

Master Article- Hybrid Warfare: The Rise of Soft Authoritarianism
By Rex M. Lee, My Smart Privacy

In my previous article, “Hybrid Warfare: Are You Prepared?”, we learned that Hybrid Warfare simply means that *the modern battlefield is everywhere* and targets include:

- a) Governments
- b) Corporations
- c) Members of the military & law enforcement
- d) Elected officials and government officials
- e) Corporate executives, management & employees
- f) Professionals including doctors, lawyers and judicial appointees
- g) Citizens including adults, teens and children.

The goal of Hybrid Warfare is to spread influence and power without using intimidation or military force which is also a relevant method of warfare described in The Art of War, by 5th century Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu:

- *“The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting...The greatest victory is that which requires no battle”* - Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Regarding the quote above, Sun Tzu is describing how to influence an enemy by way of “Soft Power” in order to gain partnerships with adversarial countries through appeal and attraction rather than through “Hard Power” associated with strength and intimidation such as using military force.

Once the partnership is formed, then the objective is to dominate that country economically through competition for global markets which we are seeing today as Chinese corporations are starting to infiltrate and dominate many industries worldwide.

The Soft Police State- Authoritarian Rule through Protection & Safety

Soft power can also be used by any government as a means to expand power regionally, globally and even over its own citizens in order to eliminate civil liberties *in the name of protection and safety* which is what we are seeing today with the worldwide response to the global Coronavirus (“Covid-19”) pandemic.

The adoption of soft authoritarianism leads to authoritarian rule through the “Soft Police State” which is the case today pertaining to many countries around the world including western democracies.

Since the terrorist attacks on the United States (U.S.) on September 11th, 2001 plus other terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom (U.K.) and European Union (E.U.) western democracies have slowly eliminated civil liberties, such as privacy, in the name of protection and safety.

China’s influence over many countries, including western democracies, is obvious as democracies around the globe are starting to look more like China rather than China looking more like a democracy due to the expansion of the soft police state.

To understand how we got here, we first must understand Hybrid Warfare and Great Power Competition which I touched on in my previous article Hybrid Warfare: Are You Prepared?.

To understand the origin of the soft police state, I will reveal more relevant information regarding Hybrid Warfare and Great Power Competition plus why these subject matters are important to all citizens such as yourself.

Hybrid Warfare and Great Power Competition- The Origin of the Soft Police State

Hybrid Warfare is the result of *"The Return of Great Power Competition (GPC)"* between The U.S., U.K., E.U., Russia, China, and other nations, both ally and adversary included.

Two world wars were started as a result of GPC in the 20th century while other wars were fought by proxy, such as the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, The Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq as a result of the "Cold War" which could be defined as WW III which is ongoing today.

Today we see that Hybrid Warfare is being waged by adversarial nation-state countries such as China and Russia plus their proxies that include Iran, Syria, and N. Korea against the U.S., U.K., E.U. and other ally countries around the world in regards to an economic war centered on control of global markets and industries.

What is surprising about today is the fact that we see Hybrid Warfare methods used by western democracies such as the U.S., U.K. and E.U. in an effort to erode the civil liberties enjoyed by citizens within these so called "free countries" built on democracy through the adoption of the soft police state.

These western democracies need to understand that when they adopt authoritarian methods, hard or soft, they are playing into the hands of countries such as China and Russia.

One of the main goals of Hybrid Warfare is to spread influence internally, regionally and globally in order to dominate politics and competition associated with a competitive nation-state.

Dominating competition enables countries and/or nation-state corporations to control markets and industries through valuable intellectual property ("IP") in order to control innovation by using IP to limit or prevent future competition.

For example, often doing business within an authoritarian country such as China, ruled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), companies such as tech and telecom giants must give up IP to China in order to do business with the Chinese people.

The acquisition of valuable IP from corporations, medical institutions and universities is why we are seeing the theft of IP worldwide by numerous countries such as China, Russia and even India.

Per Hybrid Warfare, adversaries will use insiders to steal IP such as an employee of a company, a scientist working for a medical institution, and students or a faculty member associated with a university.

Additionally, authoritarian countries such as China can use influence and appeal as a means for democracies to inadvertently or directly adopt "soft authoritarianism" in order to keep their citizens protected and safe from nebulous threats such as terrorism or a global pandemic threat in the form of a deadly virus.

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For example, we are seeing western democracies adopt “*soft authoritarianism*” during the global Covid-19 virus pandemic as a means to control their citizens which could play into the hands of China, ruled by the CCP, even though the virus started in Wuhan, China.

Don’t take my word for this description of Hybrid Warfare and Great Power Competition. Former Joint Chiefs of Staff (U.S.), General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., explains these concepts better than I can as he noted in an interview at the 2019 Atlantic Council Conference.



Former Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., 2019 Atlantic Council

During a CNN Interview with Barbara Starr, Pentagon Correspondent, at the [2019 Atlantic Council Conference](#), General Dunford had this to say about *Military Strategy and The Return to Great Power Competition* between the U.S., Russia & China in a response to Ms. Starr’s question, “*Why the return to Great Power Competition?*”:

General Dunford’s Reply: “Addressing the National Security Strategy from 1998...It did not saying anything about China...It spoke about Russia...there was a lot in there about failed & failing states (influenced by Russia)...it spoke about the nexus of violent extremism and weapons of mass destruction (regarding proxy nation-states, Iran, Afghanistan etc.)...we (U.S.) did not have a competitor, a pure competitor economically, diplomatically, or militarily...you compare that to today, we have two states (China & Russia) both trying to establish preeminence...and both trying to assert greater influence on the world’s stage and then from a military perspective this really means the path and capability (economically/militarily) development that China and Russia have been on does challenge us in a number of areas...*why is that important?*...there are two things that make the United States military strong...one, our network of allies & partners and the other is the ability to project power...and when necessary is to advance our national interests...they (China & Russia) both recognize those strengths...they recognize the competitive advantages we’ve had historically...*what they (Russia & China) are seeking to do is undermine (by way of influence, politics, economics, etc.) the credibility of our alliance structure in Europe and the Pacific...from a military perspective...to make it more difficult to contest our ability to move in an alliance area or then operate freely once we are there across sea, air, land, space and cyber space..*”

What General Dunford is describing is the fact that China and Russia do not want to engage the U.S. directly by conventional warfare but rather to assert their influence world-wide plus decrease the United States’ capability to project power while disrupting U.S. national interests regarding allies and partners.

Additionally, China and Russia’s goal are to cause discourse between citizens within targeted countries such as the case with the 2016 presidential elections in the United States regarding Russia’s use of Facebook in order to cause discourse between U.S. citizens through the use of propaganda delivered by way of fake social media accounts and political ads.

One way to assert power without using weapons of war is to assert influence by way of “Soft Power” associated with Hybrid Warfare which is relevant to techniques Sun Tzu described in the Art of War, published 5th century BC:

- *“Supreme excellence consists of breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting”*- Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Soft Authoritarianism- Playing into the Hands of Your Adversary

Examples such as the emergence of soft police states plays into the hands of China and Russia as western democracies are *adopting soft authoritarianism as a means to control their citizens* during the global Covid-19 pandemic.

To the contrary, China and Russia are using the global Covid-19 pandemic as a means to spread their influence by way of good will gestures such as the two examples below:

- China is shipping masks, test kits and ventilators to affected countries worldwide while affected countries are struggling to provide masks, test kits and ventilators to their own citizens resulting in China as being viewed in a positive light even though the virus spread globally from Wuhan, China, as China neglected to allow outside help to stifle the spread of the virus.
- Russia is using the global Covid-19 pandemic as a means to spread influence, without using military force, by increasing oil production flooding the worldwide market with supply causing OPEC to also raise production resulting in plummeting oil prices.

Both of these tactics are associated with Hybrid Warfare which are also relevant to tactics described in The Art of War by Sun Tzu.

Over the past two decades China has grown power over the U.S., U.K. and E.U. through one way trade agreements that favor China enabling China to infiltrate hundreds of industries once dominated by U.S., U.K. and E.U. corporations.

Chinese multinational corporations that have gained prominence in vital industries such as telecommunications, technology, pharmaceutical and entertainment include WuXi App Tech (Pharma), Tencent, Alibaba, JD.Com, Wanda Group, ByteDance, and Baidu.

Through telecommunications and technology Chinese corporations can gain access to citizens of the U.S., U.K. and E.U. in order to surveil and data mine the citizen by way of intrusive apps and social media platforms such as TikTok (ByteDance), WeChat (Tencent) and DU apps/browser (Baidu).

China is also able to spread influence and propaganda to global citizens of all nations by way of television, films and the internet through companies such as Tencent and Wanda Group.

Tencent and the Wanda Group are enabled to help produce movies, with U.S. multi-media corporations, such as a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood and Terminator: Dark Fate.

China's ability to produce films in conjunction with U.S. entertainment conglomerates enables the CCP to censor content that may be unfavorable to China such as films that may shine a spot light on China's appalling human rights record or a documentary that may feature the historical events that took place in Tiananmen Square or the ongoing protests in Hong Kong.

By way of greedy senior corporate executives power hungry U.S. elected officials have been influenced by lobbyist to enable U.S. corporations to do business in China under heavy regulation by the CCP while Chinese corporations operate with little or no regulation in the United States plus many countries around the globe through unfair trade agreements that benefit China.

Chinese companies have been successful at infiltrating many industries worldwide making billions in profits while spreading influence through propaganda on a global basis courtesy of capitalism rather than having to spread influence through intimidation supported by military force.

Today Sun Tzu would marvel at China's ability to spread influence, while becoming a global super power, without having to use military force in the process.

Dominance through dollars seems to be more powerful than dominance through bullets as we see elected officials and senior corporate executives from the U.S., U.K. and E.U. bow to the demands of the CCP in order to do business within China.

Soft Authoritarianism- The Industrial Government Surveillance Complex

What is increasingly concerning is the fact that we have seen the rise of the "industrial government surveillance complex" over the past 15 years due to the fact that tech and telecom giants are forming partnerships with nation-states, authoritarian & democracies, worldwide.

These partnerships between governments and commercial telecom & tech providers have led to government surveillance by proxy.

Relationships between governments and companies such as AT&T, T-Mobile, Microsoft, Apple, Google, Amazon and Facebook enable governments to collect user data, including personal & professional information, acquired from the citizen's use of social media platforms, apps, smartphones, tablet PCs and other connected products supported by the android OS, Apple iOS and Microsoft Windows OS (8&10).

According to T-Mobile and Verizon, telecom and tech products such as smartphones, tablet PCs and PCs in general are no longer private or secure forms of telecommunications and computing.

- T-Mobile Admission: *"We, too, remember a time before smartphones when it was reasonable to conclude that when you activated service with T-Mobile that only T-Mobile would have access to our personal information. However, with the Samsung Galaxy Note, the iPhone, and many other devices, there are indeed a variety of parties that may collect and use information."* — T-Mobile Privacy Team (FCC Consumer Complaint #423849 Filed by Rex M. Lee/Public Record)
- Verizon Admission *"We have reviewed your request at the highest levels of our organization and have confirmed that the only solutions to make a phone private and secure are available through third parties, not directly from Verizon.... Additionally, Verizon is not equipped to address preinstalled solutions or applications on any device"* — July 02, 2018

The reason tech and telecom products are not private or secure today is due the fact that products such as smartphones, tablet PCs and connected products are supported by predatory surveillance and data mining business practices employed by Google, Apple and Microsoft plus their partners such as Facebook, Amazon, Tencent (China), ByteDance (China), Baidu (China) and Prisma Labs (Russia).

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Consumer telecom, tech and connected products such as smartphones, tablet PCs, voice automated assistants (i.e. Amazon Alexa & Google Assistant), connected vehicles, PCs in general, wearable tech, appliances and other connected products have been turned into surveillance and data mining tools that enable developers to exploit the product user for financial while exposing the user's information to state actors at all levels.

We are now seeing governments police people by way of the person's connected tech and telecom products that cost money to participate.

This means that the very tech and telecom products a person is paying for can now become a vehicle in which a state actor can enforce laws that could result in the user being jailed, fined and receive a criminal record due to surveillance and data mining business practices employed by the user's tech and telecom providers.

We are seeing numerous examples of tech and telecom product user information that is being shared or acquired by state actors such as the following examples:

- Google and Apple form a partnership to create a contact tracing app that will share user data with governments around the globe in response to the Covid-19 virus- [Wired](#), by Andy Greenberg, April 10th, 2020
- Google shares location data with authorities looking to police lockdown areas associated with the Covid-19 Virus- [Silicon UK Daily](#), by Tom Jowitt, April 3rd, 2020
- Israel Government to conduct mass surveillance on population through smartphones in response to Covid-19 virus-, [The New York Times](#), by David M. Halbfinger, Isabel Kershner, & Ronen Bergman, March 18th, 2020
- AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile and Sprint sell user data to data brokers Zumiga & LocationSmart who shared data with law enforcement- [Washington Post](#), by Brian Fung, June 19th, 2018
- Google shares a Google app user's location information with law enforcement- [NBC News](#), by Jon Schuppe, March 7th, 2020
- Amazon sells Ring doorbell and security user data to numerous law enforcement agencies- [The Verge](#), by Colin Lecher, July 29th, 2019

There are numerous other real world examples of how tech and telecom giants are sharing their user's information directly to state actors and/or with data brokers who in turn share or sell user data to state actors while lawfully circumventing an individual's civil liberties in the process.

Users of these apps and platforms plus products such as smartphones need to realize that these tech and telecom giants do not see their users as paying customers but rather see the user as a product to be exploited for financial gain.

It is bad enough to lose privacy but to be *exploited and policed for financial gain at the expense of civil liberties, privacy, cybersecurity and safety* by any company should be unacceptable to any free thinking individual especially a citizen of a country such as the United States.

Hybrid Warfare- Never Let a Serious Crises go to Waste

To understand why we are seeing the spread of soft authoritarianism around the globe all we have to do is examine the global response to the Covid19 pandemic outbreak as we see governments around the globe adopting soft authoritarianism in the name of safety and protection.

Elected officials, within democracies, are ruling like dictators through the use of “executive orders” enabling these officials to lawfully eliminate or temporarily suspend civil liberties without the vote of a legislative body or the vote by the populous.

Consequently power hungry elected officials, from affected countries, could also use the virus as a means to retain or gain power which is a concept Rahm Emanuel, former Chicago Mayor, described when he was an advisor to U.S. President Barack Obama as he said “*Never Let a Serious Crises go to Waste*”.

Likewise, Sun Tzu suggests that leaders look for opportunity within chaos which is noted in The Art of War:

- “*In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity*”- Sun Tzu

There are real world examples of how countries around the world are eliminating or temporarily suspending civil liberties in the name of protection and safety in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic outbreak such as the following:

- Hungry uses the Covid-19 virus as a means to cancel elections and suspend it’s own ability to legislate, indefinitely- [The Atlantic](#), by Ann Applebaum, April 3rd, 2020
- History shows that once countries such as the U.K. and U.S. suspend civil liberties, such as privacy, in the name of protection and safety the suspended civil liberties may never return- [UK Column](#), by Mike Robinson, March 8th, 2020
- Citizens could be forced to vote by mail or even by nebulous apps due to threats from the Covid-19 virus. The U.S. considers mail in ballots for the 2020 presidential election due to threats posed by the Covid-19 virus- [PEW](#), by Matt Vasilogambros, March 13th, 2020
- New York Mayor, Bill de Blasio, threatens to close churches and synagogues permanently if churches and synagogues fail to adhere to shelter-in-place laws. De Blasio has also has been criticized for not mentioning Mosques- [Fox News](#), by Caleb Park, April 1st, 2020
- Cities in the U.S., such as Laredo, TX and Riverside, CA, force citizens to wear face masks or face fines and jail time- [US News](#), by Alexa Lardieri, April 2nd, 2020/[Inland Empire Community News](#), by SPMG Media, April 7th, 2020

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- Google, Facebook and other tech giants are in discussions with the U.S. government over the ability for the government to use location data collected from tech and telecom product users in order for the government to track the Covid-19 virus- [cNet](#), by Richard Nieva, March 17th, 2020
- Private businesses are forced to close while citizens are forced to shelter-in-place even at the expense of losing their ability to make a living- [Politico](#), by Elizabeth Joh, March 18th, 2020

These are just a few examples of how countries around the globe are using the global Covid-19 pandemic as a means to eliminate or temporarily suspend civil liberties in the name of protection and safety.

There are also benefits to adversarial countries such as China in regards to civil unrest such as the protests in Hong Kong. The spread of the Covid-19 virus has cleared protestors from the streets of Hong Kong without China having to use violent military force.

Hybrid Warfare- Disinformation & Propaganda

The global Covid-19 pandemic is also enabling countries to use disinformation and propaganda in many ways to spread the influence of a nation-state as a means to gain power internally, regionally and globally.

China's clear influence over the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) has been on display as the W.H.O. failed to warn countries to avoid travel to and from China in January which would have kept the virus from spreading by way of air travel and by way of cruise ships.

Governments and the W.H.O. are giving contradictive information regarding safety pertaining to the Covid-19 virus such as whether to wear a face mask or not wear a face mask as a means of protection.

For example, both the U.S. Surgeon General and the W.H.O. gave contradictory information as recent as March regarding the fact that the Surgeon General and W.H.O. both said that wearing a face mask could actually be more dangerous to the person wearing the mask.

- "You can increase your risk of getting it by wearing a mask if you are not a healthcare provider."- U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Jerome Adams, March 02, 2020, Fox & Friends

However, not even two weeks later, the public is now being urged by the Trump administration's Coronavirus task force to wear face masks for added safety plus government entities around the globe are forcing citizens to wear face masks enforced by new laws leaving people confused in the process.

China has been effectively using social media platforms such as twitter as a means to export their influence all over the globe by spreading propaganda in favor of how China has handled the Covid-19 virus outbreak internally while Chinese whistle blowers are turning up dead or are missing.

The mainstream media's coverage of the global Covid-19 pandemic outbreak at times looks very Orwellian like something out of the book 1984 pertaining to brainwashing as there is 24 hour news coverage focused on the virus supported by virus centric advertising.

For example, the mainstream media's coverage of the Covid-19 virus implies that the threat from this virus is something new as if Covid-19 fell from the skies over night posing a threat to the entire globe.

The mainstream media and governments around the world have adopted the name “Coronavirus” as a means to describe Covid-19 rather than describing the virus as “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome” and/or SARS Coronavirus as branded during an early 2,000s global pandemic outbreak.

Rebranding the “SARS Virus” to the “Coronavirus” could be described as a method of “*thought corruption*” enabling a government to gain influence over its citizens, in a passive aggressive way, through propaganda as described in the book 1984:

- *“But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought...War is peace...Freedom is slavery”- George Orwell, Author of the Book “1984”*

There are other examples of disinformation regarding the global pandemic Covid-19 virus outbreak too numerous for this article.

Hybrid Warfare- Forced Dependence on the Government

We are also seeing a global financial crisis that could lead to the next great depression as economies around the world start to collapse causing citizens and businesses to rely on government financially in addition to relying on government at all levels for protection and safety from nebulous threats in the form of viruses or terrorism.

With these new unprecedented powers by way of “executive orders” governments, including democracies, will be enabled to temporarily or permanently eliminate civil liberties while expanding their powers and influence internally, regionally or even on a global basis in the name of safety and protection.

Elected officials could even use protection and safety as a means to arbitrarily withdraw funds from a country’s treasury as we are seeing in the United States regarding the two trillion dollar bail out courtesy of the “Families First Coronavirus Response Act” and/or [Bill H.R. 6201](#).

In Orwellian fashion, the legislation is named “*Families First Coronavirus Response Act*”, yet the legislation is riddled with pork barrel spending looking more like a tool for elected officials to use for a two trillion dollar robbery of The Federal Reserve Bank since most of the pork barrel spending has nothing to do with the Covid-19 virus, protection or safety.

Going forward citizens need to press for laws that would prohibit pork barrel spending from being added to any legislation associated with any crises brought on by natural disasters, terrorism, a virus (natural/manmade), or warfare in general while still preserving the citizen’s civil rights in the process.

I’m for taking measures protecting my family and myself from the Covid-19 virus such as wearing a face mask, sheltering-in-place and practicing social distancing as long as I have the free will to do so in accordance with the constitution of the United States. I suggest all other citizens do the same.

In closing, what will be the cost in terms of life, treasure and freedom as a result of collapsing economies around the world while eliminating civil liberties in response to the global Covid-19 virus pandemic outbreak?

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In time we will understand if the cure ends up more costly than the virus in terms of life, treasure and freedom.

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