

## Political Warfare by Russia



### Novel and Important Signals to Watch: Active Measures 2.0

#### The Russian Intelligence and Security Services (RISS) continue to play an integral role in hybrid operations

- Russian Intelligence and Security Services operatives play a key role in supporting Russian core interests in a variety of direct and indirect covert actions ('active measures') against the West, in particular in the field of Information Confrontation. [HybridCoE \(1\)](#) ; [HybridCoE \(2\)](#) ; [The Guardian](#) ; [Lawfare \(1\)](#)
- *Are Western Intelligence and Security services equipped to attribute such actions not only correctly, but in ways to dissuade further such activity?*

#### Political Warfare is becoming more attractive as it is relatively cheap, and ideally tailored to the realms of cyberspace and the information environment

- The characteristics that make hybrid activity attractive will likely only become more attractive for Russia as its economic decline continues. [HybridCoE \(3\)](#) ; [CSBA](#) ; [ICDS](#) ; [Reuters](#)
- *Can we expect even more hybrid activity by Russia in order to distract domestic attention of the Russian population, keep the West off-balance and pave the way for further coercive (and territorial) advances?*

#### The rise of the privatized military-industrial complex: who actually commands and controls Russia's 'little green men'?

- Russia is increasingly using paramilitary groups and also expanding their activities into new geographic areas, like the Western Balkans and Central Africa, enabling Moscow to utilise a cadre of skilled operatives in a variety of non-attributable hybrid actions wherever and whenever required by the state. [Lawfare \(2\)](#) ; [Foreign Policy](#) ; [Jamestown](#) ; [RUSI](#)
- *Does the Kremlin still have ultimate command and control over how armed force is used on its own territory, and moreover in its name abroad?*

#### Moscow's hybrid activity increasingly focused in pursuit of a 'zone of privileged interest' in the Western Balkans

- Russia devotes an increasing level of its hybrid activity towards the Western Balkans, to prevent states within this region from being incorporated into the sphere of influence of either China, Turkey, the Gulf states, or the Euro-Atlantic institutions. [ECFR](#) ; [Bloomberg](#) ; [The Independent](#) ; [EUvsdisinfo](#)
- *Is the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia now more likely to face intensive Russian hybrid activity as it continues to move closer to NATO?*

## Long Term Trends: Threats Expanding in New Directions

Multifactor Threat Assessment (10-year timespan)

Relation	Indicator	Trend
<b>Intentions</b>	Maintain influence in 'near abroad'	—
	Undermine EU/NATO foundations	—
	Interfere in democratic processes	▲
	Erode confidence in institutions	▲
	Silence the critics of the Kremlin	▲
<b>Capabilities</b>	Number of cyber attacks	▲
	Disinformation activity	▲
	Economic coercion	▼
	Paramilitary activity	▲
	Covert (in)direct action	—

■ Decreasing threat

■ Increasing threat

▲ Upward

▼ Downward

— Net-zero (stable/fluctuating)

## Political Warfare by Russia



### Novel and Important Signals to Watch: The International Order

#### The Return of Political Warfare

- Russia continues to seek to undermine elements of the existing rules-based international order because the Kremlin sees this as being dominated by the United States and its allies and a threat to its security and core interests. [HybridCoE \(1\)](#) ; [Brookings](#) ; [CSBA](#) ; [CSIS](#) ; [Rand](#)
- *Can the West define new norms and rules that render unacceptable the practices it finds objectionable, but that do not prevent its own practices in this field from being deemed unacceptable?*

#### From Nudges to Novichok

- Russia likely believes it can act with relative impunity, even in Western countries, as evidenced by the attempted assassination of a former Russian military intelligence officer who served as a source for the UK by employing a next generation military grade nerve agent ('Novichok'). [OPCW](#) ; [HybridCoE \(2\)](#) ; [ICDS](#) ; [UK Government](#)
- *What, if any at all, will be the impact of the expulsion of over 120 identified Russian intelligence officers on Russia's behavior in the international arena?*

#### The Kremlin's Playbook

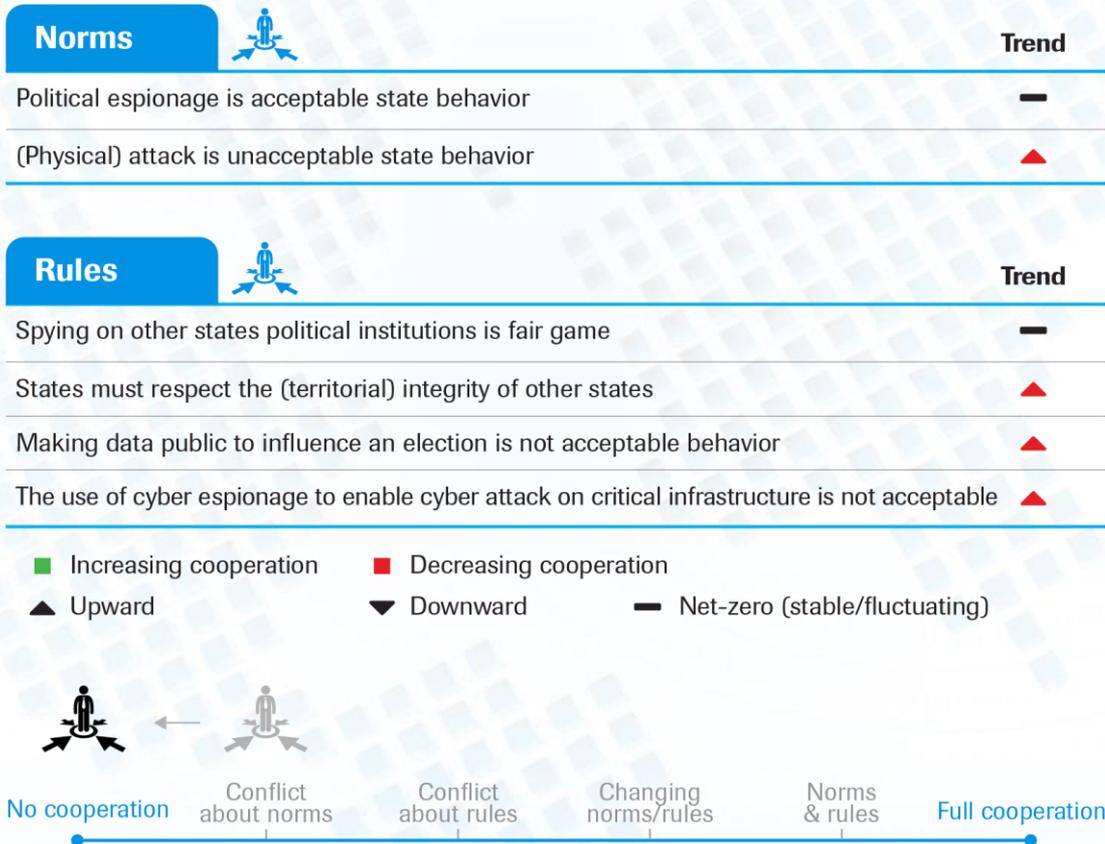
- Likely emboldened by perceived cyber-enabled successes at influencing the U.S. Presidential election and several key European elections, an increase in the number of fake accounts on Western social networking sites has coincided with the start of the 2018 U.S. Congressional mid-term elections. [New York Times \(1\)](#) ; [New York Times \(2\)](#) ; [Lawfare \(1\)](#) ; [RUSI](#)
- *Did the West's initial hesitance to respond only encourage the Russian government to continue with its practice of electoral interference and influencing?*

#### The Great Game in Cyberspace

- There is continuing competition between the great powers to set the norms and design the rules within cyberspace, according to their own interests. [IISS](#) ; [Foreign Affairs](#) ; [Politico](#) ; [EPRS](#)
- *Should we follow or hinder Russian initiatives to start a UN process to work on new international laws and norms regarding state behavior in cyberspace?*

# Long Term Trends: Fifty Shades of Gray Warfare

## Multiyear Regime Analysis (10-year timespan)



**Authors:** Aaron Arends, Danny Pronk (Clingendael). **Contributors:** Sico van der Meer, Jurgen Oppel, Tony van der Togt (Clingendael); Reinier Bergema, Katarina Kertysova, Michel Roelen, Kristina Tranakieva (HCSS). For a general methodological justification of horizon-scanning click [here](#) and for (Russian) political warfare click [here](#).

*Disclaimer. The Global Security Pulse is part of the PROGRESS Program Lot 5, commissioned by the Netherlands' Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense. Responsibility for the content and fore the opinions expressed rests solely with the authors; publication does not necessarily constitute an endorsement by the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs or Defense.*