Topic 1 – Identity and narratives shaping interstate relations in the Gray Zone

1. Does the USG have an inherent need to:
   - Always looking for a "solution"?
   - Work with tangible factors; do they attempt to reduce intangibles to tangibles – if true, how does SOF counter this?
   - Seek a quick victory, and lack long-term presence? If so, how can SOF counter this?

2. How does the geopolitical identity of state affect U.S. Government’s (USG) understanding of the human terrain?
   - How does the geopolitical identity of Russia affect USG understanding of Russian human terrain?

3. How does U.S. understanding of Russia’s geopolitical identity affect U.S. to Russia relations?
   - What is the meaning and definition of identity?
   - What are concerns associated with assigning identity to groups or individuals?
   - What problems could arise from those labels?

4. How does Russian subversion in the 21st Century differ from Soviet Cold War subversion campaigns?

5. How did the Soviet subversion in 1940-1950s affect American identity? What are parallels to those actions today?
   - Is studying identity important for understanding military/security matters?
   - What sources or methods are required to study these questions?
     - e.g., Historical records (US or Russian), political polls, open source materials, memberships in ideological organizations
   - What are the ethical considerations to these studies?

Topic 2 - State-society relationship, how domestic politics shape/are shaped by International relations in the Gray Zone

1. Could Bulgaria's political and economic ties with Russia lead to Bulgaria's exit from NATO or the EU?
   - How can nationalism be leveraged throughout Eastern Europe to promote U.S. interests & counter Russian influence in the Gray Zone?
   - How are Bulgaria’s economy and polity interconnected with Russia?
     - How is Bulgaria’s economy tied to the EU?
     - How is Bulgaria’s economy tied to the US?
   - Are US policymakers interested or willing to counter Russian influence in Eastern Europe?
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- Which domestic policies or limitations prevent the USG from countering Russian influence in Eastern Europe?
- How has the financial crisis in Bulgaria increased Russian influence in Bulgaria?

2. Group 2, Topic 2 Research Questions:
- How does the USG become proactive vs. reactive in the Gray Zone?
- What areas were historically susceptible to Gray Zone activities in the past? How?
- How does the USG develop a framework from which to identify Gray zone threat?
- Can the USG determine an algorithm to identify Gray Zone threats?
- Which geographical region is most vulnerable to Gray Zone threats?
  - How does the USG combat Gray Zone threats in this region using DIMEFIL? Is DIMEFIL a useful framework to combat Gray Zone Threats?
  - How can the USG encourage domestic and international support, and possibly funding, for a unified regional strategy?
  - How does the USG prioritize the threat and region?
- How does the USG identify potential Gray Zone threats? Is an actor’s former superpower status relevant?
- How does USG gain international consensus on what the threat is?
  - How does USG identify an international course of action?
  - Who is the next biggest threat?
  - What are the vulnerabilities?
  - What traits identify vulnerability?
- Where are future Gray Zone threats likely to emerge?

Topic 3 - Perspectives on time and actors in the Gray Zone

1. Topic 3, Group 1 Research Questions:
- Can the US operate effectively in the gray zone given existing domestic policies?
- Are changes or modifications to domestic policy required to operate in the gray zone?
  - e.g., Title 10 v Title 22 v Title 50 authorities
- Are domestic structural changes required to address the gray zone challenges?
  - e.g., Directorate of Political Warfare, National Irregular Warfare Center

2. Topic 3, Group 2 Research Questions:
- Are USG policies impacting or preventing Russian Gray Zone activities? How?
- Is the USG’s goal to penalize Russian Gray Zone activities or force Russia to modify their behavior and submit to international laws/norms?
- From Russia’s perspective is there a difference between penalization and modification?
- Can we trace policy connections to Gray Zone activities from the Cold War through today?
- Is the Gray Zone label helpful? Is Gray Zone another name for peace or international politics?