CHALLENGES OF PREDICTING SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISES AND HYBRID THREATS

Vytautas ŠLAPKAUSKAS

Mykolas Romeris University
Maironio St. 27, LT-44211 Kaunas, Lithuania
E-mail: slapkauskas@mruni.eu
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9637-6672

Abstract. *Climate change and environmental degradation have affected the entire world to varying degrees and are the main source of new crises and hybrid threats. All states and societies have a difficult and, at the same time, new responsibility to change their social ways of life, which until now have led to environmental degradation. In this process, a part of the world's humanity will experience great difficulties and overcoming them may become the cause of a global wave of social conflicts. It is necessary to avoid the rise of such a wave because its consequences can be very dangerous. This is evidenced by the consequences of Russian aggression in Ukraine.*

The article examines the challenges of predicting social conflicts, which are determined by the environment of crises and hybrid threats and the tendency of its expansion. The study revealed that the prediction of social conflicts is limited by groups of challenges of a hierarchical nature:

1. Objectively existing threats and the challenges of predicting their development, e.g. the effects of climate change, the effects of ongoing war.

2. The challenges of predicting the subjective perception of threats, which arise from the way groups of people perceive hybrid threats and evaluate the preventive behavior of authorities.

3. Methodological challenges caused by the need to create a paradigm of the connection between hybrid threats and their subjective perception (security theory).

4. Challenges in the choice of research methods caused by the limited possibilities to rely on the extrapolation of the previously established relationship between threats and their subjective perception.
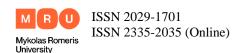
Some of the research results are presented in the conclusions. One of the most important of them emphasizes the need to rethink the concepts of freedom and security and their relationship to successfully guarantee the peace of public life in the context of crises and hybrid threats.

Keywords: *climate change and environmental degradation, state, human social development, social life, social conflict.*

Introduction

At the end of the 20th century, the famous US sociologist Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein was the first to make a reasonable prediction about the end of the evolution of the global capitalist system as we know it. He said that the modern world-system as a historical system has entered the stage of an ending crisis and is unlikely to exist in fifty years. However, since the results of the crisis cannot be determined in advance, we do not know whether the new system (or systems) that has come to replace it will be better or worse than the one in which we now live (Wallerstein, 1999).

In the states of the current world, there is a predominance of concern about crises and hybrid threats (Cook, May 4, 2023), which are the ominous result of unbridled economic expansion and the long-term impact of other anthropogenic factors on the environment. The global expansion of the process of climate and environmental degradation has already reached such a scale that individual countries are developing such environmental conditions that are less and less favorable for human social development. Therefore, it is not by chance that the migration and anxiety that the headlines of the online media remind us about are spreading. For example, "By 2100 almost half the planet could enter new climate zones: Europe will suffer the

most" (Iki 2100 m. beveik pusė planetos gali patekti į naujas klimato zonas: labiausiai nukentės Europa).

It can be assumed that climate change and environmental degradation are a hybrid cause of the global crisis of democracy. In 2022 the state of global democracy report points out that, "global democracy, already under increasing threat over the last few years, approaches the end of 2022 with multiple tipping points on the horizon—a cost of living crisis, an impending global recession, and recent wars in places as diverse as Ukraine and Ethiopia. Democracies are struggling to effectively bring balance to environments marked by instability and anxiety, and populists continue to gain ground around the world as democratic innovation and growth stagnate or decline" (Global State of Democracy Report 2022).

The feeling of impending changes is reinforced by three books published in 2022 and 2023:

1. Martin Wolf. The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism (Penguin Press, 2023).
2. Francis Fukuyama. Liberalism and Its Discontents (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022).
3. Pranab Bardhan. A World of Insecurity: Democratic Disenchantment in Rich and Poor Countries (Harvard University Press, 2022).

James Livingston, who analyzed their content, states that "three recent books combine theoretical sophistication and historical method in ways that enable us to rethink majority rule and thus re-imagine the future of democracy. And the most searching of the three calls into question whether that future is compatible with capitalism as we have come to know it" (Livingston, March 10, 2023).

Thus, it can be said that all the countries of the world and their societies must prepare for future global changes. Most of the world's societies are not ready for them. Some of the members of societies most affected by climate change and environmental degradation are preparing for migration or are already involved in migration processes. Another part of them fights, usually, among themselves for the meager resources of survival. The analysis of various data allows us to say that there is a global wave of social conflicts due to the limited resources of social life. This rising tide of social conflict will inevitably lead to many challenges that need to be anticipated and researched in advance.
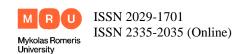
The purpose of this study is to reveal the systemic and structural challenges of predicting social conflicts. The main claims of the research are as follows:

- The development of natural and artificial factors and their interaction causes side effects - crises and hybrid threats.

- Emergence and development of crises and hybrid threats change the normal life environment.

- The context of crises and hybrid threats can be the causes of social conflicts and a catalyst for their development.

- The functioning of crises and hybrid threats limits the possibilities of predicting social conflicts.

The research is based on document analysis and a systematic approach.

The context of crises and hybrid threats and the challenge of its global spread

Sources of power of a natural, social and technological nature generate threats to the existence of all entities. The biggest source of power is climate change and environmental degradation. Its effect activates the behavior of all sources of power of a social nature - geopolitical and transnational entities, state coalitions and individual states, their self-governing entities and local communities (Šlapkauskas, 2022, p. 22). Social entities create and manage

threats of a technological nature. Crises and hybrid threats are the result of the interaction of power sources of natural, social and technological nature. The most important existential needs of man and their groups are to take care of food and safety. Crises and hybrid threats can radically limit the fulfillment of existential needs, such as the availability of potable water. The long-term functioning of crises and hybrid threats is especially harmful, because they transform the environment and the conditions of social life that depend on its condition.
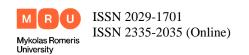
The context of crises and hybrid threats is the deterioration of social life conditions due to the action of threats that limit the possibilities of human social development and may lead to the formation of social disorganization - the weakening and interruption of the connection between cultural values and behavioral norms. Such conditions are formed as a complex result of the negative impact of threats on the normal life of groups of people. Threats can be of different nature, strength, interconnectedness and duration. The natural and evolutionary threats of climate development and the escalation of man-made threats provoke different subjective reactions of human groups, which may cause additional threats.

The impact of crises and hybrid threats of particularly high power and duration significantly limits the possibilities of human social development. Human social development is understood optimistically: it is a process that should increase the opportunities of a person of any level of development to choose the three most important things - live a long and healthy life, acquire knowledge, and make sure the resources necessary to achieve a normal standard of living. Without these basics, many other options remain unavailable.

In the context of long-term crises and hybrid threats, irreversible social changes inevitably occur, which are determined by the need of human groups to survive in new conditions. L. Friedman and J. Ladinsky emphasize that social change is any non-repetitive change in established ways of behavior in society. Social changes occur because the social structure changes - patterns of social relations, established social norms and social roles (Cotterrell, 1997, p. 67-68).

Human existence always takes place in the context of various threats. According to security research classic Barry Buzan, "security is not absolute for any individual. <...> Most of the threats to the individual arise from the fact that people live in a social environment that generates inevitable social, economic, and political pressure. Social threats take many forms, but four main types can be distinguished: physical threats (pain, injury, death), economic threats (possession or destruction of property, deprivation of opportunities for employment or access to resources), threats to rights (imprisonment, denial of normal civil rights), and threat to status or position (public humiliation). These types of threats are not mutually exclusive, as one (injury) may very well lead to another (job loss)" (Buzan, 1997, p.70-71). Thus, B. Buzan aptly emphasizes the hybrid effect of threats. Therefore, it can be said that the existence of hybrid threats began to be realized in the second half of the 20th century.

At the beginning of the 21st century, hybrid threats began to be deliberately and intensively used as a weapon in the fight against other entities. The growth of the number of cyberspace users and the development of their connections is especially favorable for the creation and use of hybrid threats. The growing social role of smart technologies and artificial intelligence presents both positive and negative opportunities. There are already serious doubts about the further social role of artificial intelligence (Thomas, 8 Risks and Dangers of Artificial Intelligence to Know). The dangerous possibilities of using artificial intelligence to limit civil rights are visible (Skidelsky, May 25, 2023). Therefore, it is proposed to declare a moratorium on the development of artificial intelligence (Pause Giant AI Experiments: An Open Letter. March 22, 2023).
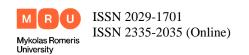
Why is it necessary to specifically examine the context of crises and hybrid threats, if human existence has always taken place in the context of threats so far? The fundamental reason for the need to examine the dynamic context of crises and threats is that the pace and ways of social life have changed in less than a generation's lifetime: relatively slow social life has been replaced by a radically high pace. The difference in this speed of social life is expressed by the decrease in the role of internal - social control in society and the inevitable increase in external - control by state authorities. This is a very dangerous process, because the expansion of external control of society raises the question of the limits of the power of state power.

Any liberal democratic state strives for the functionality of its existence. Therefore, it must manage the processes of social integrity of the society. Some of them can be managed by increasing the external control of society. But it has limits: liberal democracy may unwittingly turn into illiberal, and then undemocratic, by gradually crossing one or other limits of external control of society. The scientific team of Central and Eastern European countries examined the real possibilities of such a transformation. Summarizing the research conducted by the countries, it can be stated that all post-communist societies have preserved the features of neo-militant democracy to varying degrees, the strength of which in the public sphere is determined by the wavering influence of Russia (Neo-militant Democracies in Post-communist Member States of the European Union, 2022). Excessive expansion of state control can be avoided only by strengthening the internal - social control of the society itself.

Social control is a mechanism of social regulation of the behavior of people and their groups, which ensures compliance with certain common restrictions, the violation of which disrupts the realization of basic human needs and the functioning of the social system itself. General restrictions on behavior can be customary, moral, legal. Social control is based on the material and symbolic resources that the society has at its disposal to encourage positive behavior of its members and condemn its deviations.

Historically, human development has been characterized by a relatively slow pace of social life. The fundamental reason for this pace was the need for human groups to survive. To survive and reproduce, it took a long time to adapt to threats of natural and social origin. During this complex process of adaptation in the natural and social environment, the main institutions of social behavior - morality, religion and law - spontaneously formed. They are forms of functioning of the social order. "A social order is a set of characteristics of community relations and relationships that occur and develop in individual societies or social groups, the practice of which helps to survive (determines the development of community internal security) and achieve a higher standard of living for as many members of a society or social group as possible. This means that people together create their living environment (cultural and psychological structures) in order to institutionalize the security and freedom of the community and its members, their connection. It can be assumed that compliance with the rules of social order guarantees the safety of individuals and social groups" (Šlapkauskas, 2022, p. 27).

It is important to emphasize that a relatively fast-paced social life, unlike a slow-paced one, provides a significantly greater variety of life options that can be implemented without following general rules of moral behavior. For example, at the beginning of the era of cyberspace consumption, the Internet was said to offer opportunities for absolute freedom. This false thesis is now being neutralized by the implementation of sustainable security policy. "From the point of view of sustainable security, cyberspace consumption policy is undergoing an inversion of the interaction between freedom and security. Its formation is determined by the pursuit by international and national authorities of the relevant legal power to control the increase in the number, diversity and complexity of cybercrime through legal regulation. Managers and handlers of social networks establish standards of community behavior in

cyberspace, the observance of which will lead to the development of a culture of freedom of expression. They emphasize that decisions on network user behavior will be based on an assessment of the public interest benefit/risk of harm and in accordance with international human rights standards. Competition between all social networks is likely to be based on a policy of balancing freedom and security. Therefore, there is hope that the promotion of a sustainable security policy in cyberspace will lead to the development of a spontaneous order of security in the real world" (Šlapkauskas, 2022, p. 169).
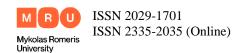
However, it is not enough to implement a sustainable security policy only in cyberspace, because new threats are generated by climate change and environmental degradation. Although many studies on climate change and environmental degradation have been carried out, many relevant reports have been prepared and the highest international agreements on the global prevention of climate change and environmental degradation have been signed, it is still not possible to implement a sustainable security policy for the environment (AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023).

Climate change and environmental degradation are now the largest source of hybrid threats to human development. Its operation means that for the first time after the Second World War, not a national or regional, but a global context of crises and hybrid threats is being formed. Climate change and environmental degradation are causing geopolitical, social and military conflicts on a global scale. For example, "a conflict over water triggered clashes in France, where several villages can no longer provide their residents with tap water. And Italy's largest river is already running as low as last June" (Europe's next crisis: Water, April 28, 2023).

Paradoxically, this state of the highest level of threats occurred after the collapse of the Soviet empire and the formation of a global market on the planet. It was naively believed that economic cooperation between authoritarian and democratic countries under market conditions promotes the development of their political and economic liberalism. According to Jean Pisani-Ferry, "when the post-World War II order was conceived, the focus was not on managing the global commons, but rather on fostering economic ties through trade and investment, in the hope that this would strengthen political alliances. Preventing climate change, preserving biodiversity, and avoiding the depletion of high-sea fisheries were not on anyone's radar" (Jean Pisani-Ferry, Mar 28, 2023).

"Climate change will increasingly increase the risk <...> as physical impacts increase and geopolitical tensions mount about the global response to the challenge. The increasing physical effects of climate change also are likely to intensify or cause domestic and cross-border geopolitical flashpoints. As temperatures rise and more extremes climate effects manifest, there is growing risk of conflicts over resources associated with water, arable land, and the Arctic. Additional factors, such as migration, some of which will be exacerbated by climate and weather events, will heighten these risks. Contested economic and military activity in the Arctic have the potential to increase the risk of a miscalculation, particularly while there are military tensions between Russia and other seven Arctic countries following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022. <...> Climate-related disasters in low-income countries will deepen economic challenges, raise the risk of inter-communal conflict over scarce resources, and increase the need for humanitarian and financial assistance. The growing gap between the provision of basic needs and what governments and the international community can provide raises the likelihood of domestic protests, broader instability, extremist recruitment, and migration" (Annual threat assessment of the U.S. intelligence community, 2023, p. 22).

No single country alone can limit the global expansion of the context of crises and hybrid threats. It is likely that it is still possible to do this with the joint efforts of the countries of the world. Organizing the prevention of climate change and environmental degradation requires a

MRU
Mykolas Romeris
University

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leading country with the necessary resources and able to mobilize most of the world's countries for a common goal. Therefore "The United Nations has warned that "cascading and interlinked crises" are jeopardizing not just the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but "humanity's very survival." Mitigating the threat requires a radical reform of international finance, based on a market-shaping paradigm that advances the common good" (Mazzucato, May 1, 2023). The latest IPCC report makes this clear. Averting the worst effects of climate change demands a profound economic transformation in the next decade. Achieving it will require a new social contract, based on a fairer distribution of wealth and income (Gaffney, March 31, 2023).

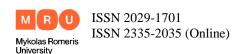**Signs of the structure and development of social conflicts**

The expanding context of crises and hybrid threats is not favorable for the development of social life. Modern states and societies do not have the necessary experience to quickly adapt to climate change and a degrading environment. Adequate response of people and their groups to the evolving context of crises and hybrid threats is the most important factor. However, often individuals and their groups choose the method of migration to new areas of life. In the near future, the expanding environmental degradation will inevitably increase migration processes towards developed countries, hoping to find suitable opportunities for social life there. Strengthened border protection of developed countries can temporarily slow down the pace of inward migration but cannot solve the migration problem itself. Therefore, the population in the European Union and North America will inevitably increase significantly. Therefore, in areas suitable for living, sooner or later, real conflicts over living space may prevail.

Conflict is a struggle between people and their groups, in which they have conflicting attitudes, goals of action, or resist aggression against their values. The struggle can take various forms - political, economic, cultural, military - and with different intensity. The strongest conflict between parties involving more than a few individuals is called social conflict.

"Social conflict is a clash of opposing social interests, views, aspirations. It usually arises from the unequal opportunities of various social forces to use the necessary resources to satisfy needs" (Socialinis konfliktas - Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija). Thus, a social conflict is a struggle between the parties to the conflict, in which the parties seek to seize the resources or territory of the rival, threaten to individuals or groups, their property or culture in such a way that the struggle takes the form of attack or defense. Social conflicts can arise at different levels - interpersonal, intergroup, and international.

All social conflicts have a characteristic structure and go through their respective stages of development. Researchers of social conflicts usually distinguish the following structural elements:

- Participants. There can be two or more parties (groups) that have their own point of view and interests.

- Topic. It defines what caused the dispute or war.

- Object. Every social conflict has its object, which can be the property, power, resources, spiritual achievements of the parties (groups).

- Context. The context of social conflict consists of the macro and microenvironment in which the opposition of countries (groups) is formed and takes place. The environment can be changed by corresponding changes in the behavior of social institutions and groups, which arise because of the subjective reaction to threats to security and the limitation of opportunities for the realization of interests. The appearance of threats to public safety can become a stimulus and catalyst for social conflict. For example, political conflicts related to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic.
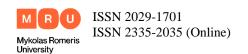
Conflicts are easier to recognize and understand when they are viewed as evolving processes. Therefore, five stages are distinguished in their structure:

1. Latent, or hidden, conflict. This is the initial stage of the conflict. It is usually caused by competition for the same goals or with different operational goals.

2. Understood conflict. It is the awareness of latent conflict.

3. Felted conflict. It differs from the understood in that it manifests itself in emotional tensions and crises. Individuals need to vent their tensions and worries in some way to maintain inner balance.

4. Expressed conflict. This is a variant of conflict behavior. It is most pronounced when open aggression occurs. For example, the brutal aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

5. Conflict resolution and consequences. The connections between understood and expressed, felted and expressed conflicts are the points at which various conflict resolution programs are applied. Their goal is to prevent conflicts that have reached the level of understanding and feeling from developing into non-cooperative behavior. For that purpose, discussions, negotiations, group agreements are organized, material values are redistributed, interdependence of conflicting parties is reduced, etc. If the conflict is resolved, especially according to the wishes of its participants, and leads to satisfaction, then it can be expected that it will not recur later. Unresolved, but only suppressed, conflict returns sooner or later and takes on more dangerous forms.

Observations and analysis of the development of conflicts in the countries of authoritarian regimes and liberal democracies allow us to distinguish the main signs of social conflicts. Characteristic signs of the presence of social conflicts and their development are the following:

1. Within the state:
- Dissemination of militant political rhetoric.
- Development of ideologizing of legal and information relations.
- Increase in the number of human rights violations and weakening of legal protection.
- Growth of exclusion and emigration flows.
- Growth of disinformation in public communication networks.
- Activation of radicalism and separatism.
- Application of political, economic, judicial and police repression against non-governmental organizations and members of civil society.

2. Between states:
- Growth of public political, economic and energy pressure.
- Turning political pressure into an aggressive position.
- An increase in the number of violations of the border protection regime of the neighboring state.
- Development of information warfare.
- Increase in cases of violation of international public law norms.
- Formation of immigration as a latent struggle against the neighboring state.
- Attempt(s) to cause a crisis in another country or its various areas of life.
- Latent and expressed application of hybrid threats.
- Demonstration of readiness for military aggression against a neighboring country.
- The beginning and continuation of military aggression against a neighbor or another country.

Most of the sign's characteristic of social conflicts can be observed in all states of authoritarian regimes, for example, Russia, Belarus, Iraq, China. There are fewer such signs in illiberal or only partially liberal democracies such as Hungary. However, signs of social

conflicts can increasingly be observed in liberal democratic countries, such as the USA and EU countries. The study of the manifestation of signs characteristic of social conflicts reveals that they have recently become more frequent in all countries of the world.

Increasing expression of signs characteristic of social conflicts represents the crisis of globalization and even its possible end. For example, late last year, Morris Chang, the legendary founder of Taiwan's (and the world's) leading semiconductor producer, proclaimed that "globalization is almost dead" (Nye, JR., Mar 31, 2023). Therefore, the question arises: What's Next for Globalization? (Rodrik, Mar 9, 2023).

Basic issues of predicting social conflicts in the context of crises and hybrid threats
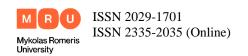
The possibilities of forecasting social conflicts are limited by two groups of unknowns: 1) the nature of crises and hybrid threats, the nature of the context resulting because of their interaction, and the peculiarities of development; 2) subjective perception of new threats by state institutions, groups of people and individuals and their inappropriate behavior in the changing environment of crises and hybrid threats. After study the relationship between the context of crises and hybrid threats and its subjective perception, it became clear that: 1) at the geopolitical level, there is still no unified political, economic and sociocultural approach to the development of crises and hybrid threats and its context; 2) a scientific methodology for identifying crises and hybrid threats and assessing the likely consequences of their development has been formed. Since, from a theoretical point of view, crises and hybrid threats of various nature and power may arise, the possibilities of their manifestation are explained and evaluated in the preparation of relevant future scenarios. For example, the possible consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine for Lithuania (Rusijos karo prieš Ukrainą galimi poveikiai Lietuvai, 2023).

Prevention of the global expansion of the context of crises and hybrid threats requires unified, quick and strong geopolitical solutions and their implementation. So far, current efforts do not match the level of threats. The prevention of climate change and environmental degradation is particularly severely limited by Russia's aggressive war in Ukraine. Therefore, the social consequences of climate change and environmental degradation - the possibility of the emergence and development of conflicts increasingly cover the whole world.

Based on the analysis of the relationship between the global emergence of crises and hybrid threats and their subjective perception, we distinguished four groups of challenges in predicting social conflicts:

1. Objectively existing threats and the challenges of predicting their development, such as the effects of climate change, the effects of an ongoing war.

2. The challenges of predicting the subjective perception of threats, which arise from the way groups of people perceive hybrid threats and evaluate the preventive behavior of authorities.

3. Methodological challenges caused by the need to create a paradigm of the relationship between hybrid threats and their subjective perception (holistic security theory).

4. Challenges in the choice of research methods caused by limited opportunities to rely on the extrapolation of previously established threats and their subjective perception.

Climate change and environmental degradation are the source of the most powerful global threats. The impact of its expression is and will be the strongest source of social conflicts in the future. For example, the number of social conflicts will increase due to access to water in areas of intensive environmental degradation. The constant lack of water and food, high heat conditions increase the volume of migration. These are the corresponding conditions for the
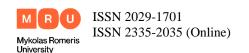
belligerent behavior of other sources of power - geopolitical and transnational entities, coalitions of states and individual states, their self-governing entities, and local communities. Therefore, social conflicts of various motivations may arise at the level of national societies. In order to predict the scope of their expression, it is necessary to distinguish the possible levels of social effects of climate change and environmental degradation:

- social consequences on a global or planetary scale, for example, due to the rise in the level of the oceans, there is a real threat to the functionality of island-states. The United Nations is not yet ready to organize the rescue of the people of these countries.

- regional social effects, for example, a long-term drought led to the emigration of Syrian peasants within their own country. As a result, social conflicts arose and expanded, which led to a civil war and the establishment of the terrorist group ISIS on the territory of Syria. This led to large-scale emigration to European Union countries. This emigration caused political, economic and socio-cultural turmoil in individual EU countries.

- social effects on a local scale, for example, floods in 2022 caused extensive damage to German towns.

Thus, it is necessary to accumulate a lot of data on climate change and environmental degradation at each level, the analysis of which allows predicting the emergence and development of possible social conflicts. But objective data on the presence of threats alone is not enough for a reliable forecast of social conflicts. It is influenced by the subjective perception of the context of crises and hybrid threats by people and their groups. For example, the global financial crisis of 2008/2009 caused the largest economic emigration of Lithuanian residents to be developed EU countries. It can be said that Lithuania's accession to the EU "facilitated" the emigration of its residents during the financial crisis.

The analysis of the attitude of groups of people towards the COVID-19 disease pandemic and the organization of its prevention, their behavior during the pandemic allows us to say that the differences in the subjective perception and behavior of threats were determined by the individual abilities of individuals to find reliable information about the nature of the pandemic, its prevention and (dis)trust in government institutions. Trust in government institutions was mixed before the pandemic, with institutions directly helping people, such as health and the police, being viewed positively, and institutions of political power and the judiciary being viewed negatively. The attitude of public groups towards the work of health institutions has changed during the pandemic. A lot of negative reactions from groups of people were caused by the unusually strict behavior of the authorities during the COVID-19 global quarantine period. This can be explained by the fact that the protection of human rights and freedoms has already grown in the consciousness of Lithuanian society, and the concept of negative freedom has formed.

The Lithuanian society that restored the independent state has followed a long path of social evolution - from a Soviet-style closed society to an open liberal democracy (Šlapkauskas, 2022, pp. 5-17). This does not mean that the manifestations of authoritarianism and Sovietism have completely disappeared. But the young generation of society has already realized the possibilities offered by negative freedom. Thus, there are groups of people in Lithuanian society who have different perceptions of the relationship between freedom and security. In other words, the manifestations of past and present political ideologies interact in the social space of Lithuanian society, which interpret the freedom and security of individuals, society (nation) and the state differently, and their connection. Due to the differently understood connection between freedom and security, there are constant political disputes within and between the highest authorities, which limit the prediction of social conflicts.

The competition of different concepts of freedom and security leads to such political and legal decisions that generate latent social conflicts, for example, the epic of drafting the civil union law of the Republic of Lithuania. According to the great 20th century philosopher Isaiah Berlin, freedom for wolves often meant death for sheep. Or, in other words, freedom for some is non-freedom for others. (Stiglitz, Feb 24, 2023).

The competition of different concepts of freedom and security leads to such political and legal decisions that generate latent social conflicts, for example, the epic of drafting the civil union law of the Republic of Lithuania. This means that at the political level there is a constant struggle for the subjective power to define "what is law?" and to impose its concept on other subjects of the political field. This struggle is taking place sharply at the geopolitical level as well: a new wave of long-term conflict between two political worldviews - the primacy of human rights or the primacy of state law - is emerging again. In the modern stage of geopolitical development, this escalating conflict has turned into an open political, legal and military struggle. Having grown its political, economic, and military muscles, authoritarian China wants to impose its understanding of the international order on the world, which is radically different from the Western understanding (Leonard, Mar 30, 2023).

The methodological challenges of social conflict forecasting are conditioned by the need to create a new holistic paradigm of the connection between individual, public and national security in this period of crisis and hybrid threats expansion. Such a paradigm of holistic security must perform several essential functions: 1) help groups of people to know and actively take such actions that can limit the expansion of the context of hybrid threats; 2) it must serve as a methodological tool for predicting social conflicts and their prevention. To create such a methodological tool for predicting social conflicts, it is necessary to examine possible answers to the following questions:

1. How does the interaction between the concepts of freedom and security influence (encourage or limit) solutions to the emergence and development of social conflicts, the possibilities of knowing and interpreting their social consequences?

2. What concept of the connection between freedom and security of social entities would lead to the creation of non-violent and sustainable peace?

3. Is it possible to create such a concept of the holistic security of society, based on which it would be possible to achieve a systematic knowledge of the sources of threats to security and their interaction?

4. Is it possible to create a cognitive theory of social conflict, based on which it would be possible to develop prediction and prevention of social conflicts in the future.

The reliability of predicting social conflicts is limited by the challenges of choosing adequate research methods. Those research methods that have already provided reliable forecasting data are most often used. However, the complex nature of crises and hybrid threats limits their usual perception and knowledge. Therefore, relying on the previously established relationship between threats and their subjective perception may lead to the selection of not entirely appropriate research methods.

Conclusions

Sources of power of a natural, social and technological nature generate threats to the existence of all entities. The biggest source of power is climate change and environmental degradation. Its effect activates the behavior of all sources of power of a social nature - geopolitical and transnational entities, state coalitions and individual states, their self-governing entities and local communities. Social entities create and manage threats of a technological

nature. Crises and hybrid threats are the result of the interaction of power sources of natural, social and technological nature.
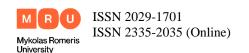
The context of crises and hybrid threats is the deterioration of social life conditions due to the intensification of climate change and environmental degradation, which limit the possibilities of human social development and lead to the formation of social disorganization - the weakening and interruption of the connection between cultural values and behavioral norms. In the process of forming such a context, the number of emigrants looking for new conditions suitable for social life is increasing. Due to the intensity of immigration, the number of people in habitable areas is growing. Therefore, the possibilities of social conflicts increase in this process.

Forecasting social conflicts in the context of crises and hybrid threats is limited by hierarchical challenges:. 1) Objectively existing threats and the challenges of forecasting their development. 2) Challenges of predicting the subjective perception of threats. 3) Challenges of the cognitive methodology of the relationship between hybrid threats and their subjective perception. 4) Challenges in choosing methods for researching the relationship between hybrid threats and their subjective perception.

Prevention of the emergence of the context of crises and hybrid threats leads to the need to rethink the concepts of freedom and security and their connection, so that their implementation guarantees the peace of public life.

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