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RUSSIAN DR. STRANGELOVE OR HOW MOSCOW NEVER STOPPED LOVING THE BOMB: RUSSIA'S APPROACH TO DETERRENCE

The international security system has been in crisis for the past decade, with the most significant escalation occurring when Russia launched an armed aggression against Ukraine, a country that was guaranteed protection under the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. This event led to a major shift in the role of nuclear weapons in global relations, triggering discussions about revising nuclear strategies and the use of nuclear deterrence as a policy tool. Russia has openly stated that traditional nuclear deterrence is no longer effective and has considered lowering the nuclear threshold to restore the credibility of its deterrence. This article aims to determine whether this potential shift in Russia's nuclear strategy represents a move towards nuclear escalation or is merely an attempt to enhance its deterrence capabilities. The research is based on the theory of nuclear deterrence, focusing on the reliability, decisiveness, persuasiveness, and dynamics of deterrence. It examines Russia's nuclear posture through the lens of its perception of deterrence, analyzing its military doctrines and strategies alongside the statements of Russian senior strategic representatives to gain insights into Moscow's nuclear strategies and the stability of its deterrence. The study also explores the character of the Russian leader and their willingness to bear the risk of nuclear conflict, which directly influences the persuasiveness of Russia's nuclear deterrence. Additionally, it delves into Russia's "red lines" and the extent to which they reflect the true determination of the Russian leadership. In conclusion, the study suggests a decrease in the effectiveness of Russia's nuclear deterrence, with attempts to restore it through the threat of using nuclear weapons if certain "red lines" are crossed.

Key words: nuclear weapons, deterrence, Russia, coercion, "red lines", strategy.

Introduction. The large-scale armed aggression of the largest nuclear power against a state, which voluntarily gave up its nuclear arsenal in exchange for security guarantees, has changed the perception of traditional security guarantee mechanisms and norms. One of the manifestations of the crisis of the international

security system, based on nuclear non-proliferation and arms control regimes, is the enormous growth of the role of nuclear weapons in communication between world actors. Russian nuclear blackmail, primarily targeting the USA and NATO allies, achieved its goals: Ukraine did not receive direct military support, and the supplies of promised weapons were delayed. This strategy restored the popularity of nuclear deterrence, reminiscent of the Cold War era, and increased the role of nuclear compellence as a policy tool and a form of deterrence projection. Consequently, this development has sparked discussions about the role of nuclear weapons in modern foreign policy and strategy. In particular, Russian high-ranking officials are such an example, following Putin's statement on June 7, 2024, regarding the possibility “to rule out making any changes” to Russia’s nuclear doctrine – “the living tool” (Rosenberg, 2024). Deputy foreign minister Ryabkov stated that “the war in Ukraine meant that “nuclear deterrence in its traditional sense does not work fully” and as such there needs to be some “conceptual additions and amendments” providing Russia’s “more concrete approaches” with regard to “further escalation on the part of our adversaries” (Cole, 2024). Challenges, stemming from actions by US and NATO raise the question of compliance of Russia’s doctrinal documents on nuclear deterrence with modern nuclear needs, continued Ryabkov, repeating Kremlin rhetoric about West’s escalation of “the conflict in Ukraine”. And on June 24, 2024 Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov declared that Russia “has started updating its nuclear doctrine” (Reuters, 2024). One of the possible amendments may be related to “lower its threshold for nuclear use” (Putin says, 2024).

Purpose and objectives. The research aims to determine the extent to which the debated lowering of the nuclear threshold in Moscow is a step towards nuclear escalation or merely a move to restore the effectiveness of Russia's weakening deterrence. Therefore, the objectives of the article are to explore, firstly, the general perception of deterrence in Russia, secondly, the nature of Russian president Putin as a political leader and key decision-maker and his approach to nuclear deterrence, and finally, to identify the Russian “red lines” which the Kremlin is currently trying to update.

Methodology. The paper is mostly based on the deterrence theory framework. For the purpose of the research the authors refer to Freedman’s definition of deterrence as “an act of persuasion” that the costs of the potential attack will overwhelm any benefits from it (Freedman, 2018, p. 4). At the same time it is important to concern the broader interpretation of the deterrence known also as the theory of influence (George, 2003) where deterrence is regarded as “persuasion of one’s opponent that the costs and/or risks of a given course of action he might take [*adequately*] outweigh its benefits” (George & Smoke, 1974, p. 11). The latter definition involves influencing not only the opponent’s perception of a potential attack but also the range of decisions the opponent may be ready to take in the general course of any action. That is to say, this deals with foreseeing and averting the potential threat of attack even before it is formed. Here, compellence “threatening action that is intended not to forestall some adversarial action but to bring about some desired action through “fear of consequences” (Schelling 1966).

Additionally, the theoretical framework involves the meaning of escalation as a tool of influence. In particular, escalation here means “an increase in the intensity or scope of conflict that crosses a threshold considered significant by one or more of the participants” (Morgan et al., 2008, p. 8). In the article, the deliberate escalation when

an actor increases (or pretends to be ready to increase) the scope of a conflict, thereby coercing the opponent away from the undesired actions or compelling him to perform ones in compliance with the actor's interests. Such an approach is most common for the asymmetric distribution of power, when the weaker opponent uses "coercive diplomacy" to blackmail the stronger rival. This situation, named escalation dominance, takes place when the blackmailing state discovers some type of asymmetric vulnerability in the opponent and is able to impose the unbearable costs on the opponent (Morgan et al., 2008, p. 17). In case of Russia, one can see that this "relative stakes" in the conflict is one of the main features of current Kremlin's strategy.

Recent publications. The relevance of the problem of deterrence and its changing nature can be considered through numerous publications that appeared since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Putin's first statements related to the threat to use nuclear weapons against any who "may be tempted to intervene in the ongoing events". In this regard, the changes in perception of deterrence and its credibility is in the focus of the research of D. Adamsky (2024), K. Ven Bruusgaard (2016), K. Giles (2023), A. A. Michta (2023), P. Sinovets and I. Maksymenko (2023). Key elements of deterrence and nuclear posture in the Putin's policy – "red lines" and "escalation for de-escalation" strategy – are elaborated by O. Oliker and A. Baklitskiy (2018), P. Sinovets (2018; 2022; 2023a; 2023b), M. B. Schneider (2018), B. Tertrais (2016), K. Ven Bruusgaard (2021). At the same time, the article aims to provide an exploration of Kremlin nuclear posture through the lens of the Russian perception of deterrence, as well as a content analysis military doctrines and strategies versus speeches by Russian higher-strategic representatives that allows better understanding the role of nuclear weapons in Moscow's strategic standpoint and perspectives of deterrence stability.

The key pillar deterrence element is its credibility which consists of the capability to inflict damage, the resolve to do this and the understanding of this situation by the potential opponent. The second element is essential for deterrence to remain dynamic as a tool of pressuring the opponent for coercive purposes. The resolve of the state to inflict damage is usually defined by the character of the leader whose determination is very much dependant on his eagerness and the ability to bear risk of going to the brink of nuclear war. To reach this purpose any leader can use bluff to boost his image of the risky player, however rationality is the factor which being proved usually affects the credibility of the leader's bold declarations. Usually expressing the resolve goes in combination with drawing "red lines" which shows the enemy the limits of the permitted actions, the threshold crossing which will result in retaliation.

To unpack the aspect of Russian resolve in its war on Ukraine the research intents to focus on such issues as: as Russian general perception of deterrence, the character of the Russian leader defining the bluff vs. the true resolve and the Russian "red lines" and their shift during the war, which to certain extents reflects the true vs. the declared resolve of the Russian leadership.

The General Perception of Deterrence in Russia

There is a common wisdom that *deterrence a la Russe* is somehow different from what deterrence in the West means. According to both V. Bruusgaard, S. Charap and D. Adamski, one of the key answers is embedded in the Russian word "сдерживание" ("sderjivaniye") (deriving from the verb "to hold" which already means action, mostly physical than the verbal one) which by definition supposes threat of action plus action

(literally translated as “containment”), while the English word “deterrence” relies mostly on the verbal threatening (Ven Bruusgaard 2016; Chaper 2020; Adamsky 2024). There is some doubt about this linear connection. In particular, Soviet scholars avoided the direct translation of the word “deterrence” as “устрашение” (“ustrasheniye”), as the latter meant more an act of terrorizing Soviet Union with fear of nuclear bombardment. For instance, there is a belief that at the earliest years after the invention of the atomic bomb “ustrasheniye” was the act of using atomic bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the further hope to affect the USSR decisions. “Only after the emergence of the Soviet nuclear arsenal ... the term “deterrence” has started to be used by the American strategists as “containment” (“сдерживание”) or “mutual containment” as one of the Soviet experts stressed in the mid of 1970s. So, according to the Soviet use of these strategic wording one can see that the term “deterrence” as a strategy was translated to Russian as the word “сдерживание” (literally meaning “containment”) because “ustrasheniye” has negative and purposeless meaning in Russian.

In this context, D. Adamsky (2024) justly defines “deterrence a la Russe” as based on the “use of threats, sometimes accompanied by the limited use of force, to preserve the status quo (to deter) or to change it (to compel). Therefore the only basic difference between Russian and Western deterrence is instead of the Western coercion (which combines deterrence and compellence) Russians use the word “deterrence” for the same purpose.

However, it would be mistaken to imagine that the Russian understanding of deterrence is anyhow different from the Western one. The Russian perception of deterrence originates from classic US deterrence literature of the 1960s. A classic example is a document titled “Management and Termination of War with the Soviet Union”, prepared by the Shelling’ group for the US intelligence, and based on the idea of terminating the war on terms acceptable for the United States (CIA. 1963). One can find that basic similarity in all Russian military doctrines since 2000, as well as the “Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian federation on nuclear deterrence” from 2020 where the main purpose of Russia is proclaimed as the termination of the military actions “on terms acceptable for the Russian Federation”. This similarity mostly related regional wars (the war of Russia with its neighbour where the third larger side interferes), and stands on the idea that the limited use of nuclear weapons can help Russia to end up the war using nuclear weapons “to de-escalate” the situation. Again, it rests on the concept of predetermined damage, which was defined as the “damage subjectively unacceptable to the enemy as being higher than the advantages the aggressor is waiting to gain from the application of the military force.” Applying this concept to regional war, which has become one of Russia’s biggest fears since the Kosovo precedent, “the aggressor” would likely back down as a result of the cost-benefit analysis if having received or anticipated certain damage from nuclear weapons. The interesting fact is that the Military Doctrine of 2014 raised the nuclear threshold to the level where nuclear use is assigned only to the situations where state existence is in jeopardy, and according to the Russian president it’s still relevant for the current posture.

However, the obvious shifting of the Russian red lines drawn for the West in the war on Ukraine created the official debate in the Russian society, where last year Sergey Karaganov, and recently Dmitry Trenin suggested to shift Russian

nuclear doctrine from defending the existence of the state to securing state's vital interests. The aim of this trend is to resurrect nuclear deterrence by lowering nuclear threshold. Again, referring to the authors' point on the character of Russian nuclear deterrence: French military theorist of 1960ths general Andre de Beaufre claimed: state' deterrence does not work if the other side doesn't believe it may strike first.

Actually, this idea often appeared also in the US political discourse where the introduction of the Trump 'administration' Nuclear Posture Review in 2018 was often promoted together with the idea that lowering nuclear threshold is aimed at enhancing deterrence credibility.

Analysis of the Russian leader's Resolve

Deterrence in Russia as the authoritarian state is strongly dependent on the character of its leader. Therefore, it's crucial to examine the role of Vladimir Putin as a decision maker in the strategic field and his rationality.

There are a lot of speculations on the nature of the Russian president. "He is inadequate", said President of Ukraine Zelensky. "Only inadequate person could attack the other state". Unfortunately, ages of history proved that very adequate persons invaded other nations and were involved in the genocidal actions.

However, President Putin is a highly rational, risk-averse leader who has a good understanding of deterrence theory and is strongly convinced that, in terms of resolve, Russia always outmatches the West. The Putin's biography and him traditionally dealing with conflicts are full of examples.

Among them the first instance illustrates Putin's experience with other adversaries before February 24, 2022. One may notice that while Moscow was involved in the number of military conflicts the Russian president always been careful enough to avoid risking his own or the state's national security. Meaning that it has never been a case of him attacking the enemy he ever considered strong. Chechnya, Syria, Georgia, Ukraine with Crimean case... even if Russia met strong resistance the balance of forces was very far from being even comparable to the Russian capabilities. Moreover, no serious Western sanctions were imposed on Russia for all its previous actions, while Nord Stream was gained its further development exactly at 2008 and 2014 no matter of the attacking Georgia or annexing Crimea from Ukraine. The same expectations were about Ukraine's possible resistance or Western sanctions. Ukraine was presented by the Federal Security Bureau reports as a vulnerable target without any capabilities or resolve to fight longer than 3 weeks, while the seriousness of the Western sanctions was planned to compensate by the intensification of Russian cooperation with the East.

Second, Putin demonstrated his knowledge of deterrence theory more than once. The 2021 article of President Putin, gives a very motivated explanation of why he started the bloody war: "...When I was asked about Russian-Ukrainian relations, I said that Russians and Ukrainians were one people – a single whole. These words were not driven by some short-term considerations or prompted by the current political context. It is what I have said on numerous occasions and what I firmly believe" (Putin, 2021). This article manifests Russia's intentions regarding Ukraine, signalled to the world eight months before the invasion. A. Aslund branded it "one step short of a declaration of war", while Russian media declares the essay as Putin's "final ultimatum to Ukraine" (Dickinson, 2021). According to the basics of deterrence theory, the deterrent side can only control the situation if the adversary's motivation

is low enough (Morgan, 2003, p. 239). To some extent, this imbalance of resolve/interest was reinforced by President Biden's statement on the eve of the war, in which he stressed that the US would not support Ukraine with military forces to avoid a possible nuclear war with Russia.

“This bizarre game of nuclear look-at-me is linked to the Kremlin's equally bizarre complaint that its act of invading Ukraine has created an existential threat to Russia”, comments Rose Goetemueller (2024, May 15), raising the primary concern of the West today. In his September 21, 2022 speech on the official annexation of the conquered Ukrainian regions, President Putin sent one of his most intimidating messages. By officially declaring these territories as Russian, he employed his “art of commitment,” putting himself “in a position where we cannot fail to react as we said we would” (Tertrais, 2016). The legal inclusion of the annexed territories in Russia automatically eliminated any other options for Moscow and demonstrated its resolve to stand by its new acquisitions. The speech was supported by the claim that if Russia feels its territorial integrity is threatened, Kremlin will use all defense methods at our disposal, and “this is not a bluff” Putin emphasizes. It all shows the Russian president well familiar with “the game of a chicken” strategic manoeuvre when one of the drivers-competitors demonstrates his inability to stop (which can be camouflaged under the notions of “irrationality”, “fanaticism” or blind resolve), compelling his rational opponent to swerve first.

Third, contrary to his strong deterrent messages Putin demonstrated great cautiousness dealing with NATO during the Russia invasion in Ukraine. In particular, Russia never attacked NATO states' arms supplies lines to Ukraine even at the Ukrainian territory. Moreover, Ukraine managed to perform its obligations according to the grain deal, having established a shipping corridor in the western regions of the Black Sea. Rose Goetemueller (2024, March 22) calls it “another form of intra-war deterrence” when “Kyiv has taken advantage of proximity to NATO territory, ensuring that shipping passes close to the coasts of ... NATO allies willing to support the transit of commercial ships through the Black Sea”. It would not happen if Putin was a reckless risk-taking leader, never fearlessly changing his way because of the opponent reactions. On the opposite, it mostly reminds a cautious rational leader who is afraid of escalation similarly to his American colleague.

Fourth, the risk-averse character of Putin can be proved by the situation of the autumn 2022 when he gave his speech on the annexed territories causing anxiety of the West that may use tactical nuclear weapons against Ukraine. In October 2022, in response to President Putin's speech, the Biden administration sent strong signals to the Russian leadership that any use of nuclear weapons against Ukraine would be retaliated with a conventional strike (Helmores, 2022). Those signals were artfully backed up by President Biden's speech in October 7, 2022, in which he made the first direct threat of using nuclear weapons since the Cuban Missile Crisis. President Biden added that he does not think “there's any such thing as the ability to easily (use) a tactical nuclear weapon and not end up with Armageddon” (Bose, 2022). This could be interpreted as a direct warning to Russia that any use of nuclear weapons would lead to uncontrolled nuclear escalation.

Russian authorities suggested they understood the US signals by moderating their nuclear rhetoric in late October and November 2022. In particular, in his Valdai speech on October 27, 2022, the Russian president mentioned that the West

was intentionally trying to find additional arguments to confront his country, while Russia didn't need any nuclear use on Ukraine "as it lacks any military or political utility". Furthermore, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) declared in early November that Russia was committed to the top priority of avoiding "any military clash of nuclear powers" since "nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought." The MFA also reiterated that Russia would only use nuclear weapons if the existence of the state was threatened. This principle was fully confirmed in President Putin's 2023 Valdai speech when he added that "there is no such situation today when something could jeopardize Russian statehood or the existence of Russia" (Faulconbridge, 2022).

The US deterrent signals towards Russia in the fall of 2022 demonstrated that the US informal communication on the potential use of nuclear weapons convinced Moscow to reduce its nuclear rhetoric for at least a certain period of time. Of course, one may say that the US private channel messaging deterred Russian nuclear escalation threats, not the actual use, but this is the main risk of deterrence. The performance of the threat can perfectly track its failure, but its stability may be just suggested because the status quo has been preserved. However, if to regard the threat as an act of deterrence, it can be said that the US deterrence neutralized the Russian compellent/deterrent threats. In this regard, President Putin is a cautious and rational leader who prefers safe outcomes over dangerous ones.

All of the said above probably reduces some concerns, however does not exclude chances of Putin using nuclear weapons. One of the primary anxieties here is Russia responding to the significant shift of its "red lines", which could be recently observed from the West.

Russia's Red Lines and Reaction to Shifts in Deterrence Strategy

This section describes how the West has substantially shifted Russia's "red lines" since the beginning of the war and how Kremlin reacted at crossing them by the West. B. Tertrais (2016) defines "red lines" as "the manipulation of an adversary's intent through (mostly public) statements for deterrence purposes, referring to the deliberate crossing of a certain threshold by an adversary and relevant counteraction if this threshold is crossed". From this standpoint "red lines" are used as a communication mechanism aimed at deterrence, indicating the circumstances and/or the threshold as well as consequences of certain steps made by adversary (Sinovets, 2023b).

President Putin has delivered some speeches that explicitly outlined Moscow's "red lines". Some of those statements carried very strong hints on the potential nuclear escalation in case the Russian "red lines" would be crossed. First was the speech for the launch of the war on Ukraine, the second was the May speech about the non-delivery of long-range arms to Ukraine, and the third was the September annexation speech. The West has gradually disregarded some of Russia's red lines using "salami tactics" by sending more and more arms to Ukraine, in particular those, which Russia "prohibited" sending (long-range missiles such as "Storm Shadow", "Scalp", or ATACMS). The latter and also, the known speech of French President Macron about not excluding sending troops to Ukraine, together with the statements of the UK Defence Secretary Cameron that Ukraine may use the UK missiles to target Russian territory, sparked the new round of the Russian escalatory statements and moves. In particular, President Putin made a formal order about the tactical nuclear weapons drills, accompanied by the very open statements of his press secretary Peskov: "We

see this kind of verbal escalation from officials. We see it both at the level of heads of state when it comes to France and at a rather expert level when it comes to the UK... This is a direct escalation of tensions around the Ukrainian conflict, which could potentially pose a threat to European security, for the entire European security architecture” (Gehrke, 2024).

Latter it was also followed up by the already mentioned interview of Russian influential researcher Dmitry Trenin to Interfax that Russia should change its nuclear doctrine substituting threat to the “existence of the state”, which is currently the official reason for the nuclear weapons use, to jeopardizing state vital interests. On June 7, 2024, Putin commented on the same issue, not excluding that Russia may change its nuclear doctrine lowering the nuclear threshold, or making nuclear tests (Nakhoul et al., 2024). Moreover, Kremlin accompanied its threats of “nuclear apocalypse” with deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus and subsequent military exercises there. Such steps presented a direct message to the West aimed to compel the Europeans and Americans to reduce its support to Ukraine.

The understanding of the Russian red lines seems to be further complicated by the dynamic situation with Ukraine’s invasion of the Kursk oblast, which is an essential Russian territory, covered by Russian nuclear doctrine as possible *casus belli* for the start of nuclear use. However currently one can observe not only the diminished rhetoric on the Russian nuclear use but also certain lack of the Russian authority’s attention to the Kursk situation. The Russian president called the situation a “large-scale provocation” and has taken a few trips, while the Russian media represent the presence of Ukrainian troops inside Russia’s borders as the “new normal” (Dickinson, 2024). On one hand it is possible to explain by the fact that the level of Ukrainian invasion is not critical to the Russian state’s existence yet, so no need to use the weapons of last resort or even the threat of such weapons. But on the other the lack of an appropriate reaction for the invasion of its own territory underlines the narrative of the relativity of the Russian red lines and strengthens the narrative that those lines can be shifted much further than declared. As P. Podvig comments “this whole kind of a business of red lines is actually quite misleading and not helpful” (Keating, 2024).

There can be two problems here though. First, it looks like the West has started to understand the vitality of Ukraine for Europe, and that is why one can hardly believe that it will give up its support of Kyiv. Second, the lowering of the Russian nuclear threshold with time will likely to cause similar tendencies at the West. In such situation Moscow may face the same mistake it has made starting its war on Ukraine: the underestimation of the enemy, which may end up with the direct conflict with NATO.

Conclusions. The traditional Russian perception of deterrence relies on using threats and limited force to maintain or change the status quo in their favor. This approach is evident in all of Russia’s strategic documents since 2000. However, the war against Ukraine and the increased confrontation with the West, including the concept of “escalation for de-escalation”, have raised doubts about the effectiveness of Russia’s nuclear doctrine. Russian analysts have called for a review of the nuclear posture to lower the threshold for using nuclear weapons to protect vital interests, and this call was supported by president V. Putin.

The role of the Kremlin’s leader is pivotal in understanding Russia’s nuclear strategy and the potential use of nuclear threats in a conflict with Ukraine. Despite

concerns (of being irrational) expressed by European and Ukrainian politicians about Putin's behavior, his actions in conflicts and crises do not confirm these concerns. In most cases, he chose weaker opponents or escalated conflicts when the potential supporters of his rivals were not highly motivated to intervene. Putin also strategically employs deterrence and carefully weighs the consequences of his actions. Therefore, while the possibility of a tactical nuclear strike in a conflict with Ukraine cannot be dismissed, there should be some compelling reasons for such a decision, such as a clear violation of "red lines", ending up with direct threat to the Russian state, its physical or its political integrity.

During the war against Ukraine, Putin has outlined "red lines" and threatened nuclear escalation in several speeches. However, the absence of a nuclear response from Russia to the supply of more powerful weapons to Ukraine or to Ukrainian forces crossing into Russia suggests that these threats may not have been genuine. Or, as Nikolai Sokov suggests, Russia may react at the crossing of the "red lines" post factum when facing the grave results (Sokov, 2024). This option can't be excluded, but most often it's used by some NATO members as the justification for limitations of the arms supplies or the permission to use them.

The diminished credibility of Russia's compellent threats became first evident on the eve of the Ukrainian counteroffensive operation, which successfully reclaimed territories in the South without triggering a significant escalation from Russia. The next step was the start of the UK and France coordination, sending their long-range missiles to Ukraine in the mid 2023, while the US joined this tendency with ATACMS in the spring of 2024. The speeches and the related interviews of Macron, having emphasized once again the intention of France to keep strategic ambiguity in sending troops to Ukraine, not sticking to any restrictions, has framed the new potential line regarding Russia and how its deterrence is perceived and reacted at by the only EU nuclear state. It has persuaded Russia that its nuclear compellence works less and less while deterrence, which is regarded by Moscow as the single whole, was not in perfect shape. Therefore, the increase in Moscow's escalatory signalling has resulted from its awareness that its deterrence has lost efficiency and needs to be boosted by nuclear threats. One of the main questions here is will Russia be able to escalate, fulfilling its nuclear threats to boost its credibility?

Having evaluated the nature of Russian deterrence and the leadership, one may conclude, that though nothing can be absolutely excluded, it is obvious that Putin understands the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons use. Therefore, the main Russian signalling about possible lowering of its nuclear threshold is first of all the psychological operation, aimed at influencing the resolve of the West in the war on Ukraine. Nuclear use is still a matter of last resort for Russia, and may happen at the moment when other options will look much less safe for Putin then this one. And there should be the survival of the political regime and Vladimir Putin personally at stake.

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РОСІЙСЬКИЙ ДР. СТРАНДЖЕЛАВ, АБО ЯК МОСКВА НЕ ПЕРЕСТАВАЛА ЛЮБИТИ БОМБУ: ПІДХІД РОСІЇ ДО СТРИМУВАННЯ

Резюме

Протягом останнього десятиліття міжнародна система безпеки переживала кризу, найбільше загострення якої відбулося, коли Росія почала збройну агресію проти

України, країни, якій гарантувався захист згідно з Будапештським меморандумом 1994 р. Ця подія призвела до серйозних змін у ролі ядерної зброї у глобальних відносинах, викликаючи дискусії про перегляд ядерних стратегій і використання ядерного стримування як інструменту політики. Росія відкрито заявила, що традиційне ядерне стримування більше не є ефективним, і розглянула можливість зниження ядерного порогу, щоб відновити довіру до свого стримування. Ця стаття має на меті визначити, чи є ця потенційна зміна ядерної стратегії Росії рухом до ядерної ескалації чи просто спробою посилити її можливості стримування. Дослідження базується на теорії ядерного стримування, зосереджуючись на надійності, рішучості, переконливості та динаміці стримування. У статті розглядається ядерна позиція Росії через призму її сприйняття стримування, аналізуючи її військові доктрини та стратегії разом із заявами російських високопоставлених стратегічних представників, щоб отримати уявлення про ядерні стратегії Москви та стабільність її стримування. Дослідження також вивчає характер російського лідера та його готовність нести ризик ядерного конфлікту, що безпосередньо впливає на переконливість ядерного стримування Росії. Окрім того, аналізуються російські «червоні лінії» та те, наскільки вони відображають справжню рішучість російського керівництва. У висновках констатується певне зниження ефективності ядерного стримування Росії зі спробами відновити її через загрозу застосування ядерної зброї у разі перетину певних «червоних ліній».

Ключові слова: ядерна зброя, стримування, Росія, примус, «червоні лінії», стратегія.