

Canadian
Forces
College

Collège
des
Forces
Canadiennes



Grey Zone Warfare and Canadian Special Operations Forces Command Operations

Major Ryan Mitchell

JCSP 48

Service Paper

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2022

PCEMI 48

Étude Militaire

Avertissement

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada, représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2022

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 48 – PCEMI 48

2021 – 2022

Service Paper – Étude militaire

Grey Zone Warfare and Canadian Special Operations Forces Command Operations

Major Ryan Mitchell

“This paper was written by a student attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions, which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”

“La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale.”

GREY ZONE WARFARE AND CANADIAN SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES COMMAND OPERATIONS

“Competitors operate below the threshold of war precisely because we maintain one.”

— UK Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, *Future Warfare: Shaping Capability for the 21st Century Battlespace*

AIM

1. The aim of this Service Paper is to discuss the concept of ‘Grey Zone Warfare’¹ (GZW) and propose an operational approach for Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) to contribute to Canadian whole-of-government efforts to address the grey zone activities of strategic competitors.

INTRODUCTION

2. The international political system is increasingly being defined by what many analysts are describing as a return to ‘Great Power Competition,’ with multiple aspirational hegemons competing for geopolitical power and influence.² As the world emerges from the ‘unipolar moment’,³ revisionist powers, such as China and Russia, are using all instruments of national power to vie for dominance, challenging the status quo of the rules-based international order. This state of affairs is reflected in the national defence policies of several Western nations, including Canada’s 2017 Defence Policy – *Strong, Secure, Engaged*; the 2018 United States (US) National Defense Strategy; and Australia’s 2020 Defence Strategic Update.⁴ Within this context, some Western militaries have come to identify a blurring of the orthodox duality of war and peace, describing a ‘grey zone’ in which strategic competitors are engaging in coercive and disruptive activities below the threshold of armed conflict.⁵ In recognition of this change in the

¹ The term ‘Grey Zone Warfare’ is adopted throughout this Service Paper as a descriptive term for the engagement in, or the activities involved in war or conflict in the ‘Grey Zone’, similar to the descriptive use of the term ‘warfare’ in ‘Irregular Warfare’, ‘Hybrid Warfare’ etc

² Adib Farhadi, *Conceptualizing the Great Power Competition and U.S. Geoeconomic Strategy for the Central and South Asia (CASA) Region*, The Great Power Competition Volume 1 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 31–53.

³ The term ‘unipolar moment’ was first used by political columnist Charles Krauthammer in 1990 to describe the status of world power at the time of the Soviet Union transferring East Germany to the Western Alliance. He described this as an instant, “...where world power resides in one reasonably coherent, serenely dominant, entity: the Western alliance, unchallenged and not yet (though soon to be) fractured by victory.” It has since become associated with the period of US military and economic dominance since the end of the Cold War. Source: Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs* 70 (New York, United Kingdom New York, New York: Council on Foreign Relations NY, 1990), p.23.

⁴ US Department of Defense, “2018 National Defense Strategy of The United States of America - Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge” (Washington, DC: United States Government, 2018); Department of National Defence, “Strong, Secure, Engaged - Canada’s Defence Policy” (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2017); Australian Department of Defence, “2020 Defence Strategic Update” (Canberra: Government of Australia, 2020).

⁵ Phillip Lohaus, “Special Operations Forces in the Gray Zone: An Operational Framework for Using Special Operations Forces in the Space between War and Peace,” *Special Operations Journal* 2, 2, no. 2 (2016): 75–91.

character of warfare, several Western militaries, such as Canada and the US, have also dispensed with the traditional ‘spectrum of conflict’⁶ – a linear continuum that ranges from total war to total peace – and are instead conceptualising contemporary warfare in non-linear terms, adopting the ‘competition matrix’⁷ (see Figure 1) and ‘competition continuum’⁸, respectively.

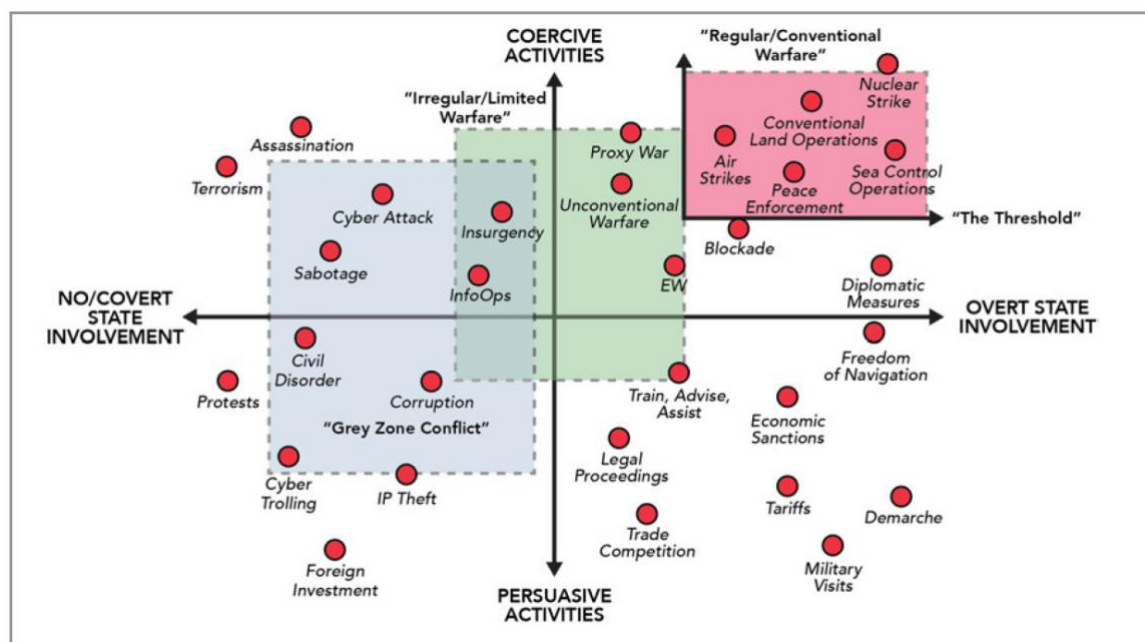


Figure 1 - The 'Competition Matrix'

Source: CJOC, “Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept - Prevailing in an Uncertain World,” p.35.

3. Despite increasing use among Western military and national security officials, there is no universally accepted definition for the term ‘grey zone’ or unifying operational approach to confront adversaries conducting grey zone activities. This Service Paper discusses the concept of GZW and proposes an operational approach for CANSOFOM to lead a Canadian whole-of-government effort to address the grey zone activities of specific actors, within a multinational context. First, the concept of GZW is discussed, including its definition, criticisms, and relationship to Hybrid Warfare. This is followed by a summary of the key characteristics, actors, and activities associated with GZW to contextualise the operational approach requirements. Finally, an operational approach is proposed for CANSOFCOM to lead a joint, interagency team to address the grey zone activities of specific actors, within a multinational context. This is based on the ‘multinational platform’ approach taken to address Foreign Terrorist Fighter and

⁶ Joint Doctrine Branch, “CJFP 01 - Canadian Military Doctrine,” Canadian Forces Joint Publication (Ottawa: Canadian Armed Forces, 2011), p.2-12.

⁷ CJOC, “Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept - Prevailing in an Uncertain World,” Draft (Ottawa: Canadian Armed Forces, 2021).

⁸ US Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Joint Doctrine Note 1-19: Competition Continuum” (Washington, DC: United States Government, 2019).

Domestic Counter Terrorism challenges emanating from the Middle East during the campaign to defeat Da'esh.

DISCUSSION

Defining Grey Zone Warfare

4. The catalyst for the emergence of GZW has been the US's conventional military dominance since the end of the Cold War. This has pushed some strategic competitors to alternative approaches to achieve their strategic aims, while avoiding direct military confrontation with the US and their allies.⁹ Such approaches sit somewhere between routine statecraft and open warfare, and are characterised "...by ambiguity about the nature of the conflict, opacity of the parties involved, or uncertainty about the relevant policy and legal frameworks."¹⁰ They exist below the threshold of armed conflict, and present novel challenges for Western governments and their national security architectures. If the traditional concepts of war and peace are represented dichotomously as black and white, then these alternative approaches exist in the 'grey zone' that exists between the two.

5. Despite considerable discussion on the topic of GZW over the past decade and increasing use by military and national security officials, there is no universally accepted definition of the 'grey zone.' This is somewhat problematic, given assorted references to the 'grey zone' and 'grey zone challenges' in Western defence policies, such as *Strong, Secure, Engaged* and the Australian 2020 Defence Strategic Update, however, demonstrates awareness and acknowledgement of the prescient threat that GZW presents to Western liberal democracies. Following a comprehensive study of contemporary state-based grey zone activities, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) provides the following definition of grey zone activities, which is adopted for the purposes of this Service Paper:

[Grey Zone Warfare is defined as an] effort or series of efforts intended to advance one's security objectives at the expense of a rival using means beyond those associated with routine statecraft and below means associated with direct military conflict between rivals. In engaging in a gray [sic] zone approach, an actor seeks to avoid crossing a threshold that results in open war.¹¹

6. In addition to the absence of a universally accepted definition, the utility of the term is also debated, with critics arguing that it is vague and poorly defined; that it is simply an extension of the existing concept of 'Hybrid Warfare'; and that it is merely the latest buzz-word used by military and national security officials as a catch-all to describe all non-linear aspects of

⁹ Kathleen H Hicks et al., "By Other Means Part I: Campaigning in the Gray Zone," Centre for Strategic & International Studies (Lanham, MD: Rowmann & Littlefield, 2019).

¹⁰ Philip Kapusta, "The Gray Zone," *Special Warfare* 28, 28, no. 4 (2015): 18.

¹¹ Hicks et al., "By Other Means Part I: Campaigning in the Gray Zone," p.4.

contemporary warfare.¹² While the criticism relating to vagueness is arguably fair, it is also a product of the relative novelty, complexity, and ambiguity of the phenomenon, which will likely take additional time, analysis and understanding to crystallise into a clear and accepted definition.

7. Addressing the comparison to Hybrid Warfare is somewhat complicated, as it too lacks a universally accepted definition. NATO describes a hybrid threat as “...adversaries with the ability to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively in pursuit of their objectives.”¹³ An expanded definition is provided in *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, describing hybrid methods as those “...[involving] the coordinated application of diplomatic, informational, cyber, military and economic instruments to achieve strategic or operational objectives.”¹⁴ A synthesis of these definitions describes Hybrid Warfare as the simultaneous and coordinated application of conventional and unconventional instruments of power and influence, including diplomatic, informational, cyber, military, and economic means, to achieve strategic or operational objectives. Although there is some overlap in the methods employed by hybrid and grey zone adversaries, they remain separate concepts, based on two key points of difference. First, Hybrid Warfare describes an adversary’s method of operating and the types of activities they conduct – in essence, the ‘ways’ and ‘means’ an adversary uses to achieve its strategic objectives; whereas GZW describes where an adversary’s actions or activities sit on the spectrum between ‘war and peace’, or between ‘cooperation and conflict’ (depending on the conceptual framework adopted) from an international relations perspective. Second, while Hybrid Warfare may involve actions across the entire spectrum of international relations, up to and including armed conflict, GZW activities are always intended to be conducted below the threshold of armed conflict.

8. While the conceptualisation of GZW is novel, these approaches are not new, as insurgents and nation-states have employed creative mixes of regular and irregular forces and methods to achieve their strategic aims throughout history, particularly when confronted with a conventionally superior foe.¹⁵ However, many of the tools now available, particularly through globalisation and digitisation, provide expanded opportunities for adversaries to pursue their strategic aims through GZW.¹⁶ Although the merits of the terminology may be contested, “...rejecting it entirely belies the changing nature and rapidity of international competition and

¹² Thomas Dobbs et al., “The Perry Group Papers: Grey Zone,” The Forge (Canberra, ACT: Australian Defence Force, 2020); Alessio Patalano, “When Strategy Is ‘Hybrid’ and Not ‘Grey’: Reviewing Chinese Military and Constabulary Coercion at Sea,” The Pacific Review 31, 31, no. 6 (2018): 811–39.

¹³ NATO, “NATO International Military Staff Memorandum (IMSM)-0292-2010 - Hybrid Threats Description and Context” (NATO, May 21, 2010).

¹⁴ Defence, “Strong, Secure, Engaged - Canada’s Defence Policy,” p.53.

¹⁵ Scott Jasper and Scott Moreland, “The Islamic State Is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter?,” Small Wars Journal 1, 1, no. 11 (2014): no. 11.

¹⁶ Lyle J Morris et al., “Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone - Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War,” RAND National Defense Research Institute (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019).

undermines current momentum to address [Western] strategic incoherence outside of the orthodox peace/war duality.”¹⁷

Grey Zone Warfare Characteristics, Actors and Activities

9. A key characteristic of GZW is that it seeks to exploit inter- and intra-national boundaries and fissures in Western liberal democracies and their national security architectures.¹⁸ To achieve this, strategic competitors use ambiguity, opacity, and uncertainty to exploit vulnerabilities in the coordination and decision-making processes between Western allies and within their governments. Liberal democracies “...are constrained by domestic and international opinion, international norms and the rules of law, [and] alliances such as NATO require consensus before initiating collective action.”¹⁹ In addition, as GZW tends to involve the conduct of simultaneous activities across multiple instruments of national power, coordination across various government departments is required, further complicating and delaying the implementation of a coherent response due to the inherent bureaucratic friction. Comparatively, GZW is far easier to execute for centralised authoritarian governments due to their unified control of the relevant instruments of national power and streamlined decision-making processes.²⁰ As a result, liberal democracies must undertake deliberate efforts to coordinate across government departments and multinational partners to effectively confront grey zone actors.

10. The four countries identified to be conducting the majority of grey zone activities against the US and its allies, to varying degrees of success, are China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea.²¹ This is in order of concern, based on the breadth and quality of each state’s toolkit and their relative potential effects. The primary GZW activities, categorised into seven areas of coercive activity, are:²²

- a. ***Information Operations and Disinformation.*** Including the use of social media and propaganda to create doubt and dissent in foreign countries.
- b. ***Political Coercion.*** Including the use of coercive instruments to affect the political composition or decision-making within a state.
- c. ***Economic Coercion.*** Including the use of coercive economic instruments to achieve economic or strategic objectives.

¹⁷ Lohaus, “Special Operations Forces in the Gray Zone: An Operational Framework for Using Special Operations Forces in the Space between War and Peace,” p.75.

¹⁸ Kapusta, “The Gray Zone,” 18; Morris et al., “Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone - Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War.”

¹⁹ David Kilcullen, *The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2020), p.119.

²⁰ Kapusta, “The Gray Zone,” 18.

²¹ Hicks et al., “By Other Means Part I: Campaigning in the Gray Zone.”

²² Ibid., p.7.

- d. ***Cyber Operations.*** Including the malicious use of cyber tools to cause psychological damage, disrupt political processes, cause economic harm or achieve economic advantage.
- e. ***Space Operations.*** Including interfering with space-based infrastructure and communication to disrupt normal space activities.
- f. ***Proxy Support.*** Including the direct or indirect use of non-state and parastate groups to control territory or achieve specific security of political aims.
- g. ***Provocation by State-Controlled Forces.*** Including the use of non-military or paramilitary forces with direct lines of funding or communication to the state to achieve state interest without the formal use of force.

11. The combination of the characteristics, actors, and activities associated with GZW is challenging traditional national security and military operational approaches, which typically follow a formulaic process to develop and implement a response.²³ Given the inherent complexity in confronting grey zone challenges, a new operational approach will be required – one that proactively privileges ‘safe fail experimentation’ over ‘fail safe design’.²⁴ This will challenge existing political risk thresholds, however reflects the reality that “...to be effective, countering gray [sic] zone aggression demands some degree of risk tolerance.”²⁵

Proposed Operational Approach for CANSOFCOM

12. The convergence of GZW characteristics, actors and activities necessitates a combined, joint, and interagency approach to bring together the respective instruments of national power to effectively confront grey zone actors. To this end, a recent similar approach in the Middle East to better connect Foreign Terrorist Fighter (FTF) and Domestic Counter-Terrorism (DCT) efforts, may provide useful insights into how these efforts could be coordinated. The ‘multinational platforms’ established during the fight against Da’esh in the Middle East allowed information and intelligence sharing, coordination, and collaboration, to harmonise the efforts of many partner nations seeking to monitor and address the DCT concerns resulting from returning FTFs.²⁶ The success of this approach exceeded all expectations, and resulted in a number of criminal prosecutions based on evidence collected in theatre, often through the pooling of information and intelligence collected by international partners. Adopting a similar approach to address the grey zone activities of specific strategic competitors may prove similarly fruitful, and

²³ Lohaus, “Special Operations Forces in the Gray Zone: An Operational Framework for Using Special Operations Forces in the Space between War and Peace,” 75–91.

²⁴ David J Snowden and Mary E Boone, “A Leader’s Framework for Decision Making,” *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 11 (2007): 68; Cynthia F. Kurtz and David J. Snowden, “The New Dynamics of Strategy: Sense-Making in a Complex and Complicated World,” *IBM Systems Journal* 42, no. 3 (2003): 462.

²⁵ Morris et al., “Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone - Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War,” p.132.

²⁶ This is based on the author’s personal experience and is intentionally vague for security classification requirements.

assist in developing a more fulsome strategy, as situational understanding, and interagency and international coordination improves.

13. A proposed starting point would be to establish a joint and interagency ‘Grey Zone Analysis Team’ (GAT) – including representatives from the conventional forces, as well as other government departments, such as the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, Communications Security Establishment, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Department of Finance Canada, Global Affairs Canada, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police – to monitor and analyse the grey zone activities of specific actors within a designated region. Multinational coordination could initially include collaboration with ‘Five Eyes’ partners (which would be convenient for information and intelligence sharing purposes), however could expand to include regional partners, such as France and Germany in Europe, and Japan and the Republic of Korea in South-East Asia.²⁷ Possible basing locations could include United States Special Operations Command Europe (USSOCEUR) to establish a ‘Multinational Grey Zone Analysis Platform’ (M-GAP) to monitor the activities of Russia and Iran, with a second M-GAP potentially based out of United States Special Operations Command Pacific (USSOCPAC) to monitor the activities of China and North Korea.²⁸ While specific details are provided, this is merely intended to provide illustrative examples of how such GATs and M-GAPs could be assembled, with further planning, analysis, and consultation required. The central aspect is that the approach should be joint and interagency, working within a multinational context. In essence, the GATs would act as ‘Strategic Sensors’²⁹ – providing *access*, *awareness*, and *attribution* of grey zone activities to inform subsequent strategies and response options.

14. Aligned with the role of CANSOFCOM as a ‘Joint Leader’ outlined in the 2020 CANSOFCOM Strategy – *Beyond the Horizon*,³⁰ CANSOFCOM is well placed to lead such teams (GATs), as part of a Canadian whole-of-government approach. This would leverage CANSOFCOM’s competencies as combined, joint, and interagency *translators*, *conductors*, and *integrators*, to coordinate a unified approach across government departments and between international partners.³¹ The initial scope would be to monitor and analyse the grey zone activities of a specific actor or actors, with a view to developing options for subsequent actions once emergent patterns have been identified. This approach, including international collaboration through suitable multinational platforms, will mitigate two key vulnerabilities that grey zone actors seek to exploit within Western governments and alliances – which is inter- and intra-national coordination.

²⁷ This is not an exhaustive list and is only intended for illustrative purposes. Further analysis and consultation would be required to determine appropriate multinational partners for such an undertaking.

²⁸ Suggested basing options are illustrative examples based on existing infrastructure that may be able to support such platforms. Further consultation and analysis would be required to determine suitable basing locations once relevant partners have been confirmed.

²⁹ Emily Spencer, “Strategic Topic Review: Role of Special Operations Forces in the Great Power Competition” (Ottawa: CANSOFCOM, 2020).

³⁰ CANSOFCOM, “Beyond the Horizon: A Strategy for Canada’s Special Operations Forces in an Evolving Security Environment” (Ottawa: Canadian Armed Forces, 2020).

³¹ Spencer, “Strategic Topic Review: Role of Special Operations Forces in the Great Power Competition.”

CONCLUSION

15. GZW represents an evolutionary step as adversaries seek asymmetric advantages to achieve their strategic objectives, while avoiding the conventional military dominance of the US and its allies. The blurring of the orthodox dichotomy of war and peace has necessitated novel conceptualisations of contemporary warfare, as strategic competitors increasingly seek to exploit the ‘grey zone’ beyond routine statecraft, but below the threshold of armed conflict, in the pursuit of their aims. While this is nothing new, the expansion of opportunities made available by globalisation and digitisation is presenting particularly vexing challenges for Western liberal democracies, as adversaries exploit fissures and boundaries in inter- and intra-national coordination inherent in our bureaucratic organising principles. A combined, joint, and interagency approach is necessary to effectively address such challenges, with CANSOFCOM uniquely placed to contribute as a ‘Joint Leader’ to coordinate and lead Canadian whole-of-government teams, within a multinational platform context. As surmised by Captain Philip Kaptusa, USN in the USSOCOM Gray Zone White Paper, “At best, we can achieve alignment of the goals and actions among our disparate countries and organizations. At worst, we experience self-induced paralysis and find ourselves constantly reacting late to nimbler autocratic gray [*sic*] zone actors.”³²

³² Kapusta, “The Gray Zone,” p.23.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bilal, Arsalan. "Hybrid Warfare – New Threats, Complexity, and 'Trust' as the Antidote." NATO Review, November 30, 2021. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2021/11/30/hybrid-warfare-new-threats-complexity-and-trust-as-the-antidote/index.html>.
- Branch, Joint Doctrine. "CJFP 01 - Canadian Military Doctrine." Canadian Forces Joint Publication. Ottawa: Canadian Armed Forces, 2011.
- CANSOFCOM. "Beyond the Horizon: A Strategy for Canada's Special Operations Forces in an Evolving Security Environment." Ottawa: Canadian Armed Forces, 2020.
- CJOC. "Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept - Prevailing in an Uncertain World." Draft. Ottawa: Canadian Armed Forces, 2021.
- Defence, Australian Department of. "2020 Defence Strategic Update." Canberra: Government of Australia, 2020.
- Defence, Department of National. "Strong, Secure, Engaged - Canada's Defence Policy." Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2017.
- Defense, US Department of. "2018 National Defense Strategy of The United States of America - Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge." Washington, DC: United States Government, 2018.
- Dobbs, Thomas, Garth Fallon, Sarah Fouhy, Tennille Marsh, and Machlan Melville. "The Perry Group Papers: Grey Zone." The Forge. Canberra, ACT: Australian Defence Force, 2020.
- Farhadi, Adib. *Conceptualizing the Great Power Competition and U.S. Geoeconomic Strategy for the Central and South Asia (CASA) Region*. The Great Power Competition Volume 1. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021.
- Grady, John. "Lawmaker: Special Operations Must Adapt to Gray Zone Conflict." USNI News. US Naval Institute, July 15, 2021. <https://news.usni.org/2021/07/15/lawmaker-special-operations-must-adapt-to-gray-zone-conflict>.
- Group, CANSOFCOM Commander's Advisory. "Strategic Topic Review: The Rise of China." Ottawa: CANSOFCOM, 2021.
- Hayes III, James E. "Beyond the Gray Zone - Special Operations in Multidomain Battle," Joint Forces Quarterly 91, 91 (2018): 60–66.
- Hicks, Kathleen, Melissa Dalton, Megan Donahoe, Lindsey Sheppard, Alice Hunt Friend, Michael Matlaga, Joseph Federici, Matthew Conkin, and Joseph Kiernan. "By Other Means Part II: Adapting to Compete in the Gray Zone." Center for Strategic & International Studies. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

- Hicks, Kathleen H, Alice Hunt Friend, Joseph Federici, Hijab Shah, Megan Donahoe, Matthew Conklin, Asya Akca, Michael Matlaga, and Lindsey Sheppard. "By Other Means Part I: Campaigning in the Gray Zone." Centre for Strategic & International Studies. Lanham, MD: Rowmann & Littlefield, 2019.
- Hoffman, Frank G. "Examining Complex Forms of Conflict - Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges," Prism 7, 7, no. 4 (2018): 30–47.
- Jasper, Scott, and Scott Moreland. "The Islamic State Is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter?," Small Wars Journal 1, 1, no. 11 (2014).
- Kapusta, Philip. "The Gray Zone," Special Warfare 28, 28, no. 4 (2015): 18.
- Kilcullen, David. *The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2020.
- Krauthammer, Charles. "The Unipolar Moment." Foreign Affairs 70. New York, United Kingdom New York, New York: Council on Foreign Relations NY, 1990.
- . "The Unipolar Moment; Enjoy It Now. It Won't Last Long.: [FINAL Edition]." The Washington Post (Pre-1997 Fulltext). 1990.
<https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/unipolar-moment-enjoy-now-wont-last-long/docview/307338508/se-2?accountid=9867>.
- Kurtz, Cynthia F., and David J. Snowden. "The New Dynamics of Strategy: Sense-Making in a Complex and Complicated World," IBM Systems Journal 42, 42, no. 3 (2003): 462.
- Lohaus, Phillip. "Special Operations Forces in the Gray Zone: An Operational Framework for Using Special Operations Forces in the Space between War and Peace," Special Operations Journal 2, 2, no. 2 (2016): 75–91.
- Morris, Lyle J, Michael J Mazarr, Jeffrey W Hornung, Stephanie Pezard, Anika Binnendijk, and Marta Kepe. "Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone - Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War." RAND National Defense Research Institute. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019.
- NATO. "NATO International Military Staff Memorandum (IMSM)-0292-2010 - Hybrid Threats Description and Context." NATO, May 21, 2010.
- Patalano, Alessio. "When Strategy Is 'Hybrid' and Not 'Grey': Reviewing Chinese Military and Constabulary Coercion at Sea," The Pacific Review 31, 31, no. 6 (2018): 811–39.
- Revolution, IT. "Cynefin: Four Frameworks of Portfolio Management." IT Revolution, 2021.
<https://itrevolution.com/cynefin-four-frameworks-of-portfolio-management/>.
- Reynolds, David. "Future Warfare: Shaping Capability for the 21st Century Battlespace." Jane's Defence Weekly. Jane's, November 3, 2020.

Snowden, David J, and Mary E Boone. "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making," Harvard Business Review 85, 85, no. 11 (2007): 68.

Spencer, Emily. "Strategic Topic Review: Role of Special Operations Forces in the Great Power Competition." Ottawa: CANSOFCOM, 2020.

Staff, US Joint Chiefs of. "Joint Doctrine Note 1-19: Competition Continuum." Washington, DC: United States Government, 2019.