



Analysis of Russian Irregular Threats

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The authors of this report describe strategic global trends related to Russian global influence and behavior and provide an overview and assessment of hostile activities—including information warfare, political subversion, and the use of violence or the threat of violence through proxies to undermine political order and influence vulnerable governments—that Russia has undertaken in the face of these trends.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What trends are there in Russian influence and behavior from 2000 to 2017?
- What types of hostile activities has Russia engaged in globally since 2010?
- How do the types and intensity of these activities vary by region?



KEY FINDINGS

The West has maintained considerable pressure on Russia

- Public confidence in both national governments and international institutions, such as the European Union and NATO, has improved since 2010.
- Western nations have kept up a relatively united front against Russian hostile activities, sustaining sanctions longer than many skeptics had expected and arresting the decline in European military spending.
- Russia has incurred some economic costs as a result of these sanctions, and it has experienced a sharp decline in Western public perceptions.

The types and intensity of Russian hostile activities vary by region

- The evidence in this report shows no indication that Russia has been able to translate its hostile measures into strategic gains.

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- Outside the former Soviet space, Russia typically engages in higher-intensity, physical activities only in more fragile states afflicted by civil conflicts, such as Syria and Libya.
- With some notable exceptions, in more stable countries, Russian actions are typically limited to influence operations.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Russia's apparent failure thus far to translate its hostile measures into strategic gains should not induce a sense of complacency among U.S. or Western decisionmakers.
- The United States and its allies should expect Russia to assume more risk in areas of conflict and where it wields more influence vis-à-vis the West—former Soviet and various Eastern European states.
- Where the United States can build resilience and consolidate its advantages among its allies and partners, it should do so.
- The United States should exercise due caution if and when engaging Russia in zones of conflict.



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