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Considerations for Arctic Operations: The Strategic and Regional Information Environment

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As a place of persistent competition at the sub-threshold of warfighting, the Arctic region is currently engaged in information confrontation and disinformation, which can impact the ability of friendly nations, partners and allies to optimise their science and technology (S&T) initiatives, including those involved in Sensing, Search, and Surveillance (SSS) in the Arctic. This presentation will make the SSS S&T community aware of the nature of current disinformation and information confrontation in the Arctic, as well as other similar regions (i.e. the Antarctic), where S&T and research are being subjected to politicization, influence operations, as well as the application of soft-power, sharp-power and smart-power philosophies by competitors and authoritarian regimes in order to undermine and influence. It may therefore be prudent for the SSS community to consider SSS in the associated information environment, as well as the physical geographic environment.

- The bigger picture.
- What is already happening in the Arctic / High North (HN).
- Agents of Influence networks.
- NATO's 'Cognitive Warfare' concept.

The Bigger Picture

The bigger picture

- Sub-threshold (Sub-T), Grey Zone (GZ), Hybrid warfare.

- Integrated Operating Concept (UK).
- Great Power 'Competition'.



Source: UK MOD (2021). Integrated Operating Concept

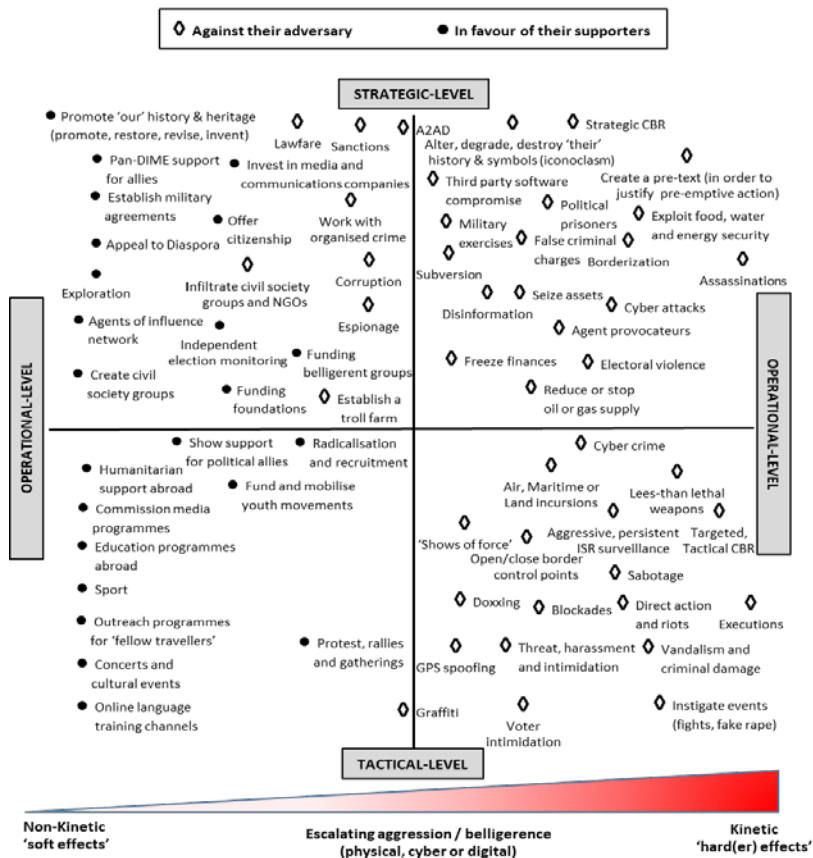
- Disinformation and misinformation.

- Disinformation (deliberate creating and dissemination of false information).
- Misinformation (inadvertent passing on of false information).

- But it's more than just disinformation / misinformation.

- Influence operations.
- Information confrontation.
- Information disorder.

The Sub-Threshold and Grey Zone space



- Strategic – Operational – Tactical.
- Pan-DIME (smart / sharp power).
- The continuum of belligerence.
- 'Them' vs. 'us' (audiences).

Source: Neil Verrall (2022). Closing Knowledge Gaps in 'the space between': Adding Explanatory Power to Grey Zone and Hybrid Activities in the Sub-Threshold. PhD in International Relations, Staffordshire University.

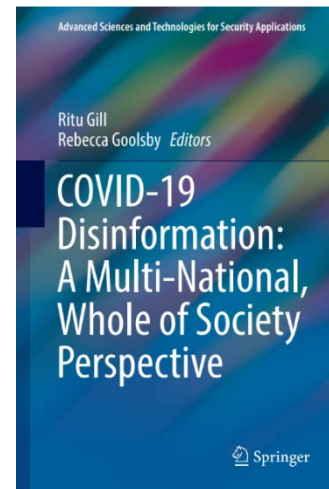
What is already happening in the Arctic / HN

Already evident in the Arctic / HN

- Lots of disinformation and information confrontation.
 - EUvsDisinformation database <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>
 - Arctic nations' fact checking organisations.
- Leveraging of “wedge issues” (emotional sockpuppets).
 - Elections.
 - Organised protests (incl. environmental issues).
 - Heritage and history (‘whataboutery’), incl. revisionist history.
- Other activities.
 - Airspace violations.
 - Targeting dispersed rural communities who rely on traditional media.
 - COVID-19.



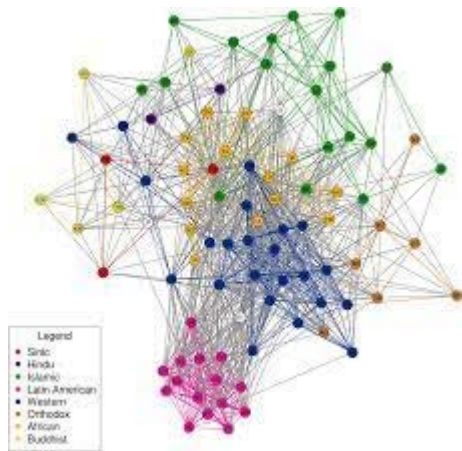
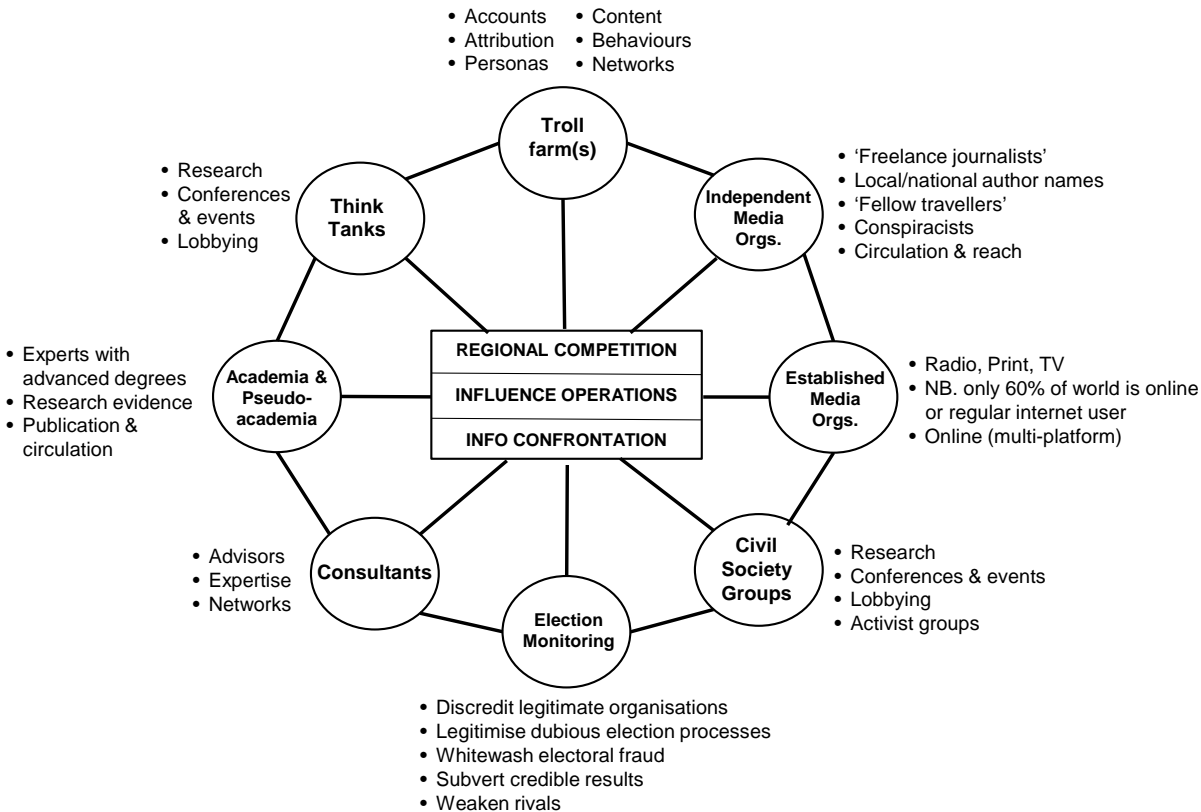
Source: Wikipedia



Source: Springer

Agents of Influence

Agents of Influence Nexus



Source: Wikimedia commons.

NATO's 'Cognitive Warfare' Concept

Cognitive Warfare

The Future of the Russo-Ukrainian War: Winter Cognitive Warfare

NATO Developed New Methods of Cognitive Warfare

“The Changing Dynamics of Conflict: The Impact of Cognitive Warfare and Cyber Operations”

The Role of Today's VRE and Considerations for Cognitive Warfare

The Future of China's Cognitive Warfare: Lessons from the War in Ukraine

Cognitive Warfare Will Be Deciding Factor in Battle

Behind NATO's 'cognitive warfare': 'Battle for your brain' waged by Western militaries

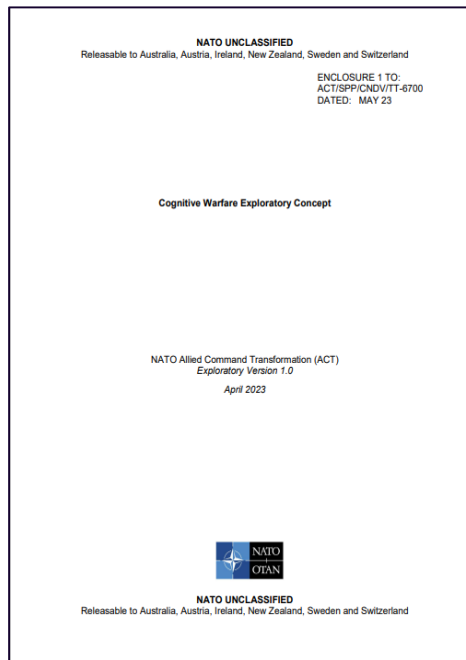
Neuro-Cognitive Warfare: Inflicting Strategic Impact via Non-Kinetic Threat

COVID and Cognitive Warfare in Taiwan

Influence of Cognitive Warfare on National Will to Fight

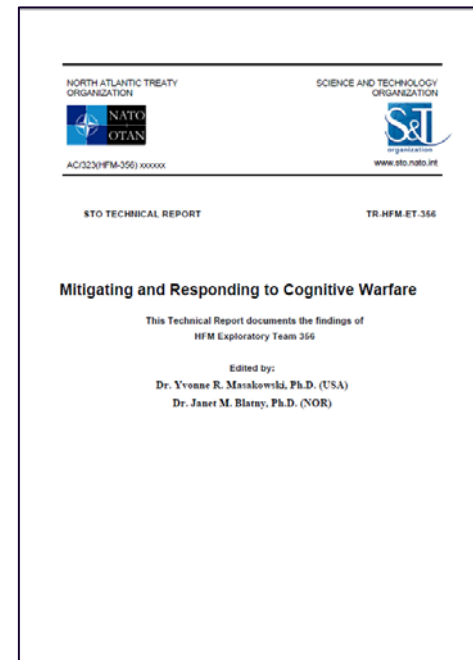
“COGNITIVE WARFARE”: NATO IS PLANNING A WAR FOR PEOPLE'S MINDS

NATO ACT



Source: NATO ACT.

NATO STO (CPoW)

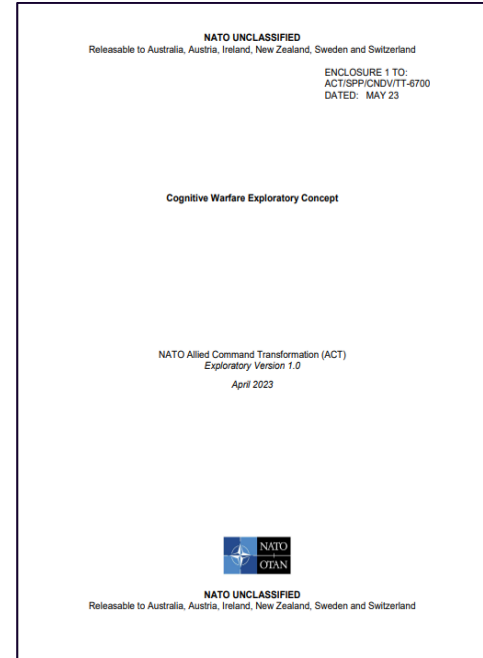


Source: NATO STO HFM-356..

What is 'Cognitive Warfare'?

- **The Central Idea:** “The NATO Alliance must seize the initiative by recognising and contesting the threat of persistent cognitive attacks...and take proactive steps to shape the cognitive dimension” (NATO ACT, 2023, p.5).*
- Proposed definition by NATO ACT (2023, p.3):*

“Activities conducted in synchronization with other Instruments of Power, to affect attitudes and behaviour by influencing, protecting, or disrupting individual and group cognition to gain advantage over an adversary”.
- Supporting ideas: EDUCATE, COLLABORATE, PROTECT, SHAPE
 - Whole of Society problem, and the Military Challenge for NATO.



Source: NATO ACT.

* NATO Allied Command Transformation. (2023). *Cognitive Warfare Exploratory Concept* (Norfolk, VA: NATO ACT).

Summary

- **All part of Sub-T, GZ, Hybrid.....Cognitive Warfare:**
 - **Information confrontation** (wider than just disinformation / misinformation)....as part of...
 - ...**Influence operations**, as part of...
 - ...**Great Power Competition**.
- **You are part of the Arctic / HN information environment** (wittingly or unwittingly).
 - Tactical (tech) contributes to Operational and Strategic impacts (what you 'do' and 'say' matters).
- **You will be (have been) targeted as part of an alternative narrative(s).**
 - For example: 'You' are the threat; 'They' are just defending themselves; 'Their' version of history.



Source: UK MOD (2021). Integrated Operating Concept

- **Antarctica** (Look at the developing narratives and influence campaigns by ‘others’):
 - Longer-term, slower-time, but it is happening.
 - Increase in activities across all the DIME Instruments of Power (IoP).
 - Challenge territorial claims (Antarctic Treaty System 2048).
 - Intent to influence regional codes, associations and organisations (governmental and non-governmental).
 - Creeping militarisation, as a scientific support activity.
 - Exploit the bounds of ‘scientific research’; weaponized dual-use technologies, such as satellites, drones, etc.
 - The regional information environment:
 - For them: Influence, Persuade, Compel, Convince, Coerce, Deter, Shape, Protect, Mentor, Partner.
 - Against others: Destabilise, Discredit, Degrade, Diminish, Undermine, Confuse, Harass, Frighten, Deceive (Mislead, Manipulate, Mask).

[dstl] The Science Inside

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