



NUCLEAR WEAPONS AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ACHIEVING INTERNATIONAL DOMINANCE BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

BRÓŃ NUKLEARNA INSTRUMENTEM OSIĄGANIA
PRZEZ FEDERACJĘ ROSYJSKĄ DOMINACJI
MIĘDZYNARODOWEJ

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— ABSTRACT —

This article presents the results of research which set out to clarify the principles of the use of nuclear weapons and deterrence mechanisms in order to achieve dominance by the Russian Federation in the international security environment. Analysis and criticism of the literature, non-participatory observation and elements of case study were used to solve the research problems. The research process established that the Russian Federation will conduct campaigns to undermine the existing international security order using military means, including nuclear weapons. The nuclear component is an inherent element of the Russian Federation's policy shaping the international security environment and at the same time is a key factor in the holistic concept of coercion. Strategic deterrence is a mechanism for achieving international dominance in peacetime, crisis situations, and war. Its purpose is to bring about concessions and coerce behavior consistent with the strategic interests of the Russian Federation.

— ABSTRAKT —

Celem badań, których rezultaty przedstawiono w niniejszym artykule, było wyjaśnienie zasad stosowania broni nuklearnej oraz mechanizmów odstrasżających w celu osiągnięcia przez Federację Rosyjską dominacji w środowisku bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego. Do rozwiązywania problemów badawczych zastosowano podejście systemowe oraz metody: analizę i krytykę literatury, obserwację nieuczestniczącą oraz elementy studium przypadku. W procesie badawczym ustalono, że Federacja Rosyjska będzie prowadziła kampanie podważania obowiązującego porządku bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego przy użyciu środków militarnych, w tym broni nuklearnej. Komponent nuklearny jest nieodłącznym elementem polityki Federacji Rosyjskiej kształtującym międzynarodowe środowisko bezpieczeństwa i jednocześnie stanowi kluczowy czynnik w holistycznej koncepcji przymusu. Odstrasżanie strategiczne jest mechanizmem osiągnięcia dominacji międzynarodowej w czasie

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Nuclear weapons are the ultimate guarantee of the Russian Federation's strategic dominance in the world. On the other hand, the constantly lowered threshold of its use leads to the degradation of the security environment and the violation of its stability.

Keywords: strategic dominance; Russian Federation; international security; armed forces; new nuclear weapon

pokoju, sytuacji kryzysowych i wojny. Jego celem jest doprowadzenie do ustępstw i wymuszanie zachowania zgodnego z interesami strategicznymi Federacji Rosyjskiej. Broń nuklearna stanowi ostateczną gwarancję strategicznej dominacji Federacji Rosyjskiej w świecie. Z drugiej strony stale obniżany próg jej użycia prowadzi do degradacji środowiska bezpieczeństwa i naruszenia jego stabilności.

Słowa kluczowe: dominacja strategiczna; Federacja Rosyjska; bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe; siły zbrojne; broń nuklearna

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the Russian Federation's foreign policy is to be recognized as a superpower and, by achieving dominance in the security environment, to be assigned the role of the main center for the supervision of the international order in a multipolar world (Bugajski & Assenova, 2016, p. 6). In the Russian Federation it is believed that the potential for war in conducting international confrontation is inherent in the conflict of interests and is a key factor in achieving regional and global dominance (Sherr, 2017, p. 3). Therefore, the strategy for achieving international dominance is based on modern operational capabilities and the armed forces' maintenance of high readiness to conduct strategic deterrence (Anderson et al., 2016, p. 24). In November 2020 in Sochi, President Vladimir Putin declared that regardless of the changing nature of military threats, the primary and key guarantor of Russia's military security is the nuclear triad. By doing so he made it clear that with its high nuclear weapons potential Russia remains immune to all attempts at intimidation and external influence (Putin, 2021) and at the same time can ensure the achievement of its own political goals in the global dimension. This statement may mean that Russia has tilted strategic parity in its own favor, which is tantamount to impunity in the international arena, especially in ambiguous situations similar to the annexation of Crimea.

Of particular concern for maintaining security stability is the modernization of nuclear weapons, given that the Russian Federation is poised to be the first to use them in a large-scale conflict. This is evidenced by raising the combat readi-

ness of the nuclear forces (Putin, 2020a) after the start of the war with Ukraine in February 2022 and informing the public of the creation of a nuclear-proof command center (Putin, 2020b). The Kremlin constantly plays a political game in an attempt to intimidate the West. The Russian leadership believes that with hypersonic superweapons, which can be armed with both conventional and nuclear payloads, the Russian Federation has surpassed the West militarily. This means that it is more likely to engage in direct military confrontation and, at the same time, the threshold for using nuclear weapons in conflict situations is being lowered (Felgenhauer, 2020), with implications for destabilizing global security.

Based on the literature search, it was found that limited literature is available in political science that treats the relationship between states more in terms of hegemony than domination. Security sciences lack any studies that focus on mechanisms for achieving dominance in the international security environment. Available analyses are limited to achieving military superiority, neglecting other instruments of international influence. In particular, there is a lack of studies that identify how the use of nuclear weapons and deterrence mechanisms can shape international dominance in the present or in the future. There is also a lack of knowledge regarding the achievement of international dominance by the Russian Federation.

On the basis of the existing cognitive gap, the main research problem was formulated, which is: How do nuclear weapons and deterrence mechanisms affect the Russian Federation's achievement of strategic objectives and the shaping of dominance in the international security environment? Detailing the main research problem, the following specific problems were identified: 1) What are the strategic intentions of the Russian Federation?; 2) What is the role of strategic deterrence in shaping the process of strategic dominance and how does it affect the implementation of the Kremlin's strategic ambitions?; 3) How does the use of nuclear pressure and aggression affect the Russian Federation's achievement of international dominance?

The purpose of the research, the results of which are presented in this article, was to clarify the principles of the use of nuclear weapons and deterrence mechanisms in order for the Russian Federation to achieve dominance in the international security environment.

To direct the research process, a research hypothesis was formulated, expressed by the following suppositions. Nuclear weapons are an integral element of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation and a key instrument for achieving dominance and shaping the security environment, allowing to realize

the strategic objectives of international competition and ensure the interests of the Kremlin.

A systemic approach was used to study the interactions, interdependencies and relationships between the mechanisms of influence of the Russian Federation and the participants in the international security environment. Based on it, the states and processes of achieving dominance with the use of nuclear weapons and deterrence mechanisms in the past and present were studied. On the basis of this it was possible to draw conclusions to future states of influence and identify mechanisms through which the Russian Federation will achieve its own strategic goals in the future. In solving the research problems and obtaining objective qualitative data, mainly literature analysis and criticism, non-participant observation and case study elements were used. Comparative analysis and generalization were also helpful in determining the mechanisms of maintaining, by means of nuclear weapons, dominance by the Russian Federation in the international security environment in the future. The conclusions presented in the article are the result of the application of inductive and deductive reasoning.

STRATEGIC INTENTIONS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Dominance is derived from a state's ability to achieve its own goals in the international arena, primarily through the use of force (Łoś, 2018, p. 33). In Max Weber's classical view, the power of a state is expressed by the probability of realizing its own intentions in a situation of resistance by the opposing party (Wallimann, Tatsis, & Zito, 1977). The effectiveness of power is expressed by the willingness of a state to submit or subordinate to another state (Wrong, 2002) and the ability to achieve the intended results, so it is based on efficient management (Ledyayev, 2008, p. 28). In general, states seeking to gain as much power as possible are perceived as dangerous by other actors. In the Russian Federation, it is believed that the main instrument in competing and achieving dominance in the international arena is the instrument of military influence, as through it one can subjugate other states and expand spheres of influence (Russell, 2021). However, it is important to be aware that raising the risk of aggression in the international arena can cause an escalation of negative reactions (Russell, 2021, p. 20), and thus the possibility of serious international conflicts (Putin, 2015).

The Russian Federation's dominance in the international arena is based on Yevgeny Primakov's doctrine, which was formulated in 1996. One of its key

elements is the primacy of Russia in the post-Soviet space and the pursuit of close integration of the former republics with the Russian Federation. Another element is opposition to NATO enlargement, persistent efforts to weaken transatlantic institutions, and making changes consistent with Russia's vision of the international order (Rumer, 2019, p. 4). According to current assumptions, Russia will not follow in the footsteps of Western powers, but aim to form an independent power center in the international arena, contributing to the development of a multipolar world as an alternative to the unipolar order led by the United States of America (US) (Gurganus & Rumer, 2019, p. 1). This turnaround became particularly vivid in 2012, with the return of V. Putin as president. Since then, the Russian Federation has pursued an active foreign policy of ambitious geographic scope and reflects the Kremlin's willingness to take advantage of favorable external conditions to violate the international order established by the United States (Gurganus & Rumer, 2019, p. 1). Russia's status as a great power from Moscow's perspective implies claims to possess special rights in the post-Soviet region, to play a special role in the settlement of international disputes and a greater degree of international autonomy, and to prioritize its global interests (Tsygankov, 2011, p. 41).

Russia sees the global system as a system of great powers based on a balance of power with separate spheres of influence. It recognizes two potential great powers in the European area, which include the US with NATO and the European Union (EU) (Oliver, 2016). However, it is difficult to call this a great-power system, especially since any claims of a global balance of power are wrong. The United States is still the dominant global actor militarily, economically, and probably ideologically. Only some actors, e.g., the EU, can compete with the US. Russia wants to be a great power and therefore increases its military spending, but it still lags behind the US in all three aforementioned indicators of state power (Kuhrt & Feklyunina, 2017, p. 5). These conditions, and above all economic disparities, mean that the Russian Federation has to make choices in the international arena. These choices are shaped by historical experience, elite consensus on the desired status and role of the state in international affairs, and habits that determine the ways in which strategic objectives are pursued. Based on historical experience, Russia, in its pursuit of dominance and the conduct of international rivalries, prefers offensive actions to agreements aimed at limiting the scope of competition for its own interests and making it safer. Offensive actions are based on building military power in order to deter the United States and then focusing on other strategic directions to expand the scope of the gains

achieved. Through indirect warfare the Russian Federation seeks to change the global balance of power. The strategic influence model adopted in this way limits the ability to counter strategic rivals and weakens their ability to concentrate resources (Kofman, 2020, p. 2).

Moscow in international relations pursues a revisionist policy and does not care about the nature of the international order, but about its own interests and its increasingly powerful position in the world. Most importantly, Russia wants to remain central, independent, sovereign, and the most important actor in the international arena. This is difficult due to its existing disparities in many areas with the US (Kofman, 2020, p. 3). However, it wants to minimize these disparities and achieve dominance through the use of nuclear weapons and the phenomenon of asymmetry.

Russia's policy in the international arena is becoming more and more severe. It can be assumed that it is the result of impunity after the annexation of Crimea and at the same time increasing military power, especially nuclear weapons. In February 2015, one of V. Putin's closest associates, State Duma Chairman Sergey Naryshkin, warned that the West should either learn the lessons of Yalta anew or risk war (Zamakhina, 2015). This means that the Russian Federation openly articulates its dissatisfaction with the current international order and seeks to replace the Helsinki Principles (Final) with a new Yalta system based on spheres of influence and limited sovereignty of smaller states. The Russian Federation presented a plan for this order to the United States in December 2021. In the proposed so-called security treaties, the Russians threatened not only Ukraine, but also NATO, demanding that the Alliance abandon further expansion and the withdrawal of all troops and equipment from the territory of countries that joined NATO after 1997 (Maikowski, 2022). In reality, this was blackmail, and the essence of these proposals was a repetition of the 1945 Yalta Conference arrangements of agreeing to the subordination of Eastern Europe to Russia. The West's rejection of these demands resulted in the start of war with Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Since then, senior legislative and executive officials have openly threatened forceful solutions against countries that do not yield to pressure from the Russian Federation and threatened to use nuclear weapons.

The Russian Federation's undermining of the existing international order creates great uncertainties about the future. Uncertainties also result from divergent assessments by the West and the Russian Federation of the international situation in various regions of the world and of their own operational capabilities. In addition, the war that Russia is waging today against the West, described as

non-linear, networked, new generation, hybrid, war of chaos, war without rules, war without a front line, with a flurry of propaganda half-truths and lies, diplomatic and economic pressure (Miłosz, 2015), is aimed at blurring the boundaries between internal and interstate conflict and between peace and war, which makes Russia achieve international dominance in a gray area.

THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC DETERRENCE IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF DOMINANCE BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Russian strategic deterrence is integral to Russian foreign policy and is firmly rooted in Russian history, military doctrine, and linguistics (Lucassen, 2018, p. 15). Russia's notion of strategic deterrence is very broad and includes deterring aggression, enforcing specific behavior and inflicting losses. Strategic deterrence in the Russian Federation is a holistic concept and is embedded in the integrated use of political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, and information instruments (*National...*, 2015, p. 10). It focuses on the political-military realm in peacetime, emergency, and warfare, whether local, regional, or global. It integrates the non-military power of the state with strategic military capabilities, therefore the concept of strategic deterrence is an important framework for the formation of Russian military strategy, which influences operational concepts, and sets directions for the acquisition of new operational capabilities. Strategic deterrence provides a unified model for responding to threats by using all available instruments of state influence, shaping the international security environment in a way that benefits the Russian Federation (Kofman, Fink, & Edmonds, 2020, p. 5).

Precision-guided weapons are playing an increasingly important role in conducting strategic deterrence, as the stipulations of the 2014 military strategy clearly indicate (*Informacja...*, 2015, p. 190). It should be noted that it is a dual-purpose weapon, as it enables both conventional and nuclear strikes. The combination of precision conventional strikes with a wide range of unconventional means provides great flexibility in the choice of impact options for political leaders, including the use of nuclear weapons, while at the same time making it possible to avoid waging conflict or nuclear war (Johnson, 2018, p. 25). Nuclear deterrence is conceptually, doctrinally, organizationally and operationally integrated with the use of precision-guided weapons, i.e., non-nuclear deterrence (Protasov, Sobolewskij, & Suchoruczenko, 2014, pp. 9, 12). According to Russian

military strategy, long-range precision strikes, along with unmanned systems, are targeting the economic sphere and critical infrastructure of the adversary, which, along with information operations, are designed to shake up the state's economy and discourage society from further resisting (Bosbotinis, 2018).

The pillars of deterrence include a military and a non-military component. The military component, whose main task is to conduct strategic deterrence, includes conventional general purpose military forces, non-nuclear deterrence forces with conventional precision-guided weapon, and strategic and non-strategic nuclear forces (Informacja..., 2015). Weapons of precision destruction play an increasingly important role in the conduct of strategic deterrence, as clearly indicated by the provisions of the 2014 military strategy (Informacja..., 2015, p. 190). It should be noted that it is a dual-purpose weapon, as it enables both conventional and nuclear strikes. The combination of precision conventional strikes with a wide range of unconventional means provides great flexibility in the choice of impact options for political leaders, up to and including the use of nuclear weapons, while avoiding conflict or nuclear war (Johnson, 2018, p. 25).

Strategic deterrence is a unified model of matching threat perceptions to the Russian Federation's instruments of international influence designed to shape the security environment in a manner convenient to Russian interests. In Russian thinking, strategic deterrence is both a pillar of the state's theory of how to achieve security objectives in peacetime and a comprehensive concept embedded in the national security strategy to coordinate the use of the state's means to manage the escalation of conflict. Non-military means include political, diplomatic, legal, economic, ideological, and technical-scientific means. Despite the significant interest in these means, the concept of deterrence in reality is mainly based on military force solutions. As for the list of measures used, it is relatively long. It includes demonstration of force, increasing the combat readiness of armed forces, deploying them to operational areas, demonstrating readiness to strike or conducting individual strikes, including the use of nuclear weapons (*Sderzhivaniye strategicheskoye*, n.d.). Deterrence measures are used in peacetime to prevent direct aggression or to apply military pressure against entities that threaten Russia's interests. In wartime, they are designed to manage the escalation of a conflict so as to bring about de-escalation or an end to the war at an early stage of its conduct, on terms favorable to Russia (Trenin, 2019, p. 6). De-escalation should be understood as deterring or managing escalation, but it is not synonymous with ending the war. It may entail conducting limited combat operations at an acceptable level of conflict. De-escalation is also not

synonymous with achieving victory. De-escalation can be considered a situation that leads to a strategic pause, with the simultaneous start of negotiations (Khryapin, 2005). Although the concept of strategic deterrence of the Russian Federation is comprehensive in its nature, it does not abandon forceful solutions. One might even be tempted to say that despite the clear emphasis on non-military means, other non-violent solutions prove ineffective (Sterlin, Protasov, & Kreydin, 2019).

Russian leaders use strategic deterrence to communicate to potential adversaries that Russia is capable of inflicting progressively greater losses on critical facilities of economic and military importance, with the effect of signaling to adversary leaders and civilian populations the need to abandon aggression, de-escalate hostilities, and/or end conflict. It also includes actions aimed at limiting the scope of the conflict, deterring third parties from intervening, and escalating the conflict, i.e., transforming, for example, a local war into a regional war or a global war (Kofman et al., 2020, p. 10).

THE USE OF NUCLEAR PRESSURE AND AGGRESSION TO ACHIEVE DOMINANCE

The Russian Federation's concept of strategic deterrence is based on the threat of the use of force to instill fear in the adversary and prevent the adversary from producing undesirable effects, and aims to convince the adversary that retaliatory use of force will cause the costs incurred to outweigh the benefits (Pechatnov, 2011, p. 32). It includes both a nuclear and non-nuclear component. Its goal is to intimidate an adversary resulting in a specific behavior that is consistent with the intimidating party's expectations. This type of deterrence is realized through threats or practical execution of single or group strikes using both strategic conventional weapons and nuclear weapons, according to the phase and scope of the conflict and the stage at which attempts are made to manage its escalation. Here it is important to emphasize the key role of conventional precision strike systems, which can cause selective damage to enemy assets and facilities. This makes it possible to vary the planned level of losses, according to the objectives of deterrence or forcing the opposing party to stop further armed resistance and/or end the conflict (Sukhorutchenko, Zelvin, & Sobolevskiy, 2009, p. 33). This means that precision-guided weapons should be used in the pre-nuclear stage of conflict resolution and treated as a separate type of deterrence, which fits

between the use of large conventional forces and non-strategic nuclear weapons (Radin et al., 2019, p. 112).

There is a perception in the Russian Federation that strategic conventional weapons are particularly useful in controlling the escalation of a conflict because nuclear weapons may have low credibility as a deterrent in the early stages of a conflict. This may mean that its use will not lead to de-escalation. Some Russian analysts emphasize that the use of nuclear weapons may create prohibitive psychological and deontological barriers (Burenok, Pechatnov, & Tagirov, 2009). Deterrence through the use of force is not exclusively conventional in nature, but appears to rely primarily on conventional precision-guided means, especially in the context of regional and local wars and their early stages. Nuclear deterrence can produce the desired results, but it can also equally well induce an adversary to overreact. Some, however, believe that because of its considerable destructive power, nuclear weapons can only be seen as a serious argument by states engaged in uncompromising combat. Therefore, it is likely that in armed clashes of local and regional scales, warring parties will seek to achieve their objectives using non-nuclear weapons (Sukhorutchenko et al., 2009, p. 33). Strategic conventional weapons achieve the same effect of decreasing macroeconomic indicators of the industry as nuclear weapons. It should also be taken into account that the use of nuclear weapons would lead to excessive material and human losses, which in turn could paradoxically lead not to de-escalation, but rather to further escalation of the armed conflict (Sukhorutchenko et al., 2009, p. 33).

The essence of the use of nuclear weapons, which consists in inflicting unacceptable losses to material or spiritual values on the opposing party, triggers the Russian Federation's use of reflexive control. This means that nuclear weapons are an excellent tool for achieving international domination by inducing the decision-makers of the opposing side to behave in accordance with the will of the actor. This is achieved by deliberately providing selective information on the basis of which it appears that the actors of the opposing party are taking actions consistent with their own intentions. In reality, they secure interests beneficial to the controlling party (Tomas, 2002), which enables the Russian Federation to achieve the goals of international competition and dominate the opposing party.

At this point, it is important to point out the role that non-strategic nuclear weapons play in strategic domination. The key point is that it makes it possible to change the parity of power. The point is that the use of these weapons changes the power ratio in favor of the one who made the decision to use them.

In other words, non-strategic nuclear weapons allow the Russian Federation to compensate for the disparity in conventional capabilities vis-à-vis NATO and thus avoid defeat in a direct military confrontation. In other words, it allows to compensate for the conventional advantage without crossing the threshold of using strategic nuclear weapons, which could cause global destruction or even annihilation of humanity (Sivolob & Sosnovskiy, 1999).

In the military strategy, the Russian Federation considers A2/AD capabilities as one of the pillars of deterrence and neutralization of NATO's military superiority in peacetime, crisis, and war. Considering the range of A2/AD assets deployed near borders with NATO, particularly in the Kaliningrad region and Crimea, one can conclude that they can significantly affect the Alliance's ability to move troops on its own territory. During a crisis, the Russian Federation can, through a demonstration of force, discourage the Alliance from military action against Russia. It will also be able to effectively influence the lowering of Alliance's situational awareness by disrupting means of communication, radiolocation and radio reconnaissance (Erdogan, 2018). In addition, the ever-increasing range of influence could distort the assessment of Russian strategic intentions and blur the picture between military exercises and actual preparations for escalating tensions leading to a hot conflict. On the other hand, it puts Russia in a privileged position expressed in terms of spatial and temporal superiority over the Alliance. In the event of an armed conflict with NATO, the Russian Federation will certainly try to isolate the theater of operations from the flow of fresh forces and supplies, while at the same time redeploying its own troops and putting itself in a privileged position. Given that the Alliance will have to reinforce its eastern flank in a threatening situation, it is clear that Russia's A2/AD strategy is designed specifically to prevent the deployment of NATO's main forces in the theater of operations, cutting off second-strikes and retreats and logistical support to the zone of direct military combat (Erdogan, 2018).

Factors that might prompt Russia to use nuclear weapons for the first time could include conventional strikes by an adversary directed at facilities critical to the functioning of the state, the incurrence of heavy losses by the armed forces and in key defense systems in the theater of operations, or the inability of the Russian Federation to repel a strike deep inside the national territory. Some consider existential threats ('to be or not to be') as the limit for the use of nuclear weapons, but this opinion is not widely shared. The nuclear threshold, as declared in military doctrine, is qualitative and general in nature, and the tools to quantify it are inadequate. More broadly, the question of events that could

trigger the use of nuclear weapons in the event of an escalation of conflict is complex. There appear to be two triggers for the transition from the threat or period of threatened armed conflict to the phase of actual conflict. The first is an imminent, massive and direct military threat. The second is externally inspired political upheaval, which in Russian thinking can be combined with a credible military threat. Both of these categories are qualitative interpretations of the political-military environment that Russian political leaders believe mark the transition from a period of danger to a period of direct threat (Kofman et al., 2020, p. 52). In the case of war, the decisive factor is the assessment of the scale of the conflict, i.e., what kind of war it is. For example, failure to categorize a conflict as a local war may lead to it escalating into a regional war. Regional wars inherently trigger the need to consider the indiscriminate use of strategic conventional weapons or the selective use of non-strategic nuclear weapons. In addition to the scale of the conflict, the second primary factor affecting the Russian Federation's use of nuclear weapons is the level of losses suffered by the adversary. It may boil down to the destruction of Russian economic and military facilities critical to the functioning of the state, the destruction of forces that are key to the conduct of strategic operations (usually strategic deterrence forces), and the incurrence of losses in combat systems capabilities necessary to conduct military operations in a theater of war (Kofman et al., 2020, p. 52).

Considering nuclear weapons, the Russian Federation is certainly a world power and matches the potential of the United States. Modernization of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons and their delivery systems are top priorities. In the past ten years, four of the 11 strategic nuclear submarines have been replaced with new ones, and seven of the nine missile squadrons have been rearmed with modern Yars missiles (Marran, 2021). The emphasis on strategic nuclear systems is a response to concerns about US missile defense systems in Europe. The Russian Federation fears that these systems could neutralize its ability to threaten other states with nuclear strikes, which in turn could cast doubt on Russia's status as a world power. To counter this, among other things, Iskander-type surface-to-surface ballistic missiles were strategically deployed along the entire western border, which could theoretically destroy the infrastructure of the US missile defense system, as well as other important facilities of political and military importance in Europe. In addition, the Baltic Fleet has been rearmed with cruise-type missiles Kalibr, which have a range of about 2,000 kilometers. The aforementioned weapons systems make it possible in the early stages of a conflict to execute strikes against critical infrastructure and

concentrated NATO troops, which ensures that the Russian Federation maintains its spatial and temporal dominance in conducting hypothetical military operations in Europe (Marran, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Research has confirmed that Moscow is constantly making efforts to achieve world domination by legitimizing its great power status. The strategy to achieve the goal of the multipolar world vision is based on the use of pressure and aggression and asymmetry in the use of various instruments of influence. One of them is nuclear weapons. The research process proved the thesis that in the near future the Russian Federation will continue its campaign to undermine the existing international security order and shape it from scratch, especially by military means. The Russian Federation seeks to transform its nuclear capabilities into a useful instrument of policy and the realization of its own strategic goals and the achievement of international domination.

On the basis of the research, it is proved that the nuclear component is an inherent element of the Russian Federation's policy shaping the international security environment and at the same time is a key factor in the holistic concept of coercion. The strategic objectives of the Russian Federation are achieved through integrated nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence. The Russian concept of strategic deterrence is universal in nature, as it takes into account all possible threats and accordingly implements all instruments of influence at Moscow's disposal. Strategic deterrence has a continuum function, which means a continuous impact on a potential adversary in times of peace, crisis situations, and war. The logic of applying strategic deterrence is twofold, for it combines deterrence with coercion. It demonstrates the readiness of the Russian Federation to use all possible coercive means, up to and including the use of nuclear weapons, the purpose of which is not to deter direct aggression against Russia, but first of all to bring about concessions from the international community and the attainment of certain benefits ensuring the realization of the strategic interests of the Russian Federation. The level of this readiness increases as the effectiveness of conventional deterrence diminishes.

Russia's power to undermine the existing global order is steadily growing, so it is to be expected that it will use the nuclear weapons argument to change the established system of international security. This is primarily due to Rus-

sia's strong political will to achieve its strategic goal of global domination. This domination is guaranteed by nuclear weapons, the threshold for the use of which is steadily decreasing. The constant efforts of the Russian Federation to change the balance of power, exemplified by the war with Ukraine, lead to the degradation of the international security environment and the violation of its stability. The use of even a small tactical power of nuclear weapons can lead to a drastic reduction in political, economic, and social security, and even a humanitarian catastrophe on a global scale.

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