

U.S. Army Special Operations Center of Excellence

*and*

The College of International Security Affairs,  
National Defense University

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Project **Gray** Symposium

Russian Engagement in the **Gray** Zone

## SYMPOSIUM REPORT

October 19 – 20, 2016

Lincoln Hall Auditorium  
Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.



[www.projectgray.org](http://www.projectgray.org)

[www.soc.mil](http://www.soc.mil)

[ndu.edu](http://ndu.edu)

[cisa.ndu.edu](http://cisa.ndu.edu)

## *Co-Hosts*



James Linder

Major General Linder is the Commanding General at the U.S. Army Special Operations Center of Excellence at the JFK Special Warfare Center and School.



Michael Bell

Dr. Bell is the Chancellor of the College of International Security Affairs at NDU and a retired Colonel of the U.S. Army.

# Join the conversation

# PROJECT GRAY SYMPOSIUM

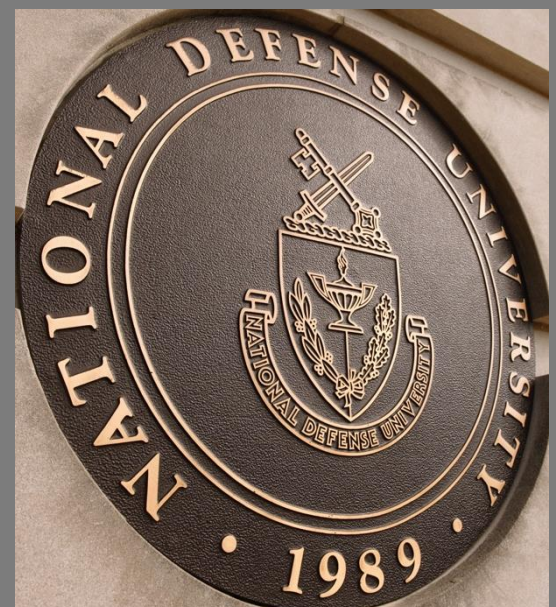


The Project Gray Symposium brings together warfighters, academics, and members of the U.S. inter-agency, to partner and engage in active, candid dialogue. The goal of this symposium is to create a forum that presents different frames of reference to examine the competitive interaction between the United States and Russia in this **space between war and peace** and begin the formulation of strategy and policy responses.

Project Gray is a **collaborative** study of the arena in which competitive interactions that fall short of a formal state of war, and which are characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty about relevant policy and legal frameworks, are undertaken by state and non-state actors.

To understand and effectively address these conflicts, the United States must **evolve** its organizations, thinking, and institutional cultures to operate successfully in the Gray Zone.

As we approach the 70th anniversary of diplomat George F. Kennan's highly influential "Mr. X" article on the sources of Soviet conduct and the U.S. Cold War strategic approach, this symposium provides a forum to develop the foundation of similar strategic assessment and strategy formulation.



# SPEAKERS



**Michael Adelberg**

Lt. Col. Adelberg is an Army Strategist, and the Director of European Research at the U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute.



**Anna Borshchevskaya**

Ms. Borshchevskaya is the Ira Weiner Fellow at The Washington Institute focusing on Russia's policy towards the Middle East.



**Klaus Botzet**

Mr. Botzet is a diplomat and head of the Political, Security and Development Section in the Delegation of the European Union to the U.S.



**Hal Brands**

Dr. Brands is a Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.



**Marek Chodakiewicz**

Dr. Chodakiewicz is the current holder of the Kosciuszko Chair of Polish Studies at the Institute of World Politics.



**Charles Cleavland**

Retired Lieutenant General Cleavland is the Former Commanding General of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.



**Oleksandr Danylyuk**

Mr. Danylyuk is a lawyer, a leader of the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution, and the Former Chief Advisor to the Ukrainian Minister of Defense.



**Michael Dennis**

Dr. Dennis works for the National Ground Intelligence Center.



**Patrick Duggan**

Colonel Duggan is an Army Special Forces Officer and an Unconventional Cyber Strategist.



**Michael Gfoeller**

U.S. Ambassador Gfoeller is an Advisor for the Chertoff Group and Former Political Advisor to CENTCOM CDR.



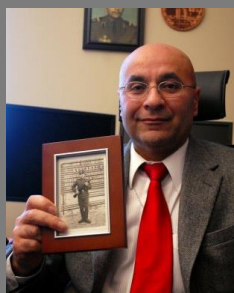
**Sebastian Gorka**

Dr. Gorka is the Vice President for National Security Support and Professor of Strategy and Irregular Warfare at the Institute of World Politics.



**Frederic Hof**

U.S. Ambassador Hof is the Director at the Atlantic Councils Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East specializing in Syrian Studies.



**Mahir Ibrahimov**

Dr. Ibrahimov is the Program Manager at CREMLO for the U.S. Army. He is a former Soviet Soldier and Senior Diplomat.



**John Lenczowski**

Dr. Lenczowski has served in the State Department and on the National Security Council. He is the President and Founder of the Institute of World Politics.



**Erica Marat**

Dr. Marat is an expert on post-communist security issues and a professor at NDU specialized in Russian Strategy from the Central Asia perspective.

# SPEAKERS



**David Maxwell**

Colonel (Ret.) Maxwell is the Associate Director of the Center for Security Studies and Security Studies Program at Georgetown University.



**J.Q. Roberts**

Mr. Roberts is a Senior Advisor for CISA & former Principal Director, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary in Special Operations and Combating Terrorism.



**Robert Sperling**

Major Sperling is the Public Relations Officer and Director of Communication and Engagement for the DHS's Federal Protective Service.



**Begnt Svensson**

Major General Svensson is the Swedish Defense Attaché to the United States and has served as the Swedish Chief of Training.



**Peter Zwack**

Brigadier General (Ret.) Zwack is a Professor at NDU and formerly served as a U.S. Senior Defense Official and Attaché to the Russian Federation.



**Peter Eltsov**

Dr. Eltsov is a Senior Fellow and Associate Professor at NDU with a wide expertise in anthropology, history, and political science.



**Spencer Meredith**

Dr. Meredith is a professor at NDU with over a decade of previous collegiate and graduate teaching experience and a recipient of many Fellowships.



**Mark Phillips**

Dr. Phillips is the Director of Strategic Communications for NDU and is currently an Adjunct Professor at George Washington University.



**Elena Pokalova**

Dr. Pokalova is an Associate Professor of International Security Studies at CISA-NDU and the recipient of several research grants.

*Active. Engaging. Dialogue.*

# Paradoxes of the **Gray Zone**

Dr. Hal Brands' article published by the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Feb. 5, 2016.



1. The Gray Zone cannot mean **everything** if it is to mean **anything**.
2. Gray Zone **challenges** are both the wave of the **future** – and a blast from the **past**.
3. The Gray Zone reveals both the **strengths and weaknesses** of the international order. It reflects the fact that there are fairly strong international norms, but these norms can be eroded.
4. The Gray Zone strategies are **weapons** of the weak against the strong and of the strong against the weak.
5. Confronting Gray Zone conflict requires both **embracing** and **dispelling** ambiguity.
6. Gray Zone conflict is aggression but **military tools are only part of the response**.
7. The United States may not be **fully prepared** for Gray Zone conflict. The Difficulty that we will face has to do the most with organizational and central challenges.
8. Gray Zone challenges can be productive and counterproductive at the **same time**.

## Keynote Speaker

*Lt. General (Ret.) Charles Cleveland*

“The United States has got to understand and maintain expertise in **unconventional warfare** – *it’s about options in a **hyper-connective world**.*”

“Warfare is **additive**; conventional requirements don’t go away when the enemies of our country turn to unconventional and cyber warfare.”

“No Service has Professional Military Education focused on the most **prevalent forms of warfare and conflict**, namely resistance, rebellion, insurgency, civil war, and terror.”

“We call it a Gray Zone. I call it the **Human Domain**.”

*“I do not know what the answer is, I just know that we need to continue the **dialogue and discussion**.”*

# Roundtable Discussion

*What is the Importance of Understanding Russian Power Projection and Statecraft and How Does it Shape Russian New Generation Warfare?*

“History has been full of **existential** threats to Russia, partially due to its own imperial and expansionist history.”

“Russia and the United States’ need to find a way to find **convergences** in the future, because I think we are in a very **perilous** space right now.”

*Brigadier General (Ret.) Peter Zwack, U.S. Attaché to the Russian Federation*

“Those **currently** setting military strategy in Russia were raised in the **Soviet mindset** and school of statecraft.”

“The Russians are seeking to create a **psychologically disarmed audience**. All of their methods are perennial methods of statecraft and have been **disregarded** for too long by Western Foreign Policy Elites.”

*Dr. John Lenczowski, Institute of World Politics*

*“What has happened is not new or sudden, but has been building for a long time.”*

“It is of the utmost importance for the West and the United States **to not retreat** from world affairs.”

“When it comes to Russia, realize we are in it for the long haul – we need a **long-term** strategy.”

*Ms. Anna Borshchevskaya, The Washington Institute*

“Russia is seeking to create **security** and **economic organizations** that could be used to **rival** the existing structures such as NATO.”

“Russians **understand the value** of culture and soft power from having watched it in the Soviet Union.”

*Dr. Mahir J. Ibrahimov, Regional Expertise/Language Management Office*



# Roundtable Discussion

*What are the Regional Perspectives on Russian Strategy?*

“What happens in Syria does not stay in Syria... Putin may come to regret backing Assad, what happens between now and then though, is very worrisome.”

*U.S. Ambassador Frederic Hof,  
Atlantic Council*



“This topic is of the utmost importance, it is not an academic exercise, but reality. We have to be candid.”

*Major General Bengt Svensson,  
Swedish Defense Attaché*

“No one in Europe wanted this conflict, it was a deliberate decision by the Russian President to start it... Responding on a joint basis is key to going forward.”

*Mr. Klaus Botzet,  
Delegation of the European Union*



“While Central Asia is not currently a focus, it is ripe for exploitation through Gray Zone tactics... The dilemma for the U.S. is where is Russia invited and where is it coercive?”

*Dr. Erica Marat, CISA*

# Special Presentation

*Mr. Oleksandr Danylyuk*

The Former Chief Advisor to the Ukrainian Minister of Defense offered a unique perspective on the concept of the Gray Zone. He clarified that a “*Gray Zone usually fits in the time between peace and war,*” adding that, “*There is a famous Russian saying... ‘war is over when the last soldier is buried.’ The Cold War is not over because members of the Russian government and military still feel that they are at war.*” He asked the audience to consider: is Ukraine a Gray Zone, or is it at war? Danylyuk presented the history of what has taken place in the Ukraine and the challenges of the region. “*It became clear that Ukraine was no longer the country of Ukrainians but rather a puppet regime.*” He warned that, “*The West is fighting Russia’s proxies and refusing to define Russia as the Enemy. It is hard to win a fight when you are not fighting the actual enemy.*”



*“American’s do not like to consider themselves the destabilizing power. We need to understand and appreciate the power and nature of narratives. Different views of the past, and different understandings of power and influence, can undermine the ability to cooperate with allies and partners... unless we learn to talk to each other. At the same time, we must strive to understand adversaries’ perspectives.”*

*Dr. Bell, Chancellor of the College of International Security Affairs*



# Roundtable Discussion

*Analysis and Implications of Russian Power Projection.*

**Non-linear war:** *the complex interactions of nodes in a mesh network where each node represents an entity with a unique interest. These nodes can be sites, groups or individuals. What defines this network is the shifting nature of the relationships: it is a zero sum competition.*



“People of the Middle East do not see Russia leaving Syria, but rather using it as a base for power projection into the region. This is part of a North-South long term Russian Strategy.”

*U.S. Ambassador Michael Gfoeller  
The Chertoff Group*

“We must change our institutional culture towards the cyber realm. We must not be uncomfortable with the concepts of leveraging youth and capabilities... Cyber is not a military domain. Cyber is a human space as dynamic and uncertain as human nature.”

*Colonel Patrick Duggan  
Joint Base Myer Henderson Hall*



“We can look at key actions that Russia has taken to learn valuable insights regarding the Gray Zone activities and utilize these to predict future action. Violence may be down in the Caucasus region, but the insurgents are still there and persist in spite of the extreme Russian pressure.”

*Dr. Michael Dennis, National Ground Intelligence Center*

“Irregular Warfare is War. Russians understand psychological warfare is more important than anything else, because if you get it right you are going to start winning before a shot is even fired.”

*Dr. Sebastian Gorka  
Institute of World Politics*

# Roundtable Discussion

*Putin's Agitprop War: Can It be Beaten?*

“One of the most important aspects of Russian history is **continuity** since the Mongol invasion of the Russian state. Without **cultural change** long term resolution is not possible for the Russian problem. **The prize of the game is the world.**”

“They wait for the **crime of opportunity** and move in when a hole exists.”

“There are ready and willing audiences for all of the propaganda and allegations of fascism coming from Russian media. The narrative must not be overlooked, it must be **corrected and challenged.**”

*Dr. Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Institute of World Politics*

“The effort coming out of Russia in engagement is based around **generalized communications** and seeding the global information sphere.”

“Russia’s global effort is setting up a slow preparation to have **global situations** prepared for Russian action and **intervention.**”

“We have to **change our narrative** and move to get out there. We need to build a **trusted and consistent** image.”

“This is a **long** game. We need to start **playing now**, and we need to understand that **change** will not happen quickly or within a single administration.”

*Major Robert Sperling, Federal Protective Service*

“We are **woefully inadequate** as a government at this task.”

“Our **binary conception** of war is problematic, we want a clear fight and a clear win.”

“The **interagency** working group [Counter Active Measures Working Group in the Reagan Administration] was one time we were able to do **good** work revealing the truth behind Soviet propaganda.”

“This is a **political military problem** and we lack capability.”

*Mr. J.Q. Roberts, CISA*

“Russia and Mr. Putin see the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a **tragic** outcome.”

“**Crisis continuation** in many places is beneficial to Russia, keeping them low at a boil.”

“Russia views the world as a **zero sum competition**, which fits with their narrative of being under **attack** from the west.”

*Lt. Colonel Michael Adelberg, U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute*

# Student Research Discussion

*CISA Student Research Engagement Discussion*

## *To the students:*

“Ask yourself: What will I do as a commander?”

“How can we **manage** expectations into goals that are manageable?”

*Major General James B. Linder, Commanding General at the U.S. Army Special Operations Center*

“The key word is: **Understanding**”

“A framework or narrative for **identity** should explain how this influences conflict.”

*Colonel (Ret.) David Maxwell, Georgetown University*

“Is there a Russian Strategic culture? And if so, what are the implications of it?”

“Americans rarely appreciate the importance of the Great Patriotic War in the countries that were part of the former Soviet Union. This will require a comprehensive approach using all instruments of power and influence to include law enforcement information, intelligence, and financial tools.”

*Dr. Michael Bell, Chancellor of The College of International Security Affairs*

*How does geopolitical identity of the state affect the United States government understanding of the human terrain?*

*How does the United States' understanding of Russian geopolitical identity effect U.S.-Russian relations?*

*How do Russian subversive activities today differ from Cold-War subversion campaigns?*

*How did Soviet subversion in the 40's and 50's affect American identity?*

*How important is studying culture and identity in military and security matters?*



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