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Is the Arctic on the Brink of a Hybrid War? *

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Abstract. The article examines the phenomenon of hybrid war in relation to Arctic politics. The goal of the study is to show how valid this concept is whom Western experts consider the main source of hybrid threats, and what they consider hybrid threats in the Arctic. The empirical grounds of the study are documents of international organizations and publications of Western authors. A critical analysis of documents and publications shows the concept of hybrid war was introduced into scientific circulation by the military, but it is also used in a broader meaning. Military experts have not yet come up with a clear definition of hybrid war. Representatives of political science use the concept of hybrid war in an even more amorphous meaning, which leads to its unlimited expansion. Based on specific examples, it is shown that any manifestations of Russian politics potentially fall under the concept of hybrid threats, which is conducive to the creation of political mythology that covers up the political goals of Western opponents. There is no consensus in the West regarding the productivity of the hybrid threat/war concept. At the same more popular is the radical point of view that reduces relations in the Arctic, and international politics in general, to confrontation.

Keywords: *Arctic, security, hybrid war, hybrid threats, Russia, deterrence.*

Introduction

Modern states' defense policy has a tendency towards a broad interpretation of security implying that the spectrum of threats covers both military and nonmilitary components. One of the manifestations of this trend is the topic of hybrid threats. The term was introduced into circulation in 2007 by American researchers [1, Hoffman F.], but a general interest in it grew after the reunification of Crimea with Russia in 2014.

In the context of a general deterioration in relations between the West and Russia, the term "hybrid war" is applied not only to specific episodes, such as "color revolutions," and individual states' foreign policy. In a hybrid war, Western experts see the seeds of a new form of war and even a "grand strategy" of states in the 21st century [2, Schmid J.]. It means Russia's policy towards Ukraine or the Baltic countries is increasingly equated with a hybrid war [3, Banasik M.]. In Europe, NATO [4, Treverton G., Thvedt A., Chen A.] and the USA [5, Davitch J.] they talked about the hybrid threat as a long-term profoundly serious security issue that is gaining global scale.

Over the past few years, Western states have formed a specific research approach based on the thesis that a new "era of hybrid threats" in security policy has begun. Its difference consists of a new combination of strategy and tactics [6, Smith A., p. 2]. The strategy for countering hybrid threats is being developed by NATO and the European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, established in 2017, with headquarters in Finland. The center's main task is to provide

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networking of experts and politicians and coordinate the efforts of NATO and the EU countries in the fight against hybrid threats. The scope of activities is evidenced by the fact that 27 countries participate in the center's work, including, in addition to European states, the USA, and Turkey. Also, the Multinational Capability Development Campaign project, which focuses on a conceptual framework for countering hybrid threats, has been created with the participation of all Arctic coastal states.

Recently, the topic of hybrid threats and hybrid wars began to sound with regard to the Arctic, where there was no significant deterioration in the military-political situation even in the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis [7, Konyshov V., Sergunin A., Subbotin S.]. Can we talk about a new form in the evolution of threats in the Arctic, or is this an example of a political mythology for achieving other goals? In this regard, the article examines the sources, content, and place of hybrid threats (and wars) in some other political instruments of the Arctic policy. The study's empirical basis was made up of international organizations' documents, publications of Western academic journals, and documents of research institutes specializing in military topics.

Factors influencing the formation of security threats in the Arctic

Security threats in the Arctic are formed under the influence of factors that impact the policy of the region's states in the military-political sphere.

Since the Cold War, the Arctic has retained global strategic importance in the nuclear deterrence policy between the United States and Russia. It means that US multipurpose nuclear submarines are on patrol in the Arctic Ocean. Their main armament is non-nuclear cruise missiles. Trajectories for launching ballistic missiles from the continental United States and Russia pass through the Arctic spaces. The Russian Northern Fleet is based on the Kola Peninsula and contains two-thirds of its nuclear arsenal for strategic deterrence.

Secondly, under climate change, permanent ice is decreasing, expanding the possibilities for conducting maritime operations and naval presence in the Arctic seas. It applies mainly to the submarine fleet.

Thirdly, the nature of the contradictions between the Arctic states on regional issues, such as territorial disputes, the status of sea areas, the right to develop resources, is mainly resolved within the framework of the existing legal regime in the Arctic. The risks of a military conflict due to regional problems are assessed as quite moderate or low.

Fourthly, suppose a radical deterioration in the military-political situation nevertheless occurs. In that case, the conduct of large-scale joint operations in the Arctic using high-precision weapons will be problematic due to the harsh climatic conditions, geomagnetic interference that hinders the operation of communication systems, as well as the small number of military bases nearby [8, Voronov K.V.; 9, Zagorskiy A.V.].

Russia is in the most vulnerable position from the northern strategic direction since it has the longest border in the Arctic. Also, the Northern Sea Route runs along the coast, along which

international shipping is gradually developing, implying the right of innocent passage for warships. NATO's total power, which can be used in the Arctic, far exceeds Russia's military potential, stationed in this region [10, Konyshchev V., Sergunin A.].

The prospect for further militarization of the Arctic is possible, but there are no objective grounds for turning the situation around. Of course, the continuing negative trends require a response from Russia. In particular, the number and scale of NATO exercises are growing, the West tries to include Finland and Sweden in this military bloc, military infrastructure of Poland and Norway is developing in the interests of U.S. missile defense systems that can be quickly converted from defensive into offensive systems.

Besides, Western experts and politicians' attention is increasingly attracted by new factors contributing to the militarization of the Arctic. The hybrid threat debate is a prime example. But unlike the military itself, hybrid threats are interpreted so that they can be attributed to both the spectrum of "hard" and "soft" security challenges. To understand what they are and what their place is among other security threats in the Arctic region, it is necessary to start with the hybrid war concept's military-doctrinal foundations.

Hybrid Wars and Threats: Military Doctrinal Foundations

In the discussions of Western experts about the onset of a "new era of hybrid threats", the interpretation of hybrid war remains very vague. It boils down to the thesis of a combination of various methods and tools of military and non-military nature that can be used in an explicit or hidden form. As a consequence, several scientific publications and official statements of the various states interpret not only individual actions of Russia, but all of its foreign policy as a hybrid war [4, Treverton G., Thvedt A., Chen A., p. 67; 11, Chivvis C., pp. 316-321].

To understand how this situation developed one need to refer to the US Department of Defense documents, which, in many ways, set the tone in the evolution of the entire Western military-strategic thought. It follows from the US Department of Defense documents that hybrid war as a specific type of hostilities does not exist at the military-doctrinal level. It's only about trying by military experts' to determine the specific attributes of hybrid war basing on modern experience of warfare. The general trend of research is to formulate the hallmarks of hybrid warfare, i.e., try to show that hybrid warfare is a new qualitative stage in developing the irregular war. But so far, the interpretation of hybrid war remains too amorphous and boils down to a combination of regular and irregular war methods, which, in general, is characteristic of wars over a long history. It is noteworthy that in the analysis of Russia's actions in Crimea in 2014, the US military also uses the term "hybrid war" formally, quickly moving to the terms of irregular war¹. Therefore, one should agree with the opinion of that part of Russian and foreign experts who argue that for professional military men, hybrid warfare is reduced to nothing more than the operational art of planning and

¹ Counter-Unconventional Warfare. White paper. URL: <https://info.publicintelligence.net/USASOC-CounterUnconventionalWarfare.pdf> (accessed: 14 April 2020).

conducting operations, combining already known methods of confrontation [12, Konyshov V.N., Parfenov R.V.; 13, Johnson R.; 14 Russia's military; 15, Reichborn-Kjennerud E., Cullen P.].

A note sent to NATO headquarters in 2010 also indicated that the alliance does not have a clear understanding of what the hybrid threat is and how to counter it². Interest in the topic faded away due to a lack of funding. As a result, it was redirected from NATO to the created European Center of Expertise for Countering Hybrid Threats (Helsinki), financed through individual states, and not from the alliance funds. However, even after the reunification of Crimea with Russia in 2014, the alliance could neither develop a definition of hybrid war or formulate a strategy for responding to hybrid threats. The 2019 NATO Secretary General's annual report states that the alliance continues to develop a strategy to combat hybrid threats, but "the primary responsibility for responding to hybrid attacks lies with the attacked state"³. It means that so far, the response to a hybrid attack on one of the alliance states has nothing to do with Article 5 on NATO's collective defense.

In expert discussions, there has also been little progress in understanding the essence of hybrid warfare. Within the framework of the aforementioned Joint Project on the Study of Hybrid Threats, a broad interpretation of the term "hybrid war" has been published: "in reality, hybrid war occurs on the international arena in the continuum from competition to conflict between actors". And it further clarifies that the term "war" should be understood figuratively since, in this case, it denotes the "serious, adversarial, hostile and persistent nature of the challenge" to security. The expert community and politicians are invited to operate with a concept that, on the one hand, substitutes state foreign policy as a whole. On the other, it eliminates the difference between the state of war and peace⁴.

Currently, the use of the concept of hybrid warfare in political discourse demonstrates two tendencies. In a mostly military sense, hybrid warfare is in its infancy, and among the military, the attitude towards it is relatively restrained. The military also uses the term "hybrid war" as an analytical construct, i.e., an abstraction that does not yet claim to designate a new type of war. Hybrid warfare and hybrid threat in a broad and even less defined sense are increasingly being used by representatives of political science and modern politicians. Why is there such a strange situation: a poorly developed concept is borrowed from the military but is intensively used in political discourse?

The importance of the concept of hybrid war in a broad sense is determined because it allows you to transfer almost any actions of an opponent state or non-state actor into the so-called

² BI-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats. Enclosure 1 TO 1500/CPPCAM/FCR/10-270038 5000 FXX 0100/TT-6051/Ser: NU0040 DATED: 25 AUG 10. URL: https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/events/2010/20100826_bi-sc_cht.pdf (accessed: 10 March 2020).

³ The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019. P. 29. URL: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf_publications/sgar19-en.pdf (accessed: 10 April 2020).

⁴ MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Countering Hybrid Warfare. March 2019. P. 17. URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/784299/concepts_mcdc_countering_hybrid_warfare.pdf (accessed: 16 April 2020).

“gray zone” of the international law [16, Sloan E.]. In other words, it creates an opportunity to interpret specific actions of a political opponent as aggression with all the ensuing consequences. A similar example a few years ago was the humanitarian intervention. The main problem with the humanitarian intervention was a conflict with the principle of sovereignty. In the case of a hybrid war, one has an opportunity to interpret the opponent’s policy as an act of aggression. Of course, the other side of the conflict can also use the “gray zone” to mask up the real geopolitical goals.

Hence the temptation to use hybrid threats for political manipulation and legitimization of retaliatory military actions bypassing international law becomes understandable. Only these considerations can explain why Western experts, with all the ambiguity of the concept of hybrid war, nevertheless propose to make the strategy of countering hybrid threats the main priority in the strategy of the United States and NATO for years to come ⁵. And in practical terms, it is proposed to strengthen NATO’s presence on the front lines of defense, for example, in the Baltic countries [14, Russia’s military, p. 181]. The same logic is gradually spreading to the Arctic region.

States that generate hybrid threats in the Arctic

Russia, and in perspective China, are considered to be the main sources of hybrid threats in the Arctic [17, Hicks K., Federici J., Akiyama C., pp. 3-5]. Several reasons are given to support this point. First of all, Russia and China have important and long-term interests in the Arctic. But both states do not have enough resources to implement strategic plans: Russia has underdeveloped economy, finance, and technology, and China doesn’t possess a legal basis for offshore resource development. At the same time, they have coinciding interests in the Arctic, such as the Polar Silk Road project, the joint implementation of which will allow to squeeze out some of the Arctic powers [18, Sorensen C.]. But at the same time, there are certain difficulties in organizing cooperation between Moscow and Beijing. Therefore, indirect influence methods through diplomacy, economic and scientific cooperation, which China has already successfully used to strengthen its influence in the Arctic [19, Konyshchev V.N., Kobzeva M.A.], are becoming incredibly useful tools.

Additionally, the West believes that hybrid warfare as a political means is attractive mainly for those states that do not expect to achieve their objectives in an open military, political or economic competition [4, Treverton G., Thvedt A., Chen A., p. 73]. Politically, China and Russia are opposed to the other Arctic powers as authoritarian, so it is expected that in their hybrid attacks, they will try to use democracies’ vulnerabilities to weaken from within. Potential targets for attacks are the foundations of a democratic structure (state guarantees of political rights and freedoms, the autonomy of civil society institutions), the principle of competition between branches of government, cultural tolerance, media free for discussion, limited state influence on the economy [20, Wigell M., p. 47].

⁵ Counter-Unconventional Warfare. White paper. URL: <https://info.publicintelligence.net/USASOC-CounterUnconventionalWarfare.pdf> (accessed: 12 April 2020).

Of course, the Arctic military-political situation is developing not only under the pressure of objective circumstances. After the Ukrainian crisis began, Russia's Arctic neighbors, with whom they had previously developed quite constructive relations, started talking about the growth of military threats from Russia. Due to its geopolitical position and NATO membership, Norway's position is of paramount importance for Russia, with which economic and military cooperation has been established (the Pomor exercises). The Ukrainian crisis gave impetus to a partial rollback of bilateral cooperation between Moscow and Oslo. At the doctrinal level, Russia was again included in the category of external threats to Norway's security, and joint military cooperation programs were stopped. Experts from the Norwegian Center for Defense Research noted that the increased risk of confrontation is associated with several factors: tendency of an authoritarian regime to use force; the successes of Russia's military modernization were underestimated in the West; Russia was able to effectively use hybrid actions in Georgia and Ukraine, which creates a temptation to repeat the success, but it is unlikely that this will affect the Arctic [21, Atland].

In the Finnish Institute of International Relations publications, it is noted that although it is not about the risk of a full-scale war, the situation in the Arctic is assessed as a strategic rivalry taking place in various forms. In addition to strengthening its military potential, Russia is actively using hybrid methods of war: incursions into the airspace of Arctic states, jamming GPS communications (at NATO exercises in Norway in 2018), cyber activity, energy policy, unfriendly diplomatic steps, organizing refugee flows into Arctic states [22, Mikkola, p. 8].

Thus, the hybrid threat was introduced into the discussion of the Arctic security agenda and was further developed.

Hybrid Threats in the Arctic

How is the problem of hybrid threats interpreted explicitly concerning the Arctic? Here we can distinguish two conditional directions of analysis: "moderate" and "radical".

A moderate number of experts are skeptical about hybrid threats. They believe that hybrid war cannot pretend to be Russia's new super strategy; moreover, such identification of foreign policy and war complicates the understanding of Russia's goals, which are of a non-military nature. Scientists rightly point out that mythologizing Russia's actions under the banner of a "hybrid war" can only play into the hands of V. Putin, strengthening the image of Russia as a strong power to be reckoned with. On the other hand, since the West often mistakenly perceived the motives of Russia's actions after the end of the Cold War, reducing Russian foreign policy to a hybrid war only because of the deterioration of its relations with the West will further exacerbate this problem [23, Renz B, Smith H., pp. 3, 10, 14, 18-20].

Discussing hybrid warfare in the military aspect, experts from the Finnish Aleksanteri Institute note that in the history of military-strategic thought, concepts have repeatedly come and gone, aimed at defining new types of wars. They express against exaggerating the Russian armed forces' real possibilities based on a successful Crimean campaign because in general, NATO has

significant advantages. The Crimean experience in the form of hybrid actions is unlikely to be directly transferred to the Baltic region or the Arctic [23, Renz B., Smith H., pp. 3, 10].

Scientists admit that little can be said definitively about hybrid warfare from a military point of view, so they base their reasoning about the hybrid threat mainly with reference to publications in the media and interviews with experts. As a result, many Finnish authors are forced to speak not even about a hybrid threat from Russia as part of a military confrontation, but about a hybrid influence (interference), which could hypothetically develop into a threat. After that, literally any political action of Russia is included in the hybrid influence: informational, financial, physical, political, cybernetic, and political violence [24, Helsinki in the era ..., pp. 4, 6].

Finnish experts recommend developing measures to counter hybrid influences. For example, in Helsinki, municipalities with broad self-government authority must take over the organizational function. They will also play a vital role if hybrid influence develops into a hybrid threat. The key to success is municipalities' ability to mobilize society, collect the necessary information at the local level, and maintain a high level of citizens' trust in each other and the authorities [24, Helsinki in the era ..., pp. 7-8]. Experts suggest considering the following types of hybrid influence:

Creation or maintenance of a vulnerability in a technical, economic, or spiritual realm. Examples are the activities of fake news websites.

Observation as the collection of information about an object to study a vulnerability.

Testing as a test of the target object's response to specific actions, such as cyberattacks, to test the stability of IT systems.

Activities to influence target objects in various ways and methods.

Sabotage, when this activity masks any other activity [24, Helsinki in the era ..., p. 9].

But under what conditions the hybrid influence ceases to be a threat? Experts are silent, referring only in the most general form to the existence of a "new type of threat". There is a logical discrepancy here. After all, the representatives of the "moderates" themselves note that such an interpretation of hybrid war blurs the line between the state of war and peace, which is fraught with a slide towards the militarization of politics, complicates the analysis of the foreign policy of states and the causes of conflicts [23, Renz B., Smith H., p. 22]. Also, the hybrid war begins to be interpreted as a continuous activity that begins long before the escalation of the conflict, which completely confuses the legal status of war and peace [14, Reichborn - Kjennerud E., Cullen P., p. 3].

One of the options for avoiding the noted contradiction is proposed in the strategy called "democratic containment", developed by the Finnish Institute of International Relations staff. To separate the military and non-military aspects of hybrid influence, M. Wigell prefers to talk not about hybrid war but only about "hybrid intervention", meaning indirect methods of struggle such as manipulative technologies that ensure the secrecy of external influence on society as a whole or individual management structure. Indirect influence is carried out through secret diplomacy,

geo-economic levers, and disinformation to wreak havoc and sowing seeds of discord in a democratic society by exploiting its vulnerabilities. The examples of such a hybrid intervention in the West are considered to be the Russian energy policy aimed at increasing contradictions within the EU; support for populist parties and Eurosceptics supporting the idea of disintegration; provoking regional economic imbalances through the creation of electoral preferences; providing economic benefits for the creation of corruption schemes within other states [20, Wigell M., pp. 5-6].

Democratic containment strategy differs from the traditional understanding of containment that was formed during the Cold War. It is not the state but the entire society that participates in democratic containment, while state bodies act as coordinators of joint efforts. In turn, this requires high cohesion and trust between the state and society. Soft power, based on the attractiveness of the institutions and values of liberal democracy, becomes the main instrument of containment. The transparency of decisions, strong compliance the rule of law, and civic activity should counter covert actions of the enemy. Contrary to the principle of balancing, the responses to hybrid influence use asymmetric means based on the achievements of democracy demonstrated its advantages to the opponent. Finally, if traditional deterrence is aimed at suppressing any aggression, then democratic deterrence is limited since it has a non-violent nature [20, Wigell M., pp. 9-11].

For the same reason, discussing development the strategy of counteracting hybrid influence, representatives of the “moderate” side prefer to focus on the concept of “elastic response” (resilience), which means an increase in the state’s ability to withstand a blow and recover from the consequences of external negative influences [20, Wigell M., p. 11]. It can be viewed as part of a strategy of democratic containment in the form of a system of measures to reduce vulnerability of society and state. It is noteworthy that the “moderates” warn against exaggerating the problem of hybrid threats, causing even more damage to society than the threats themselves. General suspicion can destroy trust in society, increase contradictions, and provoke a split in political forces [24, Helsinki in the era ..., p. 23].

However, among Western experts, a radical position is more widespread, supported by the institutions of the EU, NATO, and officials of the Arctic states. It is characterized by a broad interpretation of the term “hybrid threat”. Similar to the assessments of the “moderates,” it manifests itself in many spheres: administrative, legal, cultural, social, diplomatic, infrastructural, informational, cybernetic, space, economic, political, military, and intelligence. Moreover, this list may change [25, Nuclear energy ..., p. 10]. But more radical conclusion is then made that we are faced with a spectrum of problems that “is capable of destabilizing the international system”. And if so, then it is necessary to create a common strategy for all interested countries⁶. The global nature of the threat is explained by the fact that hybrid warfare is a “grand strategy” of “revisionist” states

⁶ Monaghan S., ed. MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Countering Hybrid Warfare. March 2019. p. 16. URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/784299/concept_s_mcdc_countering_hybrid_warfare.pdf (accessed: 16 April 2020).

seeking to change the world arena's status quo in their favor, namely: Russia, China, and Iran⁷. This insight into the scope and nature of hybrid threats is contained in concept papers published under the Joint Hybrid Threat Research Project, which serve as a guide for all experts in a scientific network led by the European Center of Expertise on Combating Hybrid Threats in Finland.

Thus, hybrid threats are brought to the global level simply declaratively, without sufficient grounds. The authors do not explain why precisely hybrid threats play such a destructive global role, and not, say, the erosion of international law, the US withdrawal from the ABM and INF treaties, the gradual militarization of outer space, the redistribution of the centers of power in the world, etc. But when we talk about “revisionist” states, why we forget that the history for many centuries demonstrates a struggle for influence? Why “revisionism” is declared a threat of global destabilization? And finally, why a negative role a priori is assigned the “revisionist” states?

In the spirit of the Cold War the radicals call for containment as a strategy for countering hybrid threats. The author of such an idea, Vytautas Kirshanskas, emphasizes that “a lack of decisiveness or inaction can undermine the containment strategy.” The containment itself is aimed at “neutralizing hybrid threats before they appear.” The escalation of relations to intimidate the enemy is viewed “as an integral and justified part of containment”. A “soft” response to a threat demonstrates own invulnerability as well its combination with the other measures helps to motivate the enemy to stop hybrid actions. A “hard” option provides retaliation in the case of crossing the “red lines”, while it is not necessary to make it clear for the enemy in what form or in what dimension the mission will be realized [26, Keršanskas V., pp. 9-12].

It can be noted that the “soft” response of the radicals coincides with the concept of “moderates” described above – “democratic containment”. Radical experts from the Royal Danish Military College criticize the moderates for their passive response to the problem of hybrid threats and the apparent lack of “soft” measures against long-term hybrid threats, pointing to a Russian policy that “must not go unpunished”. Furthermore, retaliation policy should serve as a powerful stimulus combining EU and NATO efforts. That means the response to the hybrid threat must put into effect article 5 of the Treaty providing collective defense option [27, Sorensen H., Nyeman D., pp. 3, 5].

Radical's strong emphasis on “hard” security can be explained by direct identifying the hybrid threat with specific areas of vulnerability of the modern state, for example, with the energetics. Here again, a logical discrepancy arises. The vulnerability of a state is associated with its properties, regardless of the external environment (if there is no gas in its depths, this fact itself does not depend in any way on relations with other states). But the threat arises from inside or outside the state due to the actions of the subject of politics, who may or may not use the vulnerability to cause harm. It turns out that threat and vulnerability are far from the same thing: vulnerability is

⁷ MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Conceptual Foundation and Implications for Defence Forces. March 2019. pp.1-2. URL: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7207/db36faa8e51d56709c3d4ef433ddf625e730.pdf?_ga=2.263480140.1548099221.1588232627-840606667.1588232627 (accessed: 16 April 2020).

an objective attribute of a states, and the threat is an expected negative consequence of a politician's actions. Radicals' understanding means that vulnerability is always viewed as a priori external threat, which leaves no room for cooperation in advance. In other words, this is a view of states' attitude only through the prism of conflict, which is an echo of the Cold War.

Representatives of the radical point of view propose a mechanism for the manifestation of a hybrid threat in the form of three phases of activity. The first, preparatory, forms in the population and the ruling elites a long-term motivation for behavior and attitude by influencing cultural processes and interethnic relations, control over news channels, aggravating social problems, etc. The second phase, destabilization, seeks to blur the concepts that retain social order. Interpretation of external and internal threats, the jurisdiction of various levels and subjects of power, and relations between the federal center and regions. Adding additional chaos can hinder or even paralyze government responses. The first two phases create vulnerability points of another state to be converted to hybrid threats later; all activities are carried out within the legal framework. The third phase, violence, corresponds to the state of hybrid war and aims to translate threats into practical actions. It includes military and any other instruments [25, Nuclear energy ..., pp. 11-12]. The mechanism proposed by the radicals presupposes the absence of a border between the state of peace and war.

Artificial politicization is being formed when any vulnerability is presented as an objectively existing hybrid threat from the outside. For example, it is proposed to consider the energy supply or energy dependence as part of the complex of the hybrid threats for given state [28, Verner D., Grigas A., Petit F., p. 3]. Based on this logic, an assertion is made that if Finland uses nuclear reactors built according to Russian technologies and receives fuel for them from Russia, a hybrid threat arises for energy supplies and technological dependence [25, Nuclear energy ..., pp. 13-14]. Meanwhile, energy policy problems have either an economic or geopolitical background or a combination of both, which is the common practice of states, including the United States and other great powers classified as liberal-democratic. But in the case when it comes to the policy of Russia, the substitution of concepts is made. Instead of geoeconomics, it is proposed to talk about the instruments of the hybrid war used by Russia.

Western experts are transferring a similar technique to cooperation in nuclear energy between Russia and Finland. It is argued that because Rosatom's leadership is appointed directly from the Kremlin for political reasons, this makes the organization itself a convenient tool for hybrid influence. It is not necessarily direct, but through the spillover effect, it can create a lever of influence in various areas: intelligence, military, legal, social, infrastructure. In particular, the project for constructing a nuclear power plant by Russia in the Finnish city of Hanhikivi is viewed as economical and as part of a hybrid impact aimed at splitting the EU and NATO [25, Nuclear energy ..., p. 32].

In the same a priori conflicting logic, dictated by the unjustified identification of vulnerability and threat, it is proposed to consider the legal regime of the Arctic. It is known that there are

several controversial issues on the division of the shelf, the status of the central part of the Arctic Ocean, the status of straits and sea communications. Objectively, all controversial issues are resolved in the legal field, and most experts consider the likelihood of a military conflict on this basis exceptionally low [29, Zagorskiy A.V.]. But the radical view of the supporters of hybrid threats suggests that the existence of “gray zones” in legal regulation provokes a new type of military conflict, which will become widespread in the 21st century.

Legal norms as a weapon of war (lawfare) in the gray zone are based on the fact that manipulation of legal norms is used in planning a military campaign. In this interpretation, under the hybrid actions and threats, the position of Russia on the implementation of the norms of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea is subsumed when it tries to defend the status of the Northern Sea Route as a national, not an international transport artery. Planting a Russian flag on the seabed in 2007 during the expedition of A. Chilingarov and even the submitting an application to the UN Commission on the extension of the shelf are labeled as provocation of conflict: “Russia ignored the claims of other Arctic states” [30, Al-Aridi A., pp. 116-117]. That means any Russia's attempt to defend its rights within the framework of the existing legal regime in the Arctic falls under hybrid actions and threats. It remains unclear why Russia's opponents in the same issue of expanding the shelf boundaries never considered a hybrid threat.

The described approach to understanding the hybrid threat, aimed at artificially politicizing regional policy issues, is especially characteristic of studies conducted under the auspices of international centers and network organizations with the United States' participation. Artificial politicization means that the discussed hybrid threat is not essential in itself but serves as a tool for achieving other goals – for example, “hybridization” is very convenient as a tool for unfair competition in the energy services market or any other area.

Techniques for identifying hybrid threats are of particular interest. The experience of expert groups from different states was summarized in a publication in the Joint Project framework on the Study of Hybrid Threats. Conventional methods based on monitoring indicators (exceeding the “threshold” of activity means an increase in the threat) are insufficient with such an amorphous interpretation of the hybrid threat's content and high unpredictability. Indeed, it is difficult to find a gray cat in a dark room.

To solve this non-trivial problem, it is proposed to divide hybrid threats into two types: “known unknowns” and “unknown unknowns”. While indicators can detect the first, there are no indicators for the second type's threats since even their nature is unknown. The report does not formulate an intelligible answer on how to deal with the second type of threat. The recommendations boil down, first, to a combination of already known indicators and greater attention to threats that were previously considered marginal. Second, it is proposed to organize nationwide

monitoring of the broadest possible range of government institutions and private business activities, revealing even minor anomalies as possible signs of an unknown hybrid threat⁸.

Conclusion

In political discourse, hybrid warfare is used to consolidate anti-Russian sentiments, observed in many European states, in the EU and NATO. At the doctrinal level, hybrid war and a hybrid threat have not been developed in any army in the world. Therefore its active use is mainly associated with the artificial politicization of foreign policy problems to exert pressure on Russia and other states referred to in the West as “revisionists”, who, by definition, are attributed to the desire to destabilize the international system. A vague definition of the concept allows to include any manifestation of the foreign policy of an unfriendly state in hybrid actions. Hence, the European Center for Combating Hybrid Threats and other organizations' recommendations contain measures of a vast range of actions directly aimed at escalating conflict relations with Russia.

The surge in attention to hybrid threats since 2014 is partly due to the confusion in the West over the fact of rapid, successful, and innovative action in Crimea, where no shots were fired during the operation. Western experts express fears that they misjudged the Russian armed forces' depth of modernization [23, Renz B., Smith H., p. 2]. But this interest can be seen on more serious grounds. Perhaps the global scale attributed to hybrid threats and wars reflects the growing state of chaos in the international system, the erosion of international law, the collapse of global economic mechanisms and security regimes? Then, the inevitable growth of contradictions enhances international relations' conflict potential, which makes the demand for non-traditional methods of confrontation of all against all. The global threat is not created by hybridity as a form of war, but by the loss of stability in the international system, which is happening at an accelerating pace. Isn't this problem covered up by the thesis about “revisionist” states as the culprits of global destabilization?

The difference between moderate and radical supporters of the concept of hybrid wars is that moderates focus on reducing the vulnerability of the state and society in the face of external influences, while radicals, equating vulnerability and threat, tend to a priori perceive the problem of vulnerability in terms of potential conflict. But given the amorphousness of the very concept of a hybrid threat, this is fraught with an unjustified confrontation of interstate relations in the spirit of a “witch hunt”. The radicals' politically dangerous position is fueled by support from NATO, the EU, a number of states unfriendly to Russia, and within the framework of the Joint Project to Study Hybrid Threats.

In practice, the topic of hybrid wars is used to persuade neutral Sweden and Finland to cooperate and subsequently join NATO. Second, hybrid warfare helps to give new impetus to strengthening NATO, an organization in crisis amid serious disagreements both between the Unit-

⁸ Monaghan S., ed. MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Countering Hybrid Warfare. March 2019. p. 25–32. URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/784299/concept_s_mcdc_countering_hybrid_warfare.pdf (accessed: 16 April 2020).

ed States and Europe and within Europe over security issues. Third, the artificial inflating of the problem of hybrid threats serves as an argument for the supporters of an increase in European states' military spending and the activation of NATO in the Arctic.

The hybrid war agenda as a whole has roots very far from the regional problems of the Arctic. Discussions about hybrid threats look entirely artificial and are associated with a general deterioration in relations between Russia and the West, which began even before the Ukrainian crisis. Attempts to interpret the Arctic's regional problems through the prism of the concept of hybrid war have become a kind of reflection on global negative political trends. It is indicative that the supporters of the "hybridization" of international relations are ready in advance to ascribe to Russia's policy a hostile direction even concerning projects of mutually beneficial cooperation in the Arctic.

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