

Hybrid Warfare Case Study: Syria Civil War, 2011 And Annexation of Crimea by Russia, 2014

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ABSTRACT: Hybrid warfare has evolved into a multidimensional conflict strategy, integrating conventional, irregular, and cyber warfare with political, economic, and informational tactics. This study employs qualitative analysis to explore Russian hybrid warfare strategies through two case studies: the Syrian Civil War (2011) and the Annexation of Crimea (2014). Using thematic content analysis, this research examines primary sources, policy documents, and expert interviews to identify patterns in Russia's use of hybrid tactics. Findings reveal that in Syria, Russia leveraged proxy forces, cyber operations, and sectarian narratives to reinforce its geopolitical presence, while in Crimea, it relied on economic coercion, strategic misinformation, and covert military intervention to achieve annexation with minimal direct conflict. The study underscores that hybrid warfare is context-dependent, adapting to regional vulnerabilities and socio-political conditions. The implications of this research highlight the necessity for governments to enhance resilience against asymmetric threats, particularly through information security, diplomatic preparedness, and cyber defence. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of hybrid warfare's impact on modern global security frameworks, offering strategic insights for policymakers and defence analysts.

KEYWORDS: Annexation of Crimea, Defence Analysis, Hybrid Warfare, Russian Hybrid Warfare, Syria Civil War

INTRODUCTION

As long as records of history can be found, there have been conflicts. Considering the facts, it is reasonable to view the history of humanity as a past marked by struggle and compulsion. If one follows the assumption, the next step that one must take to grasp that mankind has always developed creative and new ways to wage war and establish new modes of war is to realise that humanity has always established new modes of war. Despite multiple eras of violent conflict and stability, the likelihood of war has continued to rise. Over the last two decades, a period of innovation known as hybrid warfare has emerged in the diamide of global strategic unpredictability (Bilal, 2021). These phenomena are described as being both modern and dynamic. The term "hybrid warfare" is a form of political warfare that combines conventional warfare, irregular warfare, and cyberwarfare with other means of influence, such as fake news, diplomacy, lawfare, and foreign electoral intervention (Hoffman, 2007). Hybrid warfare employs political warfare. The aggressor's goal is to protect themselves from being blamed or punished for their actions by employing covert and overt methods in their attack. Some scholars and practitioners have criticised the concept of hybrid warfare for its supposed vagueness, its purportedly contested core components, and its purportedly misrepresented history.

Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the phrase "Hybrid Warfare" began to be used in defence and political circles, as well as in the media (Peco, 2018). It was brought out of the relative obscurity that it held inside the circles of strategic theoretical discourse to come to a popular word that is used to characterise a number of severely disparate threats to the security and safety of the West. Researchers in the security field and people who work in defence are following a similar trend: they are coming up with new terms to characterise and explain the dangers out there (Reichborn-Kjennerud & Cullen, 2016). The term "hybrid" has become a frequent way to describe modern warfare in the 2000s due to the rapid emergence and increasing lethality of aggressive non-state actors as well as the expanding potential of cyber warfare. This is one reason why the term "hybrid" has become so common (Caliskan, 2019). This is especially the case because of the potential that has been steadily growing. One of their distinguishing characteristics is that hybrid dangers cannot be singled out as a new type of threat. It's asymmetric because it lacks restrictions or rules of interaction and embraces a wide range of broad, unorthodox, dynamic, non-linear, and even random two occurrences. However, it is supported by many different groups, including terrorists, religious zealots, xenophobes, and the heads of criminal organisations, and it has no coherent theory of its own (Johnson, 2014).

From what we can deduce, the enemy was largely symmetrical in the past, which means they tended to follow a set pattern or structure and were resistive to or unwilling to adapt to new ideas or methods. Modern adversaries are like us in many ways, including

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being asymmetrical in that they are always changing and adapting to their surroundings and the tools at their disposal. It is arguable that the conflicts being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq classify as examples of hybrid warfare due to the presence of elements and the combination of forces that are being used to accomplish the primary goal. In a similar vein, the War in Lebanon in 2006 serves as an example of the hybrid threats that will emerge in the future. As a direct result of the kidnapping of members of the Israel Defence Force (IDF), the conflict got underway with an invasion of southern Lebanon by the IDF (Facey, 1999). This was done in response to missile fire from Hezbollah into territories controlled by Israel. The fast changes in warfare and its associated tactics, techniques, and processes represent a national threat to Malaysia, as demonstrated by the aforementioned case. The Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) and the Malaysian must undergo mental and physical preparation for the hybrid danger. For the sake of a united front against a shared foe, it is more crucial than ever that the spirit of every Malaysian infiltrate deeply into their spirits at this time. This is truer than usual when danger is close at hand.

Hybrid Warfare Concept

In recent years, hybrid warfare, which combines conventional military tactics with a variety of non-military strategies, has received considerable attention. Cyberattacks, propaganda, economic coercion, disinformation campaigns, and support for proxy forces are employed in this type of warfare (Bilal, 2021). Hybrid warfare aims to achieve strategic objectives through multiple tactics and strategies, as opposed to relying solely on military force. The use of hybrid warfare by state actors to accomplish their objectives without triggering a full-scale military conflict, thereby allowing these states to pursue their objectives through indirect means, is one of its defining characteristics. Critical infrastructure, such as power infrastructures or financial systems, can be disrupted by cyberattacks, which can have significant economic and social consequences. According to Bachmann (antony2015), governments and militaries across the globe are placing a greater emphasis on the development of strategies to counter hybrid warfare and protect themselves from its effects. This can include a combination of military and non-military strategies, such as enhancing intelligence capabilities, enhancing cybersecurity, and increasing investment in the protection of critical infrastructure. In order to reduce the likelihood of conflict, there is a growing recognition of the need to address the root causes of hybrid warfare, such as economic inequality and political instability. This is being done with the intention of decreasing the likelihood of conflict.

The idea of hybrid warfare has been around for millennia, but it has received fresh consideration in recent years due to developments in technology as well as shifts in the geopolitical environment (Mazarr et al., 2019). State and non-state actors have employed hybrid warfare throughout history to achieve their objectives through a combination of military and non-military methods of conflict resolution. During the American Revolutionary War, for instance, the Continental Army employed guerrilla tactics and propaganda to gain support from the populace and reduce the efficacy of the British military. In contemporary conflicts, such as the Russian annexation of Crimea, state actors have employed hybrid forms of warfare. These conflicts have been waged using a variety of tactics, including military force, economic coercion, cyberattacks, and propaganda campaigns, in order to achieve strategic goals. As a result, hybrid warfare has become a primary concern for governments and organisations across the globe, which are presently working to develop strategies capable of effectively combating this type of conflict (Solmaz, 2022). The use of non-linear tactics, which make it difficult for opponents to respond effectively, is one of the defining characteristics of hybrid warfare, according to another scholar. Hybrid warfare is the simultaneous and adaptable use of various military, political, and informational means to achieve strategic objectives, including unconventional warfare, terrorism, and criminality (Hoffman, 2007). This suggests that hybrid warfare is not restricted to conventional military operations, but can also include cyberattacks, propaganda campaigns, and economic coercion. Utilising a variety of tactics, hybrid warfare enables actors to exploit vulnerabilities in their opponents' defences and achieve their objectives through indirect means.

Several key characteristics contribute to the effectiveness of hybrid warfare, such as the combination of regular and irregular forces, the ability to act simultaneously and non-linearly, the use of multiple military and non-military methods, and the incorporation of criminality into acts of terror or subversion (Caliskan& Liégeois, 2021). Hybrid warfare involves the unrestricted use of both legitimate and unlawful means, making it difficult to predict. One of the defining characteristics of hybrid warfare is its ability to attack a state's military, social, cultural, and technological domains in order to undermine that state's traditional and non-traditional defence and security capabilities (Cox et. al, 2012). **Figure 1.1** illustrated the concept of hybrid warfare and how hybrid warfare exploits conventional and irregular capabilities without crossing the threshold for a full-spectrum war.

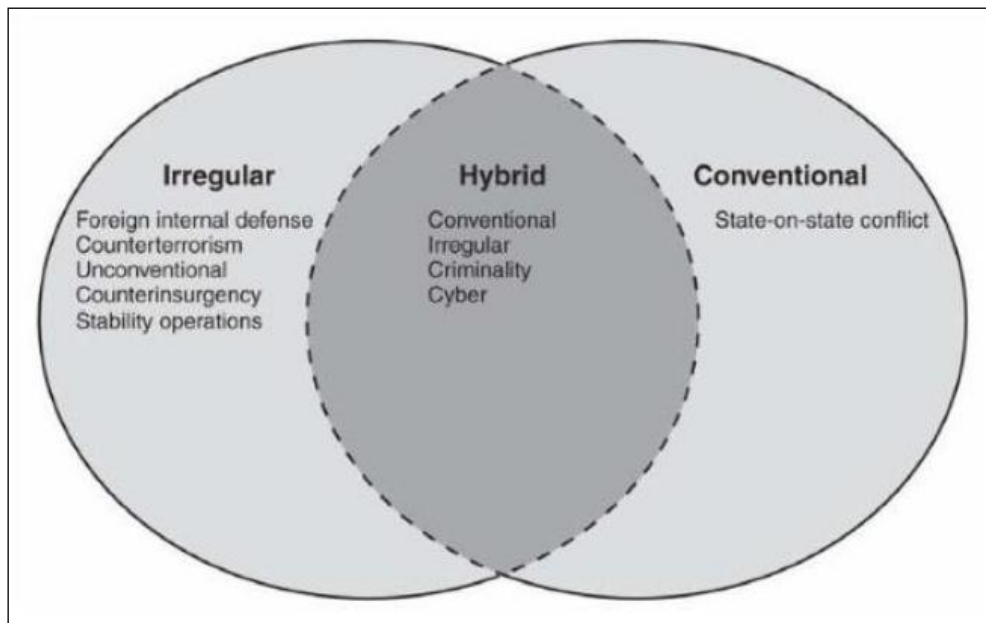


Figure 1.1 The Hybrid Warfare Concept

Source: GAO Analysis of DOD military concept and briefing documents and academic writings (2010)

The concept of hybrid warfare is still evolving, and scholars and policymakers continue to debate its definition and response. Some argue that the term "hybrid warfare" is too broad because it encompasses a variety of activities that do not necessarily comprise a new form of warfare (Bilal, 2021). Others argue that the emphasis on non-linear tactics in hybrid warfare obscures the fact that a number of these tactics have been used in previous conflicts. Despite these debates, there is widespread agreement that hybrid warfare poses a formidable challenge to militaries and governments around the world. It can be challenging to attribute and respond to the use of non-military means, such as propaganda and cyberattacks, making it challenging to deter or defeat hybrid warfare campaigns. Therefore, effective responses to hybrid warfare require not only formidable military capabilities, but also the ability to coordinate across multiple domains, including political, economic, and social factors.

Case Study 1: Syria Civil War 2011

The Syria Civil War began in 2011 as a popular uprising against Bashar al-Assad's autocratic regime. The conflict rapidly evolved into a complex and multifaceted conflict involving a variety of diverse actors, including rebel groups, terrorist groups, and foreign powers (Mbogo, 2020). In the Syrian conflict, numerous hybrid strategies were employed, including propaganda, cyberattacks, and support for proxy forces. According to Anthony (2018), Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah provided military support to the Assad regime and conducted a sophisticated propaganda campaign to influence international opinion regarding the conflict. Russia also used cyberattacks to disrupt insurgent communications and disseminate misinformation. In the meantime, the United States and its allies supported numerous opposition factions and imposed economic sanctions on the Syrian government. In the Syrian conflict, the use of hybrid tactics allowed both parties to accomplish their goals without resorting to a full-scale military invasion, while also limiting the possibility of international intervention. The conflict remains unresolved, with no obvious conclusion in sight. **Figure 1.2** show the political map of the Syria Civil War that illustrated the control area of actors involved in the Syria Civil War.

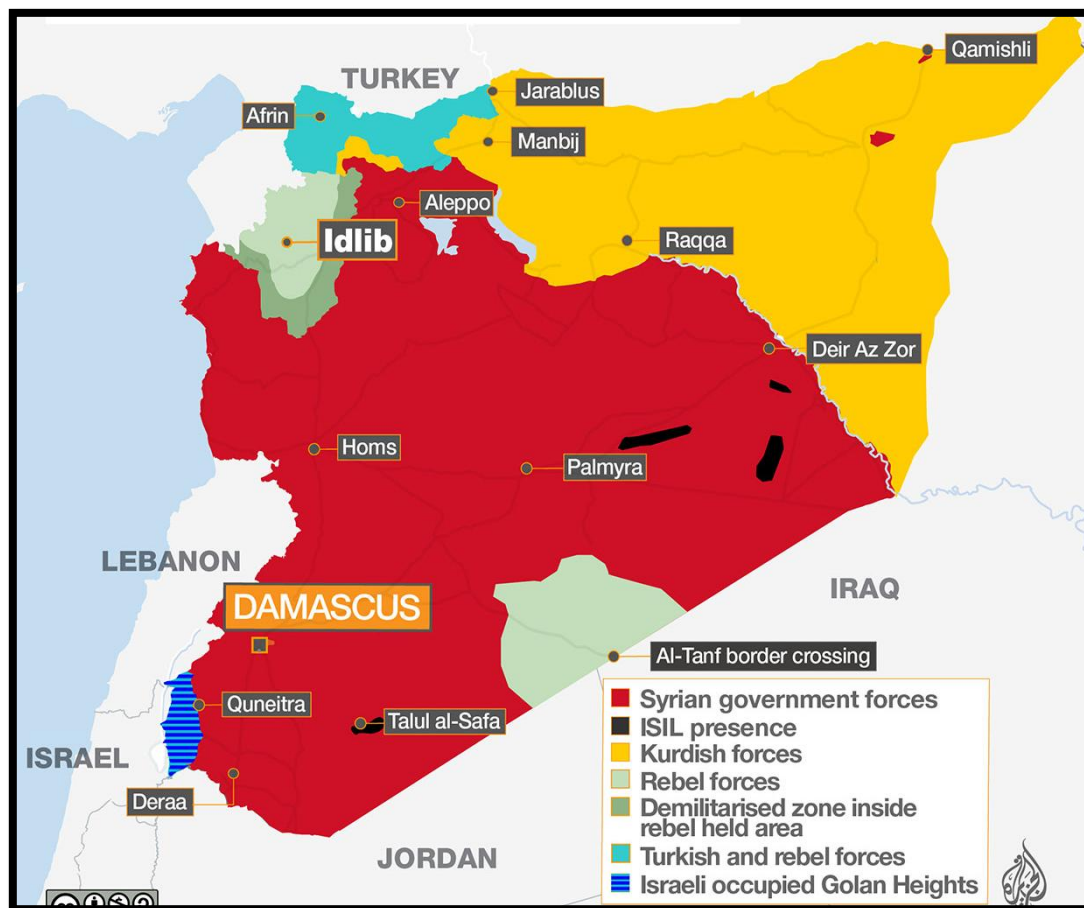


Figure 1.2. The Political Map of Syria

Source: Liveuamap (2019)

a. Actors Involved

The Syria Civil War, which began in 2011, involved a complex blend of state and non-state actors employing a variety of tactics, including hybrid warfare. On one side were the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who received military and political support from Russia and Iran, and who employed both conventional military tactics and hybrid warfare tactics, such as propaganda, espionage, and proxy forces (Celso, 2018). For instance, the Syrian government has been accused of manipulating media and social media platforms to shape the conflict's narrative, as well as employing proxy forces such as Hezbollah and Iraqi Shi'a militias to bolster its military capabilities on the ground. On the opposing side were various opposition groups, ranging from secular democratic forces to Islamist militants, who employed similar hybrid strategies, frequently with the backing of Western and Gulf states. For instance, the opposition has been accused of using social media to disseminate its message and recruit new members, as well as using proxy forces such as the Free Syrian Army to advance its military objectives. In addition to these primary actors, foreign powers such as the United States, Turkey, and Israel intervened in the Syrian conflict to pursue their own strategic objectives using a combination of military, economic, and diplomatic means. For instance, the United States has been accused of arming and training opposition groups and disrupting pro-Assad forces' operations through cyberattacks and information operations (Olanrewaju & Joshua, 2015).

b. Hybrid Environments

The Syrian conflict is a prominent example of a hybrid environment characterised by a complex web of actions and reactions involving multiple actors. The Syrian government, backed by Russia and Iran, has combined conventional military force, irregular militias, and foreign combatants to combat opposition forces. The opposition, comprised of moderate and extremist groups, has utilised guerilla tactics, terrorist attacks, and information operations to challenge the legitimacy of the government. Moreover, external actors, such as the United States, Turkey, and various Gulf states, have intervened in the conflict and provided support to various factions with varying goals (Jones & Bachmann, 2021). In the Syrian Civil War, both the government and the opposition utilised proxy forces to bolster their military capabilities on the ground. The Syrian government has relied extensively on proxy forces to supplement its conventional military forces, including Iranian-backed militias, Hezbollah, and Russian private military companies (PMCs) (Celso, 2018). These proxy forces have been instrumental in securing strategic locations, such as Aleppo, and have allowed the government to maintain its authority. In the meantime, the opposition has employed a variety of proxy forces, such

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as the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Islamist militants, and Kurdish forces. The FSA has played a significant role in the conflict. However, the use of proxy forces has also resulted in complications, as these groups have their own agendas and loyalties and may not always act in the best interest of their external sponsors.

The exploitation of social, cultural, and religious differences to exacerbate the conflict is another characteristic of the composite environment in Syria. The population of Syria is divided along multiple fault lines, including ethnicity, religion, and social class. The government has portrayed itself as a defender of the Alawite minority against an opposition dominated by Sunnis. The government has also used religious and sectarian distinctions to justify its use of force, portraying the conflict as a struggle against Islamist extremists (Celso, 2018). In turn, the opposition has employed similar strategies, depicting the government as a corrupt and repressive regime that has marginalised the Sunni majority. The opposition has also appealed to sectarian differences, especially in its efforts to gain support from the majority-Sunni Gulf states. The use of propaganda has been another distinguishing feature of Syria's hybrid environment. Both the government and the opposition have utilised media and social media platforms to influence public opinion and construct the narrative of the conflict. The Syrian government has used state-controlled media to portray itself as a legitimate authority defending the country against foreign-backed terrorists, whereas the opposition has utilised social media to spread its message and garner support from domestic and international audiences (Celso, 2018). The use of cyberattacks has also been a characteristic of Syria's hybrid environment. Both the government and the opposition have been accused of using cyberattacks to interfere with each other's activities and collect intelligence. For instance, the Syrian Electronic Army, a pro-government hacking group, was responsible for several high-profile cyberattacks, while opposition groups used social engineering to obtain access to government networks (Olanrewaju & Joshua, 2015).

c. Strategies

Propaganda and information warfare have been among the most prominent hybrid warfare strategies employed in the Syrian Civil War. Social media, satellite television, and other forms of communication have been utilised by the Syrian government and opposition groups to influence public opinion (Seo & Ebrahim, 2016). The Syrian government, for instance, has used state-controlled media to depict the opposition as terrorists and foreign agents, while the opposition has utilised social media to share images and videos of the regime's brutality and violations of human rights. This propaganda has been directed at both domestic and international audiences and has helped define the conflict's narrative. Cyberattacks have been an additional hybrid warfare tactic employed in the Syrian Civil War. The Syrian government and opposition groups have both engaged in cyber warfare, such as hacking and disinformation campaigns (Gorczeski, 2018). Pro-regime cyber groups, such as the Syrian Electronic Army, have targeted opposition websites and social media accounts, while opposition groups have attacked government websites and infrastructure. The objective of these attacks was to disrupt the other side's communication and propaganda efforts, as well as to take sensitive information. In addition, irregular warfare has contributed to the Syrian Civil War. This includes the use of guerrilla tactics by opposition organisations, such as ambushes and hit-and-run attacks. These strategies have made it possible for the opposition to operate in regime-controlled areas and have helped to undermine the regime's authority (Hinnebusch, 2016). Similarly, the regime has employed irregular forces, such as pro-government militias, to maintain control over non-government-controlled regions. These militias have been accused of committing human rights violations, such as mass murders and torture, and have contributed to a climate of terror among the opposition.

Additionally, foreign actors, including Russia, Iran, and the United States, have participated in the Syrian Civil War. In addition to providing military and financial support to various conflict factions, these nations have engaged in propaganda and information warfare (Phillips, 2019). Russia, for instance, has utilised state-controlled media outlets to promote its intervention in Syria, whereas the United States has supported opposition groups and conducted airstrikes against the Islamic State. These interventions have added to the conflict's complexity and increased the likelihood of a regional or global conflict. The Syrian Civil War has employed a variety of hybrid warfare strategies, such as propaganda, cyberattacks, irregular warfare, and foreign intervention. These tactics have served to shape the conflict's narrative, disrupt communication and propaganda efforts, and maintain territorial control. However, they have also contributed to the conflict's complexity and brutality and increased the likelihood of a regional or global war.

Case Study 2: Annexation of Crimea by Russia 2014

Crimea, a portion of Ukraine, was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014, resulting in widespread condemnation of Russia's violation of international law. The annexation was accomplished with the aid of military force, propaganda, and separatist organisations. Russia propagandised and disseminated the notion that Crimea's annexation was a legal act of self-determination. In the meantime, Russian special forces posing as local militia provided armed support to separatist groups, allowing them to seize control of critical government structures and infrastructure. By utilising hybrid tactics, Russia was able to achieve its objectives during the annexation of Crimea without resorting to a full-scale military invasion (DeBenedictis, 2022). It also decreased the probability of foreign intervention, as the use of military force was limited and separatist organisations could be portrayed as functioning independently. Figure 2.3 show the geographical area of Crimea that has been annexed by Russia in 2014.



Figure 1.3 The Maps of Crimea

Source: The Economist (2019)

Actors Involved

The 2014 Annexation of Crimea by Russia was a geopolitical crisis involving a variety of actors, such as the Russian government, the Ukrainian government, the Crimean government, and the international community. Protests in Ukraine against the pro-Russian then-president Viktor Yanukovich led to the outbreak of the conflict. Yanukovich was ultimately deposed, and a new pro-Western government was established. This occurrence was perceived as a threat to Russia's interests in Ukraine, prompting Putin to take action to safeguard Russian-speaking populations in Ukraine (Trenin, 2014). Putin justified the annexation of Crimea as necessary to defend Russian interests and prevent the spread of Western influence in the region. Putin argued that the Crimean Peninsula belonged to Russia and that the Ukrainian government was illegitimate. However, the Ukrainian government regarded the annexation as an affront to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Crimean government, which is under the authority of pro-Russian Forces, supported the annexation and hailed the arrival of Russian troops. The Crimean government asserted that Russian speakers were being persecuted by the Ukrainian government and that annexation was necessary to safeguard their rights. The annexation of Crimea remains unresolved, and tensions continue to percolate between Russia and Ukraine. The United States and the European Union imposed economic sanctions on Russia, targeting individuals and companies implicated in the annexation and restricting economic ties with Russia. The purpose of these sanctions was to penalise Russia for its actions and deter future aggression. In addition to condemning the annexation, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution affirming Ukraine's territorial integrity. Through these actions, the international community intended to demonstrate its support for Ukraine and convey to Russia that its actions would not be tolerated (Trenin, 2014). The annexation of Crimea had broader effects on international relations, particularly in terms of the principle of territorial integrity. This annexation also involved a variety of complex actors, each with their own unique interests and perspectives. The conflict demonstrates the significance of comprehending the various actors involved in any geopolitical crisis in order to develop effective strategies for conflict resolution (Trenin, 2014).

Hybrid Environments

Hybrid warfare entails a variety of tactics that combine military and non-military instruments to attain strategic goals. Russia's annexation of Crimea is a prominent illustration of a hybrid warfare conflict in which a variety of tactics were employed to achieve Russia's strategic goals in Crimea. Russia's strategic objectives were achieved through the use of propaganda, cyber operations, economic coercion, and military force in a complex environment. The function of propaganda in the annexation of Crimea was crucial. Russia shaped public opinion and influenced the views of the Russian and Ukrainian populations through its state-owned media outlets. The purpose of Russian propaganda was to discredit the Ukrainian government and promote the legitimacy of the Crimean referendum, which was used to justify annexation. The Russian media depicted the annexation as necessary to safeguard Russian speakers in Ukraine, creating a narrative that resonated with Russian-speaking populations in both Russia and Ukraine. The purpose of the propaganda was to justify the annexation to the international community and to influence the opinions of the Ukrainian population (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). Cyber operations were also utilised extensively during the annexation of Crimea. Russia employed cyberattacks to interfere with Ukrainian military and government operations, including the disabling of communications networks and the seizure of sensitive data. The cyberattacks are intended to impair Ukraine's military capabilities and undermine the legitimacy of its government. The Russian government implemented sophisticated cyber operations to accomplish its strategic goals in Ukraine, highlighting the significance of cyber security in modern warfare (Chertoff, 2014).

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In addition to the use of military force, economic coercion was also employed in the annexation of Crimea. Russia achieved its strategic goals, including the annexation of Crimea, through the use of its economic leverage over Ukraine. To exert pressure on Ukraine to accept the annexation, Russia threatened to cut off gas supplies and imposed economic sanctions. The objective of the economic coercion was to undermine Ukraine's economy and make it more susceptible to Russian influence. Economic coercion is a potent weapon in modern warfare, underscoring the significance of economic security in hybrid warfare conflicts (Asmus, 2014).

In the annexation of Crimea, military force was also a crucial component of the hybrid warfare environment. Russia utilised military force to annex Crimea and safeguard its strategic interests in Ukraine. Russian Forces were deployed in Crimea, and separatist forces in eastern Ukraine received Russian military support. The military actions were intended to secure Crimea's annexation and protect Russian-speaking populations in Ukraine. The military actions demonstrate the significance of conventional military capabilities in hybrid warfare conflicts. Russia's annexation of Crimea is a prominent example of a conflict involving hybrid warfare, in which a variety of tactics were employed to achieve Russia's strategic objectives in Ukraine. The conflict consisted of propaganda, cyber operations, economic coercion, and military force, illustrating the complexity of hybrid warfare. The annexation of Crimea demonstrated the need for a thorough comprehension of hybrid warfare in order to address and prevent future conflicts. The use of a variety of instruments in the conflict demonstrates the need for an all-encompassing approach to modern warfare that incorporates conventional military capabilities, economic security, cyber security, and information operations (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014).

Strategies

Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea was a classic example of hybrid warfare. Russia achieved its goal of annexing Crimea through a variety of strategies, including military, political, economic, and informational instruments, all of which fall under the umbrella of hybrid warfare (DeBenedictis, 2022). The annexation of Crimea was largely dependent upon military strategy. Russia's military forces were mobilised to occupy strategic locations in Crimea, including government facilities, airports, and military bases. According to analysts, the operation was meticulously planned and carried out, and Russian Forces wore unmarked uniforms to conceal their identities and avoid international scrutiny. This strategy of "little green men" allowed Russia to accomplish its goals without engaging Ukraine in a full-scale military conflict. This strategy was effective because the Ukrainian military was unprepared and lacked the resources to respond to the Russian invasion. In addition to political strategy, the Annexation of Crimea by Russia was also dependent on this factor. Russia utilised the political unrest in Ukraine, specifically the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovich, to justify its intervention in Crimea. Russia's state-controlled media channels, such as Russia Today and Sputnik, disseminate false information about the events in Ukraine in order to influence public opinion and undermine the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government. Russia also asserted that it had a duty to protect Russian-speaking populations in Ukraine, an argument that has been used to justify similar interventions in other nations (Buchheit, 2017).

In the annexation of Crimea, Russia also utilised economic strategy as a crucial instrument. Russia weakened the Ukrainian economy and increased its leverage over Ukraine by using economic coercion, such as trade sanctions and threats to cut off gas supplies. Russia's control over Crimea also granted it control over critical economic assets, such as the port of Sevastopol, an important strategic asset for Russian naval forces in the Black Sea (Murodov, 2022). The informational strategy was also a crucial element of Russia's hybrid warfare campaign in Crimea. Russia utilised state-controlled media outlets to disseminate propaganda and influence public opinion in both Russia and Ukraine (Iasiello, 2017). The purpose of the propaganda was to undermine the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government, promote the annexation of Crimea, and legitimise the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. Russia also employed cyber operations to interfere with the Ukrainian government and military operations and to sway public opinion. To manipulate public opinion in Ukraine and Russia, Russian cyber operations targeted critical infrastructure, such as power infrastructures and communication networks, as well as social media platforms. In a nutshell, Russia's annexation of Crimea was a classic example of hybrid warfare, with Russia employing multiple strategies to accomplish its goals. These strategies included military, political, economic, and informational instruments designed to accomplish maximal impact while minimising the risk of a large-scale military conflict with Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea highlighted the need for a comprehensive comprehension of hybrid warfare and a coordinated and integrated response from the international community to address and prevent future conflicts.

Comparative Analysis of Russian Hybrid Methods in the Syria and Crimea Crisis

According to Ilmari (2021), hybrid warfare is a relatively new trend in military strategy that has gained traction in recent years. It is a word used to characterise a state's employment of both conventional and unorthodox techniques to attain its goals. The rising variation in hybrid warfare definitions appears to be driven mostly by disparities in how governments perceive their own national wars. However, one of the most notable countries to employ hybrid techniques is Russia, which has used similar tactics in both the Syrian and Crimean conflicts. Russian hybrid warfare involves the use of a combination of military, economic, and political means to achieve strategic objectives, and it is likely to become more common in the future. According to Yenidünya and Atalay (2016), Russia has been giving weaponry and other types of military support to the Assad administration in Syria's continuing turmoil. Russia has been increasing its presence in Syria by building a new operational Russian air base and deploying attack and close support aircraft capable of taking on a wide range of opposition groups. This gives Russia the potential to intervene actively in

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Syria's civil war at a moment when Assad's troops are gaining ground on their opponents. Putin has engaged in hybrid or asymmetric political warfare, which entails the use of armed forces as political weapons.

Russia captured and later claimed Crimea using a mix of military force, media, and political manipulation during the 2014 crisis (Chertoff, 2014). Russia seized control of Crimea with a combination of classic and unorthodox military techniques, including the use of special troops. Furthermore, Russia spread falsehoods in an effort to justify its involvement in the war and foment confusion and doubt among the Ukrainian people. Russia's use of composite military techniques in the Crimean Peninsula was effective in achieving the country's objectives. One of the reasons hybrid warfare has proven to be successful is its ability to adapt to the aims and techniques of those who use it. It enables governments to employ a variety of strategies that may be adapted and adjusted to meet the specifics of a given conflict. As a result, it is an especially powerful instrument for regimes attempting to achieve their goals through a mix of military force, political subversion, and propaganda. Another reason for hybrid warfare's effectiveness is that it is tough to counter. Because it blends conventional and unorthodox methods, traditional armed forces may struggle to respond effectively. In the instance of the Crimean Crisis, for example, Russia's employment of special troops and propaganda caught the Ukrainian military by surprise. This provided Russia with an early edge in the battle, allowing them to seize control of the territory before Ukraine could retaliate effectively (Murodov, 2022). When contrasted with Russia's hybrid techniques in both crises, one may argue that hybrid warfare methods are unique to the state that chooses to employ them (Wither, 2016). This is due to the fact that hybrid approaches incorporate components of both conventional and unconventional military tactics. Russia's engagement in the Syrian Civil War, as well as its annexation of Crimea, demonstrate that the government is willing to use hybrid types of warfare to achieve its objectives.

The use of hybrid warfare has grown in popularity in recent years, with Russia being one of the most prominent countries to employ these techniques (Yenidünya & Atalay, 2016). The idea of hybrid warfare is difficult to grasp, and the growing variation in definitions appears to be driven mostly by disparities in how governments interpret their own national warfare. The versatility and difficulty in countering hybrid warfare make it a useful tactic for governments attempting to achieve their objectives through a combination of military force, political manipulation, and propaganda. Russia's engagement in the Syrian Civil War, as well as its annexation of Crimea, demonstrate that the government is willing to use hybrid types of warfare to achieve its objectives. The summary of the comparison between the case study shown in **Table 1.1** below.

Table 1.1: The Summary of Comparison Case Study

Ser	Criteria	Syria Civil War 2011	Annexation of Crimea by Russia 2014
1.	Russia Intervention Method	To support President Bashar al-Assad's administration	Russia annexed the territory from Ukraine
2.	Method	Using a combination of military and non-military means, such as airstrikes, ground soldiers, naval support, propaganda campaigns, manipulation of social media, and disinformation initiatives	a. Using military force, propaganda, and subversion techniques b. justified protecting ethnic Russians in Crimea from the Ukrainian government
3.	Strategy	Indirect approach	Direct Approach
4.	International Community Respond	Taking a less combative stance towards Russia's engagement in Syria	Western countries putting economic penalties on Russia

Source: Illustrated by Author (2025)

CONCLUSION

The research delves into a study that centres on two case studies pertaining to hybrid warfare, namely the Syria Civil War of 2011 and the Annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. The Syrian Civil War encompassed a diverse array of participants, including insurgent factions, extremist organisations, and international actors, who employed hybrid tactics such as disinformation campaigns, cyber assaults, and backing of surrogate forces. The Syrian conflict is a complex and multifaceted scenario that encompasses a hybrid environment with the involvement of various actors, such as the Syrian government, opposition groups, and foreign powers. The employment of proxy forces by the government to enhance its military capabilities has been observed, whereas the opposition has resorted to guerilla tactics and the perpetration of terrorist attacks. Syria's hybrid environment has been characterised by the utilisation of proxy forces, exploitation of social, cultural, and religious differences, propaganda, and cyberattacks. The government has been observed to defend the Alawite minority, while the opposition has been predominantly composed of Sunnis. The Syrian

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Civil War has witnessed the utilisation of hybrid warfare tactics, including but not limited to propaganda, information warfare, cyberattacks, irregular warfare, and foreign intervention, with the aim of manipulating public opinion, impeding communication, and acquiring confidential data. The annexation of Crimea was a multifaceted conflict that involved hybrid warfare tactics, including the use of propaganda, cyber operations, economic coercion, and military force, which were employed by Russia to achieve its strategic objectives. The phenomenon in question had significant implications for the field of international relations and entailed the involvement of a diverse array of intricate stakeholders. The act of annexing Crimea serves as an instance of hybrid warfare, wherein a diverse range of tactics were utilised to accomplish Russia's strategic goals in Ukraine. The statement underscores the significance of a comprehensive strategy in contemporary warfare. The Annexation of Crimea by Russia was executed through a range of tactics, encompassing military, political, economic, and informational means, collectively classified as hybrid warfare. The hybrid warfare campaign executed by Russia in Crimea serves as a paradigmatic instance of hybrid warfare, wherein a combination of military, political, economic, and informational tools was utilised to attain the highest possible impact while mitigating the likelihood of a large-scale military altercation. Hybrid warfare is a strategic approach that enables regimes to accomplish their objectives by employing a combination of military might, political manipulation, and dissemination of information. Hybrid warfare is a strategic approach employed by governments to attain their goals by utilising a blend of military might, political manoeuvring, and propaganda. The Syrian crisis, which began in 2011, and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, were two of the most significant events in recent years, and both served as crucial case studies for the study of hybrid warfare. This case study gave vital insights into the issues faced by this type of conflict and the techniques that might be utilised to resist it by exploring the use of hybrid warfare in the context of these two wars. It also emphasised the need for recognising the interconnected and complex character of modern conflicts, as well as the need for a holistic strategy that took a variety of diverse elements and strategies into consideration. Finally, this case study was a useful resource for policymakers, military strategists, and scholars interested in learning more about hybrid warfare and its consequences for global security.

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