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Understanding Russian thinking on *gibridnaya voyna*

Markus Göransson

Introduction

'Hybrid warfare' has become a staple term in Western military discourse and is used as a shorthand for warfare that combines conventional, unconventional and non-military means.¹ It was coined and elaborated by US researchers including Frank Hoffmann, Nathan Freier and Russel W. Glenn and is often applied to multidimensional challenges by non-Western actors to Western states and militaries. As intelligence scholar Damien Van Puyvelde has noted, it has often been assumed that modern adversaries of Western militaries resort to hybrid means to 'exploit all the dimensions of war to combat the Western superiority in conventional warfare'.²

Notwithstanding its Western pedigree, the term has helped to shape military discussions also outside of the West. In Russia, it has been picked up and used in discussions about the changing character of warfare in an age of global connectivity and an enduring nuclear threat. The Russian equivalent of the Western term, *gibridnaya voyna* ('hybrid war'), was first introduced into Russian discussions in the late 2000s after the term gained popularity in the West. Since then it has been used in Russian military scholarship and also (if somewhat reluctantly)³ by senior Russian military figures such as Chief of the General Staff Valerii Gerasimov. It is generally employed to designate multidimensional warfare that comprises non-military and sometimes conventional military means.⁴

The Russian discussion of *gibridnaya voyna* is something of a carnival mirror image of the Western discussion of *hybrid warfare*. It is different from the latter but bears much that is familiar with it. It operates on an understanding of 'hybrid warfare' that focuses on the combination of military and non-military methods rather than on the reconciling of conventional and non-conventional military means. In a number of ways, Russian military researchers have repurposed the insights of Hoffmann, Freier and Glenn with a mind to security concerns that they believe are pressing for Russia. The primary one of these perceived concerns is the belief that the West is waging a subversive campaign against Russia. Russian researchers have contended that

gibridnaya voyna is a pertinent concept for explaining the ways in which the West is seeking to undermine Russia.

This chapter provides a survey of recent discussions of *gibridnaya voyna* as they have unfolded in a selection of Russian military and security policy journals and books since 2014. The journals include *Voennaya mysl'* [Military Thought], *Vestnik akademii voyennykh nauk* [Herald of the Academy of Military Sciences] and *Problemy natsional'noi strategii* [Problems of National Strategy]. The books are I. M. Popov and M. M. Khamzatov's *Voyna budushchego. Kontseptual'nye osnovy i prakticheskie vyvody* [The War of the Future. Conceptual Foundations and Practical Conclusions] (2018) and A. I. Vladimirov's three-volume *Osnovy obshchey teorii voyny* [The Foundations of a General Theory of War] (2018). While this selection is by no means exhaustive, it offers a window into Russian academic discussions of *gibridnaya voyna*.

One of the central arguments that will be put forth in this chapter is that *gibridnaya voyna* serves a securitizing rather than an analytical function in Russian academic writing. As such, it should not be understood as a strictly academic endeavour, but one that labels as potential threats phenomena that were previously left out of military analysis and thereby broadens the palette of dangers that are seen to confront Russia. Social protests, NGOs, immigration, religious organizations and special forces are all viewed as potential components of hybrid warfare as waged by the West.⁵ As Popov and Khamzatov put it with a note of exasperation, '[in Russia] the term *gibridnaya voyna* began to be understood as everything that did not fit into the notion of traditional armed struggle.'⁶

The Copenhagen school of security studies understands 'securitization' as the process whereby issues that were previously not associated with security are re-framed as matters of security. This is achieved through a securitizing act that is essentially linguistic. It involves (1) a securitizing agent that makes a claim for an issue to be treated as a matter of security; (2) the identification of an alleged threat; (3) the identification of an object that is being threatened; (4) and an audience that needs to be convinced to treat the issue as a threat. The Russian discourse of *gibridnaya voyna* expands the horizon of imagined threats to encompass a range of non-state and foreign actors that are viewed as potentially subversive of the referent object, which is identified variously as the Russian state, Russian sovereignty and even the consciousness of the Russian population.⁷ The intended audiences of the *gibridnaya voyna* discourse include the Russian political and military establishments, who, in some publications, are offered recommendations for how to manage Western 'hybrid operations'.

Glaringly, the *gibridnaya voyna* discourse stands on only a limited empirical basis. As will be shown later, Russian researchers provide little empirical support for claims that Western states undertake subversive actions against Russia or indeed have the intention and capacity to coordinate such actions. A key assumption of much of the writing on *gibridnaya voyna* is that there is unity of intention and control in multidimensional operations. Yet this assumption remains largely unsupported in academic writing. It is striking that some of the most careful analyses of Western hybrid warfare are concerned with cases that involve not contemporary Russia but Libya, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. They tend to rely on frameworks that are informed by Western conceptualizations of hybrid warfare, not *gibridnaya voyna* in its Russian elaboration.

In this sense, *gibridnaya voyna* seems to be less an attempt to provide an empirically grounded analysis of Western action than an assertion, unscholarly in its scope and securitizing in its effects, that the West is waging multidimensional warfare against Russia. True, Russian analysis is shaped by earlier discourses and experiences, including the memory of Western non-military action against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. But today *gibridnaya voyna* appears to have given a new lease of life to the old Leninist notion of ‘constant threats from abroad and within’,⁸ identifying a near-endless list of threats to Russian sovereignty, while it silently passes over issues of intentionality and capacity and treats empirical evidence with stepmotherly care. Its analytical vagueness may be one reason why the Russian military establishment has at times been reluctant to embrace the term *gibridnaya voyna*.⁹ As Popov and Khamzatov have put it, ‘The term “*gibridnaya voyna*” in the sense that is imputed to it today by various Russian authors . . . is much too abstract, purely publicistic, and not academic.’¹⁰

The first part of the chapter considers the origins of the *gibridnaya voyna* discourse and its overlaps with the Western hybrid warfare discourse. The second part of the chapter will discuss the conceptual variation and empirical limitations of *gibridnaya voyna*. The third and final part will explore the term’s securitizing function.

The Russian discussion of *gibridnaya voyna*

There is only limited English-language work on *gibridnaya voyna*, but one key publication on the topic is Ofer Fridman’s monograph about the term’s intellectual pedigree, *Russian ‘Hybrid Warfare’ – Resurgence and ‘Politicization’*. Fridman remarks that he embarked on writing the book after realizing that both Russian and Western military researchers speak about ‘hybrid warfare’ yet seem to understand the term in markedly different ways. He cites as examples Guillaume Lasconjarias and Jeffrey Larsen’s *Nato’s Response to Hybrid Threats* and Pavel Tsygankov’s *‘Gibridnye Voyny’ v khaotiziruyushchemsya mire XII veka*, a Western and a Russian book, respectively. When reading these books, Fridman remarks, ‘I was surprised to discover that the only mutual ground between them was their titles.’¹¹

With this perceived conceptual divergence in mind, Fridman investigates the ways in which the concept of ‘hybrid warfare’ emerged and evolved in Russia and the West, concluding that the Russian and Western discourses are rooted in different theoretical traditions. He traces the antecedents of the Russian discourse to ideas about non-kinetic warfare put forth by Igor Panarin, Aleksandr Dugin and Evgeny Messner, three Russian thinkers whose writings gained prominence in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Messner’s work was produced during the Cold War but was re-printed and circulated in Russia in the 1990s). In contrast, according to Fridman, the debt that Russian scholars owe to Western theorists, including Frank Hoffman, is much slighter: ‘when analysing the works of Russian scholars, strategists and military thinkers, it quickly becomes clear that the only common ground between Hoffman’s theory of hybrid warfare and *gibridnaya voyna* is the name.’¹²

Fridman contends that the concept of *gibridnaya voyna* is rooted in a peculiarly Russian understanding of war as a ‘sociopolitical phenomenon’, which it shares with

Messner's theory of subversion-war, Dugin's theory of net-centric war and Panarin's theory of information war. Both *gibridnaya voyna* and these theories, according to Fridman, understand the aim of non-military warfare as to 'break the spirit of the adversary's nation by a gradual erosion of its culture, values and self-esteem'.¹³ It is an objective that can be achieved through political, informational and economic means, not only strictly military ones. Indeed, according to the Russian theorists, military means have become more dangerous in the shadow of the nuclear threat. Fearing nuclear annihilation, countries will seek to impose their will on other states not militarily, which would risk triggering an escalating series of mutual reprisals, but through non-military subversive measures. In other words, the objective of warfare is no longer to achieve military victory over other states but instead to corrupt and weaken adversaries from within, undermining their ability to resist through non-military measures. In Fridman's words, the proponents of *gibridnaya voyna* believe that

the main purpose of this type of war is to avoid the traditional battlefield and destroy the adversary via a hybrid of ideological, informational, financial, political and economic methods that dismantle the fabric of society, leading to its internal collapse.¹⁴

There are obvious overlaps between *gibridnaya voyna* and Messner's, Dugin's and Panarin's theories. After all, they share a focus on non-military subversive warfare and an understanding that modern societies are vulnerable to such warfare. Nevertheless, there is little evidence that the theories have informed each other or that researchers of *gibridnaya voyna* actively draw on Messner's, Dugin's and Panarin's ideas. In fact, Fridman himself points out that Dugin's and Panarin's theories were 'conceptualised independently of each other, as well as from Messner's concept of subversion-war'¹⁵ and that Messner's, Dugin's and Panarin's theories are 'independent, but similar theories'.¹⁶ He also remarks that Messner's theory bears close resemblance to Mao Zedong's understanding of insurgency warfare and its stress on demoralizing the enemy, an understanding that is evidently not part of the Russian canon.¹⁷

Hence, it is problematic to conceive of Messner, Dugin, Panarin and *gibridnaya voyna* as constituting a distinct theoretical tradition in Russian military thought. After all, that states may seek to undermine adversaries by weakening them from within is no novel idea elaborated by Russian theorists. Rather, it may reflect a tendency, which is common in authoritarian states, to exaggerate the scope of internal and external threats. Certainly, the Soviet Union, long before Russian military scholars coined the term *gibridnaya voyna*, accused unregistered Islamic preachers, human rights advocates, unorthodox Communists and a range of other individuals of being supported or manipulated by foreign governments.¹⁸ The Chinese Communist Party's Politburo, similarly, placed the blame for the pro-democracy Tiananmen Square demonstrations in June 1989 on a 'linkup of domestic and foreign counterrevolutionary forces'. One Chinese Politburo member, Vice President Wang Zhen, described them as the culmination of a decades-long American campaign to overthrow the Chinese Communist Party. In words that seem a conceptualization of *gibridnaya voyna* as good as any, Zhen said, 'they'd like to achieve their goal the easy way, by using "peaceful

evolution": . . . buying people with money, cultural and ideological subversion, sending spies, stealing intelligence, producing rumors, stimulating turmoil, supporting our internal hostile forces, everything short of direct invasion.¹⁹

It also seems erroneous to downplay the Western antecedents to Russian discussions of *gibridnaya voyna*. Numerous Russian scholars cite Western theorists of hybrid warfare even as they omit Messner, Dugin and Panarin. For example, Marina Kuchinskaia, a researcher at the Russian Institute of Strategic Research, who is well-versed in Western writings on hybrid warfare, has written a detailed overview of the Western discussions in '*Voennaya Mysl*'.²⁰ Another prolific Russian researcher on *gibridnaya voyna* is Aleksandr Bartosh at the Russian Academy of Military Sciences. He explicitly espouses a definition of *gibridnaya voyna* that is based not on Messner or Dugin but on a formulation articulated by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London. Bartosh deems that the IISS's definition 'precisely expresses the key distinctions between hybrid wars and traditional conflicts.'²¹ To be sure, both Kuchinskaia and Bartosh fail to fully operationalize in their research the Western theories that they cite. Nevertheless, their express engagement with these theories shows a theoretical overlap between the Russian and Western discourses.²²

Interestingly, the influence of Western thinking on the Russian discourse is more visible in passages where Russian scholars discuss countries other than Russia. When Kuchinskaia considers the 2011 Western military intervention in Libya, for example, she talks of hybrid methods in strictly tactical and operational terms, much as is commonly done in the West. She concludes that hybrid methods used at the tactical and operational level by the Western coalition forces in Libya were key to the intervention's success:

The success of the [Libyan] operation was secured first and foremost through the use of armed detachments of the internal opposition coordinated with representatives of the special forces and special operations forces of the United Kingdom, France and the United States, and also through the use of informational-psychological action directed at the local population and the personnel of the government forces.²³

This goes against Fridman's claim that a focus on 'tactical military and operational activities' is a hallmark of Western conceptualizations of hybrid warfare.²⁴ In fact, Kuchinskaia is not the only Russian researcher who focuses on the tactical and operational level when discussing *gibridnaya voyna*. Vladimir Kiselyov and Ivan Vorobyov, two retired officers-cum-military researchers, in an article published in *Voennaya Mysl*, similarly stress the operational advantages that can be derived from deploying hybrid methods in warfare. In a discussion of Nazi Germany's aggression against the Soviet Union during the Second World War,²⁵ Kiselyov and Vorobyov comment that Nazi Germany attempted to 'blow up the U.S.S.R. from within' by raising '17 subversion and reconnaissance commands, 68 groups, the Brandenburg 800 special forces unit, Kurfürst regiment, and [the] Bergmann battalion' on Soviet territory prior to the invasion.²⁶ Undeniably, some of the Russian discussions of *gibridnaya voyna* involve references to and ideas imported from Western discussions of hybrid warfare,

rendering questionable Fridman's claim that '[Western] hybrid warfare and *gibridnaya voyna* are two completely different things'.²⁷

Importantly, however, such attentiveness to Western thinking is all but absent in instances when Kuchinskaia, Kiselyov and Vorobyov and other Russian researchers write about Russia. In those cases, they no longer home in on tactical and operational action but stress strategic covert non-military subversion allegedly conducted by the West against Russia. In her article 'Politika sderzhivaniia Rossii: "novaia norma" (a new normal) dlia NATO', (The Politics of Restraining Russia: 'a new normal' for NATO), Kuchinskaia writes that the United States and NATO are waging a hybrid war against Russia with the use of 'traditional diplomacy and special operations forces, financial bodies, economic sanctions, non-governmental organizations and global mass media'.²⁸ In other words, Kuchinskaia treats hybrid war against Russia as a different species of hybrid war from the hybrid operation that she described in Libya. This distinction is not made explicit in her text, which moves seamlessly between different conceptualizations of 'hybrid warfare'. Such conceptual ambiguity appears also in other articles and will be considered more closely in the following section.

Gibridnaya voyna as assertion

As in Western scholarship, in Russian research it remains an open question what hybrid warfare/*gibridnaya voyna* actually is. The Russian military theorist Aleksandr Vladimirov views it as a 'struggle over thoughts, morals and codices',²⁹ while Popov and Khamzatov describe hybrid conflicts as ones waged by 'irregular forces, mixed with regular forces, and characterized by the simultaneous deployment of irregular and regular strategies and tactics'.³⁰ In the latter example, Popov and Khamzatov use terms that are reminiscent of Western definitions of the concept. Meanwhile, Kuchinskaia believes that hybrid warfare does not need to involve military means,³¹ while Bartosh sees hybrid warfare as the very 'integrator of military and non-military forms, means, methods and technologies, used in contemporary multi-dimensional conflicts'.³² Even the distinction that Chekinov and Bogdanov make between New Generation Warfare and *gibridnaya voyna*, a distinction that Fridman considers to be seminal, is not observed by several other researchers. According to Fridman, New Generation Warfare can be understood as the use of non-military means to weaken the adversary ahead of an attack, while *gibridnaya voyna* is defined as a strategy that involves the employment of non-military measures to weaken and corrupt an adversary and can be implemented without the use of military means. This distinction, which Fridman names the 'main contribution of Chekinov and Bogdanov' to the *gibridnaya voyna* discourse, is brushed aside by Bartosh, Popov and Khamzatov, and Kiselyov and Vorobyov.

Such conceptual variation can be productive and indicates that a range of views on hybrid warfare exist in Russian scholarship. What is less productive is the fact that researchers often fail to substantiate their claims with evidence. This is the case particularly with that segment of the Russian scholarship that understands *gibridnaya voyna* in primarily non-military terms as a Western strategy to undermine Russia.

Kiselyov and Vorobyov's aforementioned article about Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, for example, contains numerous unqualified assertions about Western subversion against Russia, including that 'several former Soviet republics [. . .] joined NATO in what can really be called a flawless hybrid operation' and that efforts today 'continue to undermine the ethnic Russian people's unity and solidarity of the Slavic spirit today, this time in Ukraine.'³³ Bartosh, with similar confidence and dearth of evidence, asserts that the United States and NATO are supporting 'colour revolutions' and conducting 'hybrid wars' in the Middle East and eastern Europe as substitutes for military involvement.³⁴ No evidence is put forth to support either of these claims.

In Kiselyov and Vorobyov's piece, there is equally scant evidence to substantiate the assumption that the West possesses the capacity and intention to undertake multidimensional hybrid operations of a kind that would enable it to 'cut off a part of another country's territory by using a combination of coordinated political, diplomatic, information, propaganda, financial, economic, and military measures.'³⁵ The article provides a detailed overview of the capabilities of US special forces and special operations forces to conduct subversion in wartime but is much less specific in setting out the means whereby an adversary may expose 'the population and authorities where he wants to undertake unlawful operations to political brainwashing.'³⁶ Unofficial regional political parties, non-profit organizations, migration and private military companies (PMCs) are identified as channels through which foreign adversaries may impose their will on Russia,³⁷ yet there is no explanation of the mechanisms whereby foreign governments may direct the first three of these or evidence that they have previously done so. In the case of PMCs, such companies belong to the military realm, not to that of political and social subversion. This is true also for the thirty-six Ukrainian volunteer battalions that the article mistakenly refers to as PMCs. There is little discussion of the way in which PMCs may be used to subvert Russia in peacetime.³⁸ The result is a series of weakly substantiated claims that conjure up a spectre of Western hybrid warfare, identifying new security threats on the basis of limited evidence.

Other articles are similarly weak in evidence. Igor' Aleksandrovich Nikolaychuk, a researcher at the Russian Institute of Strategic Research, writes in *Problemy natsional'noi strategii* that 'even Western specialists say that interference in the internal affairs of foreign states for the purpose of realizing strategic objectives needs to take place in the context of defending national interests with minimal projection of military force.'³⁹ He supports this claim with a statement from William Courtney at the US-based RAND Corporation, yet if Courtney describes the challenges that the United States faces in responding to Russian actions in Ukraine, contrary to Nikolaychuk's claim he does not say anything about the need to interfere or intervene in other countries' internal affairs. Bartosh, too, leaves several questions unanswered when he writes about NATO's strategy for countering hybrid warfare as it was set out at the alliance's 2016 summit in Warsaw. Noting that NATO's strategy has a defensive slant, Bartosh suggests in a logical leap that the strategy should nevertheless be interpreted as aggressive given NATO's actions 'in the Balkans, the build-up of a military presence in Europe and the deployment of a strategic missile defence.'⁴⁰ No better is Bartosh' claim that Western 'politicians and military officials use [the Western conceptual model of hybrid warfare]

in practice, first and foremost against Russia and in other places, where it is necessary,⁴¹ an assertion unsupported with empirical evidence.

Such evidential gaps raise questions about *gibridnaya voyna's* function as an explanatory and analytical tool. It imputes intentionality and coherence to actors and events, but is weakly theorized and largely unsupported empirically. Overall, Russian researchers of *gibridnaya voyna* fail to demonstrate that Western actors possess the capacity and intention to undertake the operations that are ascribed to them.⁴² Moreover, several articles on *gibridnaya voyna* operate on dual and conflicting definitions of the term, deploying them opportunistically. As such, the term asserts more than it explains and should be treated with caution.

Gibridnaya voyna as a securitizing act

If *gibridnaya voyna* is of doubtful analytical value, it may serve a rhetorical purpose. It offers a paradigm that allows for the identification of an almost endless series of possible threats to Russia, attributing them to malevolent foreign action. Immigration, disease, NGOs, protesters, special forces and conventional military units are all understood as potential components of a palette of assets that foreign powers, most notably the US and NATO, may deploy in their drive to undermine Russia.⁴³ Issues that were previously understood in non-security terms are, within the *gibridnaya voyna* framework, elevated to the status of security threats that demand a coordinated state response. No clear definition of hybrid threats or explicit empirical standards for determining whether a hybrid threat is present is provided. As a result, a potentially vast spectrum of organizations, groups, individuals and phenomena can be construed as posing potential hybrid dangers to Russia. In doing so, *gibridnaya voyna* legitimizes an expansion of the reach and control of state bodies to address such dangers.

In this sense, *gibridnaya voyna* fulfils a securitizing function, encouraging state authorities to manage a broader range of phenomena as possible security threats. At times, Russian security and military researchers explicitly recommend to state power holders how to respond to hybrid threats. Aleksandr Bartosh, for example, describes a series of measures that the Russian authorities should take in order to counter the alleged Western hybrid threat. They include stepping up controls on immigration, fighting against corruption, increasing state economic control, undertaking continuous intelligence, bolstering Russia's military power and training personnel in managing hybrid threats.⁴⁴ Kiselyov and Vorobyov similarly stress the need to treat migration as a hybrid threat, calling for increased vigilance to 'prevent ill-intentioned individuals from entering' Russia and to 'forestall the spread of terrorist organizations'. They ask that domestic intelligence functions be enhanced while 'all authorities concerned are to keep a close eye on the way in which the situation, political situation, in the first place, is panning out and track it watchfully to detect signs of a brewing hybrid operation in time to frustrate it'.⁴⁵ Invoking *gibridnaya voyna*, Bartosh, Kiselyov and Vorobyov present phenomena as varied as economic decentralization, immigration, corruption and Russian military underinvestment as security threats.

One important aspect of the *gibridnaya voyna* discourse is its overlap with other security discourses that are or have been in vogue in Russia. In the 1990s, a central concern of Russian military discussions was whether Russia should prepare for conventional war with NATO or limited wars on its periphery of the kind that occurred in Chechnya, Tajikistan and the south Caucasus. Later, in the 2000s and early 2010s, there was an increased focus on so-called 'Colour Revolutions' in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and elsewhere, events for which Russia blamed the West. Conventional war, limited war and colour revolutions pose varied security issues, but scholars of *gibridnaya voyna* consider them within a single framework on the assumption that they represent different stages or aspects of hybrid warfare. Bartosh argues that efforts to subvert adversaries through 'discriminatory sanctions, information warfare . . . the activation of "fifth columns", terrorist actions' and other means are made to pave the way for colour revolutions.⁴⁶ In doing so, they may intensify international tensions to a point where these trigger a 'large regional conflict that risks transforming into a global one.'⁴⁷ Kuchinskaia similarly understands hybrid warfare as potentially escalatory, noting that the open use of arms belongs to the 'final stage' of hybrid operations.⁴⁸ She also writes that it 'is important to consider the possibility that hybrid war is transformed into a conventional one, and by extension into a war where weapons of mass destruction are used.'⁴⁹ Thereby, different types of phenomena are weaved into a common threat imaginary. Colour revolutions, limited wars and all-out conflagrations between Russia and NATO are all understood as possible manifestations of an underlying conflict between Russia and the West.

Conclusion

Hybrid warfare, which has become a buzzword in Western military discourse, has made its way into Russian military discussions. It has been imported from Anglo-Saxon theory, translated into Russian and slowly drawn the attention of the Russian military establishment. It purports to capture the essence of modern Western war craft, presenting contemporary war as a multidimensional enterprise that brings together military and non-military means. At times, Russian notions of *gibridnaya voyna* dovetail closely with Western ideas of hybrid warfare. Yet, at other times the Russian and the Western discussions appear to diverge considerably. An important current of thought in the Russian scholarship holds that the West is engaged in a largely non-military subversive campaign designed to effectuate regime change in Russia or reshape Russian national identity for the advancement of Western interests. Constrained by the threat of all-out nuclear war and global economic interdependence, the West, according to Russian theorists like Marina Kuchinskaia and Aleksandr Bartosh, are engaged in hybrid warfare as a low-risk method for undermining Russia.

If there is a long tradition in Russian military scholarship to reflect intellectually on changes in warfare, the *gibridnaya voyna* discourse should not be understood as primarily an academic endeavour. Rather, it seems an undertheorized and empirically weakly supported attempt to broaden the discussion about the threats that confront

Russia. Many of the claims about Western hybrid warfare against Russia rest on scant evidence, while Russian researchers have failed to demonstrate that Western actors possess several of the capabilities that they ascribe to them. There are also numerous examples of conceptual confusion in the Russian discussions, where Russian researchers employ *gibridnaya voyna* in multiple senses to designate as hybrid warfare several types of activity that have very little in common.

Rhetorically, the *gibridnaya voyna* discourse involves a series of securitizing moves that widens the range of issues that are identified as security threats, thereby legitimizing an expansion in the activities of state authorities. Non-governmental organizations, special forces, human rights activists, migrants and epidemics are all viewed as potential components of hybrid warfare. This is rooted in threat perceptions inherited from the Cold War, when Western subversion of Warsaw-Pact countries was rife and well-documented, as well as in a sense of vulnerability in the face of Western preponderance. Yet it is rhetorical more than analytical.

Notes

- 1 See Damien van Puyvelde, 'Hybrid War – Does It Even Exist?' *NATO Review*, 7 May 2015; Robert Johnson, 'Hybrid Warfare and Its Countermeasures: A Critique of the Literature', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29, no. 1 (2018): 141–3.
- 2 van Puyvelde, 'Hybrid War'.
- 3 Ofer Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare': Resurgence and Politicization* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018), 96.
- 4 Valery V. Gerasimov, 'Organizatsiia oborony Rossiiskoy federatsii v usloviakh primeneniia protivnikom "traditsionnykh" i "gibridnykh" metodov vedeniia voyny' [The organization of the defense of the Russian federation under conditions of the employment by the adversary of 'traditional' and 'hybrid' methods of waging war], *Vestnik akademii voyennykh nauk* 2, no. 55 (2016): 19–23. See also Valery V. Gerasimov, 'Sovremennyye voyny i aktual'nye voprosy oborony strany' [Modern wars and current questions of the country's defense], *Vestnik akademii voyennykh nauk* 2, no. 59 (2017): 9–13.
- 5 Marina Evgen'evna Kuchinskaiia, 'Politika sderzhivaniia Rossii: "novaia norma" [a new normal] dlia NATO', [The politics of deterrence of Russia: 'a new normal' for NATO], *Problemy natsional'noi strategii* 1, no. 40 (2017): 147–62; Aleksandr A. Bartosh, 'Strategy and Counterstrategy in a Hybrid War', *Military Thought* [English edition] 4, no. 27 (2018): 1–18; Aleksandr A. Bartosh, 'Hybrid Warfare: "Friction" and "Wear and Tear"', *Military Thought* [English edition] 1, no. 27 (2018): 1–10.
- 6 Igor M. Popov and Musa M. Khamzatov, *Voyna budushchego. Kontseptual'nye osnovy i prakticheskie vyvody* (Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole, 2018), 343.
- 7 Aleksandr A. Bartosh, 'Smysly gibridnoy voyny' [The meanings of hybrid war], *Vestnik akademii voennykh nauk* 59, no. 2 (2017): 165.
- 8 Stephen J. Blank and Richard Weitz, 'Russian Military Studies: A Call for Action', in *The Russian Military Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Memory of Mary Fitzgerald*, eds Stephen J. Blank and Richard Weitz (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 5.
- 9 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 96.
- 10 Popov and Khamzatov, *Voyna budushchego*, 344.

- 11 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 1.
- 12 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 91.
- 13 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 92.
- 14 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 93.
- 15 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 73.
- 16 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 92.
- 17 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 66.
- 18 See Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Christian Davenport (ed.), *Paths to State Repression: Human Rights Violations and Contentious Politics* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000).
- 19 Quoted in Andrew Nathan, 'The New Tiananmen Papers,' *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2019. Available online: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-05-30/new-tiananmen-papers> (Last accessed 27 June 2019).
- 20 Marina Evgen'evna Kuchinskaia, 'Fenomen gibridizatsii sovremennykh konfliktov: otechestvennyi i zapadny voenno-politicheskii diskurs,' *Problemy natsional'noi strategii* 6, no. 51 (2018): 122–43.
- 21 The IISS defines hybrid warfare as the 'use of military and nonmilitary tools in an integrated campaign designed to achieve surprise, seize the initiative, and gain psychological as well as physical advantages utilizing diplomatic tools, sophisticated and rapid information, electronic and cyber operations, covert and occasionally overt military and intelligence action, and economic pressure.' See: Bartosh, "Friction" and "Wear and Tear", 2–3; Bartosh, 'Smysly gibridnoy voyny', 165–72. Another Russian researcher who explicitly bases himself on a Western definition of 'hybrid warfare' is Yuri Alekseevich Popkov who cites Frank Hoffman's definition of hybrid war as the 'best definition' of the phenomenon (Popkov, 'Tactical Reconnaissance in Hybrid Warfare,' *Military Thought* 3, no. 26 (2017): 120.
- 22 See also: Vakhtang Shotovich Surguladze, "Setevye," "gibridnye," "novye": sovremennye voyny i politika identichnosti v epokhu globalizatsii' ['Net', 'hybrid', 'new': Contemporary Wars and the Politics of Identity in the Era of Globalization], *Problemy natsional'noi strategii* 3, no. 36 (2016): 248; Igor A. Nikolaychuk, 'O sushchnosti gibridnoy voyny v kontekste sovremennoy voenno-politicheskoi situatsii,' *Problemy natsional'noy strategii* 3, no. 36 (2016): 85–104.
- 23 Kuchinskaia, 'Fenomen gibridizatsii', 135.
- 24 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 92.
- 25 Vladimir A. Kiselyov and Igor N. Vorobyov, 'Hybrid Operations: A New Type of Warfare,' *Military Thought* [English edition] 2, no. 24 (2015): 29.
- 26 Kiselyov and Vorobyov, 'Hybrid Operations', 29.
- 27 Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, 95.
- 28 Kuchinskaia, 'Politika sderzhivaniia Rossii', 147–62.
- 29 Aleksandr Ivanovich Vladimirov, *Osnovy Obshchey Teorii Voyny. Chast' III. Gosudarstvo, Voyna i Armiia: Nekotorye Voprosy Teorii* (Moscow: Universitet Sinergia Izdatel'skiy Dom, 2018), 203.
- 30 Popov and Khamzatov, *Voyna budushchego*, 344.
- 31 Kuchinskaia, 'Fenomen gibridizatsii', 122.
- 32 Bartosh, 'Smysly gibridnoy voyny', 167.
- 33 Kiselyov and Vorobyov, 'Hybrid Operations', 30.
- 34 Aleksandr A. Bartosh, 'Kak zakladyvalis' osnovy strategii globalizatsii al'iansa 'Issledovanie o rasshirenii NATO' 20 let spust'ia,' *Problemy natsional'noy strategii* 5, no. 32 (2015): 171, 179

- 35 Kiselyov and Vorobyov, 'Hybrid Operations', 28. Another article by Kiselyov includes outright conspiracy theories, including that 'gunmen from the Kosovo Liberation Army [during the Serbian-Kosovo war] forced Kosovo Albanians out of their homes, on pain of death, and drove them to the border, where Western journalists armed with cameras had already been assembled'. The source for this claim is an article in *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kur'er*. See Vladimir A. Kiselyov, 'What Kind of Warfare should the Russian Armed Forces Be Prepared For?' *Military Thought* 2, no. 26 (2017): 3.
- 36 Kiselyov and Vorobyov, 'Hybrid Operations', 33.
- 37 Kiselyov and Vorobyov, 'Hybrid Operations', 33–5.
- 38 Kiselyov and Vorobyov, 'Hybrid Operations', 33–4.
- 39 Nikolaychuk, 'O sushchnosti gibridnoy voyny', 87.
- 40 Bartosh, 'Smysly gibridnoy voyny', 166.
- 41 Bartosh, 'Smysly gibridnoy voyny', 166.
- 42 For an article that stresses the confusion, chaos and lack of control that hybrid warfare brings yet explains it as set in motion and managed by a rival actor, see Ivan S. Konyshov, 'Hybrid Warfare: Hygienic and Epidemiological Aspects, and the Role and Place of Information Technologies', *Military Thought* 4, no. 25 (2016): 113–22. See also Bartosh, 'Strategy and Counterstrategy', 5.
- 43 As Bartosh writes: 'Not all states unconditionally accept attempts to impose the dictatorship of the sole superpower on the whole world, which leads to a sharp intensification of interstate confrontation, the basis of which is made up of nonmilitary measures: political, economic, informational. The confrontation, encompassing many other aspects of the modern society's activity – diplomatic, scientific, sports, and cultural – has actually become total.' Bartosh, 'Strategy and Counterstrategy', 1–18.
- 44 Bartosh, "Friction" and "Wear and Tear", 9.
- 45 Kiselyov and Vorobyov, 'Hybrid Operations', 35.
- 46 Aleksandr A. Bartosh, 'Primenenie gibridnykh metodov v sovremennykh konfliktakh', *Problemy natsional'noi strategii* 6, no. 39 (2016): 160.
- 47 Bartosh, 'Primenenie gibridnykh metodov', 161.
- 48 Kuchinskaia, 'Fenomen gibridizatsii', 122.
- 49 Kuchinskaia, 'Fenomen gibridizatsii', 138.