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Prelude to Crimea: Russian Political Warfare in 2014

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Prelude to Crimea: Russian Political Warfare in 2014

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PRELUDE IN CRIMEA: RUSSIAN POLITICAL WARFARE IN 2014

In these unstable times, the world faces threats from a number of state and non-state actors, however more often than naught, these threats do not manifest in conventional warfare. Diplomatic, informational, military (under the threshold of warfare) and economic (DIME) measures are more likely to be employed as tactics to undermine another state's interests or sovereignty. Collectively captured under the term political warfare by American diplomat George Kennan in 1948, it is "the employment of all of the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives."¹

Russian political strategy has embraced this model; in February 2013, Russian Chief of the General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, stated that the "role of non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown," and even "exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness."² An exploration of the employment of political warfare by Russia during the annexation of Crimea in 2014, provides an excellent example of this threat. In the lead up to and during the campaign, Russia utilized measures across all aspects of DIME, specifically demonstrating a heavy reliance on unattributed forces and means in public disinformation and military operations.

To counter the threat of political warfare, Canada, and its allies, require a collaborative and sustained whole of government civil-military response in defence of current and future political warfare tactics of Russia and other state or non-state actors, supported by a strong national security apparatus.³ Using the Russian exploitation of

¹ Linda Robinson, et al, *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses*. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018): xiii.

² *Ibid*, 43. Russia uses the term 'next generation warfare' to describe their model of political warfare.

³ The core security and intelligence community includes the Canadian Armed Forces/Department of National Defence (CAF/DND), the Privy Council Office (PCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Communications Security Establishment (CSE), the Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre (ITAC), the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada

political warfare in Crimea in 2014, specific lessons learned across the DIME areas will provide recommended whole of government counter-efforts for Canada such as intelligence and attribution efforts, and public resiliency campaigns across foreign policy, defence, and other sectors.

DIPLOMATIC

Several months of pro-democratic protests against the authoritarian ruling party led to severe violence in Kyiv's Maiden Square between 18-20 February 2014.⁴ A compromise attempt between the pro-Russian ruling party and opposition parties was widely contested, ending with the impeachment of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich who fled to Moscow with other party members. The next day Russian President Putin called a meeting with his security chiefs, where in a 2015 Russian TV documentary, he recalled himself saying that "we must start working on returning Crimea to Russia."⁵

The employment of political warfare by Russia, specifically within the diplomatic spectrum, is built on long-standing Soviet-era strategies that were deemed effective, including "sabotage, diversionary tactics, disinformation, state terror, manipulation, aggressive propaganda, [and] exploiting the potential for protest amongst the local population."⁶ In support, Russia has developed and maintains considerable formal and informal efforts with proxy organizations across Eastern Europe, specifically in former Soviet states (including Ukraine), which Russia uses for international validity and an

(FINTRAC), and with enforcement agencies including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and Public Safety Canada (PSC).

⁴ Michael Kofman, et al, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017): 85.

⁵ Mark Galeotti, "Hybrid, ambiguous, and non-linear? How new is Russia's 'new way of war'?" *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27:2 (2016): 284.

⁶ Robinson et al, *Modern Political Warfare*, 51.

extensive network to influence near abroad countries in support of expansionist efforts.⁷ Political warfare frequently exploits shared ethnicity or other seams, for instance Russia's Compatriot Policy. A foreign policy tool developed to 'protect' and maintain connections with Russian and former Soviet citizens living abroad or descendants of those who identify with Russia, is in reality a tool to "influence the politics of its neighbors, rather than a means to protect the interests of these individuals."⁸

After the Maidan revolution, Russia aggressively communicated through proxy organizations and internationally, that the regime change in Kyiv was illegitimate and Ukraine's president was ousted in an unlawful coup d'état, assisted by the West.⁹ Moscow stated the primary motivation was to benefit the expansion of NATO while simultaneously containing Russia.¹⁰ On 27 February, masked troops with no insignia ('little green men') took over the Crimean Parliament, installing a pro-Russian government and calling for a status referendum to determine the peninsula's future, concurrently taking over military units and bases. Declaring independence of Crimea as the choice of the people, President Putin signed the treaty of accession in Moscow on 18 March 2014.¹¹ The Crimean referendums were hastily run in an attempt to legitimize the

⁷ Robinson et al, *Modern Political Warfare*, 55. The allies closest to Russia are part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as other formal institutions such as the Collective Security and Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Krygyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

⁸ *Ibid*, 57.

⁹ Andrey Demartino, *False Mirrors: The Weaponization of Social Media in Russia's Operation to Annex Crimea*, (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2021): 54-55. The Russian Foreign Ministry used the platforms of global and regional forums and international conferences to distort and falsify information about the role of Russia in the Crimea, including to the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe, as well as the G20 summits, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and CIS, among many others.

¹⁰ Kofman, et al, *Lessons...*, 14.

¹¹ The accession treaty formally incorporated two Russian federal subjects - the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol.

annexation on the world stage, but without any international observers, are considered illegal and constitutionally invalid by the international community.¹²

While condemnation for the annexation remained, as time progressed and Crimean acceptance of joining the Russian Federation blurred, western intervention became more difficult. Western political, military and economic support has been provided to Ukraine to support pro-democratic efforts since 2014, however overt actions and rhetoric against Russia became sporadic as countries started to re-engage, including Canada.¹³ The agendas of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and other government departments working collaboratively on foreign affairs, security and trade, were also stretched with mandates that did not always prioritize security.¹⁴

One criticism levied, is that “Canada is stuck in short-termism worried about bad press and lost elections, while authoritarian regimes like Russia are able to look well into the future.”¹⁵ In order to better direct our national security apparatus to defend Canada, a comprehensive strategy is required. The last National Security Review was held in 2014, thus a “thorough and transparent review would help inform the public, highlight

¹² Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, “Canada Cautions Russia on Proposed Crimea Legislation,” March 11, 2014, <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2014/03/canada-cautions-russia-proposed-crimea-legislation.html>. Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird issued a statement, declaring that “Canada and our partners will not recognize the legitimacy of a referendum...held in a region under illegal military occupation, nor will we consider as valid any corresponding legislative motion in Moscow designed to legitimize it,” additionally condemning the annexation a few days later.

¹³ Lee Berthiaume, “Canada ready to re-engage with Russia, Iran, despite differences, Dion says,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 November 2015. Accessed at: <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/canada-ready-to-re-engage-with-russia-iran-despite-differences-dion-says/>

¹⁴ In fact, in the 2020-2021 Departmental Plan of Global Affairs Canada, Canada’s main diplomatic agency, an overarching goal is to “remain a strong voice for an inclusive and effective rules-based international order and the multilateral system that underpins it.” Throughout the plan, many examples of effort including the fight for democracy, human rights, international law, climate change and gender advancements, and many countries and regions are named, but noticeably absent in the document was any mention of Russia as a threat to Canada or our allies. Canada, Global Affairs Canada, *2020-2021 Departmental Plan*, (Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada, 2020): 3.

¹⁵ Stephanie Carvin, et al, *Top Secret Canada: Understanding the Canadian Intelligence and National Security Community*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020): 282.

priorities, identify the policies and tools required to address them,” in conjunction with recent oversight efforts.¹⁶ To identify covert and proxy political warfare actions of Russia or others, Canada also needs to better leverage current tools such as diplomatic reporting gathered by Canadian embassies, including the Global Security Reporting Program (GSRP). Deployed GSRP personnel send contact reports back to Ottawa, which are generally “classified at a lower level than intelligence obtained through clandestine means,” yet not always widely shared due to information platform restrictions and institutional silos.¹⁷

Interlinked with the intelligence collection efforts of GAC, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Department of National Defence/Canadian Armed Forces (DND/CAF), and others, needs to be strong strategic messaging in the press and international forums by Cabinet and department leaders attributing instances of distortion by Russia and others, developing the awareness and resiliency of the Canadian public and susceptible countries. Taking a longer strategic foreign and defence policy view and breaking through remaining silos that hamper our intelligence capabilities will allow us to identify, expose and defend against political warfare.

INFORMATION

Information as a political warfare tactic, can “range from psychological warfare, propaganda, and incitement of the populace to the support of friendly elements inside the

¹⁶ University of Ottawa, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, *A National Security Strategy for the 2020s: How Canada Can Adapt to a Deteriorating Security Environment*, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2022): 11. The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) was established by legislation in 2017 with a mandate over all aspects of national security, and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency Act of 2019 established an oversight and review body, taking the acronym NSIRA for its name.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 17.

state.”¹⁸ Russia openly declared in their 2013 Foreign Policy Concept that it must “create instruments for influencing how it is perceived in the world,” “develop its own effective means of information influence on public opinion abroad,” and “counteract information threats to its sovereignty and security.”¹⁹ For Crimea, Russia used all media outlets across the Federation and near abroad to promote heavy propaganda in advance, during and after the annexation as shaping operations, specifically targeted at Compatriots inside Ukraine, as well as domestically inside Russia to justify their actions and “obfuscate through disinformation rather than to gain converts through persuasion.”²⁰

Created mainly by state-owned agencies, such as *Russia Today (RT)* and the news agency *Sputnik*, the narrative was then purposefully redistributed, taking advantage of YouTube and other social media networks. Three main goals in Russia’s information campaign included “discrediting the new government in Ukraine, emphasizing the grave danger to Russians in Ukraine, and ensuring the display of broad support for Crimea’s “return home” to the safety of Russia.”²¹ Russia perpetuated the belief that the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 was a Soviet error and the land historically belonged to Russia. Additionally, not only had the new Kyiv government acted in the interests of the West, but that pro-European Ukrainians were “ideological descendants of Nazi supporters and fascists”, and the Maidan movement was overrun by violent ultra-nationalists.²² As such, ethnic Russians in Crimea were under a security threat from

¹⁸ Kofman, et al, *Lessons...*, 2.

¹⁹ Robinson, et al, *Modern Political Warfare*, 61.

²⁰ *Ibid*, xiv-xvii.

²¹ Kofman, et al, *Lessons...*, 13.

²² *Ibid*, 14.

which Russia needed to protect them, while yet denying any direct intervention in the accession of Crimea.

Russia is also suspected in over 100 low-tech cyber attacks on government and industrial organizations in Ukraine in 2014, likely by both state and state-backed hackers and troll farms, as well as attacks on Poland, the European Parliament and the European Commission.²³ During the covert invasion of Crimea, Russia physically seized civilian telecommunications infrastructure, blocking social media accounts and Internet sites that belonged to or supported opposition members and groups, controlling the information flowing to and from Crimea - a key tactic in political warfare - isolating the peninsula and limiting Ukraine's response.²⁴

Misinformation and cyber tactics executed in Crimea and against western countries continue as Russian media weaponizes information to "confuse narratives through the use of conspiracy theories and a barrage of alternative explanations," to "undermine trust toward the established media and political institutions, and to instill a belief that the truth is unattainable."²⁵ Whether for elections, policies, or crisis responses, timely government transparency with compelling evidence that will resonate as truth amongst mainstream and alternative target audiences is key to neutralizing Russian (and other adversary) tactics and "hostile activities that threaten Canadian interests at home and abroad, notably by intimidating members of their diaspora."²⁶ In conjunction with the press, academics, civic organizations, and the private sector, the government needs to "focus on exposing information-warfare techniques, inoculating the public by

²³ Robinson, et al, *Modern Political Warfare*, 69.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 70.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 65.

²⁶ University of Ottawa, *National Security Strategy*, 5.

exposure.”²⁷ In addition to cyber teams at Canadian Security Establishment (CSE) working to prevent cyber-attacks on government sites and critical infrastructure, the Rapid Response Mechanism at GAC is another tool in Canada’s national security apparatus, which “monitors and analyzes potential cases of foreign interference, including by observing content shared through social media,” but more is required.²⁸ For example, for CAF/DND, only 2 of 111 initiatives in the 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, includes support to information operations, yet this threat is prevalent everyday.²⁹

Non-traditional cooperation between agencies should be expanded, such as CSE and Elections Canada working together to “secure our democratic institutions from online foreign influence.”³⁰ A recent analysis of our Canadian security apparatus demonstrated that significant work is being accomplished, despite the challenges, noting that while “there is grumbling and frayed nerves, but there are few documented instances of serious conflict between the different organizations.”³¹ Strategies to increase this interoperability include liaison officer and secondment exchanges, and joint training and exercises between Canadian agencies and departments, as well as with foreign military and civilian agencies. Yet, many of these efforts and reporting provided are shrouded in secrecy, as Canada still works to normalize information sharing between departments, as well as fight against “overclassifying intelligence material and relying excessively on need-to-

²⁷ Joseph S. Nye, “Soft Power and Public Diplomacy Revisited,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 14 (2019): 20.

²⁸ University of Ottawa, *National Security Strategy*, 16.

²⁹ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017): 110-111.

³⁰ Carvin, et al, *Top Secret Canada*, 285.

³¹ *Ibid.*

know distribution.”³² Further transparency and public exposure of political warfare activities will aid in countering foreign efforts, increasing Canadian public resiliency against them, as well as Canadian public support for efforts promoting and defending the rules-based international order.

MILITARY

The threat of Ukraine’s increasing connections to Europe and the west was significant to Russia. If Ukraine was to join NATO, the distance between potential NATO military infrastructure and Moscow would be reduced and Russia would also likely lose the Sevastopol naval base – to which President Putin is quoted as saying “if Ukraine at some time in the future joins NATO, the country will have to do that ‘without Crimea and the East.’”³³ To prevent this, the military aspect of Crimean annexation was a covert operation that utilized diversionary tactics to mislead both Ukraine and the Western countries.

A RAND analysis details the use of specialized light infantry, rapid response and special-forces operators pretending to be a local self-defense militia to seize the Crimean Parliament, Belbeck Air Base, Simferopol airport, and many other strategic locations.³⁴ Spetsnaz forces, trained as Intelligence Operators, are specifically accused of conducting covert negotiations with “members of the local ethnic Russian elite, who arranged for [these] masked and armed ‘self-defence militias’ (whose numbers included both local police and criminals) to begin appearing on the streets.”³⁵ Training drills and naval

³² University of Ottawa, *National Security Strategy*, 14.

³³ Tor Bukkvoll, “Why Putin went to war: ideology, interests and decision-making in the Russian use of force in Crimea and Donbas,” *Contemporary Politics* 22:3 (2016): 272.

³⁴ Kofman, et al, *Lessons...*, 8-9.

³⁵ Robinson, et al, *Modern Political Warfare*, 73.

exercises with 50,000 forces “served as cover for airborne forces, naval infantry, and Spetznaz to move into Crimea,” in addition to a snap inspection drill used to surreptitiously move 150,000 troops to the east of Crimea.³⁶ On February 28, three Mi-8 transport helicopters and eight Mi-35M attack helicopters crossed into Ukraine airspace without permission. Ukraine scrambled fighters to prevent more, but these were already operating over Crimea supporting Russian ground forces and capable of operating at night.³⁷ By March 2, Russia reinforcements arrived by heavy landing ships, moving across the peninsula “without much resistance, quickly encircling or taking over bases and military facilities,” severing landline communications and jamming cellphone signals between Ukraine and Crimean bases.³⁸ Essentially, Ukraine lost command and control over its military units in Crimea within days of the operation, yet Russia denied any involvement.

The Russian invasion of Crimea demonstrated deception across tactical, operational, and strategic levels, against the local populations, Ukrainian leadership, and the west – “called *maskirovka* in Russian, this is an ancient operational art of concealment and camouflage in the conduct of conventional operations.”³⁹ The West mistook these Russian tactics, which were to create plausible deniability (or an exit strategy if the operation failed) as an effort to negotiate a political settlement followed by de-escalation or frozen conflict, rather than annexation of the peninsula.⁴⁰ In addition, as

³⁶ Kofman, et al, *Lessons...*, 8, and Robinson, et al, *Modern Political Warfare*, 75.

³⁷ Kofman, et al, *Lessons...*, 9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid*, 23.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 24.

Ukraine had no formal or significant European Union or NATO relations in 2014, the West was unable to respond quickly to assist.

While covert interference in the political processes of Canada or our allies is a threat, Russia's use of proxies and unattributed forces while taking advantage of a domestic crisis have an even higher probability of replication against other countries vulnerable to destabilization. Efforts by NATO and western countries to detect and confirm, then publicly illuminate these actions, as well as provide military equipment, training and capacity building can bolster the resiliency of governments and militaries of near abroad states.

All-source intelligence assessment coordination has improved in recent years amongst Canadian national security agencies, however difficulties lie in ranking "the relative threats posed by great power competition, hybrid warfare or failed states" or "distributing its [limited] analytical and collection resources across different regions."⁴¹ Recognizing this, identifying critical information requirements for political warfare tactics, investment in detection capabilities for intelligence collection and analysis, and counter-intelligence efforts by military and foreign service members needs to be coordinated to ensure a wider coverage of these areas, to reduce duplication of effort across agencies and enable early-warnings to trigger joint responses.

ECONOMIC

Russia often attempts to leverage its varied economic connections for political influence, such as using economic pressure on Ukraine to support military action in Crimea. Threatening the "energy dependence on Russian state-owned giants aimed to

⁴¹ Carvin, et al, *Top Secret Canada*, 210.

limit Ukraine's strategic response," this also worked to "compel Europe to exhaust diplomatic options" rather than respond militarily.⁴² Russia has regularly used its standing as the world's second largest exporter of oil and gas as leverage and punishment, such as when Gazprom eliminated the Ukraine discount on natural gas imports after annexation, raising the price from \$268.50 to \$385.50 and again to \$485.50 per 1,000 cubic meters, while keeping prices much lower for other 'friendly' former Soviet countries.⁴³

The interwoven and often corrupted networks of Russian economic actors, including state ministries, partially or fully state-owned companies, and wealthy oligarchs who all depend on each other, results in Russian manipulation of resources and economics that has significant policy implications. For example, "wealthy oligarchs depend on protection from and ties with the state, and may at times act on behalf of the government, while senior officials in the Russian government may take advantage of their positions to exercise their own businesses interests."⁴⁴ The phenomenon of corruption networks, and the spread of this culture to Ukraine "was one of the several reasons behind the alienation of pro-Russian President Yanukovich from the Ukrainian people, and behind his ultimate removal from power in February 2014."⁴⁵

The economic allure of Crimea and Ukraine for Russia is multi-faceted. Not only are they a customer for oil and gas, but Ukraine is also a conduit for the pipelines to other European customers. If Russia was to gain further control over Ukraine, especially in the

⁴² Nicholas Barber, "A Warning from the Crimea: hybrid warfare and the challenge for the ADF," *Australian Defence Force Journal* No. 201 (2017): 13.

⁴³ Robinson, et al, *Modern Political Warfare*, 81.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Tom Rostoks and Diana Potjomkina, "Soft Power of the EU and Russia in Eastern Europe: Soft Power vs (not so) Soft Manipulation?" in *The Different Faces of 'Soft Power': the Baltic States and Eastern Neighborhood between Russia and the EU*, (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2015): 138.

eastern provinces, they would also gain “access to substantial and well-qualified labour resources. Furthermore, it would control significant parts of the Ukrainian military-industrial complex.”⁴⁶ As such, the draw of economic gains for Russia in annexing Crimea and spreading beyond it remain, and other Eastern European states are also vulnerable to the same economic influences and coercion.

Canada imposed initial sanctions under the Special Economic Measures (Russia) Regulations of 17 March 2014 as a response to Russia’s annexation of Crimea, which were followed up multiple times.⁴⁷ Canada and our allies need to be ready to continue to penalize offending states with sanctions, or additionally, follow up with expulsion from world organizations, such as when Russia was cast out of the Group of Eight (G8).⁴⁸

Efforts by the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada (FINTRAC) to identify instances of foreign interference will be supported by investments announced in the 2022 Budget, however, these need to be bolstered by a “campaign of awareness-building” across the country to “explain to Canadians what foreign interference is, how it can be recognized, and what can be done about it.”⁴⁹ Public exposure to economic warfare activities will aid in countering these actions on the international stage, as well increasing Canadian public support for multi-departmental efforts against them, from trade and economic sanctions, to the expulsion of offending states from economic and world political organizations.

⁴⁶ Bukkvol, *Why Putin went to war...*, 271

⁴⁷ Global Affairs Canada, “Canadian Sanctions Related to Russia,” accessed May 26, 2022, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/sanctions/russia-russie.aspx?lang=eng.

⁴⁸ Alison Smale and Michael D. Shear, “Russia is Ousted from Group of 8 by U.S. and Allies,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/25/world/europe/obama-russia-crimea.html>.

⁴⁹ University of Ottawa, *National Security Strategy*, 21.

CONCLUSION

Decision makers in the West were focused on other issues when Russia invaded Crimea, such as counter-terrorism, Afghanistan, Syria, and China, allowing Russia to achieve surprise. Continuous monitoring and tracing of Russian actions to feed crises around the world, especially with regards to the use of proxies and organizations for influence, is required by Canadian and allied security organizations. In retrospect, the “seemingly disparate events and Russian policies in Ukraine, Georgia, the Baltic States, Armenia, and Central Asia are surprisingly similar and driven by the same underlying strategy.”⁵⁰

There are limits to the success of political warfare, with its effectiveness significantly reduced in areas “where the adversary lacks credibility or leverage with key audiences and where a society is politically, economically, and socially resilient.”⁵¹ For Canada and our allies to defend ourselves and other more vulnerable countries from Russian tactics, we need to shine a harsh light on these actions, illuminating them for the Canadian public.

The answer thus is that what is new is not so much the way of war as the world in which it is being fought, the political, military, technological, and social context. Economies are globalised; the media operate to a voracious 24/7 news cycle with fewer constraints than ever. Western electorates are uncomfortable with the prospect of casualties and disinclined to encourage their governments to spend heavily on geopolitical adventures. All this provides ample opportunities for a revisionist state like Russia, in which a culture of ‘total war’ still informs doctrinal thinking and a small oligarchy essentially controls national military, political but also economic and informational resources.⁵²

⁵⁰ Agnia Grigas, *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire*. (London; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016): 242.

⁵¹ Robinson, et al, *Modern Political Warfare*, xix.

⁵² Galeotti, *Hybrid...*, 297.

To combat this, coordinating efforts between Canadian security agencies, within mandate limits, to develop common approaches to detecting and countering political warfare need to be increased supported by efforts towards recruitment and retention of personnel in these departments, as well as better leveraging of the existing intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination tools.

The lessons garnered from the annexation of Crimea in 2014 were a prelude, providing significant insight into Russian actions to come. Events in Crimea were preceded by signals which intelligence agencies identified and used to correctly predict the January 2022 invasion of Ukraine. This enabled diplomatic responses condemning Russian actions in the lead-up to the invasion, the countering of misinformation and cyber-attacks conducted by Russia, refuting military exercise pre-positioning distraction techniques and opposing with NATO exercise and force positioning, as well as broad international economic sanctions levied against Russia and its elites, all with the goal to dissuade and now halt the invasion. While this did not prevent the horrific invasion of Ukraine and challenge to the international rules-based order, it is hoped that the support provided by Canada and its allies have contributed to Ukraine in preventing Russia from winning a swift success, replicating the annexation of Crimea. Hindsight may illuminate whether the west had responded effectively across each of the DIME sectors to counter the Russians in 2014 as they have in 2022, whether the full invasion of Ukraine might have been deterred. Undoubtedly, further study of the two conflicts in due course will provide substantial lessons for Canada and its allies in the defence against political warfare.

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