Chronology of Possible Russian Gray Area and Hybrid Warfare Operations

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There is no simple or reliable way to define Russian “gray area” or “hybrid” civil and military operations that affect U.S. strategic interests. Many Russian low-level operations, military claims, and political acts are reported as only serving commercial interests, reflecting local claims or interests, or supporting Russia’s broader security needs.

The impact of gray zone operations on Russia’s strategic competition with the United States may be highly indirect, and the motives behind Russian actions may be highly uncertain. Many of these activities described in this chronology also do not have a direct impact on competition with the United States but have an impact on U.S. strategic partners, other states, and non-state actors. There also are gray zone operations that are not described accurately in open source literature or may not even be reported at all.

Much of the available reporting also is written in ways that highly compartmentalize civil, economic, and military activities. Military exercises involving air, land, and maritime claims are often described in tactical terms, but not in ways that explain that they too are a form of competition. Similarly, the motives behind civil activities like investments and major civil projects may only be reported in terms of their commercial merit or benefits, and not their overall strategic impact with the United States.

This chronology is not an attempt to define the motivations and reasoning behind Russian grand strategy, rather it attempts to provide a broad historical timeline of Russian civil, economic, and military actions that affect competition with the United States. Whether one calls it “gray area” or “hybrid” warfare, it is clear that operations under this category work in tandem to advance Russian interests without ever escalating competition to a conventional battle.

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Broadening the Definition of Gray Area, Hybrid, and Irregular Operations

This is a significant departure from some other approaches to strategic competition. Irregular warfare operations first garnered recent popular attention when Frank G. Hoffman labeled it as “hybrid war” in his 2007 Conflict in the 21st Century. He has since revised his definition in 2009 to describe “hybrid warfare” as:

Any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain their political objectives.

Hybrid warfare is also interchangeably used with the term “gray zone operations,” which Hoffman defines as:

Those covert or illegal activities of non-traditional statecraft that are below the threshold of armed organized violence; including disruption of order, political subversion of government or non-governmental organizations, psychological operations, abuse of legal processes, and financial corruption as part of an integrated design to achieve strategic advantage.

In 2013, the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation’s Armed Forces, General Valery Gerasimov, gave a speech that was recognized by many U.S. academics for defining the Russian understanding of irregular warfare known to be called “non-linear warfare” which is when,
Wars are no longer declared, and having begun, proceed according to an unfamiliar template…the role of non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness. The focus of applied methods of conflict has altered in the direction of the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military measures – applied in coordination with the protest potential of the population. All this is supplemented by military means of a concealed character, including carrying out actions of informational conflict and the actions of special operations forces.

However, it is important to note that Gerasimov’s article has been incorrectly labeled as the “Gerasimov doctrine,” and the Russian understanding of “non-linear warfare” has been recognized by many scholars and strategists to be a mirror image of Russia’s perception of U.S. activities in the irregular warfare domain.

This conceptualization also reflects the fact that U.S. strategic competition with other states like China, Iran, and North Korea involves political and economic competition, and that the word “warfare” goes beyond the military dimension on a global basis.

In 1999, two Chinese military analysts released a Chinese version of irregular warfare operations and labeled it as “unrestricted warfare.” Colonel Qiao Liang and Colonel Wang Xiangsui describe unrestricted warfare as, 4

Unrestricted war is a war that surpasses all boundaries and restrictions. It takes nonmilitary forms and military forms and creates a war on many fronts. It is the war of the future.

The Chinese use of “unrestricted warfare” has been further analyzed and sometimes referred to as “quasi warfare,” which is marked by the “three non-” warfares: non-contact (fei jierong), non-linear (fei xianshi), and non-symmetric (fei duicheng). 5

Non-contact (fei jierong) is warfare conducted in which the more advanced side is outside the immediate geographical zone of the enemy’s weapons, and therefore impervious to strikes while also retaining the ability to conduct its own direct strikes on the enemy. Non-linear (fei xianshi) is warfare that has no distinguishable battlefield due to the advancement of technology and codependent nature of the relationship between the sides – and it is usually carried out over the information space. Non-symmetric (fei duicheng) is warfare that engages the adversary in every strategic aspect with the use of limited military resources.

The U.S. commands and the Department of Defense (DoD) have also formally acquired their own term of “multi-domain operations” (MDO), which the 2017 Report released by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command defined as, 6

Multi-Domain Battle is an operational concept with strategic and tactical implications. It deliberately focuses on increasingly capable adversaries who challenge deterrence and pose strategic risk to U.S. interests in two ways. First, in operations below armed conflict, these adversaries employ systems to achieve their strategic ends over time to avoid war and the traditional operating methods of the Joint Force. Second, if these adversaries choose to wage a military campaign, they employ integrated systems that contest and separate Joint Force capabilities simultaneously in all domains at extended ranges to make a friendly response prohibitively risky or irrelevant.

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command later released a revised version in 2018, which outlines the following: 7

- Central idea. Army forces, as an element of the Joint Force, conduct Multi-Domain Operations to prevail in competition; when necessary, Army forces penetrate and dis-integrate enemy anti-access and area denial systems and exploit the resultant freedom of maneuver to achieve strategic objectives (win) and force a return to competition on favorable terms.
Tenets of the Multi-Domain Operations. The Army solves the problems presented by Chinese and Russian operations in competition and conflict by applying three interrelated tenets: calibrated force posture, multi-domain formations, and convergence. Calibrated force posture is the combination of position and the ability to maneuver across strategic distances. Multi-domain formations possess the capacity, capability, and endurance necessary to operate across multiple domains in contested spaces against a near-peer adversary. Convergence is rapid and continuous integration of capabilities in all domains, the EMS, and information environment that optimizes effects to overmatch the enemy through cross-domain synergy and multiple forms of attack all enabled by mission command and disciplined initiative. The three tenets of the solution are mutually reinforcing and common to all Multi-Domain Operations, though how they are realized will vary by echelon and depend upon the specific operational situation.

Multi-Domain Operations and strategic objectives. The Joint Force must defeat adversaries and achieve strategic objectives in competition, armed conflict, and in a return to competition. In competition, the Joint Force expands the competitive space through active engagement to counter coercion, unconventional warfare, and information warfare directed against partners. These actions simultaneously deter escalation, defeat attempts by adversaries to “win without fighting,” and set conditions for a rapid transition to armed conflict. In armed conflict, the Joint Force defeats aggression by optimizing effects from across multiple domains at decisive spaces to penetrate the enemy’s strategic and operational anti-access and area denial systems, dis-integrate the components of the enemy’s military system, and exploit freedom of maneuver necessary to achieve strategic and operational objectives that create conditions favorable to a political outcome. In the return to competition, the Joint Force consolidates gains and deters further conflict to allow the regeneration of forces and the re-establishment of a regional security order aligned with U.S. strategic objectives.

The practical problem is that such operations may or may not involve any form of conflict or actual fighting directly with China and Russia, and both countries now compete actively with the United State in other ways.

For the purposes of this analysis, gray zone operations can refer to any range of action from non-violent economic manipulation to low-levels of violence using mercenaries. They can involve changes in deployment, basing, advisory missions, arms transfers, or military exercises; claims to military zones; use of sanctions and trade barriers; economic warfare; technological competition; information warfare; support of other states and non-state actors; and other forms of competition designed to gain strategic and tactical advantage are all part of the current competition between the United States, China, and Russia.

In practice, finding new ways to compete is proving to be a critical part of American strategic competition with China and Russia, and U.S. strategy must be based on the assumption that there are no fixed rules that define “gray zone” operations, and that clearly separate the use of military force from political or economic action, or competition based on a wide spectrum of different activities on a national, regional, and global basis. This chronology lists “gray zone” and “irregular warfare” operations as broad guidelines to stress the need for U.S. strategy to respond to the full range of options, from the grand strategic to the tactical level, as the United States competes with Russia and China.

There are clear historical precedents for doing so. They include most of the portions of human history when major powers of empires were not committed to something approaching total war. Human history, and such competition, is a key focus of Clausewitz and especially Sun Tzu. It is also clear that Russia now actively competes with the U.S. on this basis, and any definition of this competition that excludes its full range of activities cannot be an effective basis for shaping U.S. strategy.

The Uncertain Contents of this Chronology
This chronology organizes the broad range of Russian gray zone operations into geographical regions where Russia is attempting to assert its influence and compete with the United States. The chronology also provides a map that color coordinates these operations into specific campaigns. These campaigns can represent either positive or negative gray zone operations. It is to be noted that countries which have a brighter and more vivid hue of a campaign’s color signify a strong positive economic, military, or civil relationship with Russia. These include, but are not limited to, arms sales, access to natural resources, military alliances, and joint civil development projects. Countries with friendly Russian relations that directly threaten U.S. global competition are also highlighted in black, and they include Iran and North Korea.

For the purposes of this analysis, countries that remain gray demonstrate either a neutral relationship with Russia or a relationship that does not share significant — whether it be positive or negative — statecraft with Russia. However, that does not negate the fact that Russia may be attempting to further develop its relationship with these countries.

The following map includes an Active Measures campaign, a Broader West/EU campaign, an Eastern Europe/Western Balkans campaign, a Western Border campaign, a Near Abroad campaign, a Syrian campaign, a Middle East campaign, a Sino-Relations campaign, an Africa campaign, a Latin America campaign, a Southeast Asia/India campaign, and an Arctic campaign.

The Active Measures campaign is a broad influence campaign specifically against the United States. These gray zone operations range from espionage to cyber-attacks to election meddling.

The Broader West/EU campaign is similar to the Active Measures campaign, but it targets mainland Europe, and more specifically NATO. Gray zone operations also include espionage, cyber-attacks and meddling, but they also heavily use trade coercion and military demonstrations near NATO sites.

The Southeastern Europe/Western Balkans campaign is a more targeted campaign towards the geographical and cultural region that can be coerced to sharing favorable relations with Russia. Many of these countries either already have membership to the European Union and NATO or they have attempted to join, but these countries also have the opportunity to be influenced more heavily by Russia.

The Western Border campaign includes the Baltic states, Ukraine and Georgia. This campaign is more specific than the Near Abroad campaign because although these countries are also post-Soviet states, Russia uses more aggressive and negative gray zone operations, specifically the threat of territorial occupation.

The Near Abroad campaign use gray zone operations on states of the former Soviet Union (FSU) including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Moldova. Many of these operations involve positive trade unions and diplomatic relations.

The Syrian campaign is Russia’s military efforts in the Syrian Civil War, which also involves Russia’s relations with Turkey.
The Middle East campaign is Russia’s attempt to expand its influence in the Middle East with the Gulf States, Israel and the Levant. There has been limited progress in this campaign, but it is still notable to track with Russia’s presence in Syria.

The Sino-relations campaign is the Russia’s attempt to develop a stronger relationship with China.

The Africa campaign has recently received high levels of attention by the Kremlin to expand its influence on the African continent. This campaign includes debt forgiveness, Russian access to natural resource, military training, and a practice ground for Russian private military companies (PMCs).

The Latin America campaign is Russia’s expanding influence in the backyard of the United States. Although Russia has very novel relationship with most countries in Central America and South America, it has already developed notable relations with Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua.

The Southeast Asia/India campaign is another upcoming campaign that expands Russia’s relationship in the region. However, due to China’s strong presence, Russia has only formed initial relationship although they do include some arms sales.

The Arctic campaign focuses on Russian gray zone operations to stake a claim to the natural resources and strategic military position in the Arctic.

By organizing Russian gray zone operations into geographical campaigns, this chronology does not reveal Russia’s specific motivations and objectives. However, it does provide the scale and special extent to which Russia is performing acts of competition against the United States.

This chronology is a rough working attempt to illustrate the full range and depth of Russian competitive activities. Many of the entries are uncertain or ambiguous while many more have almost certainly been omitted or have never been reported. A full analysis would involve a wide range of country experts and military experts. It also would require substantial intelligence analysis at classified levels to be truly comprehensive.

It still, however, illustrates the broader patterns of Russian activity in competing with the United States and serves as a starting point for a far more comprehensive analysis. An additional analysis of how U.S. competition with Russia interacts with U.S. strategic competition with China is provided in a separate Burke Chair analysis, entitled U.S. Competition with China and Russia: The Crisis-Driven Need to Change U.S. Strategy. This report is available on the CSIS website here.

Comments and Suggested Additions and Corrections

This is a rough working paper. Please send comments and suggest additions and corrections to Anthony H. Cordesman, Burke Chair in Strategy, CSIS, at acordesman@gmail.com.
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Active Measures Campaign

December 2012: President Obama signs the Magnitsky Act which blacklisted Russian government officials and their assets in the United States. Russia responded by banning Americans from adopting Russian children and banning American NGOs from operating in Russia.

2015-2017: U.S. right-wing leaders meet with ultranationalist Russian political leaders. The Base, a U.S. neo-Nazi group, has its headquarters in Russia.

June 2016: The Russian General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate was linked to the leaking of emails by the U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton during her presidential campaign.

November 2016: The St. Petersburg Company known called the “Internet Research Agency” deployed thousands of accounts on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms leading up to the presidential elections.

July-September 2017: The United States and Russia engage in a tit for tat with diplomatic officials after Congress approves new sanctions for Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. elections.

April 21, 2020: The Senate Intelligence Committee has unanimously endorsed the U.S. intelligence community’s conclusion that Russia conducted a sweeping and unprecedented campaign to interfere in the 2016 presidential election.

The heavily-redacted report, based on a three-year investigation, builds on a committee finding nearly two years ago that the January 2017 intelligence community assessment (ICA) on Russia was sound. The spy agencies also found that Russia sought to shake faith in American democracy, denigrate then-candidate Hillary Clinton and boost her rival Donald Trump.

April 1, 2020: Russia sends the world’s biggest cargo plane of medical aid to the United States. The aid serves a coronavirus propaganda.

April 10, 2020: After months of denial, Russia finally admits the Coronavirus has pushed Moscow’s health care system to the limit.

June 9, 2020: Russia condemns U.S. for hypocrisy after George Floyd’s death.

Broader West/EU Campaign

April 21, 2000: Russian President Vladimir Putin approves the 2000 Military Doctrine. The doctrine listed a main external threat as “attempts to ignore (infringe) the Russian Federation's interests in resolving international security problems, and to oppose its strengthening as one influential center in a multipolar world” in which the Russian Federation would respond by “giv[ing] preference to political, diplomatic, and other nonmilitary means of preventing, localizing, and neutralizing military threats at regional and global levels.”


January 27, 2008: Russia sends two long-range bombers to the neutral waters Bay of Biscay off the French and Spanish coast. This is notably the first large-scale military exercise next to territory of NATO members to demonstrate strength.
April 2010: A Polish plane carrying Lech Kaczynski, the Polish president, crashes in thick fog in western Russia, killing all 96 people on-board. A Russian investigation blames the Poles, while a Polish investigation pins some of the blame on Russian air traffic controllers.

February 2013: Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov’s publishes and essay that is misleadingly known outside Russia as the Gerasimov doctrine. The essay called for developing nature of warfare, to prepare for future threats and conflicts.

October 2019: Negotiations completed with Russian, Danish, and German officials to begin construction of Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

June 10, 2020: Two formations of Russian bombers were intercepted by F-22 Raptor fighters after they entered the Alaskan Air Defense Identification Zone.

June 11, 2020: Russia’s Foreign Ministry on Thursday welcomed President Donald Trump’s reported plan to withdraw more than a quarter of U.S. troops from Germany, saying it would help bolster security in Europe.

June 11, 2020: Russian combat jets have flown training missions over the Baltic Sea in parallel with NATO’s BALTOPS 2020 drills.

Southeastern Europe/Western Balkans Campaign

September 2005: Russia and Germany agree to the construction of the Nord Stream pipeline to allow direct gas supply from Russia to Western Europe bypassing transit countries in Eastern Europe.

Western Border Campaign

Russia in Estonia

October 2006: Estonian President signs bill to relocate Bronze soldier monument.

April 27, 2007: Bronze soldier monument is relocated.

April 27, 2007: Russia boycotts various Estonian goods.

May 3, 2007: Siege of Estonian embassy in Moscow.

May 3, 2007: Estonian Ambassador leaves Russia.

May 3, 2007: Russia suspends oil deliveries to Estonia.

May 16, 2007: Russia conducts cyberattacks on Estonia.

Russia in Latvia

June 5, 2000: Latvia’s admission to NATO may prompt the deployment of 300,000 troops in Belarus near the Latvian border

July 4, 2018: Latvian government prohibits any Latvian school or university from teaching a language that is not recognized by the European Union in an attempt to cease Russian language dissemination.

Russia in Lithuania

March 2014: Lithuanian officials claim that Russia is attempting to create a false history that denies the Baltic states’ right to exist. The Lithuanian defense minister, Raimundas Karoblis,
said, “They are saying our capital Vilnius should not belong to Lithuania because between the first and second world wars it was occupied by Poland.”

**Russia in Georgia**

**November 2003:** Georgian Rose Revolution takes place.

**March 2006:** Russia bans Georgian agricultural, wine, and mineral water imports.

**January 22, 2006:** Russia destroys gas and electricity lines from Russia to Georgia.

**September 28, 2006:** Russia recalls its ambassador in Georgia.

**April 3, 2008:** Georgia requests inclusion in Membership Action Plan.

**April 4, 2008:** Putin warns Bush that supporting Ukraine and Georgia’s bid to NATO membership would cross Russia’s red line.

**June 2008:** Russia sends troops to Abkhazia.

**August 2008:** Russia issues passports to Georgian citizens so Russia could legitimize its invasion during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. The Russian policy of “compatriots protection” upholds all rights of any Russian citizen, which included ethnic Georgians living in the contested regions who received Russian passports. Russia claimed that Georgia had attacked Russian citizens residing in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia — as a result, Russia simultaneously delegitimized the actions of the Georgian government while legitimizing its invasion to protect “Russian citizens.”

**August 2008:** Russia conducts military exercise on Russian border.

**August 2008:** Russia conducts cyber-attacks on Georgia.

**February 20, 2020:** Russian military intelligence agency known as GRU carried out a cyber-attack on Georgia. Hackers debilitated thousands of government and private websites to go offline, and they also interrupted television broadcast. Specifically, the Russian hacking unit known as Sandworm with ties to the GRU was linked to the attacks.

**August 7-12, 2008:** Russo-Georgian War starts after Russia backs Georgian separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

**Russia in Ukraine**

**2004:** Pro-Western “Orange Revolution” takes place.

**January 1, 2006:** Gazprom cuts off oil supplies to Ukraine after disputes over prices. Gazprom resumes oil supplies a day later and Ukraine agrees to Russian prices.

**January 7, 2009:** Russia halts oil and gas supplies to Ukraine after disputes about oil prices. Oil supplies to southeastern Europe were also disrupted.

**2015-2016:** Russian hackers turned off the power in parts of Ukraine using code.

**Crimea**

**November 2014:** Russia annexes Crimea.

**November 21, 2013:** Kiev suspends trade talks with the European Union and restores economic ties with Moscow.

December 17, 2013: Putin agrees to bailout $15 billion of Ukrainian debt and slash a third of the price of Russian gas supplies to Ukraine.

February 14, 2014: Russia accuses EU of seeking Ukraine in its “sphere of influence.”

2014: Russia leaked a phone call between the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt. They were discussing two potential members that could be in Ukraine’s government, but this phone call was manipulated to insinuate that the Maidan revolution had been directed by the West.

February 22, 2014: Ukrainian President Yanukovych is removed from office.

February 27, 2014: Unmarked “green” armed men invade Crimea and raise Russian flag and Putin gains parliamentary approval to invade Ukraine.

- After Russian troops landed in Crimea, they seized Ukrainian communication infrastructure — such as the television towers and radio towers — so that Russia could control the content distributed to the local audiences.
- Russia uses actresses to act as witnesses in the news. They played characters ranging from an Odessa resident, to a protestor in Crimea, and even as a concerned mother of a Ukrainian soldier. They provide additional support for fabricated stories that are distributed in the news.
- Zvezda, a Russian television network run by the country’s Ministry of Defense posted a video which claimed to be taken in Eastern Ukraine. The video alleged that the Ukrainian military was using phosphorous bombs against civilians. However, it was actually a video from fighting in Fallujah, Iraq in 2004.

March 4, 2014: Russian navy blocks Strait between Crime and Russia.

March 8, 2014: Russian forces fire warning shots to prevent unarmed international military observer mission from entering Crimea.

Donetsk and Luhansk

May 11, 2014: Pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk declare independence as "people's republics" after the referendums, which were not recognized by Kiev or the West.

July 17, 2014: Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 from Amsterdam is shot down near the village of Grabove, in rebel-held territory close to the border with Russia.

Russia denies it had armed rebels and argues instead that a Ukrainian fighter jet had flown near the airliner at the time.

February 12, 2015: After marathon talks in the Belarus capital, Minsk, an agreement is reached to end the fighting. The leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France announce that a ceasefire will begin on 15 February. The deal also includes weapon withdrawals and prisoner exchanges, but key issues remain to be settled.

December 29, 2019: Pro-Russian separatists and Ukraine have concluded a long-awaited prisoner exchange of 200 prisoners, the office of the Ukrainian president said.
Ukraine’s government received 76 captives, with the pro-Russian separatists reportedly taking 124.

**Near Abroad Campaign**

**January 1, 2010:** Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan agree to join the Eurasian Customs Union. In 2014, the Eurasian Customs Union was integrated into the Eurasian Economic Union. In 2015, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia joined the Eurasian Customs Union.

**Russia in Moldova**

**December 2002:** OSCE extends deadline for withdrawal of Russian weapons from Transnistria into 2004 but Russia says its troops will stay until a settlement is reached.

**March 23, 2005:** Moldova sign three-year action plan with the European Union.

**April 22, 2005:** Russia bans meat, fruit, vegetable imports from Moldova.

**January 2, 2006:** Russia cuts gas to Moldova.

**March 14, 2006:** Moldova signs a customs union with Ukraine.

**September 2006:** Transnistria referendum overwhelmingly backs independence from Moldova and a plan eventually to become part of Russia.

**October 2, 2013:** Russia expels Moldovan workers from Russia.

**April 28, 2014:** Moldova and the EU agree to visa liberalization.

**October 22, 2014:** Russia bans imports of meat and canned goods from Moldova.

**Russia in Belarus**

The Kremlin is pursuing a plan to merge Belarus into a Union State with Russia. However, whenever Lukashenko attempts to stall the process, Russia imposes – seemingly arbitrary yet targeted – bans on agricultural imports such as pears and apples. More recently, Putin has rejected an oil deal with Belarus to increase pressure.

**Syrian Campaign**

**Syria**

**September 2015:** Russia carries first airstrike in Syria claiming to target ISIS but attacking mostly anti-Assad rebels.

**June 2015:** Russian security analysts travelled to Syria to identify a military base location.

**November-December 2015:** Russia begins to deploy ground troops in Syria.

**2015:** Russia begins hospital bombing campaign with Syria.

**December 1, 2015:** Russia announces deployment of S-400 surface-to-air missiles to Syria and a Slava-class guided missile cruiser off Syria’s coast.

**December 18, 2015:** Russia signs an ambitious plan with UN to end the war in Syria. The next day, Putin warns that Russia is ready to scale up its military intervention in Syria.

**September 17, 2018:** Russia negotiated a peace deal, the Sochi agreement. However, Russian and Syrian attack in December cause a mass migration of refugees towards the Turkish border.
January 7, 2020: Putin visits Syria for the second time in three years. This follows the death of Soleimani by U.S. forces on January 3, 2020. Putin’s visit is intended to signify Russia’s dominance in Syria.

February 10, 2020: After Soleimani was killed, Iraq considered deepening its ties with Russia when the Kremlin approached Iraqi Security Forces after noticing growing tensions between with the United States.

February 12, 2020: Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service, Sergei Naryshkin, made an official visit to Oman. Oman is the only GCC member that did not suspend relations with Assad. Oman’s opposition to the Saudi intervention in Yemen aligns with Moscow’s views. Russia attempts to strengthen its relationship with Oman.

February 7, 2020: Russia launches campaign to overtake the M5 highway in Syria.

To see the full scope of Russia’s campaign in Syria, see CSIS’s “Moscow’s War in Syria.”

Turkey

November 24, 2015: Turkish F-16 jet shoots down Russian warplane in Syria. Putin warns of serious consequence.

November 24, 2015: Russian foreign minister cancels planned visit to Turkey.

November 25, 2015: Russia suspends military cooperation with Turkey.

November 25, 2015: The Just Russia political party submits bill to Russian parliament proposing to criminalize denial of the 1915 Armenian genocide.

November 28, 2015: Russia suspends military cooperation with Turkey. Russia bans Turkish citizens from working for some Russian companies and ends visa-free travel to Russia.

November 28, 2015: Russia bans imports of Turkish fruit, vegetables, poultry, and salt; Russia bans charter flights to Turkey starting January 1, 2016.

December 1, 2015: Russian-Turkish cultural center in Moscow closes.

December 2, 2015: Russia recalls Russian exchange students in Turkey.

December 2, 2015: Russian officials claim evidence that Turkey sold oil to ISIS.

December 2, 2015: Turkey signs liquid natural gas deal with Qatar.

December 3, 2015: Russia suspends talks on TurkStream pipeline project.

December 7, 2015: Russia complains to UN Security Council that Turkey sent troops to Iraq without the Iraqi government’s consent.

December 13, 2015: Russian destroyer Smetlivy fires on a Turkish vessel near Greece.

July 13, 2019: Turkish and Russian tensions subside and Russia sells Turkey S-400 missile defense system.

October 9, 2019: Turkey invades Syria in “Operation Spring of Peace.”
February 27, 2020: Turkey lost 33 soldiers in an attack at Idlib, and Ankara blamed Bashar al-Assad. When Moscow could not adequately control its Syrian partner, Russia stood by as Turkish forces conducted a drone centered offensive against the Syrian military that wiped out hundreds of Syrian personnel and fighters affiliated with Lebanese Hezbollah.

Middle East Campaign

March 10, 2020: Russia refused OPEC’s request to cut oil production. Oil prices plunged a day after when Russia and Saudi Arabia vowed to compete for market share. Russia appears to be targeting the U.S. shale industry and responding to U.S. sanctions preventing the completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Sino-Relations Campaign

1992: China and Russia issue the Joint Statement on the Basis of Mutual Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, recognizing each other as friendly countries.

1996: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - dubbed the Shanghai Five - meet in Shanghai and agree to cooperate to combat ethnic and religious tensions in each other’s countries.

June 15, 2001: Leaders of China, Russia and four Central Asian states launch the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and sign an agreement to fight ethnic and religious militancy while promoting trade and investment. The group emerges when the Shanghai Five - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - are joined by Uzbekistan.


August 18, 2005: China and Russia hold their first joint military exercises.

July 2008: China and Russia sign a treaty ending 40-year-old border dispute which led to armed clashes during the Cold War.

February 2009: Russia and China sign $25 billion deal to supply China with oil for next 20 years in exchange for loans.

May 21, 2014: China signs a 30-year deal worth an estimated $400bn for gas supplies from Russia's Gazprom.

January 27, 2020: Russia delivers S-400 to China.

March 4, 2020: Russia accuses China of technology theft. “Unauthorized copying of our equipment abroad is a huge problem. There have been 500 such cases over the past 17 years. China alone has copied aircraft engines, Sukhoi planes, deck jets, air defense systems, portable air defense missiles, and analogues of the Pantsir medium-range surface-to-air systems,” said Yevgeny Livadny, Rostec’s chief of intellectual property projects.

February 2020: Russia closed its border with China and banned Chinese nationals from entering the country due to concerns over COVID-19.

Africa Campaign
2014: The Wagner Group, a Russian private military company that maintains close ties to the Kremlin and which has reportedly been active in a number of conflict zones, from Ukraine to Libya and beyond, is created.

December 13, 2018: U.S. National Security Advisor Ambassador John Bolton accuses Russia of selling arms to African countries in exchange for votes at the UN.12

**Russia in Mozambique**

Russia has deployed 200 mercenaries to Mozambique to fight ISIS.

**Russia in Zimbabwe**

March 15, 2018: Russia’s JSC Afromet and Zimbabwe’s Pen East Ltd sign a joint venture to produce up to 855,000 ounces (27 tonnes) of platinum group metals and gold per year from the Darwendale PGM project.

**Russia in Angola**

January 12, 2018: Russian miner Alrosa signs deal with Angolan local producer Catoca Mining to secure a diamond production base outside of Russia.

**Russia in Central African Republic**

April 14, 2019: Valery Zakharov, a former Russian intelligence official, stepped in as an official military advisor to CAR's president.

**Russia in Sudan**

2017: Half of Sudan’s arm purchases were Russia sources in exchange for a Russian mining firm, M-invest, to receive preferential access to gold reserves in Sudan.

**Russia in Madagascar**

November 2018: A Russian company controlled by Mr. Prigozhin, a close friend of Valdimir Putin, acquired a major stake in a government-run company that mines chromium, a mineral valued for its use in stainless steel.

November 2018: Russia attempt to swing Presidential elections, but campaign materials were riddled with grammatical mistakes.

**Russia in Cameroon**

November 2017: Russian mining company strikes a deal with former President al-Bashir in exchange for Russian PMCs and supplies of Russian weapons.

**Russia in Nigeria**

November 11, 2014: United States refuses to sell weapons to Nigeria to fight Boko Haram.

October 24, 2019: Nigeria signs contract with Russia for 12 Mi-35 helicopter gunships.

**Russia in Libya**

September 2019: Moscow backs Hifter’s forces in Libya, the Kremlin sees Libya as an ideological platform to discredit the West. While Russia is supporting the warlord Khalifa Hifter, who is also backed by the UAE and Egypt, Turkey is supporting the U.N. installed government
in the Libyan capital, Tripoli. Turkey has made investments in Libya for gas drilling rights and a compensation deal before the civil war broke out.

**Latin America Campaign**

**Russia in Venezuela**

**January 28, 2019:** United States imposes sanctions on the state-owned oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela.

**March 8, 2019:** Russia’s state-owned oil company, Rosneft, accepted Venezuelan crude oil as a form of “loan repayment.” Rosneft would purchase Venezuela’s premium Merey 16 crude at a steep discount and then use those proceeds from the sale to go into the loan repayment from the 2014 arm sale of Russian weapons. It is also assumed that Russia is handling 70 to 80 percent of Venezuela’s oil.

**Southeast Asia/India Campaign**

**October 2018:** Russia and India sign pact to build six new nuclear reactors in a new site in India.

**November 2018:** Russia is elevated to a strategic partner with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

**October 12, 2019:** Russia President Vladimir Putin and Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte agreed to boost defense and trade ties, and Duterte urged Russian firms to invest in railway and transport infrastructure as part of his “Build, Build, Build” program to drive growth in the Philippines.

**Arctic Campaign**

**August 2007:** Russia plants flag on North Pole seabed claiming its right to billions of dollars in oil and gas reserves in the Arctic Ocean.


