

## **Examining The Conflict Of Ukraine And Russia In Terms Of Military Strength, Strategy And Risks**

**Taufik Rizalah<sup>1\*)</sup>, Khaerudin<sup>2)</sup>, Sri yanto<sup>3)</sup>**

<sup>1,2)</sup>Defense Industry Study Program Republic of Indonesia Defense University

\*Corresponding Author

Email: [Taufikrisalah35@gmail.com](mailto:Taufikrisalah35@gmail.com), [Khaerudin@unsurya.ac.id](mailto:Khaerudin@unsurya.ac.id), [9832sri@gmail.com](mailto:9832sri@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract**

*The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has become an ongoing issue in the international sphere. Starting from the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine and other countries formed under the umbrella of the Soviet Union were granted independence. But several years later, in 2014, Russia began to attack Ukraine by annexing Crimea, a strategic region that also threatened the lives of the Ukrainian people who were its native inhabitants. This action was quickly condemned by the international community and resulted in sanctions against Russia. However, in 2021, in November, Russia again gathered troops in the Ukrainian border region. It was found that the strength of the Russian army was greater than that of Ukraine, especially in the fields of resources and military technology. However, Ukraine can face these limitations by implementing a military strategy with guerrillas and sabotage as well as assistance from the support of allied. Irregular and Hybrid Warfare tactics and strategies have also been carried out by both parties. Mediation needs to be carried out by the UN, the European Union and each country to find a good solution.*

**Keywords:** *Crimea, Russia, Ukraine, Military Strategy*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has become a complex and ongoing problem that has attracted international attention. The topic of the Russian and Ukrainian conflict can be a study regarding the historical background view of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, forms of integration of military forces, as well as tactics and strategies from the perspective of irregular and hybrid warfare in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. This article is a descriptive analysis of the Russian-Ukrainian War Conflict. As is known, the historical background of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine began with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Historical factors in the dissolution of the Soviet Union during the Mikhail Gorbachev era 1985-1991 was the collapse of the world's superpower communist state which resulted in the end of the cold war between communists and the United States. Then several countries that were previously under the Soviet Union had the freedom to determine their own political policies, as the largest communist country of that time disbanded.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to independence for Ukraine. Tensions between Russia and Ukraine increased in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea, the Russian military without official attributes openly occupied and controlled the Crimean Peninsula region, which is part of Ukraine (Herszenhorn 2014). A region that has historical and strategic significance. This action received criticism from the international community, which resulted in sanctions against Russia. Then, starting in November 2021, satellite imagery showed the buildup of new Russian troops on the Ukrainian border. Ukraine also accused Russia of mobilizing 100 thousand troops along with tanks and other military equipment. This immediately received a response from US President Joe Biden. He warned of economic sanctions if he attacked Ukraine. But Russia made security demands to the West that NATO stop all military activities in eastern Europe and Ukraine. Russia also requested that it never accept Ukraine or the countries of the former Soviet Union as members. Therefore other countries and international organizations, such as the UN and the European Union, are crucial in efforts to mediate conflicts and find peaceful resolutions.

This paper attempts to analyze and provide an in-depth understanding of the Ukrainian and Russian conflict as well as a picture of military strength, tactics, implementation and impact of the war for each country.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this paper is a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a process of understanding social events as a whole based on descriptions of words, concepts and social events (Silalahi 2012). This is a study that focuses on events or occurrences based on qualitative data. This research data is secondary data. Data sources come from libraries, journals and other scientific documents.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The conflict that occurred between Russia and Ukraine is an illustration of war in modern times. It is known that the country of Ukraine is a fraction of the country of Russia which was previously better known as the Soviet Union. Russia under the leadership of Vladimir Putin currently has a strong desire to take over the Crimea region. Russia's own ambitions seem to be quite good given the human resources and military power it currently has, Plus the historical value of the Ukrainian state, which was once a fragment of the Russian state.

According to Alfonso (2021) in his journal, it is said that there are two factors in Vladimir Putin's policy in making decisions in Crimea and Ukraine, namely:

### 1. Internal

- Patrinalist relations with the former Soviet Union
- Influence of Identity
- KGB agent experience
- Russian public support for Ukrainian land
- Economic and political interests

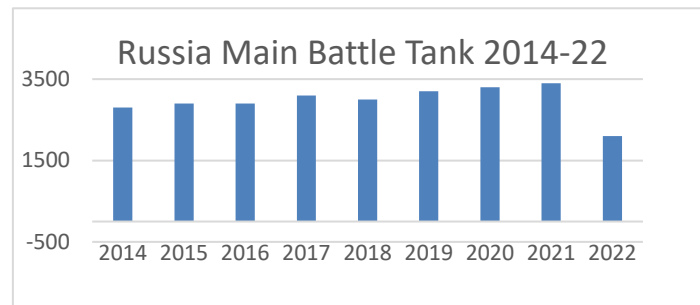
### 2. Eksternal

- Perception of threats from a verbal and physical perspective
- NATO does not deserve to exist again
- Security of resources (Russian gas pipelines in Ukraine and Crimea)

These two factors, both internal and external, influenced Russia's decision to carry out the conflict in Ukraine.

### **Forms of Integration and Use of Military Force (Cambria 12, Bold)**

Russia and Ukraine, as countries with significant military powers, have different approaches to integrating their military forces. The following is an overview of the use of military force by the two countries. Russia has one of the largest military forces in the world, with a strong focus on its army, air force and navy.



Source: processed from book of military defense 2023

**Figure 1.** Active Inventory Main Battle Tank Russia

The Russian Army has large and well-trained ground forces. Based on figure 1, the number of Russian battle tank ownership from 2014-2022 exceeds the 2000 combat-ready tanks owned by the Russian army. A comparison of military strength between the two countries also shows that Russia has 1.2 million active military personnel while Ukraine has 688 thousand active personnel (Chipman 2023). Based on data from Global Firepower, a world military ranking page, Russia is ranked second as the country with the strongest military in the world in 2022 with a Power Index score of 0.0501. Ukraine is ranked 22nd with a Power Index score of 0.3266.

#### *Forms of Integration and Use of Russia's Power*

The development of the situation on the battlefield has caused the integration of Russian military forces to continue to develop. Russia is trying to achieve its objectives quickly through massive military operations. Like the Russian Army, it is carrying out large-scale military operations involving ground troops concentrated in several important areas, such as Kharkiv, Donbas and southern Ukraine. To launch attacks using heavy weaponry such as tanks, artillery and rockets. The Russian Air Force is known as the country with the best missile technology. Apart from that, they also have 722 fighter planes and helicopters which make it easy to attack Ukrainian targets, including military infrastructure, cities and military bases. In addition, Russia can deploy advanced new military equipment and high-precision weapons systems, including Kinzhal and Iskander hypersonic missiles, Su-57 Felon fighters, and T-90M Proryv tanks in this war against Ukraine. The mobilization of reserve troops and volunteers was also carried out to increase military strength. 1. This can be seen from Russian troops gathering close to the border with Ukraine in April 2021, putting pressure on Ukraine, and at the end of the year starting to put pressure again.

#### *Forms of Integration and Use of Ukraine's Power*

Ukraine concentrated on persistent resistance and utilized international assistance. Despite being outnumbered and outgunned, the Ukrainian military showed tough resistance and took advantage of the terrain it controlled to hinder Russian movements and launch good attacks. In addition, they also attacked Russian armored vehicles with anti-tank weapons and portable missiles supplied by the West. And in terms of integration in using military force, Ukraine has a diplomatic and cooperative path with NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) quoted from Williams (2023) in dealing with Russian aggression. Such as the supply of weapons, humanitarian aid and economic sanctions NATO imposed on Russia. The existence of assistance from NATO and military mobilization, where there is compulsory military service called for in Ukraine, has increased the number of its military personnel (Danylenko 2023). The mechanisms for deploying and using Ukrainian military force demonstrate the courage, intelligence and determination of the Ukrainian people. Although they still face many challenges, Ukraine has shown that it is capable of resisting Russian aggression and maintaining its independence.

## **Tactics and Strategy from the Perspective of Irregular and Hybrid Warfare**

Russia is implementing a hybrid warfare strategy, hybrid warfare uses a combination of military and nonmilitary methods in peacetime to achieve traditional military objectives (e.g., territorial control or conquest), thereby changing the “facts on the ground” without triggering an actual conflict. In his recently published work, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict*, Michael Mazarr, a political scientist and former associate dean at the National War College, argues that peacetime hybrid warfare achieves a military objective, namely battlefield control. He asserts that “the goal of hybrid warfare is to win a conclusive campaign through the use of force and some degree of violence, or to prepare for some kind of decisive military action. The seizure of land through hybrid warfare in peacetime can be seen as shaping the theater of future military operations by expanding military control over contested land or operational space in order to better employ offensive and defensive capabilities in the event of an actual conflict. Hybrid warfare is a military strategy that combines conventional warfare, irregular warfare and cyber warfare threats, whether in the form of nuclear attacks, biological and chemical weapons, improvised explosive devices and information warfare. To achieve the desired effect, using very complex actions not only military, political, social or financial power but also information. This can benefit Russia economically, namely the distribution of energy from Russia is channeled through pipelines passing through Ukraine, becoming one of the incomes obtained by Russia. If there is energy dependence, it will cause other countries to follow the rules made by Russia.

The 2014 Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war, where Russia used steps without triggering direct military confrontation between countries that would violate the boundaries of the agreement. Russia displayed "unusual and diverse techniques" that combined a mix of special forces, information campaigns, third-party forces, and criminal activities, according to *Jane's Defence Weekly* in 2015. The common feature of this new form of warfare is accurate strategic management of troops and operations, down to the tactical level, in order to achieve ambiguity about whether the troops and methods used are truly under the authority of the national command, and to achieve the desired effect of influence and delivery of strategic communication messages in all media. In 2021, Ukraine replaced their Military Doctrine with a new Military Security Strategy that builds on the 2020 National Security Strategy. Part of the reform program included the establishment of several commands containing the Joint Forces Command. Ukraine as a small country against Russia has always placed its hopes of victory on the amount of aid from its Western allies. The Russia-Ukraine war has raised concerns about a possible Arms Race in the European continent. The war has prompted both sides to increase military spending and develop Military Equipment worth billions of dollars has poured into Ukraine since Russia launched a missile attack on Ukrainian territory in 2022. From tanks and missile systems to helicopters, helmets and ammunition continue to flow into Ukraine.

### **Cost-Risk Assessment of Defense Strategies**

The cost risk evaluation of the defense strategy between Russia and Ukraine takes into account the resources used, the economic impact caused, and the political risks associated with the defense strategy adopted. Russia is based on the resources it has such as a military budget, sophisticated weaponry, and large defense industry capabilities. They have the ability to mobilize large forces and launch long-range military operations. The economic impact of Russia by implementing an aggressive defense strategy and military intervention has a significant economic impact on Russia. Cherenko (2023) said that Western sanctions, international sanctions and economic isolation can hamper economic growth, reduce foreign investment, and supply chain disruptions put pressure on the Russian economy. The risks faced by Russia itself are such as political and economic risks. Russia's aggressive actions in this conflict increase geopolitical tensions and damage relations with Western countries.

The consequences are political isolation, sanctions, and restrictions on international cooperation. In addition, the conflict has led to increased poverty, inequality, and social tensions in Russia (Cherenko 2023). On the Ukrainian side, Ukraine's resources are faced with significant military and economic resource limitations compared to Russia. However, they were able to mobilize and deploy troops and gain political and military support from Western countries. According to Subhurovsky (2023) the risks and costs associated with the conditions in Ukraine include loss of life, damage to infrastructure, and displacement of people. And this conflict has caused significant economic damage, including lost productivity, supply chain disruption, and increased poverty. The country needs investment and assistance for recovery and rebuilding.

## CONCLUSION

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is a form of modern war involving military power, military strategy and technology. This conflict also shows that today's warfare can use the concept of hybrid war and irregular warfare which involve civilian ties. Looking at the details of the conflict, both countries experienced significant losses both economically, politically and in society. Russia's military strength can be said to be formidable, but it must be confronted with Ukraine's strategy of asking for diplomatic assistance from NATO. This war seems to be a long war. Both parties have utilized hybrid warfare and irregular warfare strategies to sabotage, propagate and cyberattack their respective countries. The costs and risks of this war can also be said to be large because both parties suffer losses from economic sanctions, infrastructure damage and loss of life due to the war.

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