



Geopolitical Report



Coronavirus Pandemics, Huawei 5G Technologies, Artificial Intelligence and Psychological Operations

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The third volume of *Geopolitical Report* titled *Coronavirus Pandemics, Huawei 5G Technologies, Artificial Intelligence and Psychological Operations* which analyses an example of high-tech psychological warfare, which is the communication control chains (CCCs) created by various actors within the framework of psychological warfare.

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Scope

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Introduction

The United States is gradually and more clearly losing its first place in scientific and technological progress and innovation to China. One of the latest examples of this: the World Intellectual Property Organization, which oversees a system for countries to share recognition of patents, said 58,990 applications were filed from China last year, overtaking the United States which filed 57,840. China's figure showed a 200-fold increase in just 20 years, it said. The United States had filed the most applications in the world every year since the Patent Cooperation Treaty system was set up in 1978 (Nebehay, 2020.04.07).

The leading NATO country has changed its foreign policy tools in many ways since the end of the Cold War (Roberts, 1995; Garten, 1995; Anderson, 2015). Since then, the United States has focused increasingly on the extraterritorial application of national law. This is different from threats of nuclear weapons or promises of billions of dollars in economic aid that the US made to achieve its long-term foreign policy goals during the Cold War (Yerkey, 1996.08.07; US Code, 1994). Moreover, given the large and growing external debt, it is not possible (or profitable) for the US to make multi-billion-dollar financial injections, even at key points of geopolitical rivalry.

Global campaigns to discredit its opponents have become the norm of US foreign policy. Naturally, its focus is on its main economic and geopolitical competitor – China and its leading companies. According to the WIPO data, China's Huawei Technologies is the world's biggest maker of telecoms equipment, was the top corporate patent filer for the third consecutive year. The United States has called on countries to ban Huawei equipment from new mobile phone networks, arguing that its technology could be used by China for spying. Huawei denies that its technology poses a security risk (Nebehay, 2020.04.07).

The acute geopolitical competition for influence and resources in the modern world creates a mood of anxiety and an atmosphere of mutual distrust. This, unfortunately, can be effectively used in psychological operations, including attacks on competitors who are successfully developing and strengthening their positions.

The communication control chains in psychological warfare

When faced with a crisis, it is easier to provoke distrust and anger in people, not only in response to real risks such as the overestimation of how long it will take for advanced technologies to be fully integrated in society (e.g., robots will replace half of the employees "tomorrow"), but also in response to positive opportunities that technological progress can provide. This is aided by the use of professional tools to influence the psyche that can provoke a certain action (or inaction) in people depending on the interests of the user of the corresponding psychological operation. To ensure the appropriate reaction by the public, appropriate expert assessments can be used (which may express the author's sincere points of view but are also convenient for the user of the psychological operation, although other options are available). These assessments can then be divulged widely, for example through social networks of celebrities (artists, famous athletes, etc.). Without excluding the deliberate bias of individual celebrities, some of them can be uncritical of certain assessments in a crisis, allowing rash statements to spread through social networks. These statements will not be ignored by the mainstream media, and they will ultimately have an impact on broad sections of the public.

This paper analyses an example of high-tech psychological warfare, which is the communication control chains (CCCs) created by various actors within the framework of psychological warfare. The CCCs are organized as a chain of events or pseudo-events (factoids) that, through the media or informal communication channels (e.g., mouth-to-mouth information) or both, have a controlling influence on the target publics or key individuals.

An obvious example is the series of events following a terrorist act in a crowded place that has left victims and destruction in a major capital, for example, in Europe. It always causes certain actions or conditions: the country's leaders interrupt routine affairs or even curtail very important international visits and return home. They always make appropriate statements, which necessarily contain anger towards terrorists, a promise to do everything possible to investigate the act, and condolences to the families and relatives of the victims. Such terrorist acts are always followed by a strengthening of public security measures, which are broadcast to the public consciousness through the media and informal communication. In a democratic society, there is always growing criticism of individual officials or the authorities as a whole for failing to take appropriate security measures (Pashentsev, 2019).

The results of the impact of the CCCs can be very different: they range from slowing down bills in parliaments on the development of advanced technologies (due to the fears of lawmakers that voters "will not understand") to protests and even illegal actions. These actions are based on the often-dominant mood of fear and panic in the public consciousness, especially strong in the context of a large-scale crisis, such as the coronavirus pandemic. The particular popular panic interpretation becomes part of the psychological operation, which, in turn, can be an element of a long-term psychological campaign within the framework of strategic psychological warfare. The latter is an integral part of strategic confrontation between states (including in the latent stage of such a confrontation), especially in the case of clashes on fundamental issues and long-term antagonisms, the resolution of which is not expected in the medium term.

The CCCs (Pashentsev, 2019) can resonate with mass phobias and real fears or arise spontaneously, by force of circumstances, and can be slightly "pushed" by the efforts of the user of psychological warfare. For this reason, it is difficult to obtain direct evidence of the intended creation of a control chain if we operate exclusively with open data. However, there is indirect confirmation of this mechanism.

When there are repeated convergences in place and time of unidirectional interests and actions of different and seemingly unrelated actors, it can be assumed that, if a control chain has not been intentionally created, it is however functioning in the interests of at least one of the actors. Random convergence of the actions of different subjects is still possible at this stage and can be caused, in some cases, by third forces. However, if such a convergence of actions does not occur in a timely manner, it may alert and provoke hostility from other state and non-state actors, who will consider it a collusion against their interests. The resulting negative consequences include unavoidable reputational costs. Parallel unidirectional actions of unrelated actors at the same time and in one country will be perceived as synchronous and mutually conditioned by a significant part of the public. A demonstrative break of this link between the state (one of the possible actors) at the stage of widespread dissemination of the ideas of another actor (a conspiracy group) will be belated and will not bring success. Moreover, it can strengthen support for the idea that the "true, fair and progressive" point of view is being suppressed.

Today, an increasingly convincing example of the creation of the CCC is the rapid and effective dissemination in various countries of the idea that 5G technology threatens the health and ultimately life of people. To elucidate this, the latest most disturbing news on coronavirus is used.

The coronavirus pandemic, which has already brought much suffering and hardship to people, is accompanied by many examples of mutual assistance and solidarity among peoples in the fight against a common danger. However, unfortunately, there are also frequent manifestations of 'national', but actually corporate, egoism and the desire to stop competitors at any cost. One of the most striking examples is the ongoing efforts of the Trump administration to exclude the Chinese technological firm from their 5G Telecom systems, insisting that Huawei's products may pose a security threat to buyers if China were to exploit it for espionage purposes.

Why 5G and Huawei technology became the main target of US attacks?

5G refers to the fifth generation of wireless internet access. It's the next upgrade to the networks that let things like your cellphone and laptop access the internet without having to be plugged in. 5G is poised to offer much faster speeds than what's currently available and offer a more stable connection. As a result, it's touted as vital to the future of the so-called Internet of Things. But it also requires more antennas to cover service areas than does the existing network, and setting those up takes both time and money (Connolly, 2020.02.11). Huawei is the most powerful player on a shrinking list of telecoms equipment suppliers, and the industry needs a long-term solution – not just for security reasons but so they are not commercially dependent on one company. From more than a dozen suppliers a decade ago, now only Ericsson and Nokia, plus Huawei and its Chinese compatriot ZTE, and South Korea's Samsung remain. Yet the market for 5G equipment is likely to be colossal – with one estimate predicting a value of \$22.93bn (£17.55bn) by 2025 (Cogley and Cook, 2020). This is a market for which there is a sharp competitive struggle, in which the US is clearly losing. And this goes far beyond the communication sphere. 5G is not just faster data. 5G will overlap with Artificial Intelligence which is key technology of the 21st century.

5G will create a need for even more of our information to be available in the cloud. It will also create a platform to enable that. As is often the case, each technology will re-enforce the other (Namaste UI, 2018.02.22). Right now, narrow AIs are developed for very narrow applications, say facial recognition or object identification. In contrast, a General Purpose AI, which only exists in concept right now, can move from task to task like we do and make complex decisions based on widely disparate information sources. For a General Purpose AI to function, it has to be able to reconfigure rapidly the entire infrastructure surrounding the solution in real time. With 5G you not only get greater bandwidth and security, but the networks are also

largely going in virtualised. This means you can make major changes in traffic flow, what the networks connect to and prioritize, and even make changes to the 5G sensors distributed throughout the ecosystem already possibly serving other purposes (Cogley and Cook, 2020).

It is curious to see rapid and drastic changes in the awareness of potential threats of AI use by the public authorities and security community of the USA. In a White House document regarding the outgoing administration of Barack Obama in 2016, the following experts' assessments were given:

“General AI (sometimes called Artificial General Intelligence, or AGI) refers to a notional future AI system that exhibits apparently intelligent behaviour at least as advanced as a person across the full range of cognitive tasks. A broad chasm seems to separate today’s Narrow AI from the much more difficult challenge of General AI. The current consensus of the private-sector expert community, with which the NSTC Committee on Technology concurs, is that General AI will not be achieved for at least decades ...” (Executive Office of the President, National Science and Technology Council, and Committee on Technology, 2016, p 7 – 8).

Two years later, in the US national security bodies there was a clear reassessment of the possible threat from General AI. The GAO 2018 report (US Government Accountability Office (GAO), 2018, p. 8) focuses on long-range emerging threats—those that may occur in approximately five or more years, as identified by various respondents at the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of State (State), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). This report is a public version of a classified report that GAO issued on September 28, 2018. It omits classified and sensitive information about threats.

The DOD, State, DHS, and ODNI independently identified various emerging threats to the United States or its national security interests. The analysis of these threats led to 26 threat profiles that fell within four broad categories: 1) Adversaries' Political and Military Advancements, 2) Dual-Use Technologies, 3) Weapons, and 4) Events and Demographic Changes.

Among Dual-Use Technologies, the first in the list in the GAO report is AI, followed by Quantum Information Science, Internet of Things (IoT), Autonomous and Unmanned Systems, and Biotechnology. It is not very difficult to see that all these threats could be developed, enhanced, and potentially coordinated through the first threat—AI—as well as all the threats named in other profiles. Moreover, the only two examples of AI threats given are deeply interrelated: 1) Nation State and Non-state Development of AI; 2) Intelligent Systems with General AI.

The 2018 GAO report, taking into account the data on the rapid qualitative development of AI in the US and other countries, refers to the emerging new realities. Officials of the security agencies responsible for the safety of the country are unlikely to put in the first place among the threats from Dual-Use Technologies without any reasons for that the question of creating General AI, which, according to the White House document of 2016, “will not be achieved for at least decades.”

In China AI has come to occupy an important role in Beijing's “Made in China 2025” blueprint. China wants to become a global leader in the field by 2030 and now has an edge in terms of academic papers, patents, and both cross-border and global AI funding. In 2017, China published its “Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan,” which laid out plans to ultimately become the world leader in artificial intelligence, with a domestic AI industry worth almost US\$150 billion. China became a leader in AI funding in 2017, with 48 percent of total equity funding of AI startups globally coming from China, compared to 38 percent funded by the US, and 13 percent by the rest of the world. This is a significant jump from the 11.3 percent of global funding coming from China in 2016 (Robles, 2018.10.01).

Summing up all of the above, we can assume that the US pressure on Huawei is not only and not so much due to fears of the growth of China's capabilities in the field of espionage. And, of course, this pressure is not being applied because Huawei was under investigation for potential violations of US sanctions against Iran (The Victoria Post, 2018.12.07). The US could have put forward such considerations, and not entirely without reason, to its allies much earlier, but it did not do so in any categorical form. The USA did not apply sanctions or other radical measures but the general deterioration of China's relations with the United States and the prospect of China winning the race for the development of artificial intelligence, changed the situation and led to more decisive measures against Huawei.

One of the unusual measures of pressure was the arrest of Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer and the daughter of the founder of the Chinese telecoms giant in Vancouver on 1 December 2018 at the request of the US authorities. The arrest came at a sensitive time for US-China relations. The nations were engaged in a trade war that has seen both impose duties of billions of dollars on one another's goods. It also coincided with moves to restrict the use of Huawei technology in Western countries. But now we can assume that the risks of using 5G technologies in progress of the ambitious Chinese AI program and especially AGI may be played rather important role in her arrest.

The absence of a national competitive company in the field of 5G is a direct threat to the US leadership in the use and development of the leading technology – artificial intelligence. This threat has become clear due to rapid progress in this area and China's ambitious plans to become a leader in AI development, including broad artificial intelligence. European Telecom equipment makers (featured executives from Nokia and Ericsson) in the beginning of March 2020 visited Washington to reassure lawmakers that their 5G gear is a safe and secure alternative to equipment from Chinese giant Huawei (Reardon, 2020.03.04).

The United States, apparently due to the strategic importance of 5G in the context of not only progress in the communications area, but also plans for the development of artificial intelligence, is ready to consider options for acquiring Nokia and Ericsson, although there are significant difficulties in how to do this. In February 2020 US Vice President Mike Pence and the top White House economic adviser dismissed an unusual suggestion from US Attorney General William Barr that the United States consider taking control of two major foreign rivals of China-based Huawei Technologies Co Ltd. Barr, a former general counsel at Verizon Communications Inc., said the United States and its allies should consider taking a “controlling stake” in Finland’s Nokia and Sweden’s Ericsson to counter Huawei’s dominance in next-generation 5G wireless technology (Shepardson, 2020.02.07). White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow added later that the United States was working closely with Nokia and Ericsson, saying the companies’ equipment was essential to the build-out of 5G infrastructure. But he said the “US government is not in the business of buying companies, whether they’re domestic or foreign,” adding that “there’s nothing to prohibit American tech companies from acquiring” them. Pence thinks that the United States can expand 5G “by using the power of the free market and American companies” (Shepardson, 2020.02.07).

In other words, some believe that a more active role of the state is necessary to concentrate resources and efforts on all aspects of the struggle for leadership in artificial intelligence (as it was, for example, in response to the Soviet space challenge), including important particular aspects, such as 5G technologies. Others believe that it is possible to achieve success within the framework of private capital efforts, of course, with state support.

In any case, the struggle for leadership in 5G technologies for the US is a crucial element of leadership in the key technology of the 21st century – artificial intelligence. China, demonstrating a strategic approach, seeks, first of all, for this reason, to lead in 5G technologies, although current profits in the telecommunications

markets are also of great importance to that country. The United States, without showing such a strategic approach, is trying to compensate for the growing incapacity of its ruling circles, based on the old socio-economic model, by various means, including methods of psychological warfare.

Further, it is advisable to trace the time and place of attacks against Huawei and 5G technologies using the example of South Africa and the UK during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coronavirus pandemics and Huawei 5G technologies

South Africa

Backstory. In 2018, the US launched a campaign against Huawei, which has managed to place itself at the forefront of 5G development. USA addressed to other countries to stop acquisition of 5G technology. The president of South Africa on Friday accused the United States of being jealous of Huawei, the Chinese telecommunications company that has been at the centre of a trade war between China and the US. "They are clearly jealous that a Chinese company called Huawei has outstripped them and because they have been outstripped they must now punish that one company," said Cyril Ramaphosa in his opening speech at a digital economy conference in Johannesburg in July 2019. Huawei has signed a contract with South Africa for the first 5G commercial network on the African continent. According to Cobus van Staden, a China-Africa researcher at the South African Institute of International Affairs, Huawei has built around 70 percent of the continent's 4G networks (EFE, 2019).

February 26, 2020. The South Africa's Rain announced that it has cooperated with Huawei to build a 5G transport network using Huawei's optical cross-connect (OXC) and 200G solution, leveraging Huawei's latest all-optical switching product, OXC (P32), to build a metro optical transport network. Rain is focused on bringing mobile

broadband (MBB) networks to South Africa and becoming the first operator to deploy 5G networks in South Africa (Huawei, 2020.02.26).

March 12, 2020. Expert view. Dr Thomas Cowan hypothesises that the coronavirus may be caused by 5G at the Health And Human Rights Summit in Tucson, Arizona, on March 12 (Huawei, 2020). Dr. Tom Cowan started his career while teaching gardening as a Peace Corps volunteer in Swaziland, South Africa and later Dr. Cowan has served as vice president of the Physicians Association for Anthroposophical Medicine and is a founding board member of the Weston A. Price Foundation. His claims have largely been slammed and debunked online but discussion on his hypotheses on many platforms attracted a lot of supporters to his position. This is understandable, in an environment of growing panic, actively supported by a significant part of the media and social networks.

The original hypothesis by Tom Cowan provokes hot discussion in South Africa in media, social networks and not only in Africa. More than 4 000 people have signed a petition on www.change.org to stop 5G roll-out in Cape Town, South Africa (Independent Online, 2020) similar petitions are in progress in South Africa. Access to these sites in the networks began to be restricted in April, but this is unlikely to stop supporters of the ideas of Thomas Cowan.

We will not go into the essence of Dr Cowan's argumentation, but it is hardly in doubt that his approaches and assessments on the relationship between coronavirus and 5G technologies have become, regardless of his intentions, a tool in a competitive struggle. In South Africa, Huawei is the undisputed leader in 5G, and active campaigning against 5G there is directed almost exclusively against this company. It is unlikely that such an information campaign will be an immediate success, but if the coronavirus pandemic increases in the country, and, most importantly, it will inevitably affect the socio-economic situation, then other scenarios are not excluded.

Britain

Backstory. Huawei has done more than sell high-quality, inexpensive telecommunications equipment to Britain's mobile phone providers. It has made itself part of the fabric of British telecommunications engineering starting in 2011, when it hired the Chief Information Security Officer of the British government, John Suffolk, as the head of its UK business. The company's relationship with the UK is the best of any Western country. GCHQ, the British counterpart of the National Security Agency, spent years critiquing Huawei's code, often demanding improvements that the Chinese firm promptly made (Goldman, 2020).

January 2020 the British government announced that it will allow "high risk vendors" such as Chinese telecoms giant Huawei a limited role in building its 5G networks. Using Huawei technology in UK 5G networks would put transatlantic intelligence sharing at risk, senior US officials have told British ministers in January 2020, warning that allowing the Chinese firm access would be "nothing short of madness". The extraordinary American ultimatum came as a special delegation led by Donald Trump's deputy national security advisor, Matt Pottinger, presented an incendiary dossier they said featured new evidence of the security risks of relying on Huawei technology in future phone networks (Sabbagh, 2020).

February 2020. Britain needs to take a "hard look" and reconsider its decision to allow the Chinese firm Huawei into the UK 5G network, US officials have said on the margins of the Munich security conference in February (Wintour, 2020). US defence secretary warns Huawei 5G will put intelligence cooperation at risk in the midst of February (Wintour, 2020). A bipartisan group of US senators is urging UK lawmakers to reconsider their government's decision to allow equipment from China's Huawei to be used on its 5G network. In a letter sent to the House of Commons on Tuesday, 20 Republican and Democratic senators voiced the latest US opposition to the plan (Musil, 2020).

March, 2020. Celebrities and social networks involvement. Social networks became full of people highlighting that the 5G theory is spreading via a lengthy WhatsApp voice note. Celebs have been slammed for sharing the conspiracy theory, including Jason Gardiner¹ and Callum Best, who posted similar claims that 5G can impact the immune system (Christodoulou, 2020). Boxer Amir Khan also released a series of bizarre videos where he blames the coronavirus on the building of “5G towers” (Winter, 2020). A music producer Teddy Riley claimed that the virus was being spread through cellular towers in an Instagram Live chat with Charlamagne Tha God. Other celebrities, including rapper M.I.A. and actor Woody Harrelson, have also been sharing false information on their platforms. And the 5G conspiracy theory has been spreading rapidly (Finley, 2020). The rock American singer Keri Hilson with 4.2 million followers on Twitter shared a series of tweets with screenshots and videos that implied that the creation of 5G cellular service is directly related to the spread of COVID-19.

“People have been trying to warn us about 5G for YEARS. Petitions, organizations, studies ... what we’re going thru is the affects [sic] of radiation,” Hilson tweeted on Sunday night, March 15. “5G launched in CHINA. Nov 1, 2019. People dropped dead. See attached & go to my IG stories for more. TURN OFF 5G by disabling LTE!!!” (Finley, 2020).

April 2020. In the beginning of April 2020 British Cabinet Officer Minister Michael Gove spoke at a digital news conference on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in 10 Downing Street in London. When asked by a reporter about the so called "theory" that 5G telecommunications masts could play a role in the spread of the disease, Michael Gove said: "That is just nonsense, dangerous nonsense as well." (Faulconbridge and Holton, 2020) At least 20 mobile phone masts across the UK are believed to have been torched or otherwise vandalised for several days in the beginning of April (Waterson and Hern, 2020). An arson attack at a tower in Birmingham owned by BT, Britain's biggest telecoms company, caused significant

damage. It provided 2G, 3G and 4G services to thousands of people, but did not have 5G capability (Faulconbridge and Holton, 2020).

A lobby group for the United Kingdom's mobile operators - including EE, O2, Vodafone and Three – said it was aware of the false rumours linking 5G to the outbreak, and that telecoms staff had been threatened (Smith, 2020). So, under coronavirus pandemic such attacks may additionally destabilize the political situation in the country.

The Food and Drug Administration and Federal Communication Commission in the US insist there is nothing to be worried about. Most studies haven't found a link between radio frequency signals from cellphones or cell towers and disease, the agencies say (Independent Online, 2020). While many long-running Facebook groups have opposed the roll-out of 5G technology, the social network has had to delete multiple pages encouraging vandalism of the phone network (Waterson and Hern, 2020). Social networks have classified the rumours as “false” and have said they are “dangerous”. YouTube has said it will remove videos linking coronavirus and 5G. A Facebook spokesperson said:

“We are taking aggressive steps to stop misinformation and harmful content from spreading on our platforms and connect people to accurate information about coronavirus” (Waugh, 2020).

Officials condemn and networks promise to remove the content and have begun to do so. However, according to the law of crisis situations, belated synchronous steps by the authorities to ban a rather popular point of view in a crisis situation can only attract more supporters to it. It was necessary to act reasonably and quickly, when on 12 March, Dr Tom Cowan presented his hypothesis and the video of his speech quickly became widely available on the Internet (Martino, 2020) (at the time of writing this article, on 16 April, it is still available on the Internet). Professionally

designed websites with the appropriate conspiracy interpretation are still available (The Millennium Report, 2020).

Conclusion

Anyway, Dr Cowan's hypothesis has already become an integral part of global information efforts to discredit China, and in particular to discredit China's Huawei 5G Technologies. At the same time, other non-Chinese companies with good positions in technology and in the 5G market may also suffer. But if other global industry leaders have difficulties, this will buy the US time to try to catch up with its rivals.

The competition with China is taking place when the income growth of the US elite is many times higher than the long-stagnating income of the majority of the US population. Income inequality inspires fierce debate around the world, and no shortage of proposed solutions. As global billionaires bid up the price of a Da Vinci painting to \$450.3 million, in the United States, the richest 1% have seen their share of national income increase roughly, since 1980, from 11% to 20% in 2014 (Rothwell, 2017; see also: Pashentsev, 2020, p. 263). This trend, combined with slow productivity growth, has resulted in stagnant living standards for most Americans.

“We believe it is now appropriate to move a step further and think about the possibility of extreme political inequality, involving great political influence by a very small number of extremely wealthy individuals. We argue that it is useful to think about the US political system in terms of oligarchy,” conclude the US professors Winters and Page (2009).

In another study done by Gilens and Page (2014), the researchers compared 1800 different US policies that were put in place by politicians between 1981 and 2002 to the type of policies preferred by the average and wealthy American, or special interest groups.

“Multivariate analysis indicates that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on US government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence” (Gilens and Page, 2014, p. 564).

“We believe that if policy-making is dominated by powerful business organizations and a small number of affluent Americans, then America’s claims to being a democratic society are seriously threatened” (Gilens and Page, 2014, p. 577; Pashentsev, 2020, p. 264).

The dominant part of the US elites is clearly ready to go further in aggravating the international situation. The period of a hard “cold war” with China fighting for profits and global leadership requires not only financial, economic and military resources, but their mobilization at the expense of the majority of Americans. There is a need for an ideological framework for the mobilization model. The slogan ‘America First’ will not be enough here. No matter what anyone writes, the United States is not a Nazi dictatorship. Most of the population is clearly dissatisfied with the current situation (even without taking into account the severe economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic). Americans will not die in defence of corporate profits. Many do not trust the authorities, many are politically inert. But the elites need to involve these circles in a confrontation with China. That’s why not only the official US versions are being distributed: “it’s bad for us because China steals our secrets”, “it’s bad for us because Beijing hid and then downplayed the beginning of the coronavirus epidemic”, etc. (with more or less truth, according to the logic of the campaign, but this is not so important).

On the basis of a general psychological campaign against China, parallel, autonomous actions are allowed, which are not necessarily directly related to the official campaign, but meet its basic goal – to prepare the country for a long and tough confrontation, to difficulties, to some extent a fanatical rejection of the enemy,

and a certain sacrifice. There are quite a lot of panicked interpretations of facts and building up of conspiracy versions in the US for the coronavirus pandemic.

For example on 28 January 2020, Harvard professor Charles Lieber was arrested and charged with making a materially false statement to the federal authorities about receiving funding from China. Lieber's arrest was big news in academic circles; but after internet users noticed that the alleged funding was coming from a university in Wuhan, China, the centre of an outbreak of a new coronavirus, wild speculation went viral and unfounded connections were drawn between Lieber and a conspiracy theory that the coronavirus was a lab-made bioweapon (Evon, 2020).

As a result, both in the United States and far beyond its borders, the number of people who may not be supporters of the current administration and do not sympathize with the American elite, but are acting on the most important direction of its confrontation with China. Some are behaving even more recklessly than the sober-minded average citizen (remember that many mobile communication masts in England have been damaged in recent days). The reasoning of such people is basically simple and clear, but based on a false premise:

Due to the fact that Huawei and other similar campaigns install towers with 5G technologies, there has been a coronavirus pandemic – my loved ones have died (will die) – I must prevent new victims/ take revenge/preparation and implementation of appropriate actions. Organizers and performers of such actions will always be found.

The traitor Liber sold biological weapons to China – the coronavirus pandemic appeared – my loved ones died (will die) – I must prevent new victims/ take revenge – preparation and implementation of appropriate actions. Organizers and performers of such actions will always be found, etc.

In fact, we are talking about a constant flow of autonomous disinformation “modules” that form a corresponding matrix of perception of reality on an anti-Chinese basis.

One can only agree with Richard Stengel who served in the US State Department from 2013-16, and is the author of “Information Wars: How We Lost the Global Battle against Disinformation and What We Can Do about It”, which draws attention to the negative role of disinformation.

“Disinformation is an asymmetric weapon with no barrier to entry. For far less than the cost of an F-35, nations will seek to get their own version of history into the global information ecosystem. It works because even when bad information is debunked, it can create “belief echoes,” a nagging sense that, well, some of it must be right. This is what psychologists call “the liar’s dividend”— the germ of doubt that remains even after a falsehood has been exposed” (Stengel, 2020).

Under the influence of not only the words and deeds of the American establishment, the work of the mainstream media, but also such a latent integration of panic interpretations into the general course of the anti-Chinese campaign Americans have turned some of their bipartisan ire amid the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic toward Beijing according to a new Harris Poll survey released in April 2020. Per the poll, nearly 90 percent of Republicans believe China, where the coronavirus originated, is responsible for the spread while two-thirds of Democrats surveyed said the same (O’Donnell, 2020).

Thus, powerful information and psychological support is being formed among Americans for a course of confrontation with China. The US authorities are trying to shift the reasons for the wide spread of coronavirus infection to China, removing responsibility for their own gross mistakes in minimizing the damage from infection. These mistakes are noted by both medical staff, politicians and the media (Daily Sabah, 2020; Zheng, 2020; Diamond, 2020; Lahut, 2020; Yahoo News, 2020). However, it would be rash to consider the shortcomings of the response to the coronavirus as only a private phenomenon. They reflect the general decline of the country. Instead of looking for internal reserves for scientific and technological

breakthrough and acceleration of national development, a nation with huge intellectual potential and production resources is stagnating due to the fault of the elites.

The US pressure on other countries to prevent Huawei from developing 5G, although supported only by a small group of countries, can have a limited negative impact on many other states – they are unwittingly falling victim to the US-China stand-off. The US has long been pressurising India to ban the Chinese company from its 5G development and deployment on the back of security concerns of Chinese surveillance on these networks (Odisha TV, 2019; Farhan, 2019; Business Standard, 2019). The delay in early 5G roll-out will lead to adverse economic implications and technology development delay in the country. While there have been certain concerns about allowing Chinese network operators to participate in these trials, in December 2019 IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has said that the government has decided to allow all stakeholders to show use-cases of 5G in India, including China-based networks such as Huawei and ZTE (Rawat, 2019).

Meanwhile the Huawei Indian CEO, Jay Chen revealed that the company was working on solutions to apply its learnings and experience from China's situation to help. The company wants to help in this crisis with new technologies such as remote temperature monitoring and 5G+ thermal imaging. The latter helped the Chinese government to contain the spread of the virus. The technology is able to monitor the temperature of a moving object accurately and in real-time. The company is proposing the use of 5G technology to drive power teleconferencing. Therefore it can help medical experts to treat patients even when they are not physically present. There are also other features that use 5G solutions. There are 5G remote imaging diagnoses, 5G medical robots and more. Unfortunately, these solutions will be slightly limited by the lack of a proper 5G field in India. The country is yet to commence the race for the next network standard. The 21-days lockdown also is delaying the plans of carriers that were betting in the new network (Lancaster, 2020).

India's decision-making on the truly complex issue of developing 5G technologies requires a balanced analysis of risks and opportunities and should not be complicated by the result of external pressure. The latter can affect many Indian citizens, especially in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. This also applies to dozens of other countries that are under direct pressure from Washington.

The anti-Chinese campaign, in turn, is linked to attempts to use the coronavirus pandemic for large-scale takeovers. This is not only about "the weakest being eaten by the strongest", acquiring assets at a low price that will soar in value after the crisis, but also strengthening the US position on world markets. It is unlikely that China will remain aloof from this challenge.

Not without reason the European Commission issued special guidelines March 25 to EU capitals on enacting new bloc-wide rules meant to prevent foreign direct investments from threatening national security. Adding to signs of increasing alarm, Italy said it may broaden defences against hostile takeovers (DNyuz, 2020). The German government agreed to tighten protections for companies from foreign takeovers as the coronavirus pandemic engulfing the global economy raises concerns about the vulnerability of key industries. "We're going to implement these rules so that we can protect our critical infrastructure more securely than we have before," Economy Minister Peter Altmaier told reporters in Berlin. Without identifying potential buyers, Altmaier said authorities are already scrutinizing a concrete attempt to purchase a German company involved in "medical production," and examining others. "There are a number of other cases that we are monitoring very closely," he said. If governments in the largest and most developed EU countries are concerned about takeovers, it is not difficult to assume that in less developed countries, as a result of a catastrophic economic downturn, corruption and takeovers may become the norm.

According to the data provided by Cooley3 during the 2008 financial crisis, it was reported that the number of proxy fights increased by 14% year over year and the

number of unfriendly transactions nearly doubled (unfriendly transactions representing 23% of public deals announced in 2008, as compared to 12.4% of deals in 2007). While the underlying reasons for the market volatility are different now than they were in 2008, and companies and activists may be more risk-averse given the general uncertainty around the duration and scope of COVID-19's impact (Cooley M&A, 2020).

In the 10 years since the financial crisis, the total debt of borrowers around the world has increased by three-quarters — from \$97 trillion to \$169 trillion. 43% of this debt is government borrowing, the rest is private and corporate loans and bonds. This year and in the next two years, corporate borrowers will have to repay about \$2 trillion a year in bonds. Even in a relatively quiet 2018, research by McKinsey & Company indicated that at least 10% to 25% of these bonds (average values, depending on countries) were issued by companies with weak financial positions (Tutykhin, 2020.04.09). It is obvious that the situation has seriously deteriorated since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

In the US itself major lenders are preparing to become operators of oil and gas fields across the country for the first time in a generation to avoid losses on loans to energy companies that may go bankrupt, sources aware of the plans told Reuters. JPMorgan Chase & Co, Wells Fargo & Co, Bank of America Corp and Citigroup Inc are each in the process of setting up independent companies to own oil and gas assets. The industry is estimated to owe more than \$200 billion to lenders through loans backed by oil and gas reserves. As revenue has plummeted and assets have declined in value, some companies are saying they may be unable to repay. Whiting Petroleum Corp became the first producer to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on April 1. Others, including Chesapeake Energy Corp, Denbury Resources Inc and Callon Petroleum Co, have also hired debt advisers (French and Moise, 2020.04.10). If the shale producers go bankrupt there is a higher probability that the banks will seize the assets.

The hypertrophied reaction to the coronavirus pandemic, first of all under the influence of the English-language mainstream media and the transnational groups behind them, is hardly random. It contributes to the reformatting of the weakened economy and further concentration of assets in the hands of the global oligarchic elite, which, of course, does not cancel out the contradictions in its ranks.

Andreas Kluth points out that social unrest had already been increasing around the world before SARS-CoV-2 began its journey. There have been about 100 large anti-government protests since 2017. About 20 of these uprisings toppled leaders, while several were suppressed by brutal crackdowns and many others went back to simmering until the next outbreak. The immediate effect of Covid-19 is to dampen most forms of unrest, as both democratic and authoritarian governments force their populations into lockdowns, which keep people from taking to the streets or gathering in groups. But generally the less money you make, the less likely you are to be able to work remotely. The differences between nations are even bigger. To those living in a shanty town in India or South Africa, there's no such thing as "social distancing," because the whole family sleeps in one room. More hand-washing is good advice, unless there's no running water (Kluth, 2020).

The International Labor Organization considers the current crisis to be the most severe crisis since the Second World War. Full or partial lockdown measures are now affecting almost 2.7 billion workers, representing around 81 per cent of the world's workforce. The ILO estimates that 1.25 billion workers, representing almost 38 per cent of the global workforce, are employed in sectors that are now facing a severe decline in output and a high risk of workforce displacement (International Labour Organization, 2020). An increase of 10 percentage points in the unemployment rate in a neighbourhood translated to a loss of roughly a year and a half of life expectancy, the AP found (Forster, 2018). According to a study by Columbia's Till von Wachter and the Chicago Federal Reserve's Daniel Sullivan, long-term unemployment can knock up to 18 months off of life expectancy: mortality rates in the year after

displacement are 50%–100% higher than would otherwise have been expected. The effect on mortality hazards declines sharply over time, but even twenty years after displacement (Garofalo, 2012.04.02).

Based on mass discontent, the growth of radical protest movements is very possible over time. However, without a positive agenda that meets the new realities and opportunities of the 21st century, such a protest will turn into anarchy or unpromising dictatorships of various orientations that are also unstable. Yes, there are attempts to use the coronavirus pandemic and if not to create a new Great Depression but to coin money on its consequences. However, we should not forget that the latter did not avoid, but somehow accelerated the maturation of the preconditions for WW2.

What does it take to stop the negative scenarios? First of all, radical changes in the United States itself as part of the transition to a more progressive social model of development in this country and others. It is extremely bad for the whole world that the potential of such a gifted and energetic nation is not fully used. The alternative is not a current Chinese model, and it will not be simply ‘Chinese’, ‘American’, etc. The current Chinese model is transitional and catching up, but China is not going to build leadership in the world with it, but on the basis of integrating the use of promising technologies with the leading role of artificial intelligence as a crucial element of economic development, the basis for technological and social restructuring of the entire society. The most advanced members of the Chinese leadership seems to be quite clearly aware that the leap forward could be so sharp and rapid that the contradictions of today (including inter-state conflicts) will quickly disappear in order to dialectically give way to the contradictions of this future global society. In fact, before this opportunity, the Soviet elite performed badly, the American elite is lurching into the abyss, and the Chinese elite is on the verge of a difficult ascent to a qualitatively new level. What answer will history give, which country will be the first to rise to the top – we will find out in the not so distant future.

Of course, there is a range of models of social development based on advanced technologies (Pashentsev, 2020), including very inhumane options. We must always remember that the ascent to the great peak is fraught with the risk of a crushing fall. In this case, it could be the last for all mankind. Any historically long pause to this ascent is no longer possible. The coronavirus pandemic, Huawei 5G technologies, artificial intelligence and psychological operations – for all the qualitative heterogeneity of these phenomena, are interrelated and are factors of this ascent, which, of course, it is not limited to.

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