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INTRODUCTION

The topic of the selected master's thesis is "Nuclear Rhetoric in Russia's War on Ukraine: The International Dimension", which was chosen for the purpose of analysing and consistently researching the evolution of the nuclear narratives of the Russian Federation during the conduct of aggressive actions in the east of Ukraine since 2014, and then the full-scale invasion of 24 February 2022 in the context of the impact on the global system of collective security.

The relevance of the study of Russia's nuclear rhetoric in the context of the war with Ukraine lies in the potential consequences that are possible for the global security system and the understanding of geopolitical dynamics. As a nuclear power, Russia has significant influence on the European and global security framework, so its nuclear rhetoric can shape perceptions, strategies, and responses both regionally and globally.

First, the analysis and in-depth study of the nuclear narratives of the Russian Federation allows us to understand the strategic intentions of the country as a world leader and a significant international actor, as well as to reproduce decision-making processes that further affect the security dimension. The use of methods of nuclear intimidation and coercion, overt or implicit, can convey Moscow's readiness to escalate the conflict, changing the foreign policy postulates of other involved parties. Understanding these signals and being able to proactively respond to them is critical for states and international organizations seeking to formulate effective response policies.

Second, the study of Russian nuclear rhetoric in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war is vital for assessing the risk of possible nuclear escalation. The mere mention or suggestion of nuclear capability can instil fear and uncertainty, potentially influencing the behaviour of other countries involved in the conflict. In addition,

writing a scientific paper on this issue makes a significant contribution to the broader field of nuclear deterrence theory. Russia's nuclear rhetoric can serve as a deterrent, coercion, or signalling tool, influencing the behaviour of both adversaries and allies. Analysing the effectiveness of such policies improves global understanding of the role that nuclear weapons play in contemporary geopolitical strategies.

Thus, the study of Russia's nuclear rhetoric in the war with Ukraine is of crucial importance for politicians, scientists and analysts, particularly Ukrainian ones, as it provides an understanding of the strategic intentions of the Russian government and an assessment of the risk of nuclear escalation. Moreover, the scientific relevance of writing this research involves the fact that this issue has been studied by a wide range of researchers, as the influence of the Russian Federation reaches large-scale dimensions, which means that a large number of scientists are interested in this issue.

The practical significance includes the fact that the war taking place on the territory of Ukraine is a significant destabilizing factor in the existence of the security system in the international space. As a result, against the background of current events that pose challenges to the security of the entire world, a practical study of the stages of formation and further changes in the nuclear narratives of the Russian Federation, as well as its methods of nuclear coercion and intimidation in the context of their impact on the global security structure, and with it on the entire international security system is really necessary. Considering the state of war and the deep security crisis in which the international system found itself, it is important to analyse how it can overcome emerging threats in the face of the Russian Federation and provide the necessary mechanisms to respond to violations of international legal norms.

The aim of the thesis is to define the impact of challenges and threats created by the nuclear rhetoric of the Russian Federation on the evolution of the formation of the international system of collective security in the period 2014-2023. During the writing of this thesis, the following tasks were set:

- to analyse the state of scientific development of the problem in view of Ukrainian and foreign scientific opinion;
- to investigate the formation of the nuclear rhetoric of the Russian Federation as an international actor in the context of pursuing an aggressive policy against Ukraine;
- identify the main foreign policy directions of such international organizations as NATO and the EU on new threats and challenges to global security;
- to reveal the achievements and failures of the Russian government in pursuing a policy of nuclear coercion in the context of reshaping the balance of power in the world.

The object of this study is Russia's nuclear rhetoric in the war with Ukraine. Considering the object of the research, aspects related to the statements, communication and speeches of the Russian Federation regarding its nuclear potential in the context of the conflict with Ukraine were investigated during the writing of the paper.

The subject of the study is the international dimension of Russia's nuclear rhetoric, within which the impact of Russian nuclear narratives on the international arena was analysed, as well as the reaction of the international community and possible consequences for the global security system.

The chronological framework of the study dates back to 1968 and ends in 2023. These frameworks are due to the signing of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1968, which led to the formation of a nuclear balance system in the world. The extreme feature is presented in 2023 and includes coverage of the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation from the moment of the annexation of Crimea and the start of the hybrid war in the East of Ukraine in 2014 and up to the

current events on the territory of Ukraine in a state of full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war.

To write a master's thesis on the topic of the nuclear narratives of the Russian Federation in the context of the international dimension, the following research method was chosen as a systematic approach, which allowed to present a comprehensive vision of the environment in which the balance of forces and the structure of the world security system are changing in the context of the nuclear narratives of Russia and to determine the relationship influence of globalization factors on them.

During the writing of this work, the modern foreign policy approaches of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, as well as European countries and the United States, which came under the influence of Russian nuclear rhetoric, were researched and analysed. As a result of the study of this issue, the results of the comparative analysis to the security strategies of the leading Western countries in the context of new challenges and threats were improved.

The mentioned topic was presented in the form of a research article on a related issue – “Weapons of mass destruction – manipulation or a real threat in the Russian-Ukrainian war?”, which was published in Ukrainian in the scientific almanac “Works of Young Scientists” in June 2022. In addition, theses on global nuclear potential and world order were defended in English during The Annual Student Scientific Conference on International Relations, Political Science and Sociology in April 2021.

The structural component of the master's thesis consists of the Introduction, Chapter 1. Theoretical Foundations of the Research, Chapter 2. Navigating Nuclear Narratives: Russia's Rhetorical Strategies in the War on Ukraine (2014-2023), Chapter 3. Global Assessment of the International Response to Russia's Nuclear Posture, Conclusions and List of References. The first section of this work is devoted

to the justification of the theoretical basis of the research, namely, the theory of international relations chosen for study, the characteristics of the scientific development of the problem, the categorical research apparatus, etc. The second and third chapters are devoted to the evolution of the formation and influence of Russian nuclear rhetoric on the international dimension of global security in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war (2014-2023), as well as the international reaction to geopolitical changes in the modern world. The total volume of work is 65 pages.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Characteristics of the chosen theory

This master's thesis focuses on the study of the nuclear rhetoric of the Russian Federation and its influence on the course of the Russian-Ukrainian war and geopolitical shifts, which are gradually becoming a reality in visible and invisible steps. Choosing a suitable school for the study of international relations is important for revealing the topic. The most successful of those currently existing is the school of "neorealism".

Neorealism is one of the key theories of international relations, which considers the interaction of states in the international arena from the point of view of their power, interests and interaction. This theory is based on the idea that states are the main actors in international relations, and their behaviour is determined primarily by the desire to preserve their power and ensure national interests.

One of the leading representatives of neorealism – Kenneth Waltz – believes that states have strategic interests that force them to act by the need to maintain their power and security. Robert Gilpin, another prominent exponent of neorealism, adds that states have more than economic interests, because national security exists within a broader system of political, economic, and social factors.

One of the main aspects of neorealism is the idea of the balance of power between states. According to this theory, states strive to increase their power and influence, but on the other hand, they cannot allow the excessive growth of power of other states, as this may lead to a threat to their power and security. Obsession with power and influence can lead to escalation of conflicts and wars, which will undermine the stability of the international system.

Barry Buzan, also a representative of neorealism, believes that the international system is hierarchical and that the status of a state depends on its place in this hierarchy. He proposed the concept of regional subsystems, where regional states and their leaders are the main actors.

Neorealism views the international system as animalistic, where power, security, and the interests of states are the key factors of interaction. Thus, neorealism differs from other theories of international relations, such as constructivism or liberalism, which emphasize the importance of norms, values, and international cooperation.

In their scientific works, neorealists pay attention to the importance of military strength and strategic stability for the preservation of international order. They also emphasize the role of contradictions and conflicts in international relations, which can lead to changes in the international system.

Although neorealism has its strengths and weaknesses, it allows us to understand and explain key processes in international relations and allows us to predict their future development.

In addition, one should also pay attention to the fact that neorealists pay a lot of attention to the concept of “balance of power”. They claim that in relations between states, there is a constant struggle to preserve their power and secure their interests. This leads to the formation of alliances and unions, in particular, in which states combine their efforts to ensure the balance of power in the international system.

A significant part of works on neorealism is devoted to issues of security and strategy. In their research, neorealists often pay attention to the military power of states and strategies for its use in international conflicts. They claim that in international relations there is a stable and constant conflict between states, so it is necessary to always be ready to protect one’s interests and security.

Neorealism as a theory of international relations is quite sceptical about the reduction or abandonment of nuclear weapons. According to neorealist logic, nuclear weapons provide states with a strategic balance of power and prevent the possibility of attack. In this regard, some neorealists believe that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is a normal process for states seeking to ensure their security and influence in the international system.

For example, Kenneth Waltz, one of the leading representatives of neorealism, believes that national nuclear security doctrines are very important in determining how states will behave with nuclear weapons and how they will respond to a potential threat.

In his research, Waltz draws attention to the fact that nuclear security doctrines are developed taking into account the specific political, social and military conditions of each country. He believes that even though there are general principles that regulate the use of nuclear weapons, it is worth taking into account the individual characteristics of each state.

One of Waltz's major contributions to nuclear weapons research is his critique of the concept of strategic stability, which is based on the idea of responsibility for a second strike capability. In his research, he shows that this concept is not always effective, because it does not provide a sufficient degree of trust between countries, and does not allow achieving sustainable peace.

Instead, Waltz proposes the concept of a "flexible deterrence strategy," which involves a combination of different deterrence methods depending on the prevailing conditions. He emphasizes that such a strategy may be more effective in a strengthening environment when the number of nuclear-weapon states is growing, and when the disaffection of individual states or terrorist groups is growing. Waltz believes that the next phase of the development of nuclear strategy may consist of a

combination of efforts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons and increase readiness to oppose their possible use.

Waltz emphasizes that nuclear-weapon states must understand that the use of nuclear weapons is a last resort that can lead to inevitable catastrophic consequences. Therefore, they should focus on developing strategies for deterrence and avoiding potential conflicts, as well as on ensuring the resilience of their nuclear arsenals against possible attacks. In addition, Waltz believes that states should cooperate with other countries in order to reduce the total number of nuclear weapons in the world and increase their security.

All these approaches to nuclear strategy and nuclear security are very important in the context of growing global instability and the risk of conflict, where the use of nuclear weapons can have irreparable consequences.

According to Robert Gilpin, nuclear weapons create a stable balance of power between nuclear weapon states. He argues that nuclear weapons not only ensure the security of the owner of the weapon but also put him in a position to influence other state leaders. Thus, nuclear weapons provide the ability to deter and influence other countries.

He also notes that the existence of nuclear weapons reduces the chances of war between the states possessing the weapons. He emphasizes that a war between such states can lead to catastrophic consequences due to the possible use of nuclear weapons, so their conflicts are usually resolved diplomatically.

In his book “Masters of the Global Market” (The Political Economy of International Relations, 1987), Gilpin also notes that the owners of nuclear weapons use their power to secure their economic and political interests in the international arena. However, he also points out that there is a danger that nuclear weapons could be used to carry out aggression against weaker states that do not have such weapons.

Moreover, nuclear weapons are a powerful means of influencing international politics, which can ensure the protection of state interests, but at the same time, they pose a threat to the stability and security of the international system. He believes that weapons can be used as a means of retreat from the conflict, which allows to avoid the catastrophic consequences of war. However, he also emphasizes that nuclear weapons can lead to the escalation of conflict, as the presence of weapons can push states to take risky actions in the belief that they have an advantage in the conflict. He also believes that nuclear deterrence can be an effective means of reducing the risk of nuclear war, but it requires mutual trust and cooperation between states.

Gilpin notes that nuclear weapons have a great impact on international security, so it is necessary to deal with the problem of their proliferation and reducing the number of nuclear weapons systems. He also believes that states possessing nuclear weapons should show their responsibility and readiness to cooperate with other states to ensure international security and stability.

Barry Buzan also expressed his views on nuclear weapons. According to Buzan, nuclear weapons are a necessary element of ensuring the security of the state, because they allow creating a protective barrier inaccessible to the enemy. Nuclear weapons play the role of a “security paradox” because, on the one hand, they ensure the security of the sovereign state, and on the other hand, they pose a threat to the security of the entire world, since in the event of their use, the possible consequences will be large-scale and almost irreversible.

In addition, Buzan emphasizes that nuclear weapons cannot be used as a means of political pressure or coercion, as this can lead to unpredictable consequences for the whole world. He claims that the use of nuclear weapons is permissible only in the case of a direct threat to the existence of the state. Therefore, Buzan considers nuclear weapons as an element of the national security system, but at the same time considers them dangerous and necessary for limitation and control.

Thus, neorealists look at nuclear weapons from the standpoint of strategic security and balance between states, which makes their approach quite different from other theoretical approaches to international politics.

In their research on neorealism, specialists consider various aspects of international relations, such as the formation of a system of international relations, interaction between states, military strategy, economics, and other aspects. They provide a holistic view of the international system and the dynamics of relations between states.

In general, neorealism is one of the most influential theories of international relations, which continues to be relevant. It allows us to consider the international system as a collection of states that are constantly searching for their security and power, and not as an ideal utopia where all states act mutually beneficially and with respect for each other. Neorealism places the main emphasis on the importance of analysing power and security in international relations, as well as on the need to preserve the balance of power between states. In general, the theory of neorealism is useful for the analysis of international politics, as it allows us to better understand the realities of the international system and predict its development in the future.

That is why, in the context of the Russian war against Ukraine, it is essential to choose this particular theory, because it is more practical, and realistic and makes it possible to predict the further actions of all the subjects of the conflict. The question of the nuclear rhetoric of the Russian Federation needs exactly this approach, due to the fact that the relevant actions and statements of the leadership of this state are aimed only at the possibility of further preservation of the regime of Vladimir Putin and the protection of “national interests”, which, in turn, in this state in particular, vary depending on the daily change in the political situation.

Nuclear coercion, propaganda and manipulation are the key components on which the current rhetoric of the Russian authorities is based. On a fairly regular basis, Putin threatens the possible use of nuclear weapons in a wide range of situations that are not covered by Russia's official nuclear doctrine. He argues that Russia can use nuclear weapons in accordance with its interests and to protect territorial integrity, which contradicts Russia's official policy of using nuclear weapons only in the event of an "existential threat." However, it should be noted that the term "existential threat" is a rather vague concept that, depending on the context and views, can mean anything: from the complete encirclement of the capital of Russia to the loss of control over some territories of Ukraine, which the Russian authorities consider extremely important. for example, Donetsk or Crimea, and even conditional Melitopol.

Characteristics of the scientific development of the problem

Subsequently, to reveal the master's thesis on the topic "Nuclear rhetoric in Russia's war on Ukraine: The international dimension", it is necessary to provide a description of the scientific development problems in the works of famous scientists and political scientists.

A significant contribution to the study of the phenomenon of the Russian nuclear program and its influence was made by a well-known Ukrainian researcher who studies the nuclear policy of Russia and the USA – Polina Sinovets. In her publications, she examines issues of nuclear security, nuclear weapons doctrine, and nuclear deterrence in Russia. She also works on problems related to relations between Russia and the United States.

Having made a general analysis of the author's works, it is possible to highlight the main aspects that the author highlights in his works:

1. The development of Russia's strategic nuclear forces and their impact on the global security system. She notes that Russia continues to improve technology, which can lead to an increase in the nuclear threat and an increase in the level of tension between states.
2. The role of Russia's nuclear weapons in conducting hostilities on the territory of Ukraine and its impact on global stability and security.
3. The development of the US nuclear policy in the context of the emergence of new challenges and threats, in particular from the Russian Federation, and the destabilization of the security situation in the European space.

Polina Sinovets draws attention to the fact that Russia quite actively cooperates with nuclear states that have a dubious reputation, namely, the DPRK and Iran. Russia actively promotes nuclear coercion and intimidation, which causes great concern among the international community. For today, these concerns have acquired a different color, because today's system of international relations is difficult to characterize as stable. The war in Ukraine demonstrates significant changes in the international order and especially emphasizes the importance of stabilizing the international security system.

According to the studies of other researchers on this topic, as well as the theory of neorealism, Russia is trying to strengthen its power at the expense of Ukraine, wanting to become a regional hegemon. For this, it used coercion, initiation and instigation of the conflict in Ukraine, and from 2022 – full-scale aggression against this country. Russia's hopes for a quick victory turned out to be wrong, so Russia went to escalate the conflict, even though risky actions. However, the riskiest would be to use nuclear weapons, but that could be counterproductive. Given the postulates of neorealism, this could intimidate Ukraine, but the US and NATO should not be intimidated and can resolutely respond to such actions. This, in turn, can lead to the

weakening of Russia, the end of the Russian regime, and in the case of a full nuclear escalation, even to the destruction of the state.

Categorical research apparatus

For the study of the topic “Nuclear rhetoric of Russia in the war with Ukraine”, four main terms are defined:

1. Nuclear doctrine is a set of political, military, economic and technical principles that determine the conditions and circumstances under which a country can use nuclear weapons. Each state has its nuclear doctrine, which reflects its national interests, military power, political views and geopolitical situation in the region. The nuclear doctrine includes such components as defining the conditions and circumstances under which a country can use nuclear weapons, as well as the technical and military characteristics of weapons, nuclear strategy and tactics of war, and the role of nuclear weapons in the country’s overall military doctrine.

A country’s nuclear doctrine can be declared openly, as Russia has done, or kept secret, as most nuclear-weapon states do. For most states, the nuclear doctrine is a strategic document that is updated annually or periodically depending on changes in the geopolitical situation in the world and other factors.

2. Nuclear deterrence is a political strategy based on the means of nuclear development to ensure the stability of international relations and prevent war with the use of nuclear weapons. The idea is that if countries that have nuclear weapons believe that their potential adversaries also have nuclear weapons, then this will cause them to refrain from using them immediately. This allows for a state of mutual threat, known as “nuclear parity,” where each side is at risk of retaliating against any invasion by the other.

As a result, nuclear deterrence is considered one of the most important components of security policy in the nuclear age, as it helps prevent war with the use of nuclear weapons, ensures the stability of the international system, and reduces the risk of armed conflict.

3. Nuclear propaganda is a system of ideas, messages and actions aimed at forming a certain information picture about nuclear weapons and their role in the world. Nuclear propaganda aims to convince society that nuclear weapons are necessary to ensure national security and geopolitical power.

Nuclear propaganda can be used as a means of psychological warfare against other states, in particular, by creating an enemy image that is a threat to the nation's security. In addition, nuclear propaganda can be used to strengthen the legitimacy of the government's policy and support its actions in the field of nuclear security. Famous examples of nuclear propaganda occur in Russia, where the authorities actively promote the idea that nuclear weapons are necessary to ensure national security, as well as to strengthen Russia's geopolitical power. Such ideas are reinforced by Russia's displays of military power and open threats about the possible use of nuclear weapons in the event of an escalation of the conflict with other states.

In general, nuclear propaganda is an integral part of the geopolitical game and can influence people's beliefs and behaviour, so it should be carefully analysed and taken critically.

4. Nuclear coercion is the threat of using nuclear weapons in order to force another state to take certain actions or refrain from them. Nuclear weapons have an enormous impact, and the threat of their use can be an effective tool of diplomacy and negotiation.

Nuclear coercion can take many forms. For example, a state may threaten to respond to aggression by another country. It could mean the threat of a first strike

that could kill millions of people or a nuclear response that would wipe out entire regions. Because nuclear weapons are such a powerful force, their use can have catastrophic consequences. Therefore, most states that have nuclear weapons do not want to use them. The threat of its use, however, can be an effective tool of political pressure on other states.

Now Ukraine is in a difficult situation, when Russia is carrying out full-scale aggression against it. The threat of Russia using nuclear weapons is becoming part of its military strategy and doctrine, as well as its propaganda. In this case, nuclear coercion is used to force Ukraine to take certain actions, or to refrain from them. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind the potential threat of nuclear coercion in resolving the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

Research source base

Four types of sources were used to write this research: documents, scientific articles of Ukrainian and foreign scientists, as well as electronic resources.

The document group includes Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968), Nuclear Posture Review (2018), Fact Sheet: The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (2022).

Each of the documents used served as a basis for the presentation of a brief description and definition of key postulates, highlighted and documented. In particular, The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program made it possible to recreate the relevant structure of the nuclear international system that was formed during and after the end of the Cold War. In addition, the Nuclear Posture Review became an important document for providing an appropriate assessment of the current strategic postulates of the US as a nuclear power in the international arena.

From the articles of Ukrainian researchers on this issue, such works as “Armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine as a threat to the system of collective security” (Voitsikhovsky, Bakumov, 2023), “Nuclear deterrence and nuclear coercion in the policy of the Russian Federation” (Yizhak, 2022), “The escalation of the nuclear confrontation between the USA and Russia in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war” (Kuropyatnik, 2015), “Strategic priorities of the missile and nuclear programs of the leading countries of the world in the conditions of disintegration of international relations” (Myronenko, 2022), “The international dimension and global consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict” (Turchyn, 2016), “Military doctrine of the Russian Federation: the main directions of imperial expansions that threaten the world” (Shaptalenko, Grinenko, Kutovyi, 2016), “Russia’s Foreign Policy: The Evolution of the Escalation Strategy” (Sinovets, Hesse, 2022), “Born in Ashes: Nuclear Uncertainties ‘Increasing’ Strategic Stability” (Sinovets, Melnyk, 2020), “Are nuclear weapons ineffective in deterring non-nuclear weapon states? The paradox of Russia’s war on Ukraine” (Sinovets, Vicente, 2022).

Ukrainian studies are distinguished by the breadth of thought and presentation. For example, the international dimension of the world security system, as well as the consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war as a threat to the system of collective security, were investigated thanks to the scientific articles of Voitsikhovsky and Bakumov (2023), as well as Truchyn (2016). The works of Yizhak (2022), Myronenko (2022), Sinovets and Melnyk (2022) were also studied to study the nuclear aspect of the security system.

Scientific research by foreign scientists includes such works as “Russia’s Case for War against Ukraine: Legal Claims, Political Rhetoric, and Instrumentality in a Fracturing International Order” (Allison, 2023), “Nuclear rhetoric and escalation management in Russia’s war against Ukraine: A Chronology” (Arndt, Horowitz, 2022), “Russia’s catch-all nuclear rhetoric in its war against Ukraine: a balancing act

between deterrence, dissuasion, and compellence strategies” (Arndt, Horovitz, 2022), “Russia Ukraine War and Nuclearization in Global Tension Areas” (Babar, Shakil, 2022), “Will Russia Use Nuclear Weapons in Ukraine?” (Barell, 2022), “The War in Ukraine and Global Nuclear Order” (Bollfrass, Herzog, 2022), “Values, rights, and changing interests: The EU’s response to the war against Ukraine and the responsibility to protect Europeans” (Bosse, 2022), “Russia’s Misinformation Campaign during Wartime: The Threat to Deploy Nuclear Weapons against Ukraine and Her Allies” (Briggs, 2023), “Russian nuclear strategy and conventional inferiority” (Bruusgaard, 2021), “Distorting Fundamental Norms of International Law to Resurrect the Soviet Union: The International Law Context of Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine” (Cavandoli, Wilson, 2022), “The Russian Invasion of The Crimean Peninsula 2014-2015: A Post-Cold War Nuclear Crisis Case Study” (Cosgrove, 2020), “Constructing The Nuclear Threat: The Relevance of Deterrence Theory in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict” (Djumala et al., 2023), “False Sense of Supremacy: Emerging Technologies, the War in Ukraine, and the Risk of Nuclear Escalation” (Favaro, Williams, 2023), “The Wind Rose’s Directions: Russia’s Strategic Deterrence during the First Year of the War in Ukraine” (Fink, 2023), “Responding to a Limited Russian Attack on NATO During the Ukraine War” (Frederick et al., 2022), “Bellicist integration? The war in Ukraine, the European Union and core state powers” (Genschel, 2022), “War and integration. The Russian attack on Ukraine and the institutional development of the EU” (Genschel et al., 2023), “Nuclear Weapons in Russia’s approach to conflict” (Johnson, 2016), “The Risk of Russia Using Nuclear Weapons Due to the War in Ukraine from the American Perspective” (Jureńczyk, 2022), “Influence of Global Security Environment on Collective Security and Defense Science” (Mitrovic, 2019), “Putin’s Response: The Use of Nuclear Weapons in the Russia-Ukraine War” (Rheem, 2022), “Chapter 3. Deterrence Rediscovered: NATO and Russia” (Rynning, 2020), “Rallying around the EU flag: Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and attitudes toward

European integration” (Steiner et al., 2023), “Reaction to the Russian aggression against Ukraine: cities as international standards’ supporters” (Szpak et al., 2023), “Russian nuclear energy diplomacy and its implications for energy security in the context of the war in Ukraine” (Szulecki, Overland, 2022), “The Effect of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict on the Potential Use of Nuclear Weapons” (Vajriyati et al., 2022), “Assessing the Nuclear Threat in the Context of the Ukraine War” (Yuksel, 2023), “Can Russia’s War in Ukraine End Without Nuclear Weapons?” (Mazzar et al., 2022).

The important role of all foreign sources lies in different from the Ukrainian point of view on the key points in the analysis of the main postulates of the nuclear policy of the Russian Federation in view of the events in Ukraine and the impact on the international security system. For example, research articles by Arndt and Horovitz (2022), as well as Barel (2022), Bruusgaard (2021), Djumala et al. (2023), Fink (2023), Johnson (2016), Mazzar et al. (2022), Rheem (2022), Sinovets and Hesse (2022), Sinovets and Vicente (2022), Szulecki and Overland (2022) were used in order to form a general picture of the evolution of the nuclear strategy and approaches of the Russian Federation in foreign policy during the conduct of aggressive actions on the territory of Ukraine from 2014 to the present. In turn, articles by Yuksel (2023), Vajriyati et al. (2022), Sinovets and Melnyk (2020), Mitrovic (2019), Jureńczyk (2022), Favaro and Williams (2023), Cosgrove (2020), Briggs (2023) , Bollfrass and Herzog (2022), Babar and Shakil (2022) and Allison (2023) revealed the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the international security system in view of the possibility of using nuclear weapons, as well as increasing tensions between nuclear and non-nuclear states in the context of changing international forces

Given the change in international centres of influence, as well as the world reaction to Russian military actions on the territory of Ukraine, it was important to

investigate these events in the context of the influence of international organizations. Including studies by Bosse (2022), Frederick et al. (2022), Genschel (2022), Genschel et al. (2023), Rynning (2020), Steiner et al. in view of the need to form a strong Europe capable of giving a timely and powerful response to any violators of international law and order. Thus, the analysis and study of the works of foreign authors made it possible to investigate the issue of the nuclear rhetoric of the Russian Federation from the point of view of global international actors and organizations, as well as countries that have undergone changes due to changes in the international security environment.

Among electronic resources, news resources were used, in particular such news platforms as Polske Radio, Suspilne Novyny, BBC News Ukraine, Slovo i Dilo, and Newsweek. In addition, official U.S. Internet resources were used for a more in-depth and reliable analysis. Department of State, The White House, NATO and the Official Internet Representation of the President of Ukraine.

Examining news electronic resources provides up-to-date data and context of events, as well as allowing for the latest political changes and security trends to be taken into account. This broadens the perspective of research, provides confirmation of hypotheses, and provides an opportunity to note actual problems. In particular, the analysis of news resources contributes to high relevance and interest of the future reader, making research more supported and informative. Thus, thanks to the news resources, the following articles were analysed: “Andrzej Duda proposes to work out a new peace agreement regarding Ukraine” (2015), “Putin declared war on Ukraine. The President of the Russian Federation supported the appeal of “L/DNR” to introduce troops” (Korinovska, 2022), “Putin told about the latest weapons” (2018), “Putin threatens a “lightning response” for intervention in the war” (2022), “U.S. Approaching ‘Dangerous Brink’ in Ukraine, Russian Ambassador Warns” (Kaonga, 2022).

It is worth noting that the official speeches of world leaders were used to write this research paper, such as the Speech of the President of Ukraine at the meeting of the UN Security Council (2022) and the Speeches of President Biden and the Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese in the Joint Press Conference (2023). The use of this material allows you to support the theses proposed in the work with authoritative sources and to explore the international perspective of this issue. Thanks to this, the research has a more grounded, reliable and broad structure of the context, which allows to make the work relevant and deeply researched.

In addition, for a more detailed study of the global security system and its formation against the background of the globalizing world, materials from the International Partners' Conference held in 2004 with the aim of creating a global initiative to reduce the threat to security and peace, as well as the GICNT Plenary Meeting, were used. that happened in 2017. The analysis of such materials allows to investigate the position of each of the participants in the construction of the international security system and to understand the processes of building the international security structure.

CHAPTER 2. NAVIGATING NUCLEAR NARRATIVES: RUSSIA'S STRATEGIES IN THE WAR ON UKRAINE (2014-2023)

The current state of international relations is characterized by high instability and the weakening of the influence of international organizations, which are designed to ensure compliance with the norms of international law, as well as to mobilize efforts to overcome global security threats and challenges. The modern world has become chaotic and unpredictable. Turbulence in international relations led to a crisis in the European and global systems of international security. First of all, the international security institutions of the UN and the OSCE showed their ineffectiveness. As a result, the level of management of international crises and processes has significantly decreased. Attempts to reform these structures have so far been unsuccessful, and Russia's presence and chairmanship of the UN Security Council at a time when it is waging a brutal war of aggression against Ukraine, committing genocide and terrorism against the civilian population has caused at least cognitive dissonance. The international situation that has developed shows that the liberal international order that was formed during and after the end of the "Cold War" is being eroded in the modern world.

With the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1970, the countries of the world were divided into those that are official owners of nuclear weapons and others. There are a total of five official owners: Great Britain, China, the Russian Federation, the USA and France. About 90% of the world's nuclear arsenals fall in approximately equal shares to two of these countries - the Russian Federation and the USA. Most of the world's countries have voluntarily agreed to give up their possession of nuclear weapons in accordance with the NPT. Such countries that have international recognition and are members of the UN (193 full members and two observers) are now 186 out of 195. Several countries

– India, Pakistan, Israel and the DPRK – possess limited nuclear arsenals outside the NPT (India, Pakistan and Israel did not join the Treaty, the DPRK was a member of it as a non-nuclear state, but withdrew from the Treaty in 2003). Several countries are not parties to the NPT but are de facto non-nuclear (Bollfrass, Herzog, 2022).

A global regime of nuclear non-proliferation is impossible without commitments from official nuclear states to non-nuclear states. The text of the NPT does not contain the obligations of the nuclear countries regarding the specific conditions for the use of nuclear weapons. However, it lays down the very philosophy of the non-proliferation regime. Article VI of the Treaty states that “each Party to the Treaty undertakes in a spirit of goodwill to conduct negotiations on effective measures to stop the nuclear arms race shortly and nuclear disarmament, as well as on a treaty on general and complete disarmament” (*Treaty on the Non-Proliferation*, 1970).

At the time of the conclusion of the NPT, the defining element of the international security system was the bloc confrontation, in which the USA and the former USSR were the key guarantors. This significantly affected the nature of the obligations of nuclear countries to non-nuclear countries.

Universally negative guarantees to non-nuclear countries were promulgated by nuclear countries after the end of the Cold War. In 1995, the UN Security Council, in connection with the preparation for the indefinite extension of the NPT, adopted Resolution No. 984 concerning the unilateral statements of the nuclear states, which contained, in particular, negative guarantees – in fact, assurances.

Nuclear powers have provided guarantees only to those non-nuclear states that are parties to the NPT, and with an important exception (exceptional case) that distinguishes these guarantees from treaty guarantees provided to countries in nuclear-free zones. For the United Kingdom, the Russian Federation, the USA and

France, one of the exceptional cases is an attack on them or their allies by a non-nuclear country together with a nuclear country, but the specific wording of this exceptional case differs for each state.

The exceptional case of the Russian Federation was formulated in such a way that “invasion or other attacks on the Russian Federation and its territory with the use of nuclear weapons or a threat to the existence of the state itself”. Since the Russian Federation did not have “dependent territories”, it defined only its own. It is possible that the haste in attempts to declare Russian ownership of the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories is connected, in particular, with the Russian Federation’s attempt to artificially draw a “red line” hinting on the possible use of nuclear weapons against Ukraine (Sinovets, Vicente, 2022).

2.1. Russian military doctrines and nuclear concepts within the frameworks of the military operations deployment on the territory of Ukraine

Russia’s hybrid war against Ukraine since 2014 and full-scale armed aggression since February 24, 2022, Russia’s voluntarist violation of international law, mass casualties and injuries among the civilian population, energy coercion, nuclear rhetoric, genocide and missile terror in Ukraine have caused a global shift in European and world security. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine destroyed illusory ideas about the effectiveness of international security mechanisms and the stability of the political world order. In April 2014, the then President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves, in response to the annexation of Crimea and preparations for a full-scale military and political aggression by Russia against Ukraine, stated that “the fundamental understanding of security in Europe is currently destroyed” and “political leaders must recognize that the old the rules no longer apply” (Johnson, 2016).

On March 18, 2014, in an address to both chambers of the country's Federal Assembly "on the occasion of the annexation of Crimea", the President of the Russian Federation formulated the main thesis of the "Putin doctrine": the balance of power on the planet has changed; the weight of the West in world politics is decreasing; international law is not a dogma, but a set of options from which the Russian authorities will choose what is beneficial to them; countries are divided into strong and weak; territorial integrity and sovereignty of the latter is a field of agreements of the strong; the time has come for radical changes, Russia is a separate state – a civilization with its unique values, which will try to shape its rules of the game in international politics (Rheem, 2022).

Later, on December 18 of the same year, Vladimir Putin adopted a new military doctrine, which includes the establishment of regimes in neighbouring states of the Russian Federation, whose policies threaten the interests of Russia, among the country's main external dangers. In this way, official Moscow sought to legitimize the likely future expansion of Russian territory at the expense of its neighbours. For example, among the key tasks of the Armed Forces of Russia in peacetime is the "protection of citizens outside the Russian Federation from the armed attack on them". Even in a distant foreign country, Russian-speaking citizens living there have the right to military protection by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. It follows from this that at the official regulatory and legislative level, the Russian leadership, in fact, establishes the legitimization of the deepening and continuation of military operations in Donbas (*Путін розказав*, 2018).

The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, adopted in 2014, states that the use of nuclear weapons is possible as an action in response to the use of nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction by another country, as well as in the case of aggression against the Russian Federation with the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state.

This formulation is largely, but not entirely, within the limits of the global nuclear order. The US nuclear strategy also provides for the possibility of using nuclear weapons to deter actions involving the use of chemical and biological weapons. This aspect of the strategy is the subject of debate and could be changed during the review of the status of the US nuclear forces in 2022. A similar doctrinal position in the documents of the Russian Federation is also debatable. The problem is the practice of provocations by the Russian Federation, which may include the use of chemical and biological weapons under a different flag (Babar, 2022).

Another problem is that according to the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, the country's nuclear weapons can be used in the event of aggression against it with the use of conventional weapons if the existence of the state is in jeopardy, even without the participation of another nuclear country. The military doctrine of the Russian Federation replaces the criterion of the participation of another nuclear country with the criterion of a threat to the existence of the Russian Federation. In the conditions of authoritarian rule, the changed criterion can be interpreted freely. How an existential crisis can be interpreted, for example, the threat of the destruction of the political regime of the Russian Federation as a result of a loss in a conventional war.

On February 28 and March 11, 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, hoping for the exclusive validity of the guarantees of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, appealed to the guarantor states in accordance with the Memorandum on Security Guarantees in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with a request to fulfil their obligations regarding its provisions and apply all possible measures to stop aggression, preserve the independence of sovereignty, modern borders of Ukraine. At the same time, the Ukrainian parliament suggested that the UN Security Council convene a meeting to review the actions of the Russian Federation, and the parliaments of the guarantor

states of Ukraine's security and international organizations to send special monitoring missions to familiarize themselves with the situation in Ukraine. However, the signatories of the Budapest Memorandum were not even able to gather for a joint meeting, the UN General Assembly only managed to discuss and adopt advisory statements regarding the fact that the monitoring missions of the UN and the OSCE were not allowed to the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian occupying forces, and the OSCE observers in the Donbas became hostages of the separatists and Russian special forces (Шапталенко, Грінченко, Кутовий, 2016).

Moreover, during the last decade, the Russian Federation developed the concept of using nuclear weapons, which in Western countries was called "escalation for de-escalation". The idea is that the threat of using nuclear weapons after a quick and unexpected Russian victory in a hybrid war will force even a stronger adversary, such as NATO, to capitulate without a response (Sinovets, 2018).

The Russian Federation did not officially confirm this concept. Only its elements can be seen in the published doctrinal documents. In particular, in the Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the field of naval activity for the period up to 2030, approved in 2017, it is stated that in the conditions of escalation of the military conflict, the demonstration of readiness and determination to use force with the use of non-strategic nuclear weapons is an effective deterrent. The main proof of the existence of the concept is its presentation in the 2018 "US Nuclear Posture Review". The description of this concept is the result of communications between the US and Russian military (*Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018).

In the statements of pro-government Russian politicians, the concept of "escalation for de-escalation" sounded for a long time as existing de facto. The leadership of the Russian Federation has constantly demonstrated readiness to use nuclear weapons. Putin's public statements in 2018 as an answer to the question

about the use of nuclear weapons became the embodiment of such readiness: “Why do we need such a world in which there will be no Russia?” and “We will go to heaven as martyrs, and they will simply die” (*Путін розказав*, 2018).

Putin’s attitude is important because according to the Military Doctrine, the decision to use nuclear weapons is made by the President of the Russian Federation. Statements about a world worthless without Russia and a nuclear paradise were embedded by Putin in extensive explanations of the strategy for the use of nuclear weapons by the Russian Federation. According to him, the strategy is based on the launch-on warning strike. This is a variant of the use of nuclear weapons known since the Cold War, in which the decision to use is made when the means of warning of a missile attack and the means of recording nuclear explosions can accurately determine the fact of a nuclear attack and the place of impact, but the nuclear strike itself has not yet been delivered, at least in full volumes.

Even a strike by the most combat-ready intercontinental ballistic missile group can last for hours, not to mention submarine-based ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and bombs on strategic bombers. Therefore, a launch-on warning strike becomes possible, which is carried out after a warning of an attack, when no missile or bomb has yet reached its targets. This is considered to be a dangerous strategy because of the possibility of errors in the warning devices. Therefore, the primary option for nuclear deterrence is a launch-on warning strike that is launched after at least the first wave of attack is over. Since the Cold War, nuclear forces have been built in such a way as to show maximum resilience in the event of a nuclear attack and to strike back with consequences unacceptable to the enemy. This, in fact, is the idea of strategic stability through guaranteed mutual destruction (Djumala et al., 2023).

Launch-on warning strike in response literally means that nuclear forces, transferred to the highest level of readiness for global nuclear war, will deliver an automated retaliatory strike upon the fact of registering the first nuclear explosions

on their territory and registering the imminent approach of the means of delivery of nuclear weapons within the scope of a large-scale nuclear attack. However, the possibility of this is still up in the air. This is a retaliatory blow in the process of an attack. It means the maximum escalation of nuclear war before one's own nuclear forces suffer significant casualties from an attack. Formally, the idea of a retaliatory strike corresponds to the obligations of nuclear states within the framework of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. At the same time, in several aspects, Putin's numerous statements about nuclear weapons (the above quotes are the most famous, but they are only a part of such statements) are outside the "normal" strategy of a nuclear state (Favaro, Williams, 2023).

First, the constant emphasis on nuclear weapons issues in the absence of any signs of the possibility of a nuclear attack on the Russian Federation may be an indicator of defence readiness for the first unprovoked nuclear strike by another nuclear state, in particular the Russian Federation. The very mention of a retaliatory strike in the context of the current state of the global non-proliferation regime is provocative (Briggs, 2023).

After the end of the Cold War, the strategic nuclear weapons of the USA and the Russian Federation, which account for more than 90% of the arsenals, were reduced. That part of the strategic forces, which is on permanent duty, is aimed at the World Ocean. The status of the force is constantly monitored through a system of two-way mutual messages, which number hundreds a year, and on-the-ground inspections that take place dozens of times a year.

According to politically binding bilateral decisions since the early 1990s, the tactical nuclear weapons of the USA and the Russian Federation are mostly located in central storage bases. According to these commitments, under normal conditions, tactical nuclear weapons should be absent from the ground forces and the navy. Covertly breaking these decisions is not easy.

Russian claims of a retaliatory launch-on warning strike point to the maintenance of nuclear forces in a state that ensures a strike within about half an hour, during which US ballistic missiles can theoretically reach Russian territory. In this way, the readiness of the Russian leadership to strike the very first nuclear strike can be announced. Otherwise, it makes no sense for the Russian Federation to provoke tension around readiness for nuclear war without signs of a nuclear threat from the US (Jureńczyk, 2022).

Secondly, the nuclear rhetoric and demonstrative actions of the Russian Federation correlate with its general aggressiveness in matters that do not require the use of nuclear weapons within the framework of the global nuclear order. Putin's message to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation dated March 1, 2018, was indicative. Half of the speech was devoted to the presentation of new types of nuclear weapons, which seem to be radically ahead of the US nuclear weapons in terms of technical level and should be put on combat duty in the near future (*Путін розказав*, 2018).

Every few years, the Russian Federation conducts exercises of nuclear forces simulating a nuclear strike with wide coverage in the media. In contrast to regular exercises of any type of armed forces, during these comprehensive exercises called "Thunder" combat control systems of nuclear forces are involved from the moment of the decision of the President of the Russian Federation to use them. Similar exercises in other countries, if conducted, never become the subject of PR (Vajriyati et al., 2022).

The last time the "Thunder" exercise was conducted in mid-February 2022 – immediately before a large-scale attack on Ukraine. The coincidence in time of conducting exercises of nuclear forces and direct preparations for an attack on Ukraine was not accidental. This is evidenced by Putin's statement on the day of the attack: "Whoever tries to hinder us, but rather create threats for our country, for our

people, should know that Russia's response will be immediate and will have such consequences for you that you have never seen before in your history. never experienced" (*Путін оголосив*, 2022). The rhetoric pointed to the possibility of the Russian Federation using nuclear weapons. In 2014, before the invasion of Crimea, the demonstration of Russia's nuclear readiness was less expressive but similar in essence. Readiness to use nuclear weapons was then broadcast by Putin in personal communications with world leaders (Sinovets, Vicente, 2022).

Statements and demonstrations of readiness to use nuclear weapons testify to the departure of the Russian Federation from the defence strategy of nuclear deterrence and the use of offensive nuclear coercion. At the beginning of the large-scale attack, such coercion was addressed to countries capable of providing assistance to Ukraine. Formally, the Russian Federation followed the norms of using nuclear weapons: either in response or in the event of an attack by a non-nuclear country together with a nuclear one. At the same time, the attack was interpreted broadly – as a state of hostilities, after which the question of the source of aggression is pushed to the background. In the same way, the Russian Federation interpreted the joint actions of Ukraine with nuclear states as any involvement of NATO countries covered by the system of extended nuclear deterrence by the USA (*Куроп'ятник*, 2015; Arndt, Horovitz, 2022).

2.2. The reaction of the EU and NATO to the actions of the Russian Federation in the context of the international dimension

Russian nuclear coercion worked in the aspect that no country dared to provide military aid to Ukraine and directly participate in the war with Russia. During the first months of the war, such participation remained a publicly declared taboo for the US and NATO. The reasons for such a taboo were complex, but the extent of Russia's readiness for nuclear escalation under certain conditions is obvious.

At the same time, Russian nuclear coercion did not work in the aspect of providing large-scale military aid to Ukraine outside of direct participation in the war. Putin's threat of consequences, unprecedented in history, did not work with regard to the supply of weapons to Ukraine, the provision of large-scale economic and political aid, and the introduction of harsh sanctions against the Russian Federation. Russia did not dare to use a nuclear strike to prevent this aid but made attempts to convince Ukraine's partners that such a strike was possible (Rheem, 2022).

Having launched a hybrid, and from February 24, 2022, a full-scale war against Ukraine, the Russian Federation hoped to restore its role as a global player through political, military, economic, and informational pressure on the states and institutions of the European and transatlantic community, using the entire range of instruments of hybrid and armed aggression and not only in relation to Ukraine but also to destabilize the situation in other states, violating the international legal order based on the norms of international law. The war became a bifurcation point in the transformation of the international order and an important historical turning point that will have an impact on global and European security and international order. However, what can be observed now is not so much a deep or final crisis of the existing order as its ongoing transformation into a broader, more inclusive system of global governance that reflects the need to adapt to new geopolitical changes (Ardnt, Horovitz, 2023).

Already on February 27, 2022, when it became clear that the blitzkrieg against Ukraine had failed, and the USA and the EU were introducing harsh sanctions that were unexpected for the Russian leadership, Putin gave the order to put nuclear deterrence forces on high alert. In March 2022, the planes of the Presidential Air Force simulated the evacuation of the Russian elite to storage facilities in the east of the Russian Federation. In April, the Russian media spread information with references to high-ranking officials that at this stage the Russian Federation is

considering the option of conventional weapons, with a hint that another stage and another option are possible (Genschel, 2022).

Putin's statement of April 27, 2022, culminated in threats of nuclear escalation by the Russian Federation. Speaking before the members of the chambers of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, he said: "I emphasize once again: if someone intends to interfere in the events taking place from the outside and create strategic threats for Russia that are unacceptable to us, they should know that our retaliatory strikes will be lightning fast. We have all the tools for this, which no one can boast of now. And we will not brag, we will use them if necessary. And I want everyone to know about it, we have made all the decisions about it" (*Путин угрожает*, 2022).

The above quote revealed several important aspects of the political thinking of the Russian leadership. The first is that the interests of Russia and the interests of its ruling regime are not identical. The second is that the red line for the use of nuclear weapons is not the very existence of Russia, as stated in the Military Doctrine, but strategic threats unacceptable to the Russian regime. The third aspect – the updated criterion for the use of nuclear weapons, as well as in the Military Doctrine, does not concern the participation of other nuclear countries in creating a threat to the Russian Federation.

At the same time, the emotionality of this statement indicated that Russian nuclear coercion had already lost its effectiveness. He was perceived in the world, rather, as a bluff. The hypothesis that the cause of such an attitude was the too-bold departure of Russian threats outside the bounds of the established system of norms forming the international nuclear order, which the Russian Federation itself would not like to destroy, can be considered justified.

In early May 2022, the Russian ambassador to Washington, A. Antonov made a de-escalation statement in an interview with Newsweek. He noted that Russia's nuclear rhetoric was misunderstood and deliberately distorted in the West. Arguing the incorrectness, he referred to the doctrinal position of the Russian Federation, according to which nuclear weapons can be used by the Russian Federation only in response to the use of nuclear weapons against the Russian Federation and its allies or in the case of non-nuclear aggression that threatens the very existence of Russia. At the same time, the ambassador noted that NATO underestimates the risk of nuclear war, which is why the Russian Federation pays more attention to it. The Russian leadership is disappointed that the US ended the strategic stability dialogue after February 24, 2022, which Russia would like to resume as soon as the US is ready (Kaonga, 2022).

Antonov's remark about the underestimation of the threat of nuclear war by the US and NATO is important for understanding the nature of Russian nuclear coercion. Russia does not want a nuclear war but wants the West to be afraid of Russia's readiness to use nuclear weapons in an uncertain situation. On the same day, May 5, the Speaker of the State Duma, Volodin, stated that it is the USA, not the Russian Federation, that is increasing nuclear risks. According to him, the Russian Federation will use nuclear weapons only in response to a threat.

The next day, May 6, 2022, Deputy Director of the Department of Information and Press of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Zaitsev stated during a briefing that the scenarios for the possible use of nuclear weapons are clearly spelled out in Russian doctrinal documents. They are not used to implement tasks set during a special military operation in Ukraine. At the same time, according to his speech, it would be useful for the countries of the West, led by the USA, to maintain a clear awareness of the absolute inadmissibility of the irresponsible escalation of their anti-Russian actions, including the creation of strategic threats unacceptable to

Russia and the promotion of rhetoric about the fictitious Russian nuclear threat, distorting the words of our representatives (Їжак, 2022).

The repetition by the representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry of Putin's formula about strategic threats unacceptable to Russia suggests that it is an established structure of the Russian nuclear strategy de facto, in contrast to the formula of a threat to the very existence of Russia – de jure.

The war significantly deepened Ukraine's political dialogue with the EU and NATO and accelerated the adoption of important political decisions. The EU and NATO recognize that Russia's war against Ukraine requires new approaches and strategic decisions to support Ukraine and a clear vision of its role in the new architecture of European and global security. "This battle is very important for us because how we respond today to what Russia is doing will determine the future of the international system", said Ursula von der Leyen. In order to coordinate the actions of democratic states in support of Ukraine in countering Russian armed aggression, new mechanisms have been created, which include EU and NATO member states, as well as other democratic states of Europe and the world. The most effective is the Contact Group on Defence of Ukraine ("Ramstein" format), which unites 54 democratic states (in total, 60 states of the world are invited). During the year, since the first meeting on April 26, 2022, 11 meetings have taken place in the "Ramstein" format, the result of which is the provision of not only defensive, but also offensive weapons to Ukraine. The process is only gaining momentum and it is quite likely that the participants of the Ramstein format are planning a new architecture of international security. Ukraine is the subject of this process (Genschel, Leek, Weyns, 2023).

The key problem of the implementation of the policy of nuclear coercion of the Russian Federation is the absence of a specific military meaning in this policy. Coercion appeals to the horror of any use of nuclear weapons. At the same time, the

Russian Federation is forced to avoid any certainty regarding the specific combat goals of use, because certainty triggers the commitment trap. Therefore, simply identifying possible scenarios for the use of nuclear weapons destroys coercion.

The total power of the warheads of missiles launched by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine since February 24, 2022, can be estimated at several kilotons (more than 2 thousand missiles, each of which carried explosives of at least 100 kg of TNT equivalent). Bombing and artillery strikes of the Russian Federation on Mariupol and other populated areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions were measured in kilotons (Barel, 2022).

A nuclear war strategy in any scenario would require a massive first strike against the enemy's command centres and nuclear forces in order to deprive it of its ability to strike back. But strategic nuclear forces are built in such a way that they can retain the ability to strike back at an unacceptable level for the enemy. The composition of the strategic nuclear forces of the United States and the Russian Federation since the Cold War creates a balance based on mutual assured destruction in any nuclear war scenario.

The irrationality of nuclear war is embodied in the very phrase “mutually assured destruction”, or MAD, that is, “crazy”. The obviousness of this insanity makes irrational the hypothetical criterion for winning a nuclear war, which is the situation of maintaining a certain number of ready-to-use nuclear weapons in the event of complete destruction or use of nuclear weapons by the enemy. Against the background of the inevitable consequences of a nuclear war, victory in it cannot be desired (Fink, 2023).

Introducing the concept of “escalation for de-escalation”, the Russian Federation took advantage of the disappearance of the mechanism of automatic escalation of the limited use of nuclear weapons to the level of a global nuclear war.

The Russian leadership was sure that the first demonstration nuclear strike, even the threat of such a strike, against a European NATO country would force the Alliance to capitulate in a lightning war with hybrid means launched by the Russian Federation.

Awareness of this threat led to a review of the US nuclear force composition in the aforementioned 2018 US Nuclear Posture Review. The changes enabled a quick, proportionate nuclear strike in response to the first strike by Russia against a NATO country. After such a nuclear response, the Russian Federation would either have to capitulate or move to a higher level of escalation up to a global nuclear war, which remains unacceptable for it (*Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018).

After changes in the status of US nuclear forces, the probability of a hybrid attack by the Russian Federation on European NATO countries, in particular the Baltic countries, decreased. An attack on other countries that have assurances, but not guarantees, of protection against a nuclear attack, could remain acceptable in the minds of the Russian leadership. However, in the Russian Federation's war with Ukraine, the limited use of nuclear weapons on the battlefield in accordance with rational military strategies – to break the defence and destroy the second echelons of advancing troops is impossible in the absence of a stable front, mobility and dispersion of troops (Barel, 2022).

This means that Russian threats of nuclear weapons against Ukraine can be nothing more than coercion, or a demonstration strike without military meaning. But at the same time, such a demonstration will be a fundamental violation of the international nuclear order, which the Russian Federation prefers not to destroy.

A demonstrative nuclear strike against Ukraine would be risky for the Russian Federation due to several uncertainties regarding the immediate consequences.

First, such a strike cannot guarantee the Russian Federation's surrender of Ukraine, nor can it change the situation on the battlefield. The explosion of a tactical nuclear weapon in an open area on a cloudless hike can be seen several tens of kilometres away. Those who won't see it will find out from the news. The psychological effect of a nuclear attack on civilian objects after the destruction of Ukrainian cities by conventional Russian weapons can be the exact opposite – only increasing Ukraine's will to victory.

Secondly, the Russian Federation does not have the means of guaranteed delivery of a demonstrative nuclear strike without the risk of automatic escalation of the war outside the borders of Ukraine. You can strike with a bomb dropped from an airplane, a cruise missile, hypersonic or a ballistic missile. Planes and cruise missiles can be and will be shot down by Ukrainian air defence as soon as possible. Therefore, there is a high risk that the bomb or warhead will not explode and will fall under the control of Ukraine in a damaged or even intact form, but without the possibility of its use.

Thirdly, even the demonstrative use of nuclear weapons does not guarantee the absence of a reaction from NATO. Indeed, the Russian Federation managed to convince the Alliance that its direct participation in the war on the side of Ukraine would lead to unpredictable consequences with a probable nuclear escalation. At the same time, at the NATO summit in March 2022, a collective decision was made to provide Ukraine with the means to protect troops from chemical, and biological weapons and radiation damage. It was stated that in the case of the use of chemical or biological weapons by the Russian Federation, there will be a collective response by NATO. It is clear that in the case of the use of nuclear weapons by the Russian Federation, there will also be a collective response.

Therefore, the use of nuclear weapons by the Russian Federation against Ukraine would be a clear violation of the international “nuclear order” and the

recognition of Russia's defeat in a conventional war. Such an application would not give Russia the desired result in terms of depriving Ukraine of the ability to achieve victory on the battlefield and its partners – the readiness to provide the necessary assistance for this. The defeat of the Russian Federation after the use of nuclear weapons would be a much worse result for it than defeat in a conventional war. This is guaranteed to create for the Russian leadership the same unacceptable strategic threat that it is trying to avoid.

Offensive nuclear coercion by the Russian Federation, in contrast to defensive nuclear deterrence, does not provide the Russian leadership with options for strategic gain. From a rational point of view, the Russian Federation should reject the policy of coercion and return to the limits of the global nuclear order. However, rationality is not necessarily the only basis of the nuclear policy of the Russian Federation, formed by the regime of Vladimir Putin (Allison, 2023).

Nuclear weapons play an important role in the policy of the Russian Federation, and the methods of their use or the threat of use are determined by different concepts. These concepts include nuclear deterrence, which has a doctrinal definition, and nuclear coercion, which remains less defined and is becoming a key aspect of Russian hybrid warfare. The failure of Russia's large-scale military aggression against Ukraine affected its nuclear policy, leading to changes in the criteria for the use of nuclear weapons and forms of coercion (Allison, 2023).

The effectiveness of the nuclear policy of the Russian Federation depends on the compliance of its components with international norms formed in accordance with the global regime of nuclear non-proliferation. These norms can be considered as a global nuclear order. However, the policy of nuclear coercion of the Russian Federation goes beyond this order, which leads to nuclear chaos. At the moment, this strategy loses its effectiveness, turning into a nuclear bluff. The Russian Federation

tries to justify nuclear coercion by using the doctrinal provisions of nuclear deterrence, which, in general, remains effective.

In the war with Ukraine, the Russian Federation is actively trying to create artificial criteria for the use of nuclear weapons, which formally correspond to the global nuclear order, but at the same time leave room for nuclear coercion. In particular, this can be explained by accusing Russia of developing weapons of mass destruction and attempts to annex temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories. In order to create a post-war architecture of international security, it will be important to bring the nuclear policy of the Russian Federation into compliance with the norms of the global nuclear order, which could become possible if the Russian leadership system the country is fundamentally changed (Djumala et al., 2023).

The concept of nuclear “escalation for de-escalation” is an important element of Russian security policy. It is built on coercion by the possibility of a first nuclear strike by the Russian Federation in order to achieve victory in a hybrid or conventional war. This concept creates this very nuclear mess. At the same time, the Russian Federation is not ready for the open destruction of the global nuclear order and hides its plans for the use of nuclear weapons according to official doctrines that generally correspond to established international norms (Sinovets, Melnyk, 2020).

At the beginning of the large-scale military invasion of Ukraine, nuclear coercion gave the Russian Federation certain tactical advantages. He allowed the Russian Federation to influence NATO countries, making it impossible for them to participate directly in the war on the side of Ukraine. The success of coercion of this kind is due to the fact that it is in the grey area of the global nuclear order, which allows the use of nuclear weapons by a nuclear country in a war with a non-nuclear one, if another nuclear country is fighting on the side of the latter. At the same time, the nuclear coercion of the Russian Federation failed in its attempts to prevent the provision of significant international aid to Ukraine, including the supply of weapons

and military equipment capable of radically changing the course of a conventional war in favour of Ukraine. The weak point of the Russian nuclear coercion, offensive in direction, was the lack of a concrete military sense of the use of nuclear weapons. The bold threat of its demonstrative use was perceived in the world as a bluff.

To maintain the effectiveness of nuclear coercion, the Russian Federation is trying to create artificial criteria that legitimize the use of nuclear weapons. In particular, at the initial stage of the large-scale military attack, the Russian Federation unsuccessfully tried to convince the world of the possibility of Ukraine's use of chemical and biological weapons. Currently, the Russian Federation is trying to create an artificial criterion for the protection of its own territory, which will include the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories after the referendums.

The Russian war against Ukraine revealed the global destructiveness of the Russian concept of nuclear "escalation for de-escalation", based on nuclear coercion. The problem requires an international solution within the framework of building a post-war security architecture.

CHAPTER 3. GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR POSTURE

In the science of international law, collective security is understood as a system of collective actions of states and their unions for the purpose of protection against any internal and external threats. The formation of an effective system of collective security involves, first of all, the implementation of a complex of measures of a political, economic, and legal nature, as well as military-organizational measures aimed at preventing and stopping any aggression. The system of collective security should be based on such principles as:

- indivisibility of security (aggressive actions against one participating state are considered as aggression against all participating states);
- collective responsibility of all participating states to ensure collective security;
- non-interference in the internal affairs of any participating state and consideration of its interests;
- the possibility of placing military facilities of some participating states on the territory of others;
- making decisions on important issues only based on joint consent and readiness of national armed forces and financial obligations of each participating state in accordance with existing threats.

Collective security includes a system of measures aimed at maintaining international peace and security, preventing and ending war, collective resistance to any aggression and collective mutual assistance. Such cooperation of interested states is carried out within the framework of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other international security organizations of a regional and interregional nature (Mitrovic, 2019).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the threat of nuclear war has become real again. The policy of individual states shows that the latter continue to build up their nuclear potential and neglect international provisions containing obligations aimed at nuclear de-escalation. It is primarily about the policy of nuclear disarmament, the inadmissibility of threats to use nuclear weapons and slowing down the pace of their build-up, mutual transparency and openness of nuclear programs of states.

It should be noted that the existing system of collective security is currently experiencing a deep crisis caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Back in 2014, after the annexation of the Ukrainian Crimea by Russia, the outbreak of the war in Donbas and the subsequent full-scale armed attack on Ukraine, after numerous “concerns” of foreign partners, it became clear that the paradigm of a safe civilized world based on mutual respect had come to an end to international rules, principles and norms, recognition of human rights and freedoms as the highest value of the free world. At the centre of this international crisis is the helplessness of the UN, which was created precisely for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security, in particular by countering any form of aggression. In efforts to stop an unprovoked aggressive war in Ukraine, one can observe the inability of a universal international organization to protect individual member states from armed aggression by other members of the organization (Ozcelik, 2020).

3.1. Ukraine as an element of the new nuclear balance of power

In general, since the creation of the UN, the Russian Federation has repeatedly made attempts to “reshape” the international legal environment, which ensures the security of states and peoples, as well as the international legal order, for its interests. For this purpose, Russia promoted its own mechanism in the system of international relations, which was based on a system of false principles and rules, the substitution of concepts in the field of ensuring international peace and security.

The Russian armed invasion of Crimea in February-March 2014 with the subsequent military occupation of the peninsula, the outbreak of the war in Donbas since April 2014, and the large-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, have called into question the ability of the modern collective security system to effectively respond to new threats and implement the security guarantees that have been provided to the participating states.

In addition, the illegal annexation by the Russian Federation of the Ukrainian Autonomous Republic of Crimea and its armed invasion of the territory of eastern Ukraine during the hybrid war showed the empty nature of the international “assurances” of providing security, recorded in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, and dealt a heavy, hitherto unheard of blow to the international nuclear non-proliferation policy.

It is significant that after the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in 2014, even some Russian scientists spoke about the ineffectiveness of the Budapest Memorandum. They noted that by its actions in the ARC, the Russian Federation violated the effective guarantees of protection against the use of nuclear weapons and the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and the obligation not to use nuclear weapons took on a rhetorical character. In fact, by its actions in 2014, the Russian Federation essentially introduced the initial stage of nuclear escalation, which was manifested in the suspension of the negotiation process on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the increase in retaliation by Western countries of its nuclear potential, the suspension of cooperation in the field of peaceful use of atomic energy, thereby – jeopardized the policy of nuclear disarmament. Moreover, the Budapest Memorandum as a whole did not contain any effective mechanisms for the protection of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine, and the violation of international legal obligations by the Russian Federation led to

significant changes in international security issues, including nuclear (Cosgrove, 2020).

In particular, experts claim that the sad experience of Ukraine, which was deprived of nuclear weapons by the joint efforts of the United States and the Russian Federation, undermines confidence in any security guarantees that could persuade other countries to abandon the creation of nuclear weapons or even to destroy their existing arsenal. The unique experience of Ukraine is much more impressive than the cases of Iraq or Libya, which came under attack after cancelling their nuclear projects. Russia's aggression against Ukraine became a shock to the international order, and increased the threat of cross-border violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity, although in Europe during the last decades, the prevailing opinion was that such incidents were a thing of the past (Sinovets, Hesse, 2022).

Russia's violation of its obligations under the Budapest Memorandum (as well as the entire contractual and legal basis of bilateral relations, which includes about 400 documents), caused a very sharp reaction from those concerned about the threat to their security, not only from neighbouring countries of the Russian Federation, which is quite understandable but also in distant countries.

Since the Russian war against Ukraine continues, and Moscow does not show any desire to return Crimea to Ukraine, there are currently no sufficient grounds to assess the potential impact of the Ukrainian precedent on the realization by other countries of their intentions to acquire nuclear weapons as a guarantee of their own security in the medium and long term. It should be recognized that the greatest damage to the NPT during the entire period of its operation and to the very idea of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons was caused by the Western states – the signatories of the Budapest Memorandum, when they did not stop the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (Mazzar et al., 2022).

Russia's behaviour seems particularly unacceptable, especially given the advantages of the NPT regime that it enjoyed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. After all, until Putin's Crimean adventure, the destruction of missiles with nuclear warheads inherited from the USSR by Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan was considered the greatest success of the nuclear non-proliferation policy in the West.

In the same historical period, the problem of fissile materials, which belonged to Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus from the beginning of the 1990s of the XX century, arose separately. This was important, considering the fact that approximately 135 nuclear reactors in the world used highly enriched uranium as fuel, that is, in the new states – the former republics of the USSR, enough uranium was stored to create about 400 units of nuclear weapons. Such materials were also found in some countries – former members of the Warsaw Pact. If terrorist criminal groups were able to buy or steal even a small amount of this material, they could use it to create a nuclear weapon or a “dirty bomb” (Sinovets, Hesse, 2022).

In 1994, the United States and Russia reached an agreement on the future fate of the Soviet Union's large stockpile of highly enriched weapons-grade uranium. Over twenty years, Russia converted five hundred tons of highly enriched uranium (weapons-grade uranium for 20,000 warheads) into low-enriched uranium, which was purchased by the United States. The deal to buy converted highly enriched uranium, known as the Megatons to Megawatts Program, ended with the last shipment of low-enriched uranium arriving in the US in late 2013 (Мироненко, 2022).

The United States, together with Russia, during 1991-2011 “secured” about 92 percent of the facilities that housed materials suitable for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. The Joint Threat Reduction (Nanna-Lugara) programs, the Global Threat Reduction Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Acts of Nuclear Terrorism were implemented with the financial support of the United States, which were later

supplemented by other multilateral initiatives. Among them is the Group of Eight Global Partnership Against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, which provided funding and technical assistance to ensure the security of nuclear facilities, the return of spent fissile material to countries of origin, and also promoted the development of international cooperation in the fight against the proliferation of nuclear weapons (Kang, 2017; *Global Threat*, 2004; *The Nunn-Lugar*, 2022).

The United States and the USSR often shared a common vision of non-proliferation issues, beginning with the NPT negotiations, which for the Soviet Union were a means of preventing Germany from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, in post-Soviet times, after the end of the Cold War, cooperation was characterized by an inconsistent, uncertain character, and its condition deteriorated sharply after Russia annexed Crimea.

Irritated by the position of the recipient of Western aid on nuclear security issues and suspicions about American monitors at sensitive Russian facilities, the Russian government almost completely stopped bilateral cooperation in the field of nuclear security in 2013-2014, and as a result of the annexation of Crimea, the US Congress banned funding of such programs in Russia that led to the actual closure of even the small areas of cooperation that remained (Мироненко, 2022).

The Russian authorities claim that the Russian Federation can effectively protect its nuclear materials and facilities without the help of the United States. However, American experts emphasize that there is a lot of unfinished business on nuclear security in Russia and express serious doubts about the desire or ability of the Russian leadership to complete this work on its own, especially given the pressure on the budget of the Russian Federation from sanctions and low oil prices. Moscow poses challenges to the Missile Technology Control Regime by defending Russian commercial interests and insisting that the Regime should play a narrow technical role. The Russian Federation does not support efforts to use the Missile Technology

Control Regime to limit the possibility of the appearance of missiles in unstable regions (Bruusgaard, 2021).

Russia is also a leading critic of the IAEA's modern concept of control at the level of states, which is designed to make inspections more effective by relying on additional sources of information, including intelligence data of member states, and not only on traditional methods of monitoring the security situation. The Russians argue that overreliance on intelligence has allowed the United States and its allies to dominate the IAEA and manipulate the agency for their political purposes (Bruusgaard, 2021).

Russia cooperated with the United States and other leading nuclear powers in the field of preventing violations of the NPT, eliminating North Korean nuclear weapons and preventing their creation by Iran, but it stopped cooperating on these issues after the introduction of international sanctions against it for the illegal annexation of Crimea. At the 2015 Conference on the NPT, the Russian Federation violated the traditional consensus of the "old" nuclear powers, taking the side of the delegations of Arab countries on the controversial issue of the creation of a Middle Eastern nuclear-free zone, while trying to place the responsibility for blocking the consensus on Washington. At the meetings of the five officially nuclear-weapon states of the NPT, where practical incremental steps were to be developed, using which the five states could affirm their unwavering commitment to the implementation of the accepted obligations under the NPT in the field of disarmament, Russia played a role a passive and disinterested participant in achieving the result (*Review Conference, 2015*).

It would seem that stable contacts and understanding between Russian and American specialists in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and countering nuclear terrorism should only be welcomed, if not for one circumstance – their frank apologetics of Putinism and anti-Ukrainian position. Calling for a fundamental

review (improvement) of relations with Moscow and ignoring the fact that the Russian Federation in the Ukrainian Donbas is today the largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world, it can be noted that Russia is uniquely suited to help prevent the acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorist organizations such as The Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, as well as state entities. Moscow's decision to sell sensitive technology or refrain from doing so will determine the difference between failure and success in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which Donald Trump has called "the world's biggest problem" (Bosse, 2022).

Since the beginning of the Russian Federation's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine, the representatives of the Russian government have begun to utter slogans inherent in the policy of nuclear coercion, and not only in the direction of Ukraine. In particular, in connection with the intention of Finland and Sweden to join the military-political union of NATO, the leaders of the security sector of the aggressor countries are threatening to strengthen the land, naval and air forces, as well as the deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of the Baltic States, where Russia has an enclave in the form of Kaliningrad. In addition, according to the ex-commander of NATO forces, Wesley Clarke, in order to put pressure on the North Atlantic Alliance, Russia may launch a tactical nuclear strike on the territory of Poland (Frederick et al., 2022).

It can be considered that today it is too late to talk about any non-proliferation of nuclear weapons within the NPT, at least when the world is on the brink of the third world war. Without exaggeration, it can be stated that the NPT is not inferior to the Budapest Memorandum in its obvious ineffectiveness, since, at least, it does not contain any levers of deterrence of nuclear states, be it effective sanctioning measures for violation of the treaty or positive obligations of states upon denunciation of the NPT.

3.2. The role of the UN in the formation of the European security system after a full-scale invasion

The international security system could not withstand the power policy imposed by the Russian Federation. International institutions whose activities are aimed at ensuring peace and security, mainly the UN, do not fulfil their main task and in fact cannot resist conventional armed aggression, not to mention the nuclear threat and the UN itself is currently inheriting the fate of the League of Nations, which failed to cope with its main task is to prevent war. The legal mechanisms of the UN, which were so actively promoted by the international community, turned out to be unable to protect the world from the Russian threat. Demonstrative blocking of the decisions of the UN Security Council by Russia casts great doubt on the expediency of the functioning of this organization and proves that the concisely prescribed mechanisms for ensuring peace and security do not apply (Cavandoli, Wilson, 2022).

Currently, the UN acts as a guarantor of only local security and does not protect the world from aggression by countries that are permanent members of the UN Security Council, and even more so from the potential nuclear aggression of such states. That is why many scientists are currently in solidarity with the position of the President of Ukraine, who in his speech at the meeting of the UN Security Council on April 5, 2022, expressed a clear position regarding the inability of the UN to ensure international security and demanded the adoption of specific alternative solutions, including (*Виступ Президента, 2022*):

- depriving Russia of its right of veto over its aggression and doing everything to ensure peace;
- reshape the UN model to act for peace;
- self-dissolution.

These are the steps that will restore trust in the UN and help achieve peace, as this body is currently incapable of solving the problems underlying its activities.

One cannot help but emphasize that one of the reasons for Russia's impunity in building up its nuclear potential and manipulations and threats to use nuclear weapons is the insufficient reaction of the world to such actions and statements. Moreover, the statements of the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation back in 2010 about the intention to enshrine in the Russian military doctrine the provisions on preventive nuclear strikes changed to the legal enshrining of nuclear prevention in 2020, when the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation documented and legalized the use of nuclear weapons in order to end any – any military conflict on favourable terms for Russia. In fact, we can see a situation in which Russia is strengthening the policy of nuclear coercion, finding internal mechanisms for its implementation with the tacit consent of the international community. However, when it comes to the threat of nuclear war or a full-scale invasion of the territory of a sovereign country, the destruction of the civilian population, peaceful infrastructure and other war crimes, there can no longer be a question of civilized approaches to reducing nuclear tension. The world must strongly respond to any nuclear threats and coercion with a strong and stable position in order to return to the balance of the nuclear deterrence regime and achieve peace both on the European continent and globally (Sinovets, Hasse, 2022).

Russia's aggressive actions have caused serious concern around the world, as they contradict the norms of international law – the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, human rights law, etc. Some countries were even forced to take certain measures to protect themselves and the international community from possible military threats from the Russian Federation, namely: Lithuania and Moldova declared a state of emergency on their territory; Turkey closed the Black Sea to Russian ships (Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits); for the first time in history,

the North Atlantic Treaty Organization activated its own multinational force to defend the Alliance; Great Britain, Canada, the United States, Belgium, Norway, Italy, Germany, the Baltic States, Poland, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Montenegro, and Slovenia successively closed their airspace to Russian and Belarusian aircraft, and by the evening of February 27, 2022, the European Union completely closed its airspace for all types of aircraft registered in Russia and Belarus; Germany has sent unprecedented additional funds to its own army in the amount of 100 billion euros; more than 400 Russian diplomats from about two dozen countries were expelled; On May 18, 2022, Sweden and Finland officially applied to join NATO, etc. At the same time, in response to Russian aggression against Ukraine, some large European cities (Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Geneva, London, Madrid, Munich, Paris, Stockholm, etc.) began to break friendly ties with Russian cities that had been established at one time for mutual familiarization with life, history and culture, for achieving better mutual understanding, strengthening cooperation and friendship between the population and city management bodies and organizations (Steiner et al., 2023).

After many months of imitation by the Russian Federation of readiness for open dialogue and outright lies to other countries and international institutions, in particular NATO and the OSCE, the international community completely lost trust in the aggressor country. In addition, by creating unprecedented economic shocks in world energy markets and using population hunger as a weapon of foreign policy influence, Russia is even more globalizing the terrible consequences of its war of aggression in Ukraine. As during the Cold War, Russian-controlled mass media, government officials and public figures resorted to irresponsible rhetoric, supporting Russia's use of nuclear weapons both against Ukraine and against NATO member states (Szulecki, Overland, 2022).

3.3. NATO-Russia and USA relations

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as a military-political union of the states of North America and Europe, largely reacted in the first months of the full-scale armed invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine. The leading position of the USA in the Alliance has proven the significant effectiveness of international mobilization efforts, in particular regarding the provision of military aid to Ukraine. NATO's response to the Russian-Ukrainian war, which had to balance between military support for Ukraine and the avoidance of an open armed conflict with the Russian Federation, was more or less justified.

Nuclear coercion by the Russian Federation also has a significant impact on the US position regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war. Russian officials have repeatedly issued various threats and warnings to Ukraine, including a threat to apply provisions of Russian military doctrine in the event of attempts to liberate territories annexed by Russia. The reaction of the leaders of the nuclear-armed NATO member states to accusations from the Russian Federation is far from always consistent. Criticizing nuclear threats from Russia, Joe Biden noted on October 25, 2023, that the use of tactical nuclear weapons by Russia during the war in Ukraine is potentially possible. However, such a step would be a "serious mistake", and US representatives have already expressed a clear position on this matter. However, according to President Biden, he does not believe that Vladimir Putin will succeed in this (Garden, 2023).

According to the results of the discussion of the nuclear threat at the level of defence ministers of NATO member countries, which took place on October 12, 2023, the official representative of the Alliance warned that the use of nuclear weapons by the Russian Federation would change the course of the war and have "unprecedented consequences" for Russia. Such an action "will almost certainly

receive a physical response from many allies and possibly from NATO itself” (*Defence Ministers, 2023*).

For his part, NATO Secretary General Jen Stoltenberg stressed that the Alliance is not a party to the conflict in the war between Russia and Ukraine. However, “if the Russian Federation uses a nuclear charge” even of low power, “this step will have catastrophic consequences”. As Stoltenberg stated, as part of a preventive response to a nuclear threat, NATO is focusing its efforts on some directions, in particular (Yuksel, 2023):

- protection of its critical infrastructure, including increased military presence in the Baltic and North Seas;
- the location of 8 combat groups of high readiness in the East - from the Baltic to the Black Sea, which can be quickly replenished to brigades;
- strengthening intelligence work and intelligence gathering, including in space and underwater;
- strengthening and deepening cooperation with the EU.

In the current conditions, NATO’s positioning is based on several main theses (Yuksel, 2023):

1. The main priority is the provision of military support to Ukraine. The main focus is on Ukraine winning the war.
2. Russia’s nuclear coercion aims to force the West to withdraw its support for Ukraine. However, the victory of the Kremlin cannot be allowed.
3. NATO should not say what the response to the use of nuclear weapons by the Russian Federation might be. This could give an advantage to the opponent.
4. The deployment of additional contingents on NATO’s eastern flank is intended to prevent a potential conflict between Russia and NATO members.

In the aspect of military support to Ukraine, it should be noted the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in holding meetings of representatives of the defence departments of the member states of the Alliance, the European Union, as well as the countries of Africa, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and the Asia-Pacific region in Germany at the US military air base “Ramstein”. The monthly meetings, starting on April 26, 2022, will play the role of an effective negotiating platform for participants from 50 countries of the world with the aim of synchronizing and accelerating the provision of military assistance to Ukraine to resist a full-scale Russian invasion, constantly coordinating their efforts in this direction and discussing issues of support to Ukraine in the post-war period. Meetings in the “Ramstein” format indicate the creation of a defensive international coalition or an “anti-Russian (anti-Putin) coalition” similar to the “anti-Hitler coalition” during the Second World War. In terms of its historical role, it is compared to the Tehran Conference of 1943 (Szpak et al., 2023).

The civilized world is increasingly beginning to realize that the war in Ukraine has gone beyond a local armed conflict. Our state is already considered an important strategic partner or ally, which is why Ukraine is constantly provided with various military weapons, financial and humanitarian support, etc. The exit of the Russian-Ukrainian war beyond the local borders can be seen, in particular, in the fact that the Russian Federation began to threaten the use of its nuclear arsenal. These unacceptable threats have become another indicator that the process of destruction of the outdated system of collective security has begun.

It is quite clear that the issue of the nuclear threat remains almost the main restraining factor for the civilized world regarding more active actions in the confrontation with the Russian Federation. Even after the adoption of the Lend-Lease law for Ukraine (a policy according to which the US supplies its allies with ammunition, equipment, products, strategic raw materials, including petroleum

products and material assets), the civilized world is still wary of quickly providing Ukraine with the necessary offensive weapons, because it can push Russia into direct nuclear confrontation with NATO. However, the world community increasingly understands that when it comes to the use of any nuclear weapons, such a threat reaches a completely different level of confrontation in the world, even despite the fact that the war will allegedly remain on the territory of Ukraine. The cessation of nuclear coercion or the possibility of transitioning the conflict to a peaceful solution is possible only under the condition of nuclear deterrence of Russia, namely, decisive preventive actions of both the most authoritative security organizations (UN, NATO, OSCE) and individual states – participants of the collective security system (primarily the USA, Great Britain, Germany, France). Therefore, the possibility of stopping the war in Ukraine and forming a new system of collective security is seen only after a complete military defeat and capitulation of the Russian Federation (Rynning, 2020).

The course of the Russian-Ukrainian war proved that only the national armed forces and international structures of collective security, both global and regional, which are able to fulfil their main role in maintaining international peace and security, can be a guarantee of security in the destroyed international legal order.

Violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, contrary to existing international agreements, clearly calls into question the system of international law and the international contractual and legal framework, including the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons. The disregard of the nuclear club states for the security guarantees of those states that have given up nuclear weapons shapes their understanding not only as a deterrent but also as a compelling argument in the struggle for leadership and resources.

It is worth remembering that Ukraine joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on the condition of providing it with security

guarantees. In accordance with the international obligations of the Russian Federation, Ukraine must raise the issue of Russia's international legal responsibility due to the annexation of Crimea, armed aggression and its support and financing of terrorist groups in the East of Ukraine, as well as appropriate compensation and satisfaction. However, experts in international law doubt the prospects of Ukraine's lawsuits against Russia, and therefore the restoration of civilized, legally compliant Ukrainian-Russian relations (Турчин, 2016).

Belarus and Kazakhstan found themselves in a similar situation to Ukraine, which similarly gave up their nuclear arsenal in the mid-nineties in exchange for guarantees from the USA, Russia and Great Britain. Today, they are not members of NATO, and large groups of ethnic Russians live on their territory. Therefore, their international guarantees look quite dubious. In addition to the fact that within the framework of the problem of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, at one time countries such as Switzerland, Sweden, Iraq, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Japan, Libya, Poland, Romania, Germany were forced to curtail their nuclear programs and projects (Турчин, 2016).

International tension is exacerbated by the fact that there are not only countries in the world that de jure possess nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery (Great Britain, France, China, the Russian Federation, the USA), but also those that are de facto considered to be such – India and Pakistan, and those who are suspected of possessing nuclear weapons – Iran, Israel. For example, Israel already pursues a traditional policy of “nuclear uncertainty”, it is believed that the DPRK has a new military nuclear program, and the “Iranian nuclear dossier” does not lose its relevance in international politics.

Under such conditions, it will also be difficult for the international community to solve the problem of nuclear proliferation, especially in the Middle East, which is one of the most dangerous regions for the proliferation of nuclear technologies. In

fact, the Russian Federation is endangering the entire regime of nuclear non-proliferation, which was formed over the past thirty years. Russia's current behavior is destabilizing regional and global security, and therefore holding back the process of nuclear disarmament. It forms the belief that the security interests of non-nuclear states are protected much weaker than those of states that are members of the nuclear club. Therefore, the position of the Americans and Europeans on the Ukrainian problem, its solution in accordance with the norms of international law, is a kind of test of the reliability of the extended deterrence system in Europe (Войціховський, Бакумов, 2023).

In the opposite case, the conviction that power is the most important factor in resolving disputes between states will gradually form in the international consciousness. Instead, the principle of law is the fate of the weak. Therefore, the most important task is to reform the structures of multilateral diplomacy, first of all, the UN, which must immediately find ways to solve a number of tasks related to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation; ensuring territorial integrity, sovereignty of states and peoples' rights to self-determination and self-defense; to reform the decision-making procedure in the UN Security Council, etc. Because otherwise, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will not only become an example of the dominance of force over law but will also set a precedent for many other states with similar problems.

In recent decades, the West underestimated Russia's aggressiveness, and convinced itself of the possibilities of its prospects as a democratic state and, as a result, this created a reserve of time for the Russian Federation to form a military and authoritarian nuclear state with an unpredictable foreign policy. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict provoked a review of the world order and the global balance of power. Thus, according to Fukuyama, the most attractive model of the political and state system at the beginning of the 21st century remains a democratic state with a

market economy. Nevertheless, over the past 25 years, there has been a decline in the prestige of democracy, which is caused by the economic crises in the USA and the EU. In parallel, the process of constructing an “anti-democratic message” is being observed, which is a kind of challenge to democracy from Russia and China, first of all. Therefore, the scientist includes the territorial ambitions of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China among modern foreign policy threats, and at the same time emphasizes that such challenges should be repelled by the world community more decisively than now. The union of the USA and the EU is opposed to the union of the Russian Federation with similar authoritarian countries. China took the position of an observer of the struggle of its competitors, thus trying to strengthen its position in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, countries that are on the lines of confrontation between world and regional leaders will constantly experience a security deficit and will probably turn into conflict zones. The advantage here will be on the side of the one who will be able to use the entire arsenal of “soft” and “hard” power tools, possess strategic thinking, as well as strong political will and broad legitimacy among the masses (Войціховський, Бакумов, 2023).

This greatly actualizes the issue of regional and global security systems. Significantly, both the global security system (UN) and the European one (OSCE) could not fully respond to the aggression of the Russian Federation. Thus, within the framework of the work of the UN, Russia blocked the decision of the Security Council regarding the non-recognition of the referendum in Crimea, regarding the situation in Ukraine, the elections in the so-called LPR and DPR, and the Malaysian Airlines plane crash. The OSCE also did not find at its disposal sufficient instruments for the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. It is obvious that the majority of NATO and EU countries have realized the expediency of developing their strategic positions regarding national, regional and continental security. At the same time, the possibility of creating alternative security alliances is denied by the statement that

the existence of a system independent of NATO in Europe is impossible, and the role of this powerful alliance in regional and global security systems is key (Genschel, 2022).

Therefore, it is clear that in the coming decades, the unifying factor for European politicians will not be the enlargement of the EU, but the strengthening of NATO, the Euro-Atlantic security zone, to which Sweden and Finland may become the first candidates for entry. Therefore, Ukraine should look for more effective ways of cooperation with NATO, and in the case of long-term postponement of the Euro-Atlantic prospects, work on the creation of alternative zones of collective security.

For example, according to some researchers, it is Poland and the Baltic states that realize the need for a serious approach to defense and are the partners that can support Ukraine in confronting the aggressor from the East. The newly elected President of Poland Andrzej Duda also initiated the creation of a new influential geopolitical bloc consisting of Poland, Romania and Ukraine, which will cover the space from the Baltic and Black to the Adriatic seas. According to Duda, “A country is strong when it is surrounded by allies, this is also an element of increasing power in the world”. Therefore, today the world public must develop new mechanisms for the formation of a modern security architecture, which will make it impossible to use force in the resolution of international disputes and strengthen the importance of the international legal system, and the effectiveness of international structures in ensuring the global security system. In parallel, work should be done on the creation of a new regional security system with the involvement of Ukraine as a strategic partner (*Андрей Дуда пропонує, 2023*).

Nuclear weapons have played a significant role in shaping foreign policy since their development in the mid-20th century. The possession of a nuclear weapon state is often considered a deterrent to potential aggressors, as the potential destruction caused by a nuclear strike is significant. The development of nuclear weapons also

led to the concept of mutually assured destruction, in which a country would not use nuclear weapons against another country that also possessed nuclear weapons because retaliation would destroy both countries. This concept helped prevent nuclear war during the Cold War.

While the war in Ukraine continues with all its brutality, Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to rattle his guns, threatening nuclear weapons. On February 21, 2023, he announced that Russia would suspend the New NPT, the only remaining arms control agreement with the United States. The West sees Putin's nuclear threats as mostly a bluff. However, Russia continues to raise the tone of its threats within the framework of nuclear deterrence. In addition to the threats, the Kremlin took three specific actions: the nuclear strike drills on February 19, 2022, before the war began, the RS-28 Sarmat missile test on April 20, 2022, and finally, the suspension of Novy START. On the other hand, the only concrete deterrent action by NATO against Russian threats was the nuclear deterrence exercises held in October 2022 (Мироненко, 2022).

Although the West did not take Russia's threats seriously, military aid to Ukraine never stopped. Therefore, Russia could not achieve its goals in Ukraine. According to some experts, this could increase the chances of using tactical nuclear weapons in theater, albeit on a limited scale. Those stakes become higher if the war turns in Ukraine's favor, given that Russia has more nuclear warheads than NATO.

It became necessary for NATO to prepare for the possibility of using nuclear weapons. In the event of Russia's use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine, NATO has options such as not acting militarily, responding with nuclear weapons, or participating in conventional hostilities. The only certainty is that if nuclear weapons are used, there will be no winner in the war, ushering in a new era with grave consequences for the entire world.

CONCLUSIONS

From February to September 2022, the Russian leadership repeatedly stated that any clash between NATO forces and Russia would lead to the risk of nuclear war. That is why most of the Russian nuclear narratives during the aggression on the territory of Ukraine were aimed at deterring both democratic decision-makers and the Western electorate from even considering direct military intervention in Ukraine. Russia has largely used nuclear threats to create a safe haven from foreign military involvement, a red line that the West has neither crossed nor questioned.

With this limited objective, Russia's nuclear deterrence has been successful. Western countries concluded that direct military intervention would not be justified, although whether this was because of either regardless of the Russian government's nuclear rhetoric or even its nuclear arsenal remains indeterminable. Western politicians mirrored Russia's red line, categorically excluding the possibility of direct military confrontation. Repeating Russian rhetoric, they repeatedly explained their position of non-intervention by referring to the risks of escalation. Significantly, the only context in which Western officials hinted at the possibility of direct intervention was in the case of Russia's use of nuclear weapons, a scenario in which the threat of deterrence would have already been realized.

Whenever Western politicians even hinted that armed intervention might be a possibility, Russian politicians followed up with a warning. This containment dynamic was repeated at least twice. However, despite some initial differences in risk assessments, the NATO allies quickly returned to Russia's red line. All members of the Alliance remained cautious and waited for a common position to emerge before taking any concrete steps. In the end, the NATO allies collectively rejected any initiatives by European countries to more radically contain the Russian Federation, directly citing the risks of escalation and stressing that NATO does not want to become an accomplice in the war.

Although both sides agreed on the need to prevent a direct confrontation between the nuclear powers, the Russian government went further in an attempt to more broadly dissuade the West from supporting Kyiv. Thus, the Russian leadership has hinted that the risk of nuclear escalation may increase in response to Western military aid to Ukraine or sanctions against Russia. This strategy of persuasion had very limited success – it did not prevent but probably slowed, and possibly imposed some limits on, military supplies and sanctions.

However, the attempts of the Russian Federation to convince everyone of the possible start of a nuclear war were extremely cautious. First, the nuclear dimension of these statements remained largely implicit. For example, Russian officials have sometimes talked about sanctions or military aid in terms that echo Russian nuclear doctrine. The aid constituted an “act of aggression” or posed an “existential” threat, Russian officials said, hinting at the possibility of a nuclear response. Russian politicians also warned that Western aid could lead to a dangerous “direct confrontation” or had already led to confrontation by proxy - a scenario both sides agreed was fraught with risks. Second, these implicit threats were followed by a series of explicit denials, corrections, and accusations of “misunderstanding” Russia’s “purely defensive” policy. More than a dozen statements denied such a policy of deterrence at all or claimed that Russia would use nuclear weapons only in the event of a direct attack.

NATO countries, in turn, sought to demonstrate that Russia’s nuclear coercion was unsuccessful, trying to prevent the creation of a dangerous precedent. During only the first seven months of the war, representatives of the West declared more than five dozen times about continuous or increased support for Ukraine.

Despite these declarative denials of the effectiveness of Russian persuasion, the behaviour of the West indicates a cautious reaction. While it remains unclear whether this was due to Russia’s innuendo or its sheer possession of nuclear weapons,

NATO countries have clearly tried to moderate their support for Ukraine to avoid a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia that could lead to nuclear risks. Five aspects are central to this caution. First, NATO governments have limited access to information by keeping certain announcements deliberately vague and confirming certain shipments only after they have arrived in Ukraine. Second, both the Europeans and the Americans adopted a phased approach to both the quantity and quality of arms delivered, trying to gauge Moscow's response before taking further steps. Third, the West has repeatedly and publicly refuted Russia's attempt to equate the provision of large-scale aid with direct military involvement. Fourth, Western powers have often shown caution when publicly discussing possible deliveries, as in the case of fighter jets or certain types of battle tanks. Finally, Western representatives tried to avoid links to Ukrainian attacks on valuable Russian targets.

During the war, Western officials repeatedly confirmed that Russia had not yet made physical preparations for the use of nuclear weapons. However, based on Russia's apparent triple nuclear strategy, three implications emerge for possible future developments.

First, statements and actions by both the West and Russia suggest that the risks of using nuclear weapons will indeed increase if NATO enters a conflict with a superior force, but there is no indication that the Alliance is headed that way.

On the other hand, below the threshold of direct intervention, Western governments seem to have more leeway to assist Ukraine in its military efforts. The Russian government's statements and observable behaviour do not indicate that it is considering the use of nuclear weapons in response to military aid to Ukraine or sanctions against Russia, least of all against NATO members. On the contrary, in accordance with the strategy of containment, Russian politicians sought to avoid any escalation that could lead to a direct confrontation with the transatlantic alliance.

Finally, Russia's calculated and cautious approach to nuclear signals also suggests that, at least for now, its covert nuclear threats against Ukraine remain implausible.

Nevertheless, it is important to take into account the aspect of the international reaction, which currently remains only at the level of support for the Ukrainian government and the army but does not correspond to a more global reality, which requires fundamental changes in the security system not only of the European space but also and the whole world. That is why it is important to redesign all the structural components of the security space and the appropriate mechanism for responding to emerging threats, because currently, in the global dimension, war, as Karl Clausewitz claimed, is only a continuation of politics by other means, in which Ukraine has become a fighter for world peace.

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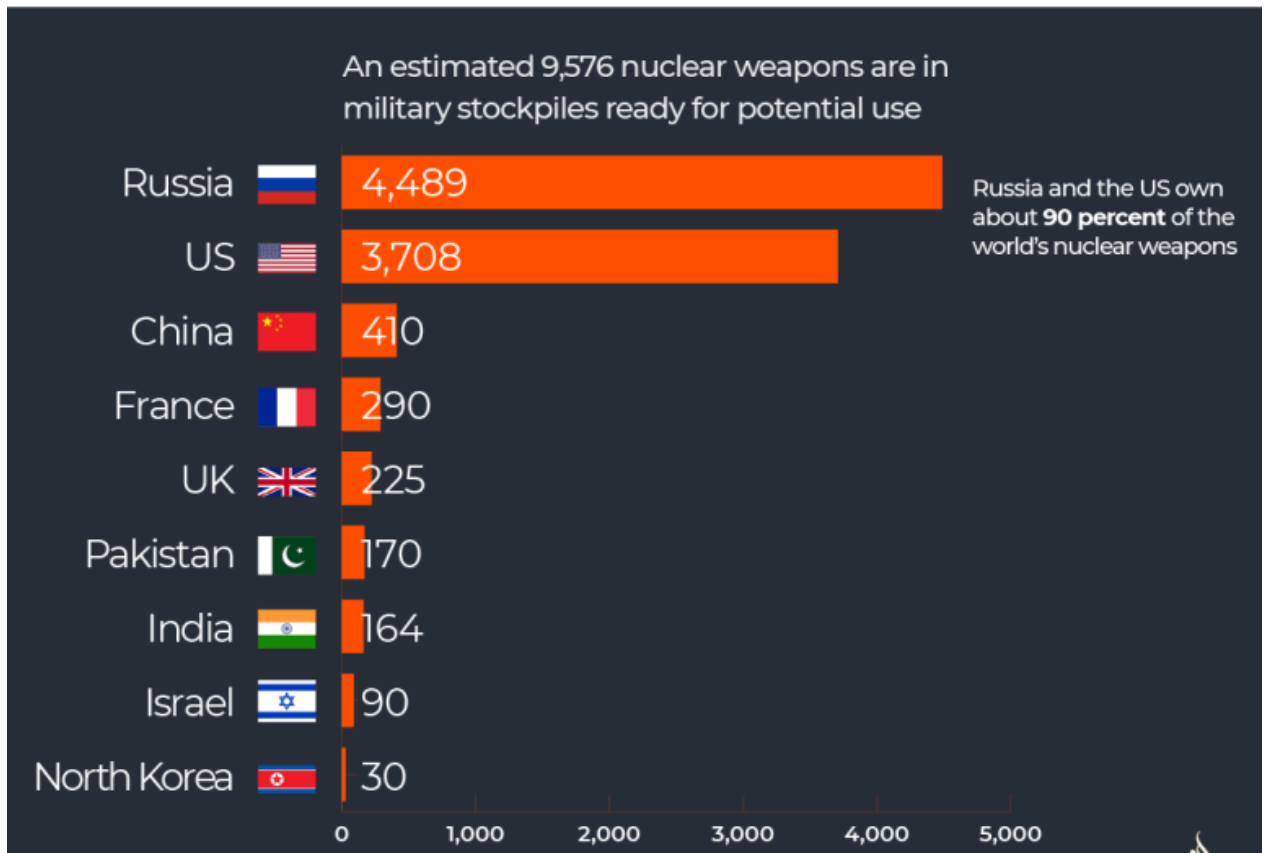
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Appendix 1. Global nuclear weapons stockpile growing in 2023



Appendix 2. Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty: Estimated U.S.-Russian Nuclear Warhead Inventories, 1977-2018

