



Competing in the Gray Zone

Russian Tactics and Western Responses

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Russia has used gray zone tactics—ambiguous actions that target domestic or international public opinion—extensively within Europe. The RAND Corporation ran a series of war games to explore this issue, observing behavior and gaining insights from these games. The authors of this report summarize the key insights from these war games and describe the research effort that informed them.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How are gray zone activities defined? What are different types of gray zone tactics?
- Where are vulnerabilities to gray zone tactics in Europe? What are those vulnerabilities?



KEY FINDINGS

The research in this report and elsewhere suggests that the West is winning this competition, but does not recognize it.

- “Everyday” gray zone actions must be differentiated from more aggressive and focused gray zone actions.
- Based on the war games conducted to support this project, the authors observed that NATO and the EU are unlikely to be able to compel Russia to stop using nonviolent Russian gray zone tactics, but they might be able to deter high-order aggression.
- Vulnerability to Russian gray zone tactics varies significantly across Europe. Russia’s “near abroad” and the Balkans are particularly susceptible, while the Baltics and Western and Central Europe are not.
- Civil organizations, rather than military ones, might be best positioned to counter Russian gray zone tactics.



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