

WEEK 21, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

# CHINA INSIDER

## PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

NEW US ARMY VIDEO SHINES  
SPOTLIGHT ON CHINA THREAT

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Soldiers from China's People's Liberation Army march on Red Square during a military parade, which marks the 75th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, in Moscow on June 24, 2020.

## OPINION

# World War III by Proxy?

Russia-Ukraine war has evolved into a contest between Russia and China and the US and Europe via NATO

JAMES GORRIE



The war in Ukraine is no longer just the war in Ukraine. Nor is it a Russia versus Ukraine situation. It already involves military personnel, equipment, or financial support from countries on three continents. If the war continues to the detriment of Russia, the argument could be made that we're witnessing the beginning of World War III.

## Proxy War Is Still War

As Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently said on Russian state media: "NATO, in essence, is engaged in a war with Russia through a proxy and is arming that proxy. War means war."

Lavrov is right, of course, and therein lies the great risk of escalation. In fact, it may already be all but unavoidable.

## Russia Has Few Military Options

That may well be the case because Russia's army and air forces have been far less effective than what Vladimir Putin—and likely everybody else—expected. Going forward, what are Russia's military options?

First, it's important to understand that Putin will continue on his militaristic path. He's committed—more on that score in a moment.

Since the military option is really the only option as far as policy is concerned, what more can Russia throw at Ukraine?

What more can the Russian military do to gain a favorable outcome?

With the Western nations supplying Ukraine with highly effective weapons, the Russians are at a battlefield resistance level and even disadvantage in some cases that they certainly had not anticipated. As of April 21, Russia has lost 829 tanks and over 170 planes, and suffered over 21,000 casualties.

The momentum of the fight is with the Ukrainians, not the Russians. Low morale and clear Ukraine victories are poisoning the Russian military's will to fight. Putin knows he has to change the board, or else he personally will pay the price.

## Putin Has Few Good Choices

But what choices does Putin have?

He has already threatened the West, specifically the United Kingdom and the

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A rescue worker gestures in front of the shopping and entertainment center in the Ukrainian Black Sea city of Odessa on May 10, 2022, destroyed after Russian missiles strike late on May 9, 2022.

United States, with war. And, per Lavrov, Putin has asserted that the United States is already at war with Russia by proxy.

But the threat isn't just war, but nuclear strikes against both the UK and the United States. These threats have been expressed on Russian state television and in state publications. Clearly, they've been approved for dissemination.

In short, Putin is telling the West that he's considering all military options. We'd do well to believe him because he has few soft power options. Sure, he can cut natural gas supplies to the European Union, but Brussels is already taking steps to reduce and eventually eliminate its dependence on Russian fuel within months. That option will soon be off the table.

Another gambit is food. By cutting Ukraine's grains exports, shortages are inevitable. But so far, that hasn't had the teeth that Putin would have liked it to have.

A third option is cyberattacks, which are already being applied but could certainly escalate. Disabling satellite communications via cyberattack, for example, could be a precursor to a nuclear strike.

## NATO Expands—Will Old USSR Reappear?

What does have teeth is Finland and Sweden's potential membership in NATO. With this soon-to-be addition to NATO, Putin's concerns about encircle-

ment by the West are fulfilled. The UK has already openly expressed that a mutual defense arrangement with the two is understood and will soon be codified.

This development effectively adds to Russia's list of adversaries and expands the war, most likely driving Putin's insecurity and aggression onward. In response, Russia and Belarus are calling on former USSR nations to form a new USSR. This, too, is escalatory.

These two events could add new potential combatant nations into the conflict. Who else is Putin calling?

## Will China Stand Up or Stand Down?

Russia is asking for China's help with the material and financing for the war in Ukraine. So far, Beijing has had a muted response.

It's easy to see why. The EU and the United States, along with Ukraine, are also urging China to convince Putin to abandon his war. Beijing hasn't responded to either request. No doubt China is shocked at the incompetence of the Russian military but, at the same time, must stand by its geopolitical partner while protecting its valuable trade relationships with America and Europe.

As for Putin, he has even fewer options, whether political or personal (at this point, they are one and the same). His very survival depends on avoiding defeat.

Again, it would appear that expanding the war is Putin's best option to stay above the grass. With both Russia and Putin cornered and fighting for survival, one other simple option presents itself, which would be nothing less than removing Putin from power in any way you can. Surely, those Russian generals who are still alive have considered such a move.

For their sake, and the rest of the world's, let's hope they find a way to make that move because, as Putin has made clear, war by proxy means war. In other words, the war-by-proxy status that the United States is fighting with Russia is very temporary.

advancing on Taiwan.

That option is more to Beijing's thinking and liking, and will happen sooner than later. The important point to note is that the war in Ukraine is now linked to war in Asia and has potentially accelerated that eventuality.

U.S. intelligence confirms that China is preparing to make a move on Taiwan, which would present a difficult choice for the U.S. administration.

## Japan Signs Defense Agreement With the UK and Australia

Beijing's planned move on Taiwan isn't lost on Japan, the UK, and Australia. Both the UK and Australia have recently signed mutual defense pacts with Japan to recognize the rising threat that China represents.

What's more, in light of Japan's new defense posture that links its security to Taiwan's, these defense agreements effectively link all three nations to China's behavior toward Taiwan. It's not inconceivable that moves by Beijing toward Taiwan may in part be driven by events in Ukraine.

## All Options Point to Escalation

The bottom line is that everyone knows that Russia lacks the military capabilities to easily defeat Ukraine. That time has passed. It also lacks the soft power in terms of financial tools that would give it an advantage over Europe.

Russia's only self-contained power plays against the West are fuel and food, and nuclear war. The effectiveness of the first two is declining rapidly.

And the nuclear option? It rather speaks for itself, doesn't it?

Other non-nuclear external options are the China option and the few alliances it can make with former Soviet nations, as well as the bad guys in Tehran and Ankara.

But since natural gas sales—one of Russia's main sources of revenue—will go away in the not-too-distant future, Putin will either have to gain a favorable outcome before that happens or find a way to replace those lost revenues.

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Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

## OPINION

# Beijing Policymakers in Bind as Property Market Spirals

FAN YU

Ordinarily, Beijing would eagerly rescue its property developers and enact aggressive policy easing to prop up a sagging real estate market.

But these are not ordinary times. Despite facing terrible economic conditions and outlook, China's financial policymakers have only responded with relatively modest easing measures. The reason is twofold. One, regulators want to curb excess leverage in the property sector and there's disagreement on whether or how much to bail out the industry. And two, Beijing fears the ineffectiveness of stimulus measures, especially in areas under COVID-related lockdowns.

As Beijing continues to test the limits of China's tolerance for real estate pain, global investors are wise to stay far, far away.

Headlines have moved on and Evergrande is seldom in the news, but real estate developers are still struggling, and it's spread to beyond a few names. Sunac China Holdings Ltd., the country's number four property developer by sales and formerly had one of the stronger balance sheets in the sector, in May defaulted on a \$29.5 million interest payment on its offshore dollar bonds.

April sales among the country's biggest developers more than halved compared to last year. Yicai, a mainland Chinese business website, said that major real estate companies, including Vanke and Country Garden, saw a combined sales decline of 52 percent from last April. By another measure, home sales by floor space declined 42 percent in April year over year.

On the ground, continued COVID lockdowns have kept workers at home, shut businesses, halted construction, and vastly reduced sales traffic in showrooms. The resulting economic pressures have also hit consumer confidence, with fewer buyers willing to commit to new home purchases.

Given this backdrop, more property developer defaults should be expected going forward.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has apparently decided to pass another round of mini-stimulus. On May 15, Bei-

jing announced it would let banks cut the lower limits of interest rates for first-time homebuyers by 20 basis points.

The People's Bank of China (PBoC) and the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, in a joint notice, said that borrowers purchasing their first homes will have the lower limit of potential mortgage rate reduced to 20 basis points (0.2 percent) below the prime rate.

It's not nothing, but it certainly won't move the needle for the property market. But it puts into action CCP regime boss Xi Jinping's words when he said a few years ago that "homes are for living in, not for speculating." It seems policy stimulus going forward would be moderate and encourage ownership of primary homes, not for investing.

The Financial Times recently suggested that current top monetary policy decision-makers are more hawkish than what we're used to seeing.

Both Liu He, Xi's top economic advisor, and Yi Gang, governor of the PBoC and a Liu ally, are against aggressive interest rate cuts.

China's top policymakers have been trying to deleverage—or at least keep it steady—the Chinese economy over the last few years, and despite the trying economic backdrop, Beijing is keen to keep the spigot shut for as long as possible.

Additionally, there's widespread concern that China will risk currency devaluation and broad-based capital flight as the policy of the PBoC and the U.S. Federal Reserve continues to diverge. As U.S. benchmark rates rise further relative to Chinese rates global investors will look to pull capital out of China.

For now, stimulus support from Beijing has been accompanied by warnings that authorities intend to keep debt levels in check and will look to avoid opening the floodgates.

And this is despite some truly atrocious April economic results, with retail sales falling off a cliff, exports slowing, and construction starts falling by 44 percent.

As Beijing continues to test the limits of China's tolerance for real estate pain, global investors are wise to stay far, far away.

Fan Yu is an expert in finance and economics and has contributed analyses on China's economy since 2015.

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A Taiwan destroyer launches a surface-to-air missile during exercises meant to simulate an attack by communist China, near the east coast of Taiwan on Sept. 26, 2013.



An advertisement of property developer Sunac China Holdings at a residential complex in Shanghai on March 25, 2018.

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

## Falun Gong Remains the Prime Target of Chinese Regime: Leaked Document

KELLY SONG

Leaked documents from the Political and Legal Affairs Committee (PLAC) in Tieling county of China's northeastern Liaoning Province reveal that the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) effort to "transform" or "zero out" Falun Gong remains the prime target of the regime.

One of the documents titled "Progress Report Submitted to the Provincial PLAC Inspection Group" said that in April 2019, nine of the highest-ranking ministries under the CCP's Central Committee issued an order to force all Falun Gong practitioners to give up their spiritual practice.

Minghui.org, a website that documents the CCP's campaign of persecution against Falun Gong, reported that policemen knocked on the door of Peng Zhiqiang's parents' home, demanding "You must sign these papers, or else." The couple refused to sign, and the police left.

Then the police called the couple's son who is not a Falun Gong practitioner and said "your parents did not want to sign the papers, this will cost you your career unless you sign for them!"

Peng was scared and signed the papers. He later published a statement on minghui.org to say that he regrets doing so.

Peng's parents are practitioners of Falun Gong, a spiritual practice the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been persecuting since 1999.

What happened to the Peng family has happened to families throughout China in recent years. According to minghui.org, this "door-knocking" campaign—conducted under the direction of the Central Committee—has a goal of "zeroing out" Falun Gong, even if only on paper.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is an ancient Chinese spiritual practice consisting of slow-moving meditation exercises and moral teachings that promote truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance in everyday life. Its popularity peaked in the late 1990s in China, with 70 million to 100 million adherents, according to official estimates.

The "door-knocking" campaign, referenced in one of the leaked documents, was jointly ordered by nine top agencies directly affiliated with the CCP Central Committee.

The PLAC is one of the CCP's security apparatuses that maintains control across different levels of central, provincial, and municipal government offices. It maintains lists of Falun Gong practitioners down to the neighborhood level, including Falun Gong practitioners' names, along with their addresses, and information about their relatives. Local police carry out the "door-knocking" campaign by going to each address and asking the practitioner to sign documents renouncing their spiritual practice.

If they get a signature, they can "zero that practitioner out," at least on paper.

## Leaked Document

The Epoch Times obtained exclusive ac-

cess to documents from the Tieling county PLAC office in Liaoning province. Tieling is about 20 miles northeast of Shenyang City, the capital of Liaoning province.

From this [leaked] document, we can see that the CCP still regards Falun Gong as its number one target to suppress, even though the CCP downplays it publicly and tries to hide it from the international community.

Heng He, political commentator

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The PLAC system is a gigantic and powerful network of suppression. It's the main tool in the CCP's persecution of Falun Gong, and the PLAC's power, as well as the high level of corruption that supports the PLAC's power, has grown as the persecution continues.

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give up their practice.

According to the document, in Tieling county, the PLAC immediately held training sessions on how to "transform" Falun Gong practitioners.

In addition to visiting the homes of individuals and trying to force them to sign documents, the PLAC also instructed county police to monitor and stop people from going to Hong Kong.

The year 2019 was the 70th anniversary of the CCP's taking power in China. The document said, "as the 70th anniversary celebration is approaching, and as the activities in Hong Kong are on the rise, in order to prevent those people from participating in activities in Hong Kong, the county police must limit their travel."

## PLAC Inspections

Senior political commentator Heng He told The Epoch Times, "from this [leaked] document, we can see that the CCP still regards Falun Gong as its number one target to suppress, even though the CCP downplays it publicly and tries to hide it from the international community."

"Under the banner of anti-corruption, the CCP Central government sent out inspection groups to different parts of the country since 2017," he said. "They mainly inspect the PLAC network of agencies, where weakness and reluctance in the persecution of Falun Gong is spotted. This means that sustaining the persecution has been very difficult."

The leaked document said, "this year in the county, eight Falun Gong members were

Falun Gong practitioners take part in a parade marking the 30th anniversary of the spiritual discipline's introduction to the public, in New York on May 13, 2022.



Simon Zhang, a New York architect, and his mother, Ji Yunzhi, a Falun Gong practitioner who was taken from her home three days prior to the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics and died 48 days later in police custody.

'transformed,' which is one percent of the total. 122 Falun Gong members were 'relieved' and the number has been reported to the upstream municipal PLAC." It is unclear what "relieved" refers to.

## Cases of Persecution

Such a campaign is being carried out all over the country. According to an April 2021 minghui.org report, the Beijing "zero out" campaign resulted in the deaths of 3 Falun Gong practitioners in 2020, 29 practitioners were given jail sentences, and 249 practitioners were forcefully taken into custody from either their homes or workplaces.

In addition, 153 homes of practitioners were ransacked, and 103 practitioners were visited by the police or received harassing phone calls.

More recently, a female Falun Gong practitioner named Ji Yunzhi from Inner Mongolia died 48 days after she was taken to the police station. She was 66 years old.

On Feb. 1, 2022—Chinese New Year day and three days prior to the beginning of the Winter Olympics in Beijing—Ji was taken from her home by policemen. At the police station, Ji was beaten and tortured. She went on hunger strike to protest but was force-fed through a feeding tube that was forcibly administered through her nose.

Afterward, her health deteriorated rapidly. On Feb. 11, the police notified Ji's family that she was in the hospital. When her husband arrived at the hospital, he saw Ji in a coma. Her ankles were still in shackles.

Despite her critical condition, the police refused to release her. On March 21, Ji passed away.

During this time, in order to prevent the information from leaking to the public, dozens

of police guarded the hospital, the funeral house, and Ji's home for days—even after the body was cremated.

Ji's son, Simon Zhang, is an architect in New York. On April 25, he and several other Falun Gong practitioners met with United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain, who after hearing Ji's story posted on Twitter, "No one deserves to suffer harassment, torture, or imprisonment for their faith."

## Raising Awareness

Since the persecution started in 1999, the CCP and its PLAC system have launched numerous campaigns trying to eradicate Falun Gong via a variety of means. However, the countermeasures used by Falun Gong practitioners seems to remain the same, as they distribute what is called "truth-clarification materials" to raise awareness of the persecution both inside and outside of China.

The leaked document mentioned that the Tieling county PLAC organized people to go around the county to "clean up" Falun Gong materials in public places. In the year of 2019, the document said, "8 cleanup attempts were organized, 378 pieces of print materials, 3 banners, and 26 posters were collected."

The document said that from April to June, the Tieling county PLAC distributed to the public 20,000 pamphlets and 35,000 other types of materials to defame Falun Gong.

Heng He said, "Since the persecution has no legal backing, the CCP has been spending a huge amount of money to defame Falun Gong via manipulating public opinion and fabricating lies spread by its media. In the meantime, the CCP goes all out to block the truth about Falun Gong from reaching the public."

## ORGAN HARVESTING

## Biden Admin Needs to Be 'Much More Active' in Opposing China's Forced Organ Harvesting: Rep. Chabot

EVA FU &amp; STEVE LANCE

The Biden administration needs to be "much more outspoken, much more active" in opposing the "barbaric" forced organ harvesting that the Chinese regime has industrialized to kill and profit off innocents, according to Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio). "This is probably one of the most heinous barbaric practices that's occurring on the earth today. It really sounds like a horror movie in many ways. The difference, of course, is this is real," he told "Capitol Report," a program on The Epoch Times' sister media outlet NTD.

An untold number of prisoners of con-

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Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio)



House Judiciary Committee member Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio) questions former Special Counsel Robert Mueller as he testifies before the House Judiciary Committee about his report on Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election in the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, on July 24, 2019.

science have died under the communist regime's state-sanctioned system of forced organ harvesting.

According to a 2019 finding by an independent panel, the atrocity has targeted primarily the adherents of Falun Gong, a spiritual practice that consists of meditative exercises and moral teachings centered on the tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. The discipline surged in popularity in the 1990s, with up to 100 million practicing by the end of the decade. Perceiving this to be a threat, the Chinese

Communist Party launched a persecution campaign intending to eliminate the practice and its adherents—an effort that has been going on for more than 22 years.

The 2019 panel, known as the China Tribunal, found beyond reasonable doubt that the Chinese regime had for years been harvesting the organs of prisoners of conscience on a significant scale for the transplant market, with no evidence showing that the practice had stopped. The tribunal determined that this constituted crimes against humanity.

China's industrialization of this grisly practice could be bringing in up to \$1 billion per year, Chabot said. Meanwhile, Chinese communist leaders can also tap into this vast organ pool to boost their health and prolong their own lives, he said.

"We could pass strong legislation, we need to do that. But the world really needs to get up in arms about this," said Chabot, who has co-sponsored the Falun Gong Protection Act and the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act of 2021. Both bills aim to seek accountability for the abuse.

"Our own government needs to do this. And I would urge the Biden administration to be much more outspoken, much more active in opposition to this than they have been thus far."

For the United States, "one of the weapons in our arsenal" is to reconsider normal diplomatic relations with China, Chabot said. "This practice is, it's not only inhumane, it's hard to fathom that in the year 2022, that this is still going on—inocent people

involuntarily being murdered and having their organs harvested. It's an outrage," he said. "And China likes to get out there and thump their chest and act like they're a leader."

Since the 2019 tribunal ruling, international condemnation of Beijing's forced organ harvesting has been steadily growing. The European Parliament earlier this month adopted a resolution to condemn the practice, saying it "may amount to crimes against humanity."

In April, a study published in the American Journal of Transplantation found that dozens of Chinese-language publications had inadvertently revealed that lung and heart removals were conducted without conducting the requisite test for brain death—meaning that donors were likely killed in the process of organ removal.

The congressman emphasized that the United States should be working with allies to put pressure on China in relation to this issue.

"We ought to be working on this together now. Many of us have important trade relations with China. And unfortunately, sometimes I think that obscures people's humanity and the right point of view, that is to call out this and do everything within our power to stop such a horrendous practice," he said.

"We shouldn't let earning money get in the way of defending human rights."

The White House and the State Department didn't respond to requests for comment by press time.



Falun Gong practitioners take part in a parade marking the 30th anniversary of the spiritual discipline's introduction to the public, in New York on May 13, 2022.

## CCP MILITARY

# ‘Anything We Touch Is a Weapon’:

## New US Psychological Operations Recruitment Video Casts Spotlight on China Threat

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE



The phrase “A threat rises in the East” is superimposed over rolling footage of Chinese and Russian military parades. Eerie, ethereal music plays as cinematic impressions of the Eurasian alliance between China and Russia are interspersed with images of the last century’s most emblematic struggles for democratic values.

There’s footage of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a free speech protest in Hong Kong, the toppling of a Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad, and the resolute stand of Tiananmen Square’s “Tank Man.”

This is not some documentary about the myriad threats democracy has faced time and time again, but a new video created by the Army’s 4th Psychological Operations Group and shared on social media by U.S. Special Forces Command.

Equal parts recruiting video and actual psychological warfare, the project might best be described as a proof-of-concept for the military’s capability to build confidence at home and instill fear abroad.

The video, aptly titled “Ghosts in the Machine,” opens with a quote from “The Art of War,” written by Chinese military philosopher Sun Tzu some 2,500 years ago:

“If your opponent is of a choleric temper, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant.”

At first glance, one might think the quote suggests that the Chinese Communist Party has been pretending to be weak for years in order to lull the United States into a false sense of superiority. By the end of the three and a half minutes of growing unease, however, one wonders whether it hasn’t been the other way around all along.

Indeed, that may be just the purpose of “Ghosts in the Machine.” After all, the video itself is psychological warfare.

### The Sugar-Coated Pill

To realize the importance of psychological operations such as “Ghosts in the Machine,” one needs to look beyond its visage of cinematic splendor and intentional creepiness, and penetrate to the threat that the video is working against.

According to innumerable reports from the nation’s think tanks and institutions of higher learning, the United States is in a war, though its leadership seems largely unaware of it. It’s a war without conventional weapons, but that is nevertheless being fought in hearts and minds everywhere. Indeed, it is a war on the minds of Americans everywhere.

It’s a psychological campaign of unrestricted hybrid warfare perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) with the purpose of eradicating the United States’ will to defend itself and preserve democratic values.



Chinese soldiers ride in tanks as they pass in front of Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City during a military parade in Beijing on Sept. 3, 2015.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping has referred to the work of organizations that engage in psychological operations for the CCP as China’s ‘magic weapons.’

According to one report published by the Washington-based think tank Hudson Institute earlier this month, this psychological warfare is one part of a suite of so-called cognitive operations used by China’s communist regime to undermine U.S. security.

“Cognitive operations involve using psychological warfare to shape or even control the enemy’s cognitive thinking and decision-making,” the report stated. Indeed, the report quotes directly from the primary propaganda organ of the Chinese military, the PLA Daily, that the ultimate aim of cognitive operations is to “manipulate a country’s values, national spirit/ethos, ideologies, cultural traditions, historical beliefs, etc., to prompt them to abandon their theoretical understanding, social system and development path, and achieve strategic goals without victory.”

In not so many words, it’s a military campaign against the United States to convince Americans to give up their society without fighting.

It is, according to a report by the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, a “long-standing Chinese government strategy to exploit foreign media to deliver Chinese propaganda.” The goal of which is to destabilize and otherwise interfere in the political processes of the United States by offering a “sugar-coated pill,” something easy to swallow but lethal to consume, often in the form of anti-American propaganda disguised as domestic information and reproduced online.

“According to the PLA, China is already in constant battle over the narrative of China’s rise and the PLA’s intentions with other nations, both inside and outside of China, and, most prominently, against the United States,” the report states, referring to the People’s Liberation Army, or China’s military.

The roots of the CCP’s psychological warfare go deep, and its tendrils can be seen crawling rampant across Western media in the form of Twitter bots, sponsored newspaper articles, and state-sponsored misinformation. And the onslaught has been going on for decades.

### ‘Unrestricted Warfare’

The CCP’s current efforts can be traced back to the 1999 book “Unrestricted Warfare.” Written by two retired PLA colonels, the book described the strategy and operations through which China could overcome the United States—without being embroiled in kinetic warfare.

“Unrestricted Warfare” argues that the United States’ weakness was the widespread belief among American military and political leadership that military dominance was solely dependent on technological means, rather than legal, economic, or social factors.

The book, therefore, advocated the use of lawfare, economic warfare, terrorism, and data and supply chain network disruption as various means of undermining the U.S. military.

Much of the book’s proposed strategy was later codified as the Three Warfares Strategy in a 2003 document published by the PLA and titled Political Work Guidelines of the People’s Liberation Army.

Since then, the CCP has worked tirelessly to adapt the Three Warfares Strategy to the social media era, using social networking platforms as tools of war to combat the minds of the Party’s enemies. Moreover, the introduction of Three Warfares has helped to underscore the promulgation of military-civil fusion, a CCP strategy that seeks to erode any boundary between civilian and military spheres, thus accelerating the erosion of distinctions between war and peace.

To that end, it’s vital to understand

that the PLA is not a military of the Chinese state, but a wing of the Chinese Communist Party. Thus, the entire military apparatus of China is designed to defend and promote communism first and foremost.

### Party Above All

How the Chinese military serves the whims of the CCP rather than the interests of the Chinese people was elucidated by retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Robert Spalding during an interview with EpochTV’s “China Insider” on May 12.

“The People’s Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Chinese Communist Party,” Spalding said. “In the West, we consider the military to be a protector of the state, which in a democracy includes the people. In China’s case, the People’s Liberation Army is actually a Party army, so it protects the Party’s prerogatives.”

“Unlike a national army dedicated to the defense of a state and its people, the Chinese military’s purpose is to create political power for the Party.”

According to a report by the U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission, U.S. leadership believed for years that the CCP’s psychological warfare efforts were a thing of the past.

Such beliefs were proven wrong, however, with the rise of CCP leader Xi Jinping in 2012, whose rule has overseen a resurgence of Party initiatives pushing psychological operations as a core part of Chinese national strategy.

Xi has referred to the work of organizations that engage in psychological operations for the CCP as China’s “magic weapons.” Those organizations include, most predominantly, the General Political Department within the PLA and the United Front Work Department, the latter of which is charged with overseeing the regime’s overseas influence opera-

tions and answers directly to the CCP’s Central Committee.

Indeed, since the ascension of Xi, Chinese state-run news agency Xinhua has gone so far as to explicitly characterize the PLA’s psychological warfare and political work as “thoroughly implement[ing] Xi Jinping’s thoughts on socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.”

Importantly, according to the Johns Hopkins report, the CCP’s psychological warfare units under Xi have sought to leverage social media as a key component of “cognitive domain operations” in order to scale Chinese propaganda to a global audience, and to sway, anger, and misinform the citizens of foreign nations to the benefit of the Party.

“China uses the tools of information and finance to advance political warfare on a global scale,” Spalding said.

“It’s a type of warfare that is completely alien to the way that we think of warfare.”

Thus, while U.S. military leaders and members of Congress have harped on budget proposals and the number of ships being built for the Navy, the CCP has already committed itself to winning a war without firing a shot.

### Brave New World

At the heart of the CCP’s efforts to assault the minds of the American public, then, is the critical ability of social media and related technologies to create content that can have a real-world effect.

“The PLA is developing technologies for subliminal messaging, deep fakes, overt propaganda, and public sentiment analysis on Facebook, Twitter, LINE, and other platforms,” according to a report by the RAND Corporation.

“Other articles also suggest that the PLA could blackmail or tarnish the

Unlike a national army dedicated to the defense of a state and its people, the Chinese military’s purpose is to create political power for the party.

Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Robert Spalding



Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Robert Spalding in Washington on Sept. 27, 2019.

The primary objective of the CCP’s efforts is to create doubt, fear, and exhaustion to such an extent that American leadership will make mistakes in planning and executing strategy.

reputation of politicians as well as co-opt individual influential civilian social media users to extend the reach of Chinese propaganda while obfuscating its Party origins.”

It’s through this “hostile social manipulation on foreign platforms” that the CCP can essentially launder state-backed propaganda through proxy channels in the way a mobster might launder ill-gotten gains through a front organization. By obfuscating the origin of social media posts and using technologies such as deep fakes, the Party can more effectively diminish American confidence in the United States’ ability and worthiness.

“What they’ve been able to do is use proxies in the West to have the same control over the narrative in the West that they have within China,” Spalding said. “We have no institution in the West that is tasked with understanding this form of warfare.”

Spalding’s comments were in line with recent remarks made by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who said that the CCP was exploiting the United States’ free and open information channels and social media networks to promote authoritarianism abroad and strike at the heart of American democracy.

### ‘Ghosts in the Machine’

The sudden appearance of a recruitment video for psychological warfare units in the U.S. military is perhaps not such a mystery, given the battles being waged against the American mind.

The primary objective of the CCP’s efforts is to create doubt, fear, and exhaustion to such an extent that American leadership will make mistakes in planning and executing strategy. Likewise, the U.S. Army’s “Ghosts in the Machine” video lifts the mirror at the effort.

“Anything we touch is a weapon,” the video says, before flashing the motto of the 4th Psychological Operations Group, “Verbum Vincet”—“the word will conquer.”

The message is clear enough, China’s transnational campaign of repression and psychological terror is not without recourse. The psychological warfare apparatus of the American military and intelligence communities have changed history before and can do it again.

It’s surely not by accident that images of the famous Tiananmen Square protests were interlaced with videos of pro-democracy revolutions, or that footage of the PLA marching was juxtaposed with the fall of the Soviet Union.

The United States has toppled great powers from within and from without, the video implies, and can do so again.

As the video so abruptly states, “We are everywhere.”

Andrew Thornebrooke is a reporter for The Epoch Times covering China-related issues with a focus on defense, military affairs, and national security. He holds a master’s in military history from Norwich University.



U.S. Air Force Maj. Shane Garner, 337th Test and Evaluation Squadron, completes a flight in a B-1B Lancer at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, on Jan. 21, 2014.

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