the Information Support Force to coordinately apply the networked information system, which would increase his chances of winning in modern warfare. The SSF has been divided into three units: the Aerospace Force, the Information Support Force and the Cyberspace Force, which will answer directly to the Central Military Commission, headed by Xi (Marinescu 2024).

Countering cognitive warfare requires ethical regulation of military neuroscience, technological innovations capable of detecting deepfakes, and geopolitical solutions for better governance. In a neuroscientific approach to national security, psychological factors (cognitive dissonance, assimilation, availability heuristics in belief formation) and environmental factors (effects of liberalism and social networks in the context of globalization) can increase the damage of cognitive warfare (Hung, Hung). The public is advised to be cautious about the information they read and the regulation of the tech giants.

SCALAR WEAPONS

Scalar weapons are also part of the electromagnetic weapons spectrum, with the difference that they are longitudinal, not transverse or microwave, like those that form the Neuro-strike spectrum. Scalar waves or Tesla waves/zero energy waves differ from conventional transverse electromagnetic waves (radio waves, microwaves and visible light) since they do not oscillate sinusoidally, but remain in a fixed standing wave shape.

Non-lethal weapons using scalar wave technology can incapacitate enemies, with or without long-term damage. While one advantage lies in the possibility of selecting the number of victims, as well as collateral damage, the disruption of neural functions, along with the invalidation of electronic equipment, poses a major problem.

While conventional electromagnetic waves fail to penetrate any medium or barrier, scalar waves have the unique ability to pass through matter with ease (underwater, in dense urban environments, underground, in bunkers), including the Earth itself, ensuring secure communication over long distances, with submarines or with troops deployed far away, on enemy territory (Serei, 2023).

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Another military application of scalar waves is stealth technology. If conventional stealth technology absorbs and redirects electromagnetic waves (e.g., radar waves), minimizing the reflection and detectability of an object with some limitations, scalar waves can create total invisibility by bending or distorting light around an object. Optical camouflage would allow invisible vehicles, ships and aircraft to be undetectable by conventional radar and surveillance systems. Scalar waves through quantum encryption techniques offer the possibility of instantaneous, secure transmission of sensitive information over a vast area, as scalar waves are not bound by time and space constraints. Scalar waves have the ability to influence tectonic activities and geological structures. The possibility of controlling and inducing seismic events by manipulating scalar waves could represent deterrent capabilities or protective countermeasures against these attacks (Ib.).

International agreements and ethical considerations are indispensable in determining the responsible use of scalar wave technology. Scalar waves, which usually go unnoticed, are attracting

interest in their use for information and energy technology due to their special attributes: scalar wave transmission at 1.5 times the speed of light; wireless transmission of electricity; the reaction of the receiver to the transmitter; the inefficiency of using a Faraday cage to protect against scalar waves; free energy transcends space and time (Meyl, 2001, p. 1).

Scalar beam weapons were invented by Nicola Tesla (1856 or 1857-1943) in 1904, with many nations secretly developing beam weapons after the researcher's death in 1943. Today, scalar weapons have become so powerful that they can produce, by satellite, hurricane-like destruction, earthquakes, tsunamis, or flash freezes – the instant killing of every living thing on Earth over long distances. Scalar weapons can also cause intense heat, induce hypnotic mind control over large numbers of people or read minds from distance (Zohuri, 2019, p. 19). Due to their pressure wave nature and ability to carry enormous energy, scalar waves can, undetected, remove anything from its place in time and space faster than the speed of light by crossing two or more beams together. Furthermore, any target the scalar weapon is aimed at is in danger of annihilation, even if it is in a bunker on the opposite side of the earth. If any of the major countries with scalar weapons (Russian Federation, United States of America, People's Republic of China) were to attempt a nuclear missile attack, it could be destroyed with scalar technology before it leaves its place of origin (Ib.).

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Scalar waves above 60 Hz can be very harmful. A scalar beam sent from one transmitter to the target, coupled with another beam sent from another transmitter, could allow the scalar beams to blast the missile before launch, but also *en route*, if the coordinates are known. Tesla hemispherical shields or Tesla globes of luminous plasma emanating from crossed scalar beams can wrap missiles or aircraft. The continuous electromagnetic pulse (EMP) Tesla plasma globe could destroy the target's electronics, while the hotter Tesla globes could vaporize the missile or activate the nuclear warhead of a moving missile, creating a nuclear explosion. Flying debris can be attacked by smaller Tesla Orbs. A Tesla shield can be used to prevent any unwanted foreign body from entering the state's airspace (Ib.).

Possession of scalar wave technology represents an advantage that can be used in cases of utmost importance to the Chinese state, such as reunification with Taiwan.

THE CASE STUDY OF THE COGNITIVE WARFARE WAGED BY CHINA AGAINST TAIWAN

The cognitive warfare insinuated itself more and more, gaining momentum with the development of information and communication technologies. The cognitive warfare waged by the People's Republic of China against Taiwan was also manifested through development aid or *"South-South cooperation".* Within the rivalry between Beijing and Taipei, decolonization in the South Pacific, starting with Samoa in 1962 and ending with Palau in 1994, gave China and Taiwan the opportunity to seek diplomatic recognition from friendly countries through chequebook diplomacy (Grey, 2020).

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Until 2008, Taiwan maintained diplomatic relations with six countries, while the People's Republic of China maintained diplomatic relations with eight countries. The loss of the presidency in Taiwan in 2016 by the Kuomintang led to a collapse in Taiwan's relationship with Kiribati and the Solomon Islands, leaving it with only four diplomatic allies in the region – Nauru, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands and Palau. The People's Republic of China provided US $1.62 billion to Pacific Island countries between 2011 and 2019, outranking New Zealand and being surpassed only by Australia. At the Pacific Island Economic Development and Cooperation Forum, China offered aid packages, with President Xi Jinping making two visits in recent years (Ib.).

The People's Republic of China has discredited the way the leadership in Taipei has managed the COVID-19 crisis (Hung, Hung), representing yet another facet of cognitive warfare. Several government departments and party agencies, such as the United Front Work Department, the Taiwan Affairs Bureau of the State Council, the People's Liberation Army and the Propaganda Department, aim to promote China-Taiwan unification, cooperation and suppress anti-independence views.

China threatened to take over Taiwan by force in the event of the latter's pursuit of independence in China's 1993 White Paper – *"Taiwan*

Issue and Chinese Unification". Chinese missile testing near Kaohsiung and Keelung during the Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996) raised concerns in Taiwan that it could turn into war (Tzu-Chieh, Tzu-Wei, 2022). The definition of the relationship between Taiwan and China by President Lee Teng-hui in 1999 as a *"state-to-state relationship"* has led to the intensification of Chinese activities. Military aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait in 2020 because of the improvement of Taiwan-USA relations (Hung, Hung).

China is increasing its influence through economic benefits from bilateral exchanges across the Taiwan Strait, offering free travel and arrival reception services or discounts on travel to China. Places for Taiwanese students at Beijing University and Tsinghua University, along with funding and awards for scholars ("Thousand Talents Plan" and "Changjiang Scholars Program") are transforming the interests of Taiwanese, enslaving them to China's influence.

In 2017, following the Taiwan National Security Survey, only 41.3% of Taiwanese believed that China would attack Taiwan following independence, a percentage that increased in 2020 to 61.8% following intimidation by the People's Liberation Army in response to the warming USA-China relations. The percentage of Taiwanese who would support independence if China attacked as soon as Taiwan declared independence rose from 26.3% in 2017 to 37.8% in 2020. The proportion of Taiwanese who would support independence if China did not attack when declaring independence rose from 60.2% in 2017 to 71.2% in 2020, indicating that China's military intimidation could backfire. China has published a list of supporters of Taiwan independence, but also reports on opinion leaders, causing fear and dividing Taiwan (Ib.).

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If China's positive propaganda did not yield the intended results in the affective and epistemic sense, negative propaganda is more effective

through affective incitement that outranks epistemic manipulation. The attention and cognitive resources that the Taiwanese population devotes to China's bellicose actions deprives the country of leaning toward constructive solutions to society's problems. Voters uninformed or uninterested in domestic and foreign politics, often young or middle-aged, are more susceptible to misinformation and easier to attack epistemologically. In contrast, older people, experienced people and extremists, with high antecedents and strong active inferences, are much harder to manipulate, but are emotionally vulnerable and thus can be induced to alter their cognitive content. Political conservatives are among China's favourite targets because they are more inclined toward negative stimuli and tend to report more fake news (Ib.).

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Artificial intelligence is at the forefront of the brain warfare through technology capable of delivering the right information to each individual.

CONCLUSIONS

China is interested in expanding its sphere of cultural influence on the Taiwanese target audience, but also in the West, and in delivering tailored informational content. Traditional Chinese characters glorified in pre-repression Hong Kong and Taiwan are a new cultural anchor for China, predisposed to launch cognitive operations against Taiwan through posting art news and technology sites in Hong Kong. Attempts are also being made to attract Taiwan's students and youth as part of the cognitive warfare. Artificial intelligence is at the forefront of the brain warfare through technology capable of delivering the right information to each individual (Ib.).

If the Taiwanese government has built a rapid response mechanism against disinformation, no less important is the modification of the social structure with the help of policies and laws to make it less vulnerable to attacks.

As countermeasures, the following can be mentioned: structural intervention or external regulation of the social environment with which the brain interacts, and cognitive intervention or internal improvement of the cognitive system against disinformation. If the Taiwanese government has built a rapid response mechanism against disinformation, no less important is the modification of the social structure with the help of policies and laws to make it less vulnerable to attacks. Among the measures, we list: maintaining fair competition for content providers, improving transparency, raising barriers for attackers and local collaborators, encouraging democratization in China.

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