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## COMPREHENSIVE THREAT MEETS TOTAL DEFENCE

*“Gaining and retaining the initiative is the aim of every commander. To be able to choose the time and place of an attack, or to keep the enemy guessing as to how we might act, gives a huge advantage. Yielding the initiative to the enemy puts us at a disadvantage”.*

Ben Hodges was commanding general of the United States Army Europe, 2014–17  
“Western allies must regain the initiative over Putin in the Black Sea”.  
(Financial Times 2/26/2022)

ABSTRACT: *The West is at war. The United States, its allies, and partners in Europe, Asia, and throughout the world – whether they recognize it or not – are at war. The enemy in this war is global authoritarianism, particularly as practiced by the Chinese Communist Party and the Putin regime in Russia, but also by lesser adversaries such as North Korea, Iran, and the nebulous global network of Salafi jihadists. To be clear, this is not a war of peoples against peoples; this is not about Chinese, Russians, or Muslims versus Americans or Westerners. This is a war between regimes in which people are among the many weapons wielded in a competition for global influence and power. The distinctive attribute of this war is its non-kinetic dimensions. It is not a war fought by our respective armed forces – though that can, does, and may yet occur. It is fought for the most part in the diplomatic, information, economic, and other domains; what are commonly referred to as the “gray zone”. The battlespaces are predominantly, but not exclusively, in the civilian domains.<sup>1</sup>*

KEYWORDS: *hybrid warfare, gray zone, global jihad, Russia, China, total defense, asymmetric response*

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<sup>1</sup> There is by now an extensive literature on gray zone conflict. See “The Gray Zone,” by Philip Kapusta for a brief summary discussion (<https://www.soc.mil/SWCS/SWmag/archive/SW2804/GrayZone.pdf>). For a more thorough treatment see “Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone,” by Votel, J. L. et al. in *Joint Force Quarterly*, January 2016 (<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/JFQ/Joint-Force-Quarterly-80/article/643108/unconventional-warfare-in-the-gray-zone/>). For an extensive treatment of gray zone conflict see “Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone; Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War,” by Morris, L. J. et al. ([https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2900/RR2942/RAND\\_RR2942.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2900/RR2942/RAND_RR2942.pdf))

In their pursuit of power, the West's current adversaries are far less averse to applying all available resources as weapons in the fight. The United States and its allies and partners are being subjected to military competition, political, economic and financial warfare, lawfare, hybrid warfare information attacks, and every other aspect of unconventional warfare. The only rules restraining our adversaries are the rules of in-attributability and of remaining below the threshold of military combat. But this multi-front, multi-domain war is not random. China, Russia, and the Salafi jihadists each seem to be guided by an ice-cold and long-term strategic determination to exploit American and Western weaknesses, and the seams in the fabric that hold the liberal world order together.

We are in an era characterized by persistent and comprehensive, multi-domain threats. Our most potent adversaries are relentless in their pursuit of strategies that know no distinction between war and peace, between military and civilian – and pose an existential threat to the liberal, rules-based global system. To prevail in this era and secure the benefits of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, the United States and its allies must adopt a new paradigm for defence and security to replace the current binary construct of war/peace.

What is required to meet any of today's significant national security challenges – be it international jihadism, or peer rivals, let alone COVID-19 or climate change – is an ambitious – perhaps even audacious – approach integrating all the elements of national power in a whole-of-society mobilization. A “total defence” posture is needed today to confront adversaries who embrace ideologies advocating permanent and comprehensive conflicts with the United States and its allies; indeed, permanent conflicts with our interests, with our values, and with the so-called liberal, rules-based world order. This all-embracing assault on all we hold dear must be met with an equally all-embracing, or total defence. Such a defence posture directly rebuts the many “think small,” incrementalistic, restraint-based, and transactional strategic approaches that are often proposed.<sup>2</sup>

There is a template for enlightened discipline in the face of persistent, multi-domain threats in the concept of total defence; therefore, we will briefly survey the approaches developed by the Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as Israel, Singapore, and Taiwan. Even total defence, however, is not enough; in an era of persistent, comprehensive, and multi-domain threats, we also need a concept of agile, pro-active measures. We must develop and actively utilize a toolbox of advanced, asymmetric actions to shift the burden of reaction to our adversaries.

## THE GLOBAL JIHAD

Though much strategic attention in the United States has turned to great power competition – divided between China and since the invasion of Ukraine to Russia – it is far too soon to

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<sup>2</sup> Variations of a limited national security concept were examined by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in a series of Issue Briefs in 2020 including “Getting to Less? Exploring the Press for Less in America's Defence Commitments” (<https://www.csis.org/analysis/getting-less-exploring-press-less-americas-Defence-commitments>), “Getting to Less? The Progressive Values Strategy” (<https://www.csis.org/analysis/getting-less-progressive-values-strategy>), “Getting to Less? The Minimal Exposure Strategy” (<https://www.csis.org/analysis/getting-less-minimal-exposure-strategy>), and “Getting to Less? The Innovation Superiority Strategy” (<https://www.csis.org/analysis/getting-less-innovation-superiority-strategy>). For a study of the historical expansion of the national security concept and associated dangers see “The Limits of National Security” by Laura K. Donohue. Georgetown University Law Center, 2011 (<https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2027&context=facpub>).

claim victory in the global struggle against terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State survive and remain motivated by a Salafist, jihadist ideology that brazenly holds to a Manichean view of the world divided between Dar el-Islam (the Islamic domain of peace) and Dar el-Harb (the non-Islamic domain of war), with people divided into “believers” and “infidels”.<sup>4</sup>

Jihadist doctrine is interpreted by these groups in its most conflictual, confrontational, and merciless form. Readings from *Dabiq* (the magazine of the Islamic State),<sup>5</sup> “The Management of Savagery” by Islamic strategist Abu Bakr Naji,<sup>6</sup> and many other Salafist sources justify violence against infidels. A Boko Haram video of 2016 urges members, “Brethren, wherever you are, I pray this meets you well. I give you the go-ahead, whether you are two or three, take up your weapons and start killing them... all those who refuse Allah... Kill, kill, and kill!”<sup>7</sup>

Evidence of this uncompromising doctrine manifests in the use of indiscriminate violence against civilians, women, children, and the elderly, including beheadings, stoning, lashings, and burnings by al-Qaeda, Islamic State, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, and other such organizations. There is no reason to anticipate that these organizations, their leaders – the current or the next generation – or their most violent members will abandon such doctrines and accept co-existence with a co-equal Western counterpart in a liberal, rules-based world order. Their war is permanent and comprehensive.

## RESURGENT RUSSIA

Russian President Vladimir Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the (20<sup>th</sup>) century”.<sup>8</sup> Under Putin Russia has obsessed over re-

<sup>3</sup> Clark, C. “The Future of the Global Jihadist Movement After the Collapse of the Caliphate,” RAND Commentary, December 11, 2018 (<https://www.rand.org/blog/2018/12/the-future-of-the-global-jihadist-movement-after-the.html>). Also “U.S. and U.N. on Jihadi Threat in 2021” by The Wilson Center (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/us-and-un-jihadi-threat-2021>) and Byman, D. “Jihadi Networks Are More Resilient Than We Think” *Foreign Policy*, November 2, 2021 (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/11/02/jihadi-terrorism-threat-us-europe/>).

<sup>4</sup> Di Carlo, I. “In chaos, they thrive: The resurgence of extremist and terrorist groups during the COVID-19 pandemic,” *European Policy Centre*, May 5, 2020 (<https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/In-chaos-they-thrive-The-resurgence-of-extremist-and-terrorist-group~32c800>). O’Donnell, L. “Terrorism Is Making a Comeback, and Africa Is the Hot Spot,” *Foreign Policy*, May 6, 2022 (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/06/terrorism-africa-hotspot-isis-boko-haram/>).

<sup>5</sup> *Dabiq* appears to have published 15 issues between July 2014 and July 2016. They do not appear to be easily accessible online. For a brief overview of *Dabiq* as of December 2015 see, “Overview of Daesh’s Online Recruitment Propaganda Magazine, *Dabiq*,” by The Carter Center, December 2015 ([https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict\\_resolution/countering-isis/dabiq-report-12-17-15.pdf](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/countering-isis/dabiq-report-12-17-15.pdf)). For a more extensive review of *Dabiq* and other Islamic State publications see, “Islamic State’s English-language magazines, 2014–2017: Trends & implications for CT-CVE strategic communications,” by Haroro J. I. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2018 ([https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep29421.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Abb776bcd63bbe9e17e61eeeb405f9795&ab\\_segments=&origin=](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep29421.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Abb776bcd63bbe9e17e61eeeb405f9795&ab_segments=&origin=)).

<sup>6</sup> *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, by Abu Bakr Naji (Translated by William McCants), John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University, May 23, 2006 (<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf>).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *Our Brains at War*, by Fitzduff, M. Oxford University Press, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> “Excerpts From Putin’s State-Of-The-Nation Speech,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 25, 2005 (<https://www.rferl.org/a/1058630.html>).

claiming the global stature it had during the Soviet period. Former foreign and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov summed up Russian aspirations advocating the counter-balancing of American power with a concert of major powers in a multipolar world. He argued that Russia must oppose further NATO expansion and undo it if possible, while insisting on Russian primacy in the post-Soviet space and the integration of that region under Russian dominance.<sup>9</sup> In this vision, the global order is redefined “as a great-power management system,” providing “ample grounds for the use of force in what Russia views as its sphere of influence and more widely in support of sovereign governments under threat from violent non-state actors”.<sup>10</sup>

To achieve this global order Russia has refined an approach to strategic competition based on persistent aggression across the full spectrum of conflict and contestation. Russian armed forces Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov is credited with an eponymous doctrine that envisions “gray zone” operations, information operations, hybrid warfare, and the use of private, military companies to advance Russian interests, subvert U.S. influence, undermine the American political system, sow discord within the United States and NATO, and dismantle the current global order.<sup>11</sup> The existence of such a doctrine has been debated and Gerasimov’s authorship of any new doctrine discredited, though Russian behaviour has at times appeared to align with the supposed doctrine.<sup>12</sup> A better description of Russia’s approach is “new generation warfare,” a “sophisticated blend of strategic communication, disinformation, cyber-attacks, covert troops, and psychological warfare”.<sup>13</sup>

Beneath these irredentist aspirations is a more profound, values-based hostility to the liberal, rules-based world order, which Russian leaders believe is a Western-centric order designed to preserve and advance Western global dominance, fashioned at a time when the Soviet Union was weak, and reinforced in the aftermath of the Cold War when Russia was supine.

The order with which Putin would replace the liberal, rules-based world system might be described as a mystical Eurasianist conservatism. It has roots in the philosophy of Ivan Ilyin, who argued that “‘democratization,’ ‘liberalization,’ ‘freedom’ were only means for destroying the unity and Eurasian spirit of the Russian civilization”. Ilyin was in favour of

<sup>9</sup> Rumer, E. “The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019 ([https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rumer\\_PrimakovDoctrine\\_final1.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rumer_PrimakovDoctrine_final1.pdf)).

<sup>10</sup> Clunan, A. L. “Russia and the Liberal World Order,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, 32, no. 1, 2018 ([https://nps.edu/documents/105858948/106279825/Clunan\\_Russia+and+Liberal+World+Order\\_2018/b7e24alc-88ea-4d0a-b60f-681bbcc27c4d](https://nps.edu/documents/105858948/106279825/Clunan_Russia+and+Liberal+World+Order_2018/b7e24alc-88ea-4d0a-b60f-681bbcc27c4d)).

<sup>11</sup> British scholar Mark Galeotti coined the phrase “Gerasimov Doctrine,” but has since regretted it; see Mark Galeotti, “I’m Sorry for Creating the ‘Gerasimov Doctrine,’” *Foreign Policy*, March 5, 2018 (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/>). Gerasimov’s original article, “The Value of Science in Prediction,” was published in *Military-Industrial Kurier* on February 27, 2013. Galeotti translated it and published the translation on his blog-site (<https://inmoscowshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/>).

<sup>12</sup> Giles, A. “Valery Gerasimov’s Doctrine,” *Universitat Potsdam*, September 2020 ([https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alexander-Giles-2/publication/346195526\\_%27Valery\\_Gerasimov%27s\\_Doctrine%27/links/5fbcc1b1af6dccc6c65e48d6/Valery-Gerasimovs-Doctrine.pdf?origin=publication\\_detail](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alexander-Giles-2/publication/346195526_%27Valery_Gerasimov%27s_Doctrine%27/links/5fbcc1b1af6dccc6c65e48d6/Valery-Gerasimovs-Doctrine.pdf?origin=publication_detail)).

<sup>13</sup> Hadjitodorov, S. and Sokolovm, M. “Blending New-generation Warfare and Soft Power: Hybrid Dimensions of Russia-Bulgaria Relations,” *Connections QJ* 17, no. 1, 2018 (<https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.17.1.01>). See also, Bērziņš, J. “The Theory and Practice of New Generation Warfare: The Case of Ukraine and Syria,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2000, 33:3, 355–380., DOI: 10.1080/13518046.2020.1824109 (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13518046.2020.1824109?needAccess=true>).

a “Russian National Dictatorship” that would protect and preserve Russian national values.<sup>14</sup> This abject hostility to the West draws further from the views of Russian ultra-nationalist and pro-crypto fascist Aleksandr Dugin, who proclaims, “We are on the side of Stalin and the Soviet Union,” and enthusiastically advocates a “genuine, true, radically revolutionary and consistent, fascist fascism”<sup>15</sup> in Russia.<sup>16</sup>

This is an authoritarian vision in which,

... the rulers of the state must exert careful control over the life of the nation. Events cannot be allowed just to happen, they must be controlled and manipulated. By the same token, markets cannot be genuinely open, elections cannot be unpredictable, and the modern equivalent of the Soviet dissidents – the small groups of activists who oppose centralised Kremlin rule – must be carefully controlled through legal pressure, public propaganda and, if necessary, carefully targeted violence.<sup>17</sup>

... all important decisions should be made in Moscow by a small unelected group of people who know how to resist these foreign conspiracies.<sup>18</sup>

There is little if any regard for individual liberties or limitations on government power. The envisioned system reflects a world view built upon a unique combination of nationalism and eastern conservatism; it anticipates permanent conflicts of interest with the West, and justifies seizing soft spots in the Western world, such as Crimea, Georgia, and possibly even the Baltics – locations where a robust Western/American response is least likely – essentially the seizure of all opportunities to reclaim great power status and undermine Western, and especially U.S. interests.

A more contemporary spokesperson for this implacable enmity toward the West and an author of what is referred to as the “Putin Doctrine,” is Kremlin advisor Sergey Karaganov. Karganov was recently quoted as stating, “This is a war with the West,” and predicting that Russia, “will become a more militant-based and national-based society, pushing out non-patriotic elements from the elite,” and boasting that, “We are ready to sacrifice in order to build a more viable and fair international system”.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Tsonchev, T. S. “The Kremlin’s New Ideology,” *The Montreal Review*, January 17 (<https://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/The-Ideology-of-Vladimir-Putin-Regime.php>).

<sup>15</sup> Dugin, A. “Fascism – Borderless and Red”. 1997 (<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=russian-studies;4a3176b4.0905>).

<sup>16</sup> For a brief description of Dugin’s work and influence see Dunlop, J. B. “Aleksandr Dugin’s Foundations of Geopolitics,” published by The Europe Center at Stanford University, undated (<https://tec.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/aleksandr-dugins-foundations-geopolitics>).

<sup>17</sup> Applebaum, A. “Putinism: the Ideology,” *Strategic Update* 13.2, London School of Economics and Political Science, February 2013 (<https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/updates/LSE-IDEAS-Putinism-The-Ideology.pdf>).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Sergey Karaganov Interviewed by Federico Fubini in *L’Economia*, April 8, 2022 ([https://www.corriere.it/economia/aziende/22\\_aprile\\_08/we-are-at-war-with-the-west-the-european-security-order-is-illegitimate-c6b9fa5a-b6b7-11ec-b39d-8a197cc9b19a.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/economia/aziende/22_aprile_08/we-are-at-war-with-the-west-the-european-security-order-is-illegitimate-c6b9fa5a-b6b7-11ec-b39d-8a197cc9b19a.shtml)).

## THE RETURN OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

China's historical self-image is of hegemonic dominance in its geostrategic environment, and today its geopolitical and geoeconomic behaviour and positioning reinforce this self-image. The model of governance practiced by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is authoritarian with regime preservation as the highest priority. Social stability is enforced through draconian restrictions on individual liberties, such as the freedoms of speech, religion, and association.

Today China is considered by the United States as the “pacing threat;” the primary challenger to America's global power and influence and a peer competitor. The 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance of the United States describes China as “the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system”.<sup>20</sup> It is the systemic challenge that is most disconcerting.

The China threat extends beyond the military dimension; China has become an economic superpower as well as a leader in numerous emerging technologies. Its recent economic prowess and dynamism under authoritarian governance offer an attractive alternative to many states that have not prospered in the neoliberal era.

Under President Xi Jinping, China has championed a narrative of Chinese revival under the banner, the “rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.<sup>21</sup> Whereas former Chinese ruler Deng Xiaoping advocated a low profile while building the economy – known as “Bide your time, hide your strength” – President Xi has made China's global aspirations explicit. In a 2013 speech to the Politburo he stated, “we must concentrate our efforts on... building a new socialism that is superior to capitalism and laying the foundation for a future in which we will win the initiative and occupy the dominant position”.<sup>22</sup> Singaporean scholar Benjamin Ho Tze Ern cautions against hyperbole and threat exaggeration; “While it is an open secret that China has its eyes on the big prize, that is, to mount a credible challenge to the U.S., I would not want to over-play Chinese capabilities as well as its ability to become a global power in the same manner of the United States”.<sup>23</sup> He bases this more cautious view on the insularity – or “inward looking” political priorities of the CCP leadership, noting that few of China's senior leaders have travelled abroad to promote Chinese interests, a view shared by former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in a recent interview.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, March 2021 ([https://insideDefence.com/sites/insideDefence.com/files/documents/2021/mar/03032021\\_nsg.pdf](https://insideDefence.com/sites/insideDefence.com/files/documents/2021/mar/03032021_nsg.pdf)).

<sup>21</sup> Jinping, X. “Achieving Rejuvenation Is the Dream of the Chinese People,” Speech made when visiting the exhibition “The Road to Rejuvenation.” November 29, 2012 (<http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/c23934/2020ChC.06/32191c5bbdb04cbab6df01e5077d1c60.shtml>).

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Nigel Inkster, *The Great Decoupling*, C. Hurst and Company, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Private communication with author.

<sup>24</sup> Rudd, K. Interview in PRISM V.10, N.01, July 2022.

Despite these cautionary notes, the Belt and Road Initiative,<sup>25</sup> *Made in China 2025*,<sup>26</sup> military-civil fusion,<sup>27</sup> and numerous other policies and initiatives clearly support an unspoken but obvious determination to achieve hegemony in the Pacific region, and even global primacy by 2050.<sup>28</sup>

*Unrestricted Warfare* was published in 1999 by colonels of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui. The authors argue that warfare has evolved from the traditional military domains and recommend, "...all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy to accept one's interests." Recognizing as early as 1999 the profound impact and implications of emerging technologies for global conflict, they conclude that, "When we suddenly realize that all these non-war actions may be the new factors constituting future warfare, we have to come up with a new name for this new form of war: Warfare which transcends all boundaries and limits, in short: unrestricted warfare". Although Chinese officials have denied that "unrestricted warfare" is an official PLA doctrine, it should be read in light of China's internal as well as its external behaviour.<sup>29</sup>

*Unrestricted Warfare* offers a full menu of non-traditional attack domains, including lawfare, network warfare, economic warfare, commercial warfare, intellectual property theft, irregular warfare, etc.: All designed to avoid direct conventional military confrontation with, while prevailing over the United States. The worldview envisioned in *Unrestricted Warfare* is of permanent conflict with all competitors, and particularly the United States, until dominance in its domain is achieved, using all national assets and resources.

<sup>25</sup> The best analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative I have read is *Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order*, by Bruno Macaes, Hurst and Company, London UK, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> The PRC website "*Made in China 2025*" provides an official overview of the policy and its programs (<https://english.www.gov.cn/2016special/madeinchina2025/>). Quite a lot has been written and published on *Made in China 2025*. A quick start is by McBride, J. and Chatzky, A. "Is 'Made in China 2025' a Threat to Global Trade?" Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, May 13, 2019 (<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/made-china-2025-threat-global-trade/>). Also see Kania, E. "Made in China 2025 Explained: A deep dive into China's techno-strategic ambitions for 2025 and beyond, *The Diplomat*, February 1, 2019 (<https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/made-in-china-2025-explained/>), and *Made in China 2025: The making of a high-tech superpower and consequences for industrial countries*, Merics Papers on China, December 2016 (<https://merics.org/en/report/made-china-2025>).

<sup>27</sup> McMaster describes military-civil fusion as "the most totalitarian" of the three elements of China's quest for global dominance; McMaster, OpCit. The U.S. Department of State provides a brief description at "Military-Civil Fusion and the People's Republic of China," U.S. Department of State One-Pager (<https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.state.gov%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2020%2F05%2FWhat-is-MCF-One-Pager.pdf&data=05%7C01%7Cmklauicm%40ndu.edu%7C16a0e60aecd6489da59f08da2f6282f3%7Ccabfe949f1dc8462bbf873527168dc052%7C0%7C0%7C637874397396557539%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlloiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLjBjBTIiLCJkaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&data=BHiu9G6Ef%2F%2Bz6qkx%2FCIPAOEuXpvxiFKwaiUR5kgWHw%3D&reserved=0>). For a more in-depth description see. Kania, E. B. and Laskai, L. "Myths and Realities of China's Military-Civil Fusion Strategy," Center for a New American Security, January 28, 2021 (<https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/myths-and-realities-of-chinas-military-civil-fusion-strategy>).

<sup>28</sup> *The long game: China's grand strategy to displace American order*, by Rush Doshi, Oxford University Press (July 8, 2021).

<sup>29</sup> Liang, Q. and Xiangsui, W. "Unrestricted Warfare," Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999 (<https://www.c4i.org/unrestricted.pdf>).

The more recent Three-Warfares doctrine is built on (1) strategic psychological operations; (2) overt and covert media manipulation; and (3) legal warfare to influence target audiences abroad.<sup>30</sup> It is designed to, “to subdue an enemy ahead of conflict or ensure victory if conflict breaks out”.<sup>31</sup> As early as 2013 the U.S. Department of Defence Office of Net Assessment concluded that, “in the decade ahead China’s Three Warfares will play an increasing role in China’s determination to expand its frontiers, to secure the maritime perimeter encompassing Japan, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines and the South China Sea. Analysts indicate that China intends to control the First Island Chain by 2015 and the Second Island Chain by 2050.”<sup>32</sup>

To accomplish the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, China’s global aspirations are advanced aggressively by the *qiaowu* policy, which is a “systematic approach of persuasion, influence, and manipulation,” by which, “the CCP has been successful in guiding and directing key groups of OC (overseas Chinese) around the world to be supportive of Beijing”. Using the over 50-million Chinese diaspora as voluntary or inadvertent agents, this policy “is an interdisciplinary strategic approach to pro-actively guiding, fostering, manipulating, and influencing OC identity and behaviour for the purposes of constructing an international environment friendly to China’s global ambitions”.<sup>33</sup>

What does the great “rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” entail, both within China and throughout the world? According to former U.S. National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster China is “promoting a closed, authoritarian model as an alternative to democratic governance and free market economics,” that “stifles human freedom,” resulting in “a world that is less free and less safe”.<sup>34</sup>

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rhetorically embraces lofty and human values,<sup>35</sup> however, careful examination of the regime’s domestic and international behaviour betrays a world view hostile to fundamental, progressive concepts such as individual liberty and incompatible with a liberal, rules-based world order.<sup>36</sup> Yuan Peng – President of the China Institute for Contemporary International Relations – in his discussion of the Outline for Studying the Overall National Security Concept notes its call for the “path of peaceful development,” while citing the need to “focus efforts on ‘total warfare’ thinking, to coordinate responses to traditional and non-traditional security challenges, ensuring that responses to traditional security challenges are more proactive while responses to non-traditional

<sup>30</sup> Raska, M. “China and the ‘Three Warfares’”. *The Diplomat*, December 18, 2015 (<https://thediplomat.com/2015/12/hybrid-warfare-with-chinese-characteristics-2/>).

<sup>31</sup> Gershaneck, K. “To Win without Fighting: Defining China’s Political Warfare,” Marine Corps University Press, June 17, 2020 (<https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Marine-Corps-University-Press/Expeditions-with-MCUP-digital-journal/To-Win-without-Fighting/>).

<sup>32</sup> China: The Three Warfares, U.S. Department of Defence, Office of Net Assessment, May 2013 ([https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/FOID/Reading%20Room/Litigation\\_Release/Litigation%20Release%20-%20China-%20The%20Three%20Warfares%20%20201305.pdf](https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/FOID/Reading%20Room/Litigation_Release/Litigation%20Release%20-%20China-%20The%20Three%20Warfares%20%20201305.pdf)).

<sup>33</sup> Qiaowu: Extra-Territorial Policies for the Overseas Chinese, by James Jiann Hua To, Koninklijke Brill nv, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2014 (<https://media.oaipdf.com/pdf/b391832b-b758-40ff-9246-d8b6ee3566de.pdf>).

<sup>34</sup> McMaster, H. R. “How China Sees the World: And How We Should See China,” *The Atlantic*, May 2020 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/05/mcmaster-china-strategy/609088/>).

<sup>35</sup> Yan, X. “Chinese Values vs. Liberalism: What Ideology Will Shape the International Normative Order?” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Volume 11, Issue 1, Spring 2018 (<https://academic.oup.com/cjip/article/11/1/1/4844055>).

<sup>36</sup> Hurlock, M. H. “Review: Social Harmony and Individual Rights in China”. *Columbia Law Review* Vol. 93, No. 5, June 1993 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1122966?seq=1>).

security challenges keep pace with the times.” The Outline promotes a “common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable global security outlook,” while committing China to “resolutely winning the people’s war, total war,” and “resolutely winning ideological struggle.”<sup>37</sup>

President Xi Jinping makes no secret of his commitment to CCP domination and its leading role in all aspects of life in China.<sup>38</sup> Under Xi the CCP “wants to lead on everything.”<sup>39</sup> Pervasive state surveillance and control of media and information severely constrain political activity, and the recently introduced social credit system empowers state authorities to exercise universal behavioural control through positive and negative incentives.<sup>40</sup> Xi has developed a true whole of society approach to competition with the West, and to the achievement of future great power, and perhaps even hegemonic power status.

China’s governing regime is intolerant of religious diversity or ethnic sensitivity. The treatment of Falun Gong adherents is well-documented,<sup>41</sup> as is the brutal repression of Uighur<sup>42</sup> and Tibetan<sup>43</sup> nationalities. It is built on a rigid domestic hierarchy and a China-centric international hierarchy.

These long-term strategic approaches aspire to a China-centric world order guaranteed by China’s military and economic dominance. That world order would reflect the value system of the CCP and “be more coercive than the present order, consensual in ways that primarily benefit connected elites even at the expense of voting publics and considered legitimate mostly to those few who it directly rewards. China would deploy this order in ways that damage liberal values, with authoritarian winds blowing stronger across the region.

<sup>37</sup> Peng, Y. “Fundamentals to Observe for Maintaining and Shaping National Security in the New Era: Study the Outline for Studying the Overall National Security Outlook,” *People’s Daily*, April 26, 2022 (translated and published by CSIS Interpret: China (<https://interpret.csis.org/translations/fundamentals-to-observe-for-maintaining-and-shaping-national-security-in-the-new-era-study-the-outline-for-studying-the-overall-national-security-outlook/>)).

<sup>38</sup> Xi Jinping speech on the CCP’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, July 1, 2021 (<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Full-text-of-Xi-Jinping-s-speech-on-the-CCP-s-100th-anniversary>).

<sup>39</sup> “The Party leads on everything: China’s changing governance in Xi Jinping’s new era,” *MERICs China Monitor*, Sept. 24, 2019 (<https://merics.org/en/report/party-leads-everything>).

<sup>40</sup> Liang, F. et al. “Constructing a Data-Driven Society: China’s Social Credit System as a State Surveillance Infrastructure,” *Policy and Internet* Volume 10, Issue 4, December 2018 (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/poi3.183>).

<sup>41</sup> Hintjens, H. “Is The Persecution Of Falun Gong In China Tantamount To Genocide?,” *Journal of Political Risk*, Vol. 9, No. 9, September 2021 (<https://www.jpolarisk.com/is-the-persecution-of-falun-gong-in-china-tantamount-to-genocide/>).

<sup>42</sup> Maizland, L. “China’s Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang,” *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder*, March 1, 2021 (<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang>). A recently released study by Bradley Jardine describes how China’s repression of the Uighur nationality has become a transnational campaign extending to 44 countries; Jardine, B. “Great Wall of Steel China’s Global Campaign to Suppress the Uyghurs,” *The Wilson Center*, March 2022 ([https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Great%20Wall\\_of\\_Steel\\_rpt\\_web.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Great%20Wall_of_Steel_rpt_web.pdf)).

<sup>43</sup> Bradsher, H. S. “Tibet Struggles to Survive,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 1969 ([https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1969-07-01/tibet-struggles-survive?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=gap\\_ds&gclid=CjwKCAjwjtOTBhAvEiwASG4bCPlk90gAgGnbLqWYgYa5V5PTkHfJwvkY0\\_nDFMxq-EWulkMJualu-BoCdlgQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1969-07-01/tibet-struggles-survive?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=gap_ds&gclid=CjwKCAjwjtOTBhAvEiwASG4bCPlk90gAgGnbLqWYgYa5V5PTkHfJwvkY0_nDFMxq-EWulkMJualu-BoCdlgQAvD_BwE)). For a more recent treatment see Cimmino, R. “Threat from Tibet? Systematic Repression of Tibetan Buddhism in China,” *Harvard International Review*, Fall 2018 (<https://hir.harvard.edu/repression-tibetan-buddhism-china/>).

Order abroad is often a reflection of order at home, and China's order-building would be distinctly illiberal relative to U.S. order-building."<sup>44</sup>

## ANTI-STRATEGY

The Western response to the emerging global threat environment has been ad hoc and disjointed. The pre-eminent elements of the response have been economic sanctions (sometimes coordinated, sometimes not), diplomatic pressure (again sometimes coordinated, sometimes not), and a dramatic increase in defence spending. Under former President Donald Trump, America embraced a unilateralist foreign policy, alienating both allies and adversaries, setting back an aligned strategic approach four years. The Biden Administration's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, published in March 2021, softened the "America First" obsession of its predecessor but suffers from many of the flaws that have plagued earlier versions.<sup>45</sup> The process of crafting the National Security Strategy for the United States is bureaucratic and unwieldy, described by one scholar as "a rhetorical exercise, characterized by grandiose ambitions and laundry lists of priorities."<sup>46</sup> The strategic processes of America's allies and partners are no less so.

The Western countries are conceptually handicapped in strategy by their adherence to a binary concept of war; either our armed forces are engaged in violent combat (war!), or they are not (peace!). As the late American diplomat George Kennan put it, "We have been handicapped by a popular attachment to the concept of a basic difference between peace and war."<sup>47</sup> Though there is a burgeoning literature on hybrid conflict and gray zone conflict to complement the mature and abundant literature on irregular and unconventional warfare,<sup>48</sup> no Western nation has yet designed a strategy for deploying all the elements of national strength (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic – the so-called DIME) in a coordinated and continuous posture to counter the relentless assault. There is no coherent

<sup>44</sup> Excerpt from "The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order" by former Brookings Fellow Rush Doshi, by Doshi, R. Brookings Institution, August 2, 2021 (<https://www.brookings.edu/essay/the-long-game-chinas-grand-strategy-to-displace-american-order/>).

<sup>45</sup> Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, The White House, March 2021 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>).

<sup>46</sup> Lissner, R. F. "The National Security Strategy Is Not a Strategy: Trump's Incoherence Is a Reminder of Why a New Approach Is Needed," *Foreign Affairs*, December 19, 2017 ([https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/untied-states/2017-12-19/national-security-strategy-not-strategy?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=gap\\_ds&gclid=Cj0KCQjwhLKUBhDiARIsAMaTLnGTsKdjiJCEv7TRc7FJV4XUL1RkyEBvM\\_WaQ4Lbauuj19SWkg0fN7UaAuOpEALw\\_wcB](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/untied-states/2017-12-19/national-security-strategy-not-strategy?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=gap_ds&gclid=Cj0KCQjwhLKUBhDiARIsAMaTLnGTsKdjiJCEv7TRc7FJV4XUL1RkyEBvM_WaQ4Lbauuj19SWkg0fN7UaAuOpEALw_wcB)).

<sup>47</sup> Kennan, G. "The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare," [Redacted Version], April 30, 1948, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, Obtained and contributed by A. Ross Johnson. Cited in his book "Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, Ch1 n4. NARA release courtesy of Douglas Selvage. Redacted final draft of a memorandum dated May 4, 1948, and published with additional redactions as document 269, 'FRUS, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment.' <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320>.

<sup>48</sup> See Footnote 1. See also Hoffman, F. "Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars," *Potomac Institute for Policy Studies*, December 2007 ([https://www.potomac institute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac\\_hybridwar\\_0108.pdf](https://www.potomac institute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf)). A later refinement of Hoffman's interpretation is here, Hoffman, F. "Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges," *PRISM* Volume 7, No. 4, November 2018 (<https://cco.ndu.edu/news/article/1680696/examining-complex-forms-of-conflict-gray-zone-and-hybrid-challenges/>).

set of principles or options for countering the persistent threat posed by our adversaries nor is there a strategic framework for rationalizing, coordinating, or synchronizing a response.

This anti-strategic handicap is compounded in coalition operations, which have historically been compromised by conflicting interests and priorities, free-riding, and intra-coalition competition. Though NATO and its close partners have been surprisingly aligned in responding to Russia's brutal 2022 invasion of Ukraine, there are certainly cracks in the firmament; and only time will tell how long the basic consensus will hold.

This ad hoc and disjointed anti-strategy is rife with risk, and patently unsuited to the challenges of persistent and comprehensive gray zone conflict, especially when our adversaries – peer and non-peer competitors – operate freely in the gray zone.

## THE PERSISTENT THREAT...

As discussed, China, Russia, and the global Salafist jihadi movement each view the liberal, rules-based world order championed by the United States and its allies and partners as a permanent and implacable adversary, impeding the realization of their respective strategic visions. For each compromise is merely a short-term posture, with the demise of American global power the ultimate objective. Though vastly different in culture, resources, and power, they share an authoritarian vision of world order irrevocably opposed to the freedoms that we embrace. Human rights, freedom of religion, of the press, of assembly, and especially the freedom to choose our own governors and governments are anathema to their regimes and ideologies. Typically, they pursue their strategic objectives independently, but their shared hostility to the liberal, rules-based system on occasion makes them partners of convenience. In addition, their corrosive impact on the liberal, rules-based system is additive and cumulative.

This multi-front, multi-domain war is not random. China, Russia, and the Salafi jihadists persistently demonstrate strategic determination to exploit American and Western weaknesses, and the seams in the fabric that hold the liberal world order together. Untroubled by bi-annual elections, quarterly earnings, or television ratings, though they embrace distinct and ultimately incompatible ideologies, they are each driven to supplant U.S. or Western dominance, without remorse, without empathy, and without restraint. And they will not cease, at least not in the near future.

## ... MEETS TOTAL DEFENCE

Confronting adversaries adamantly opposed to the fundamental principles of the liberal world order, the United States and its allies and partners need a far more comprehensive response than interagency collaboration or even “whole of government” can deliver. In the United States segmented defence, where only parts, or even the whole U.S. government defends while the rest of America carries on with business as usual, is a losing proposition. To counter irreconcilable adversaries – and to ensure that our children enjoy the fruits of freedom as we have – will require a comprehensive strategy built upon the conjoined and synchronized efforts of all the elements of American and allied power, including governments, the private and civil society sectors, the technology leaders, and the information and educational sectors.

Fortunately, a model exists for such a comprehensive national security construct; Total Defence. Total Defence is not an abstract or theoretical concept; there are several real-world

models worthy of examination, or even emulation. Several of the Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway) and the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) embrace some version of total defence, as do Israel, Singapore, and even the Republic of Georgia. What these countries have in common is a visceral and existential sense of endangerment by a predatory neighbour, Russia in the cases of the Nordics, Baltics, and Georgia, historically hostile Arab states, and today Iran in Israel's case, and emerging China for Singapore.

Many critics of the "militarization" of foreign policy<sup>49</sup> who demand the end of endless wars will be harshly critical of this; unfortunately, as the saying goes, "the enemy gets a vote;" the endless wars will not end until the enemy votes to end them.

In essence, the total defence concept is a whole-of-nation mobilization for the purpose of national survival, built on the concepts of resistance (in the case of territorial aggression) and resilience.<sup>50</sup> Each of these countries' governments has asked its citizens, companies, and civil society to join in partnership to be on constant alert for potential aggression, to deter aggression from adversaries large and small, and to energetically resist physical encroachments. Total defence is viewed as a national mission requiring firm resolve, enduring commitment, and both personal and collective sacrifice, and differing from conventional military defence by the direct involvement of civil society.<sup>51</sup>

For the Nordic and Baltic states, the goal of total defence is to "become a porcupine;" indigestible to a prospective attacker. Acknowledging their respective inability to withstand a sustained and full-on Russian military assault their objective is to stall the enemy offensive as long as possible (hopefully until allied reinforcements arrive), then to aggressively resist occupation. They would accomplish this indigestibility through a combination of territorial defence and national resilience, thus raising the cost of aggression by an enemy and diminishing the prospect of its success. It is in other words a whole-of-society deterrence posture intended to signal preparation for resolute resistance to domination.

## Sweden

Total defence was the guiding principle of Sweden's security strategy during the Cold War, however, successive post-Cold War governments chose to cash in on the peace dividend following the Cold War's end in 1991. Sweden effectively demobilized; however, the concept was revived following the Russian invasion of the Republic of Georgia in 2008 and the occupation and annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in Ukraine's Donbas region in 2014. The Swedish defence policy bill of 2015 included a call to "re-establish the total defence," and in 2018 military conscription resumed.

<sup>49</sup> And there are many. Start here, *Mission Creep: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy?* Edited by Adams, G. and Murray, S. Georgetown University Press, 2014. Sjurson, Danny. "Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy: How to Lose a Cold War With China". *The Diplomat*, January 12, 2022 (<https://thediplomat.com/tag/militarization-of-u-s-foreign-policy/>). Coyne, C. J. "Delusions of Grandeur: On the Creeping Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy," Working Paper no. 11-11, Mercatus Center, George Mason University, February 2011 (<https://ppe.mercatus.org/system/files/wp1111-creeping-militarization-of-us-foreign-policy.pdf>).

<sup>50</sup> Fiala, O. and Petterson, U. "ROC(K) Solid Preparedness: Resistance Operations Concept in the Shadow of Russia," *PRISM* Vol. 8, N.4, June 11, 2020 (<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2217669/rock-solid-preparedness-resistance-operations-concept-in-the-shadow-of-russia/>).

<sup>51</sup> Wither, J. K. "Back to the Future? Nordic total defence concepts," *Defence Studies*, 20:1, January 26, 2020 (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14702436.2020.1718498?scroll=top&needAccess=true>).

In 2018 the Swedish government sent all Swedish families a notice entitled “If Crisis or War Comes,” informing citizens that, “The term ‘total defence’ denotes all activities that are needed in order to prepare Sweden for war. Sweden’s total defence consists of military defence and civil defence,” and that, “All of us have a duty to act if Sweden is threatened.”<sup>52</sup> A Swedish Defence Commission secretariat report summary specifies further that in the case of an armed attack, “The Swedish Armed Forces, supported by the rest of our total defence, will defend Sweden to win time and create room for manoeuvre and options in order to secure Sweden’s independence. A resolute and permanent resistance will be mobilized.” To further emphasize the comprehensive nature of total defence the summary states that, “According to Swedish law, there is also a requirement for businesses to participate in the total defence planning process. Enterprises important for the war effort should be identified and regulated.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, “the Parliament, the Government, government authorities, municipalities, private enterprises, voluntary defence organizations as well as individuals are all part of the total defence.”<sup>54</sup> To this date, private sector participation is required in total defence planning though no provisions are yet in place to specify the exact details of public-private burden sharing in total defence.

## Finland

Unlike Sweden, Finland resisted the peace dividend temptation and did not demobilize at the end of the Cold War but maintained mandatory military conscription and a robust defence capability. Having ceded 11 percent of its territory to the Soviet Union in the Treaty of Moscow in 1940, and with a 1,300 km border with Russia today, Finland has remained vigilant and wary of Russian intentions. Finland’s overall posture is articulated in the Security Strategy for Society, according to which, “preparedness is based on the principle of comprehensive security in which the vital functions of society are jointly safeguarded by the authorities, business operators, organizations and citizens.”<sup>55</sup>

Finland’s emphasis is territorial defence provided by a combined conscript and professional soldier force that can rapidly mobilize up to 280,000, in the context of “comprehensive security.” In 2015, Finland’s defence authorities sent letters to all 900,000 reservists informing them of their responsibilities and roles in total defence in the case of a crisis.<sup>56</sup> The Government’s Defence Report of 2017 states, “In addition to traditional military threats Finland prepares to meet increasingly complex challenges which amalgamate both military and non-military means. External and internal security are ever more distinctly intertwined.” It goes on to say, “The maintenance of the defence capability requires close cooperation among the different actors of society. The rapid deployment of the resources

<sup>52</sup> “If Crisis or War Comes,” Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2018 (<https://rib.msb.se/filer/pdf/28706.pdf>).

<sup>53</sup> “The Swedish Defence Commission secretariat – unofficial summary, “Resilience: The total defence concept and the development of civil defence 2021–2025,” The Swedish Defence Commission secretariat, December 20, 2017 (<https://www.government.se/4afeb9/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/resilience---report-summary---20171220ny.pdf>).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Security Strategy for Society, Finland Government Resolution / 2. 11. 2017 ([https://turvallisuuskomitea.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/YTS\\_2017\\_english.pdf](https://turvallisuuskomitea.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/YTS_2017_english.pdf)).

<sup>56</sup> Stone, J. “Finland writes to 900,000 military reservists amid heightened tensions with Russia,” *The Independent*, May 22, 2015 (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/finland-writes-to-900-000-military-reservists-amid-heightened-tensions-with-russia-a38941.html>).

and capabilities of the authorities and partners is ensured through partnership and security agreements, memoranda of understanding and joint exercises,” thus reinforcing the “comprehensive security” dimension of Finland’s total defence.

## Singapore

Singapore was forged in Southeast Asia’s post-colonial cauldron, attaining independence from Malaysia in 1965. Surrounded by Islamic countries and vulnerable during a period of global and regional communist/anti-communist tension Singapore adopted the “poisonous shrimp” metaphor for its defence concept. “This metaphor was based on the fact that predators would face the high probability of sustaining unacceptably high operational losses from an attack on Singapore.”<sup>57</sup> Like a poisonous shrimp it might be eaten, but not without unacceptable pain and loss to its adversary.

Total defence was formally launched in Singapore in 1984 as a national initiative to rally all citizens behind the Singapore Armed Forces during wartime borrowing from the Swiss model of comprehensive or general defence. It was envisaged to build a sense of determination for Singaporeans to defend the country under all circumstances. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent global war on terror accelerated its adoption.

The six pillars of total defence are military, civil, economic, social, psychological, and digital defence. The concept was designed to “unite all sectors of society – government, business and the people – in defence of Singapore.” The government “Total Defence Website” states, “Total defence involves every Singaporean playing a part, individually and collectively, to build a strong, secure and cohesive nation. When we are strong, we are able to deal with any crisis.”<sup>58</sup>

Singapore’s total defence rests on the foundation of compulsory military service for males over 18 years of age. With a population of less than 6 million, Singapore has a highly trained and exercised active strength force of over 71,000 with over 350,000 reservists that can be mobilized in case of war or crisis. But the military’s role in total defence is tightly integrated with the other five pillars of defence in what has been called “civil-military fusion,” pre-dating the common use of that phrase to describe civil-military relations in today’s China.<sup>59</sup>

## Israel

Possibly the most advanced and comprehensive total defence state, though it may not be known by that name, is Israel. Since its birth in 1948, Israel has fought multiple wars against Arab adversaries. Though Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994 signed peace treaties with Israel, and other Arab states have more or less acquiesced to Israel’s permanence, they remain implacable enemies. As long as it is ruled by the Islamic regime, Iran will not

<sup>57</sup> Matthews, R. & Yan, N. Z. (2007) Small Country ‘Total Defence’: A Case Study of Singapore, *Defence Studies*, 7:3, 376–395. DOI: 10.1080/14702430701559289 (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14702430701559289>).

<sup>58</sup> Total Defence 2022, Ministry of Defence, Government of Singapore ([https://www.mindef.gov.sg/oms/imindef/mindef\\_websites/topics/totaldefence/index.html](https://www.mindef.gov.sg/oms/imindef/mindef_websites/topics/totaldefence/index.html)).

<sup>59</sup> Tan, T. Y. Singapore: Civil-Military Fusion. In M. Alagappa (ed.) *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* (276–293), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

embrace peace with Israel, nor will its proxies Syria or Hezbollah in Lebanon. In Israel's "near abroad" there is Hamas.

Recognizing its geostrategic vulnerabilities and existential threats, Israel's fundamental security posture is inherently comprehensive. Its "national security then consists of a gamut of components that go beyond the purely military aspect. It deals with security, political, economic, social, demographic, and other components that together form the foundation on which the nation's and people's security rests."<sup>60</sup> Though resting upon the formidable Israel Defence Forces, Israel's national security is broad-based; "The economic component of national security is aimed at developing society, education, and culture to strengthen the state and bolster social cohesion and solidarity."<sup>61</sup>

Israel has had mandatory universal military conscription and long-term reserve requirements (with some exceptions) since its birth. Uniquely military service in Israel is compulsory for both men and women. The highly educated force includes 169,500 current active personnel (~130,000 conscripts and ~40,000 career officers and NCOs) with over 400,000 reservists. The country is on constant alert and ready for instant mobilization. Both the military and the civilian rear – indeed all of Israel and all Israelis are under the threat of rockets of all kinds, and as a result, after 1991 the government subsidized home shelters. In addition, Israel has a very well-developed alert system, school drills and other civil defence features. With a highly developed defence innovation base, a high defence/GDP ratio (5.6 percent), and technology dominance partially provided by substantial military collaboration with the United States Israel is prepared for any national security its leadership may perceive.

## Others

Several other countries have embraced or are embracing the total defence concept in the face of an increasingly volatile and dangerous global threat environment. The Republic of Georgia already experienced in 2008, the kind of aggression from Russia that the Baltic and Nordic states fear. In 2018, Georgia adopted a total defence concept and began the build-up of an "active" and "mobilization" reserve to complement its regular armed forces. According to former Georgian Defence Minister Levan Izoria, "The Total Defence Concept means a broad involvement of society in the defence of the country and it's not just military component."<sup>62</sup> The total defence responsibilities will be mandatory for all adult Georgian citizens who have not reached retirement age. Every citizen of Georgia aged 18 to 65 will be obliged to serve in the "mobilization reserve" for 45 days a year if drafted. "Within the framework of the 'Total Defence' approach, the MoD recognises the importance of actively participating in all efforts to improve interagency coordination and cooperation with the President and the Prime Minister's offices to enhance the whole-of-government approach to defence planning."<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Eisenkot, G. and Saboni, G. "Guidelines for Israel's National Security Strategy," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 2019 (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/4613>).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Republic of Georgia, Ministry of Defence, News, December 20, 2017 (<https://mod.gov.ge/en/news/read/6261/total-defence-concept>).

<sup>63</sup> Republic of Georgia, Ministry of Defence, "Strategic Defence Review, 2017–2020" (<https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/2018/pdf/SDR-ENG.pdf>).

In response to Russia's increasingly aggressive behaviour, in recent years the Baltic states – Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia – have each adopted a version of total defence to complement their NATO membership. Bordering Russia, the Baltic states are perhaps the most vulnerable in Europe to Russian interference. With strong histories of citizen participation in security the Baltic countries are developing more robust defence capabilities as well as resistance planning to hopefully deter or defend against Russian aggression.

## PARADIGM SHIFT

The United States and its Western allies and partners for most part persist with a 20<sup>th</sup> century paradigm for meeting the national security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The binary war/peace paradigm was adequate in the pre-globalized, pre-informationized world of the Cold War period, but it is not a suitable response to the persistent and comprehensive threat posed by their 21<sup>st</sup> century adversaries. Failure to recognize acts of economic, information, proxy and other “gray zone” forms of belligerence as acts of war, prevents early recognition of and response to adversary aggression. Scruples over proportionality and attribution become effective self-deterrents.

Nearly as detrimental to U.S., allied, and partner security as an outdated conceptual paradigm is the comparatively limited participation of the private sector and of civil society in their respective national security efforts. None of the major Western powers maintains mandatory national service of any kind let alone military conscription. As a result, the burdens of national security are carried disproportionately by a small segment of the population, while the remainder of the population becomes increasingly detached from the national security efforts. This is a formula for defeat in today's global competition for power. The great strength of the Western powers is their dynamic political and economic systems, but without alignment and mobilization those advantages are moot.

While the resumption of compulsory military service may be politically unachievable in these countries today, there are certainly aspects and principles of total defence employed by its current practitioners that might be applied in the United States and its major allies and partners. Universal national service extended to both military and civilian service, improved civic education in schools, national security education in schools, greater civil-military collaboration in community events, public information campaigns, and development of a national doctrine of corporate national security responsibility are possible initiatives to explore.

## ADVANCED ASYMMETRIC ACTION

Even total defence however is primarily reactive and anticipates the initiative being taken by an adversary. If the Russians occupy Donbas, the democratic coalition will apply draconian sanctions. If China militarizes the South and East China Seas, we will boost weapons sales to regional allies. In this posture we are always on the back foot ceding the initiative to our adversaries. As General Ben Hodges said, “Yielding the initiative to the enemy puts us at a disadvantage.”<sup>64</sup> I can think of no organized competition in which perpetually being on the defence is a winning strategy.

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<sup>64</sup> See footnote 1.

Our adversaries today include both peer or near-peer competitors and non-state armed groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Peer or near-peer competitors by definition bring to the battlespace equal or near-equal assets and resources with which to wage war. However, no two states are identical in their assets; thus, battlespace dominance is most likely to accrue to the state that best uses asymmetrical advantage. Carefully identifying our asymmetric advantages is critical to our national (and allied and partner) security.

Certain non-state armed groups excel at asymmetric assaults. For example, the Islamic State was extremely successful in using online applications and anonymous communication networks to recruit members throughout the world to their cause, and used various media very effectively for its information and influence campaigns. By their very nature, such organizations employ asymmetric methods to achieve their strategic objectives as direct and symmetrical competition with the United States or its main allies or partners would be suicidal. Terrorist attacks, cyber-attacks, information warfare and other oblique means are their most common modalities.<sup>65</sup>

As we inventory our asymmetric advantages, it is vital that we examine all the elements of national strength (the so-called DIME – defence, information, military, economic – construct) across the full conflict spectrum and in all domains. Key to successful asymmetric strategy is that an action 1) needs not be directly in response to an adversary action, 2) needs not utilize the same modalities as the adversary, and 3) needs not be taken in the same geographic location that is threatened by an adversary. To shift the burden of reaction to our adversaries, and to prevent them from seizing initiatives of their choosing, action in advance of their initiatives – advanced action – is required.

Diplomatically the collective West – when it works together – has significant clout both in bilateral and multilateral fora. Diplomatic initiatives to put our adversaries on the defensive should be pursued. For example, the recent NATO applications of Sweden and Finland are a fitting asymmetric reprisal for Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and dramatically alter Russia's security calculus in the northern region. This is a clear demonstration of the significant price to be paid for Russia's unacceptable breach of the international norms of national sovereignty and against military seizure of territory.

Likewise, assertive Western diplomacy could catalyse broader condemnation of China's mistreatment of its Uighur population, which is already considered genocidal by some. The West could also achieve much greater diplomatic leverage with robust support for the recent World Court decision supporting the Philippines' territorial claims against China, and China's brazen insistence on flouting this unequivocal statement of international law at the expense of a smaller nation.<sup>66</sup> This could be built into an information campaign denouncing China's attitude that "China is a big country and other countries are small coun-

<sup>65</sup> It is noteworthy that when the Islamic State did try to confront the conventional forces of Iraq on a symmetrical battlefield, despite initial success, they were quickly routed by anti-ISIS coalition forces.

<sup>66</sup> "In the Matter of the South China Sea Arbitration before An Arbitral Tribunal Constituted Under Annex VII to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," July 12, 2016 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190129031833/https://pca-cpa.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/175/2016/07/PH-CN-20160712-Award.pdf>). For insight into the Chinese reaction see, "Whatever happened to the South China Sea ruling?" by Pratik Jakhar, Lowy Institute, July 12, 2021 (<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/whatever-happened-south-china-sea-ruling>).

tries, and that's just a fact," with the clear implication that big countries do what they wish to and smaller countries suffer what they must.<sup>67</sup>

Our collective Western information and intelligence assets and resources are potentially extremely powerful, as was proven throughout the Cold War. Recently the strategic and selective release of intelligence regarding Putin's "false flag" strategy and justification for invading Ukraine caught Russia by surprise and forced it to shift its starting position several times. Regrettably, this clever use of intelligence and information was insufficient to deter Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, it is an innovative asymmetric action that increased Russia's costs by debunking its claims of self-defence against Nazification and anti-Russian actions in Ukraine.

A more effective and assertive use of information warfare – what diplomat George Kennan called "political warfare" – could create asymmetric advantage in a variety of ways.<sup>68</sup> For example, wide dissemination of the riches and sybaritic lifestyles of Russian oligarchs, or privileges enjoyed by the children of the Chinese party elite within those countries could inflame domestic opinion regarding the hypocrisy of their leaders.<sup>69</sup>

As Russia has attempted to sow discontent within the Russian-speaking communities of the Baltic states, Western influence operations aimed at sowing similar discontent among non-Russian minorities within the Russian Federation – such as Chechens or Buryats<sup>70</sup> – might prove effective in sending a message that "two can play at this game." Likewise, an anti-Russification influence campaign in Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan might help to move those countries toward greater scepticism with respect to their northern neighbour.

The economic strength and leverage of the West is far superior to that of its adversaries. While China's economy may be growing at a more rapid rate than those of the Western states, Russia's is not (and China's economy is experiencing its own troubles – there is no guarantee that its future growth will match its recent growth). The U.S. dollar remains the global trading currency and the global SWIFT system of bank transfers is a powerful tool of economic influence. Sanctions and other economic weapons have been used increasingly by the United States and its allies against terrorist and other criminal organizations, rogue states such as Iran, Venezuela, and North Korea, and more recently against China, and especially Russia since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. They can certainly be used pro-actively as opposed to a retaliation for adversary misbehaviour.

Another advanced asymmetric action worthy of consideration is something resembling the Stuxnet attack on Iranian nuclear centrifuges uncovered in 2010, which set back Iran's nuclear development significantly.<sup>71</sup> This digital weapon surreptitiously implanted into the

<sup>67</sup> China Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi statement at the ASEAN Ministers Conference in Hanoi in July 2010. Yang is a high-ranking member of the CCP leadership.

<sup>68</sup> Kennan, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>69</sup> "Alexei Navalny: Millions watch jailed critic's 'Putin palace' film," BBC News, January 20, 2021 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55732296>). "Xi Jinping's daughter Xi Mingze living in America, reveals US Senator Hartzler," The Economic Times, February 21, 2022 (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/xi-jinpings-daughter-xi-mingze-living-in-america-reveals-us-senator-hartzler/articleshow/89728856.cms?from=mdr>).

<sup>70</sup> Kovalev, A. "For Opposition to Putin's War, Look to the Fringes of His Empire," Foreign Policy, May 20, 2022 (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/20/russia-ukraine-war-casualties-deaths-putin-ethnic-minorities-racism/>).

<sup>71</sup> Zetter, K. *Countdown to Zero Day: Stuxnet and the Launch of the World's First Digital Weapon*, Crown Publishers, November 2014.

uranium enrichment facility in Natanz is now commonly assumed to have been developed by U.S. and Israeli intelligence; far below the threshold of an armed conflict it demonstrated the reach and potential of technology-based tools in advancing national security interests.

A profound and legitimate concern regarding advanced asymmetric actions is that the traditional principles of the laws of war cannot be easily applied. For example, since advanced asymmetric action is not intended to be directly retaliatory it might be considered unprovoked. As with cyber conflict though the distinction in the gray zone between offensive and defensive and between preemptory and retaliatory is ambiguous. Here the role of proportionality is elusive. To what would an advanced asymmetric action be proportional? Arguably, an asymmetric action could be justified on the basis that it responds to persistent gray-zone aggression across all domains by our adversaries and thus is an appropriate counteraction. It may be difficult to justify an advanced asymmetric action in terms of military necessity, but military necessity is not a criterion for justifying non-military, asymmetric or gray-zone action.

Escalation is another concern, but escalation is an inevitable risk of any action or reaction in war, and we must accept that risk if we intend to remain competitive in the global competition for influence in the evolving world order. Advanced, asymmetric actions are demonstrations below the threshold of armed conflict for deterrence purposes. It is crucial that the United States and its allies and partners have a robust and credible deterrence toolbox in order to avoid the unenviable position of being self-deterred for lack of options, and in order to effectively defend the liberal, rules-based world order, and prevail in the contemporary struggle for global dominance.

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