SEC 6391 Research Russia as a Revisionist Power in the Post- Cold War Era

Fall 2021 Term B (3 CR)

This course looks at Russia’s foreign policy during the Post Cold War era by examining the rise of Vladimir Putin as a major world leader and Russia’s successful use of hybrid warfare in Georgia, the Ukraine, Syria and Libya. It outlines the parameters of Russian strategic culture and its approach to challenge US’s domination in Europe and the Middle East. In charge for over two decades Putin has raised the Russian Federation’s global position through military modernization, alliances with China and Iran and by the effective exploitation of energy resources. Russian hybrid warfare has given the nation a strategic advantage that its is effectively utilizing to weaken NATO in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Course Objectives:

- Examine the core foundations of Russian strategic culture and its development of hybrid warfare.
- Analyze the application of Russian hybrid warfare in Georgia, the Ukraine, Libya and in Syria.
- Chronicle Russia’s use of military, information, cyber, economic and diplomatic tools to advance its strategic interests.

I. Week One: The End of the Cold War and the Collapse of the USSR

The disintegration of the USSR and the rise of weak and fragile states in Central Asia and East Europe presented the Russian Federation with an unprecedented political and economic crisis. The progressive expansion of the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) into Eastern Europe challenged Russian influence in areas that it has historically dominated. By the late 1990’s Russian democratization and marketization of its political and economic systems was far from complete. A succession of weak leaders combined with Russia’s immense political and economic crises badly damaged its global status.

Readings


Hall, “NATO and Russia, Russians and NATO: A Turning Point in the Post Cold War East-West Relations” World Affairs 162 (1999) 1 p. 22-28


II. Week Two: Revival of Russian Strategic Culture

The rise of Putin and Russia’s desire for a return to geo-military prominence is discussed. This began by the Russian Federation’s securing of its vulnerable Central Asian and Eastern European political and military position in former territories of the USSR. Crucial in this development was Putin’s reorganization and modernization of the Russian military and the development of a new way of hybrid war that prioritized a lighter more mobile military adept at the use of advance weaponry and working with proxy forces. The general structure of Russian hybrid warfare strategy is discussed.
Readings

Dubik,”American Global Competitions: The Gray Zone in Context” Institute for the Study of War (February 2018)

Clark, “Russian Hybrid Warfare” Institute for the Study of War (September 2020)


Remler, “Russia at the UN: Law Sovereignty and Legitimacy” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (January 2020)

Hoffman, “Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges” Prism 7:4

III. Week Three: Russian Expansionism/Hybrid warfare in Central Asia and Eastern Europe

In this section we examine the application of Russian hybrid warfare in Georgia, the Ukraine and its efforts to destabilize the Baltic Republics. Of crucial importance to the Russian federation is to disrupt NATO’s eastward progression to secure a territorial buffer to protect homeland and secure access to warm water ports. Beyond its military moves in Eastern Europe and Central Asia Russia’s manipulation of energy and pipeline routes are designed to project economic and political influence in Europe.

Readings

Cesare, “Russian Encroachment in the Baltics: Role of Russia Media and Military” Foreign Policy Research Institute of Philadelphia (December 2020)

Stell, “Russia’s Clash with the West is about Geography, not Ideology” Foreign Policy (February 2018)

Shaishmelashvilli, “Russia’s Permanent War in Georgia” Foreign Policy Research Institute of Philadelphia (March 2021)

Felgenhauer, “Russia Escalates its Proxy War in the Eastern Ukraine” Eurasia Daily Monitor 18 (March 2021) 41

Shlapak and Johnson, “Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO’s Eastern Flank’ Rand Corporation (2016)

Kofman, Fixing NATO in the East or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love NATO’s Crushing Defeat by Russia’ War on the Rocks (2016)

Pifer, “Crimea: Six Years after the Illegal Annexation” Brookings Institution (March 2021)

Anjaparidze, “Can Russia Capitalize on the Current Political Unrest in Georgia” Eurasia Daily Monitor 18 (March 2021) 38
IV. Week Four: Russian Policy in the Mideast

During this week we examine the evolution of Russian foreign policy in the Mideast. Not since the Cold War has Russia exerted so much influence in the region. Russian military intervention in Syria is largely credited with securing the Assad regime’s survival. Here Russia’s alliance with Iran is a major strategic development and is designed to weaken US influence the region. Russian foreign policy in the Mideast, its interventions in Syria and Libya are driven by a need to gain access to warm water ports and exploit energy and trade opportunities. As in the Ukraine Russia has used mercenaries from the Wagner groups to advance its hybrid warfare aims in the region.

Readings


Hamilton, Miller, and Stein (editors), Russia’s War in Syria: Assessing Russian Military Capabilities and Lessons Learned (Philadelphia, FPRI, 2020)

Rumer, “Russia in the Middle East: Jack of all Trades, Master of None” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (October 2019)

“Russia Growing Interests in Libya” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (March 2021)

Karasik, “Russia in the Middle East: Implications and Policy” Jamestown Foundation (November 2018)

Service, “Russia and American Power in the Middle East) Hoover Institute (September 2020)

Cafarella and Zhou, “Russian Dead-End Diplomacy in Syria” Institute for the Study of War (June 2018)

V. Week Five: USSR and Iranian Relations

In this week we look at the economic, political, military and strategic foundations of Russia’s alliance with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Forged by mutual hostility toward the United States and by joint economic and energy interests, Russia and Iran have created a formidable partnership that exerts great influence in the Mideast and Central Asia. We conclude this section with an examination of Russian patronage of Iran’s quest to develop its nuclear scientific and technological capability and Russian involvement in the negotiations centering around the resumption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) designed to prevent the Islamic Republic’s development of nuclear weapons.

Midterm Assignment due Sunday of Week 5

Readings

Talbot and Tennis, “The Only Winner of the US-Iran Showdown is Russia” Brooking Institute (January 2020)

VI. Week Six: Russian-US Relations (The Nuclear Issue)

During this week, the modernization of Russia’s nuclear weapons arsenal and its missile defense system is examined. Of crucial importance is Moscow’s violation of existing nuclear arms limitation treaties with the United States and what this development may portend for future agreements. We conclude by reviewing Russian doctrine over the use of nuclear weapons and how this has changed during Putin’s reign.

Readings

Newlin and Conley, “US-Russia Relations at the Crossroads” Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (October 2020)


“New START Treaty” US State Department Document


Tierney, “In Search of a Biden Doctrine” Foreign Policy Research Institute of Philadelphia (November 2020)

“The Global Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime” Council of Foreign Relations (May 2012)

“2018 National Security Summary” Department of Defense

“Diplomacy in the Act: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons” US Department of State

VII. Week Seven: The Future of US-Russian Relations

The course’s seventh week centers on areas of gray zone confrontation and geo-military rivalry between the United States and the Russian Federation. Moscow’s active measures campaign of cyber warfare is examined especially as it relates to allegations of commercial espionage and election interference in the United States. The future of Washington-Moscow relations is examined.

Readings

“Russian Targeting of Election Infrastructure in the 2016 Elections: Summary in the Findings and Recommendations” (May 2018)

“Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections” National Intelligence Council (March 2020)
“How Russia Uses Social Media to Divide Americans” *The Guardian* (October 2017)

“Restoring Equilibrium: US Policy Options for Countering and Engaging Russia” *Brookings Institute*


VIII. Week Eight: Final Exam Period

Week 8 results in a final essay based on cumulative learning of assigned reading materials.

Assignments

**Midterm Essay (8-10 double spaced pages) Due Sunday by 9 pm of Week 5**

Discuss the core foundations of Russia’s hybrid warfare strategy in gray zone conflicts. Compare and contrast Russian military activities in Georgia, the Ukraine and in the Mideast. How successful has Moscow been in realizing its strategic ambitions in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Mideast?

**Final Exam (12-15 double spaced pages) Due Friday by 9 pm of Week 8**

Discuss the reasons why Moscow has forged a strategic partnership with Iran. How has that relationship part of Russia efforts to confront and weaken the United States? How have nuclear arms limitations been impacted by the Post-Cold War rivalry between the United States and Russia. What strategies has Russia employed to influence US elections and shape American public opinion?

Student Signature: [Signature]

Date: 11 Apr 21