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Webinar Summary Report: China – The Three Warfare Strategy



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The Three Warfare Strategy

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DISCLAIMER:

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Talks

1. **Talk by Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia, PVSM, AVSM, SM (Retd), Director, CENJOWS.**

The salient points that can be drawn from the talk of the speaker are as under :-

- China shares its borders with 23 nations (14 land and 9 maritime) and most of these nations have issues with China.
- Hence we see China engaged concurrently with a host of nations on various issues including boundary disputes.
- China would like to see all these nations towing the line of the Chinese Communist Party.
- As far as India's current face-off with China is concerned, as per the CCP, the disengagement process that India is seeking has already been completed.
- In the present case India probably went wrong in anticipating China's strategy and China went wrong in anticipating India's reactions to its actions.
- In the economic domain, it is getting countries into a debt trap.
- In the diplomatic domain it is the 'wolf warrior' diplomacy that is at play.
- In the military domain it is the Three Warfare Strategy that China has been pursuing since 2003. China's three warfare strategy aims at winning without fighting.
- It is carrying out psychological warfare by shaping both national and international opinion for the party. It wields political power for the CCP, not for China.
- Towards this end 'Global Times' is being vigorously used as a mouthpiece by CCP.
- India should also try to use the information domain to its advantage. eg. even though India had struck terrorist camps at Jabbar Top, the name that the media circulated was Balakot, which was to Pakistan's advantage. Thus India played to Pakistan's narrative whereas it should have made better use of the opportunity.
- China would like conflict resolution on its own terms.
- India should try and understand what China is trying to achieve but this will probably require certain changes to be made in the structure of the Ministries such as creating a Ministry for National Security and create structures in the information domain



2. Talk by Lt Gen K Surendranath, PVSM, AVSM**, SM, (Retd).

The salient points that can be drawn from the talk of the speaker are as under :-

- CCP has a name for media warfare – ‘Thought Process Refining’
- They have created a unique media environment by creating a barrier between domestic and international environment.
- It aims at generating support from its internal as well as international populations.
- China spends a large amount of money on this process.
- China’s online influence supports its offline influence operations.
- Courses for journalists from abroad are highly subsidized.
- Chinese diaspora is actively used for influencing.
- CCP bases its three warfare strategy on two pillars:
 - ✓ **Propaganda Dept.** This department is used for shaping thoughts.
 - ✓ **United Front Works Department (UFWD).** This dept influences the elite population inside and outside China. It has three additional bureaus to control Chinese students abroad.
- Examples of Chinese propaganda :
 - ✓ Towards media consolidation as most of the news channels in China have been merged into ‘Voice of China’, which is the mouthpiece of CCP.
 - ✓ CCP took all possible measures to ensure that attention related to the COVID pandemic was diverted away from China.
 - ✓ China spread all sorts of false information through social media during the Taiwanese elections.
 - ✓ While its border clashes with India are on -
 - (i) China has blocked all access to Indian News Channels and media.
 - (ii) It has spread fake news.
 - (iii) It has circulated articles against the BJP government.
 - (iv) A large number of articles on the 1962 war have been made to circulate in India and abroad.
 - ✓



- ✓ Cyber attacks on Australia –
 - (i) Unit 61398 based in Shanghai carried out these attacks.
 - (ii) Remote code execution and spear-phishing was extensively used.
 - (iii) Third countries were used, making attribution extremely difficult.
- Recommended Counter Measures :-
 - ✓ Establishment of a combined structure to work across ministries.
 - ✓ Exploitation of anti-China sentiments.
 - ✓ Utilization of Taiwanese and Hongkong assets.
 - ✓ Resource sharing with friendly Foreign Countries.

3. Talk by Mr Manoj Kewalramani, Associate Fellow – China Studies, The Takshila Institute.

The salient points that can be drawn from the talk of the speaker are as under :-

- Lawfare is a critical component in Beijing's actions.
- The earlier Confucius approach principled it's actions on 'virtue'. However, the CCP's Lawfare approach is principled on distorting laws for the party's advantage.
- It aims at cultivating legitimacy by creating legal structures to allow it to do what it wants to do and de-legitimizing adversaries' actions.
- The larger of objective of CCP is to cultivate authority.
- The world over-thinks China's capabilities. Retreat of democracies is what is allowing Beijing to do what it is doing.
- Examples of China's Lawfare:-
 - ✓ China used Lawfare to gain advantages in the South China Sea by leading PRC to enact the 'Law of Exclusive Economic Zones and Continental Shelf' in 1998.
 - ✓ China has 'legalized' internment camps in which it is detaining millions of Uyghurs.
 - ✓ CCP recently passed the Hongkong Security Law and postponed the elections in Hongkong.
 - ✓ Lawfare and public opinion warfare is strategic while psychological operations is tactical.

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- The Chinese media builds word constructs in order to influence minds. Words like obstructing, trespassing, illegal, provoking, interfering are extensively used to mould the thoughts of the target audience.
- China is attempting to make the United Nations Organization a tool for achieving its hegemonic ambitions. However its methods may not succeed as value proposition should be appealing to people – which in China’s case, isn’t.
- It is seeking legitimacy for all its actions.

4. Views and questions to the panelists.

Lt Gen PR Shankar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) opined that currently there was disruption in military affairs going on coupled with technical disruptions. The confluence of the two was leading to multi-domain warfare. He said that in order to influence, one needs legitimacy, and for this one has to have law on one’s side. So it is understandable as to why China is majorly concentrating its efforts on ‘Lawfare’.

Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Bar) (Retd), was of the opinion that to understand as to what China has put together to achieve what it has, it would require a much deeper study and India’s academia has to get involved in the same. He said that India’s Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has all tools available to take on this mission. However what India needs is a Communication Strategy Doctrine and it also needs to figure out which organizations should be brought on board.

Interesting questions came in from the audience of the webinar and were put up to the panelists by the moderator and healthy discussions followed. After more than an hour and half of intellectually stimulating talks and discussions, the webinar came to an end at 7.45pm IST.