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### **What Do Russia's Nuclear Threats Tell Us About Arms Control Prospects?**

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Arms control with the Russian Federation has hit a rough patch due to Russia's essential shut down of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), aggressive and expansionist foreign policy, and arms control violations. Russia has been remarkably consistent in issuing nuclear threats against the West and has elevated the role of nuclear weapons in its nuclear strategy. Moscow's unwillingness to limit its nuclear weapons in any meaningful way is apparent, yet the U.S. arms control community appears to discount the importance of Russia's nuclear threats as an obstacle to arms control. Russian nuclear rhetoric illustrates core Russian beliefs; beliefs that are fundamentally at odds with the West's arms control approach. The United States ought to stop assuming that both countries' share arms control goals and desire cooperative results.

#### **Russia's Nuclear Threats: General Themes**

Russia's nuclear threats against the West have been a fairly common occurrence in its public discourse, particularly since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.<sup>1</sup> The threats have been direct and indirect. Different actors within Russia issue them, from presidents and former presidents to other members of the government, to Kremlin spokespeople, to Russian propagandists. The pattern of nuclear threats is apparent: whenever the United States or NATO pursue a policy that the Russian Federation deems against its interest, the frequency of nuclear threats increases.



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The target audiences for public messages differ, too. Russia issues some threats knowing they will reach foreign audiences, particularly in the West. Such threats are likely aimed at shaping the decision-making environment in Russia's favor. Russia has been somewhat successful in this regard. For example, Russia's nuclear threats appear to have slowed down and restricted the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) military support for Ukraine with respect to providing certain weapon systems, particularly early in conflict, leading to Ukraine losing a number of its most experienced and dedicated fighters. Their lives perhaps could have been spared had the appropriate weapons been provided and delivered sooner.

Moscow's nuclear threats also appear to have contributed to achieving Russia's political goal—preventing NATO from accepting Ukraine as one of its members for the foreseeable future. As Alexander Vershbow, former Deputy Secretary General of NATO and U.S. ambassador to Russia and South Korea, pointed out in a recent article, “Putin wouldn't be wrong in concluding that nuclear coercion works.”<sup>2</sup> That is also why it is unlikely that Russia's threats will abate anytime soon.

Other nuclear threats appear to be issued to impress, and perhaps to assure, the Russian public. Nuclear weapons are a reminder of Russia's grandeur and an affirmation of its superpower status. The most powerful weapons ever invented demand respect. In a country where many villages “lack reliable electricity, navigable streets, or even indoor toilets” and food is scarce, there is “only ambiguous pride of belonging to such a great - and strong - nation,” as chiefs of the Baltic states' counterintelligence agencies point out.<sup>3</sup> In the context of Russia's conventional forces' unexpectedly dismal performance in Ukraine and a strong international reaction and sanctions against the country, nuclear weapons and nuclear threats are one of the visible reminders to its population of Russia's superpower status and a manifestation of its strength.

Nuclear threats could also be intended to normalize the idea of nuclear weapons employment within the Russian public and prepare the information environment for such an option; however, at present the Russian people do not appear supportive of nuclear weapons use in Ukraine, although whether their opinion matters is questionable.<sup>4</sup> According to Russian political scientist Mikhail Troitsky, “It's doubtful that major segments of Russian society would put the ‘survival of the state’ (as understood by Moscow) above their own physical survival.”<sup>5</sup> Recently, some members of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, a Russian think-tank, came out in opposition to normalizing the idea of nuclear weapons use promoted by the Council's chair and Putin's advisor Sergei Karaganov.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, about a third of those Russians surveyed in a poll last year stated it is “highly probable” or “quite probable” that Putin could order the Russian military to launch nuclear weapons first in a war with the West.<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that propaganda could not over time create an environment in which the Russian people *do* equate the survival of the state with their own survival and well-being, which may increase their support for nuclear weapons use. After all, over 50 percent of surveyed Russians demonstrated fear “of the possibility of war between Russia and Ukraine” in early February 2022, but 81 percent supported the action once Russia



invaded. Their support has remained consistently high throughout the war, even as evidence of Russia's atrocities and war crimes permeated the information space.<sup>8</sup>

A surge of nuclear threats from Russian officials came during U.S.-Czech/Polish negotiations in the 2007-2009 timeframe about placing U.S. missile defense components on these countries' territories.<sup>9</sup> For example, then-Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces General Nikolai Makarov threatened a pre-emptive nuclear strike in connection with U.S. missile defense deployments.<sup>10</sup> The Obama Administration cancelled the Bush Administration's plans and announced its own missile defense plans to deploy a different type of a missile defense system to Poland and Romania. These plans, too, met with Russia's disapproval.<sup>11</sup> U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty that Russia had been violating for years was another significant event during which Russia increased the number of its nuclear threats.

With Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia's threats have reached an unprecedented frequency. Perhaps this is because while Putin thought the Russian army would be able to capture Kyiv in two days (and that the Ukrainians would welcome the Russians as liberators),<sup>12</sup> the war continues more than 500 days later thanks to Ukraine's heroic resistance and Western support, resulting in large losses of equipment and manpower. For example, Russia's tank losses reportedly surpassed 2,000 at the end of May 2023.<sup>13</sup>

### **Threats Issued by Russian Government Officials**

While nuclear weapons have always been an important feature of Russia's presidential politics, Putin has been more vocal about Russia's nuclear might and what it could mean for NATO and the West since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. For example, he announced that Russia's nuclear forces would be on "special alert" immediately before the February 2022 invasion.<sup>14</sup> (The United States did not observe any changes in Russia's nuclear posture following the announcement.<sup>15</sup>) He also stated that "No matter who tries to stand in our way or all the more so create threats for our country and our people, they must know that Russia will respond immediately, and the consequences will be such as you have never seen in your entire history. No matter how the events unfold, we are ready. All the necessary decisions in this regard have been taken."<sup>16</sup>

A year and a half later, with Russia's Army still bogged down by Ukraine's valiant defense and unable to deliver the quick and decisive victory its leaders expected, Putin stated that the "elites of the West do not hide their purpose. But they also cannot fail to realise that it is impossible to defeat Russia on the battlefield."<sup>17</sup> Putin also stated that the threat of nuclear war "is increasing."<sup>18</sup> In March 2023, Russia announced it would deploy nuclear weapons to Belarus, in the first deployment beyond the Russian Federation's borders since the end of the Cold War.<sup>19</sup> The work is to be completed by "the end of the summer, by the end of this year," according to Putin.<sup>20</sup> "This is an element of deterrence," he said, "so that everyone who thinks of inflicting a strategic defeat on us should keep this circumstance in mind."<sup>21</sup> Russian nuclear deployments to Belarus introduce new uncertainties in the deterrence calculus, though the



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strategic equation is not affected much since Russia can already reach all the targets on NATO's territory.

But Putin was no stranger to nuclear threats even prior to Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine. For example, during his 2018 address to the Federal Assembly, Putin unveiled a suite of new "exotic" nuclear weapon systems such as underwater nuclear drones and said "In spite of all difficulties over the years, economic and financial problems with our defense industry and Armed Forces, Russia reached nuclear power, but nobody wanted to take us seriously. Nobody listened to us. So listen to us now."<sup>22</sup> The remarkable slide show accompanying his speech ended with what appeared to be a depiction of Russian nuclear warheads headed toward Florida.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps no Russian government official has issued more nuclear threats during Russia's invasion of Ukraine than Dmitry Medvedev, former stand-in President for Putin, once the West's hope for Russia's democratization, and currently the Deputy Head of Russia's Security Council.<sup>24</sup> He threatened a "nuclear apocalypse"<sup>25</sup> in the context of Western weapon supplies for Ukraine on several occasions.<sup>26</sup> He boasted, "And I can tell you something, simply as someone who knows something about this. Let's be clear: if you have a weapon in your hands, and I know what this is like as a former president, then you should be prepared to use it without qualms in a certain situation, no matter how monstrous and brutal that might sound."<sup>27</sup> He said "Britain was, is and will be our eternal enemy. [...] In any case, soon enough their impudent and disgustingly damp island will be sent into the abyss of the sea by waves created by the latest Russian weapons system."<sup>28</sup> His speeches and articles are often aggressive and insulting toward U.S. and allied government officials.

Russia also appears to consider nuclear weapons use justified in the case of a defeat in a conventional war. For example, Medvedev noted that "The defeat of a nuclear power in a conventional war may trigger a nuclear war. Nuclear powers have never lost major conflicts on which their fate depends. And this should be obvious to anyone. Even a Western politician with any trace of intelligence."<sup>29</sup> He reiterated that Russia may consider using nuclear weapons should Ukraine attack Donetsk and Luhansk, illegally annexed territories Russia now considers its own.<sup>30</sup> There are indications that Putin sees war with Ukraine as an existential struggle for Russia.<sup>31</sup>

Russian ambassadors also occasionally engage in public nuclear threats, which begs the question of why Western countries should let them continue to be ambassadors after engaging in nuclear brinkmanship on Russia's behalf.<sup>32</sup> For example, Oleg Stepanov, Russia's Ambassador to Canada, recently stated "Once again, just to be clear: when you are not in the nuclear bloc [referring to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization], you are safe. When you join it, you become yet another target. We cannot believe that the alliance, including our Finnish neighbors, does not understand this truism. It's as plain as day."<sup>33</sup> Nuclear threats across of levels of the Russian government have become a frequent occurrence in Russia's conduct of foreign and defense policy.



In addition to more public nuclear threats, it is plausible that Russia is threatening other states with nuclear strikes through unofficial channels. For example, following Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in 2014, then-Ukrainian Minister of Defense Valeriy Heletey stated that the "Russian side has threatened on several occasions across unofficial channels that, in the case of continued resistance they are ready to use a tactical nuclear weapon against us."<sup>34</sup>

### **For Russia, the Quantity and Quality of Nuclear Weapons Appear to Matter**

As long as U.S. adversaries consider nuclear weapons and their attributes important, the United States must account for this when developing its own nuclear weapons policy, even if U.S. officials consider such factors unimportant. As nuclear policy expert Greg Weaver pointed out during recent testimony, "In a deterrence relationship, the adversary doesn't just have "a" vote, they have *the only vote*."<sup>35</sup> While U.S. pundits argue that the United States keeps too many nuclear weapons<sup>36</sup> or that nuclear weapons do not matter at all,<sup>37</sup> official Russian statements indicate that Moscow values numerical superiority, as well as the increased diversity of its nuclear weapon arsenal. For example, Putin noted "that we have more such nuclear weapons than NATO countries. They know about it and never stop trying to persuade us to start nuclear reduction talks. Like hell we will, right? A popular phrase. Because, putting it in the dry language of economic essays, it is our competitive advantage."<sup>38</sup> In 2013, then-Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov stated: "When I hear our American partners say: 'let's reduce something else,' I would like to say to them: 'excuse me, but what we have is relatively new.' They [the U.S.] have not conducted any upgrades for a long time. They still use Trident [missiles]."<sup>39</sup> In addition to its nuclear-charged rhetoric, Russia also conducts large-scale military exercises that include simulated nuclear weapons attacks.<sup>40</sup>

Putin appears to value more than just a numerical advantage. Unlike the United States that has not designed and deployed a new nuclear warhead since the end of the Cold War, Russia rejuvenated its nuclear weapons complex after the 1990s' slump and maintained personnel proficient in nuclear weapons building. Consequently, some of Russia's nuclear weapons "are more modern than the weapons NATO countries have," as Putin pointed out.<sup>41</sup> Given the fact that U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe were deployed in the 1960s, the feat is much less impressive than it appears at first. Then-Defense Intelligence Agency Director Robert Ashley stated that the "United States believes that Russia probably is not adhering to the nuclear testing moratorium in a manner consistent with the zero-yield standard."<sup>42</sup> More importantly, he added that "Our understanding of nuclear weapon development leads us to believe Russia's testing activities would help it improve its nuclear weapon capabilities."<sup>43</sup> Russia's quantitative superiority on the tactical nuclear weapons level and belief in the qualitative superiority of its nuclear warheads at the strategic level may be yet again contributing to its foreign policy adventurism, as it did during the Cold War.<sup>44</sup>



## What Does Moscow's Propaganda Tell the Russians about Nuclear Weapons?

The Russian government maintains a loyal network of propagandists and “journalists.” Freedom of speech is extremely limited in the country and divergence from the official line is punishable by high fines and years in prison. The already bad situation got even worse after February 2022. Russia effectively shut down the BBC, the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Deutsche Welle, and the independent Russian outlet Meduza as retaliation for Western governments cracking down on some of Russia's influence operators in their countries.<sup>45</sup> Russia also banned X (formerly known as Twitter) and Facebook and passed laws that made any criticism of the “special military operation,” as the Kremlin euphemistically calls the war in Ukraine, punishable by years in prison.

The state's tight control of the media environment makes it incredibly difficult to reach the Russian audience with any content that is not approved by the authorities. This also means that nuclear threats discussed on Russia's popular talk shows have the authorities' approval if not endorsement. As many as 82 million Russians consume media content every day and are exposed to statements that normalize nuclear threats within the public discourse.<sup>46</sup>

For example, Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of *RT* and the media group *Rossiia Segodnya*, stated following the International Criminal Court's (ICC's) issue of an arrest warrant on Putin for unlawful deportation of minors from Ukraine,<sup>47</sup> “I'd like to see the country that arrests Putin according to The Hague's ruling. Eight minutes later. Or whatever the flight time to its capital is.”<sup>48</sup> On another occasion she stated that “Either we lose in Ukraine, or the Third World War starts. I think World War Three is more realistic, knowing us, knowing our leader. The most incredible outcome, that all this will end with a nuclear strike, seems more probable to me than the other course of events.”<sup>49</sup>

Russian propagandists appear to be more explicit and aggressive in their nuclear threats. For example, Vladimir Solovyov, a prominent radio and television presenter for the state-owned *All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company* (VGTRK), stated he would like to see Russia withdraw “from the treaty on moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons in all environments.”<sup>50</sup> He explained that “We need to test nuclear weapons so the West can see that they exist and see how powerful they are. And give an ultimatum to the NATO countries by targeting our nuclear strategic forces on the government quarters and on launch sites of those countries that have nuclear capabilities, on the quarters of those countries that support the Nazi regime. And put an ultimatum. If they don't want to hear it, that means there will be no more London, no more Berlin, no more Paris, no more Washington, D.C.”<sup>51</sup>

On another occasion, he pondered an attack on the United Kingdom in retaliation for providing Ukraine with long-range missiles:

And why are there still undersea cables leading to Britain? Why are all the pipelines still there? Why aren't we responding in the most brutal way, asymmetrically, to Britain? We are now out of the treaty, which is what we should have done a long time ago. I think we need to abandon a ban on nuclear weapons testing. We should conduct tests,



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show the nuclear weapons we have, blow something up somewhere, and target our Strategic Missile Forces, first of all targeting Britain. And all those countries that are providing support. And give them an ultimatum: You supply the missiles, we'll bomb.<sup>52</sup>

He also said, "One Sarmat [a new Russian intercontinental-range ballistic missile] means minus one Great Britain."<sup>53</sup>

Russian propagandists also appear more explicitly apocalyptic than government officials. "I hope they understand that if we lose, we are taking the whole world with us," Solovyov pointed out on one of his shows.<sup>54</sup> And Dmitry Kiselyov, Kremlin-backed journalist and RT's general director, pondered "Why do we need a world if Russia is not in it?"<sup>55</sup> and showed potential nuclear targets in the United States on his TV show in 2019.<sup>56</sup> These kinds of statements are well within acceptable norms in Russia, however extreme those in the West may consider them.

### Conclusion

The consistency of Russia's nuclear threats should cause the arms control proponents and national security experts to rethink their positions on deterrence and arms control and take into account the Russian strategic culture. Russian government officials, including Putin himself, appear convinced that nuclear superiority matters; they continue to brandish nuclear weapon threats, and have been consistent and explicit, particularly since Russia launched its most recent invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Moscow's perceived qualitative and quantitative superiority might be influencing its foreign policy to be more belligerent toward Western interests, just like it did during the Cold War.

U.S. consideration of arms control appears to ignore or discount Moscow's views of nuclear weapons and increasingly explicit nuclear threats. Continuing to do so would be unwise. Rather, the United States ought to approach arms control not as an arena of mutual interest and cooperation, but as another form of competition—which clearly is Moscow's mode of operation. It appears that Russia's aggressive, revisionist policies and goal of reordering the global order, in league with China, will portend conflict and crises. At this point in history, the United States would be better off preparing to compete rather than accommodate.

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent and comprehensive treatment of Russia's nuclear forces and policy, see Mark Schneider, "How Many Nuclear Weapons Does Russia Have? The Size and Characteristics of the Russian Nuclear Stockpile," *Occasional Paper* Vol. 3, No. 8 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, August 2023), available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Vol.-3-No.-8.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Vershbow, "How the United States and NATO can deal with Russian nuclear coercion in Ukraine," *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, June 23, 2023, available at <https://thebulletin.org/2023/06/how-the-united-states-and-nato-can-deal-with-russian-nuclear-coercion-in-ukraine/>.



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<sup>4</sup> Press Release, "On the Possibility of Using Nuclear Weapons in the Ukrainian Conflict," *Levada Center*, June 21, 2023, available at <https://www.levada.ru/en/2023/06/21/on-the-possibility-of-using-nuclear-weapons-in-the-ukrainian-conflict/>.

<sup>5</sup> Mikhail Troitsky, "The death of nuclear fear In the wake of Prigozhin's mutiny, war hawks are once again brandishing Russia's nuclear potential. Why aren't their threats working?," *Meduza*, July 3, 2023, available at <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2023/07/03/the-death-of-nuclear-fear>.

<sup>6</sup> "О ПРИЗЫВАХ К РАЗВЯЗЫВАНИЮ ЯДЕРНОЙ ВОЙНЫ (On Calls for Nuclear War)," *Council on Foreign and Defense Policy*, July 13, 2023, available at <https://svop.ru/main/48156/>.

<sup>7</sup> Simon Saradzhyan, "Levada: Nearly 1/3 of Russians Are 'Not Very Afraid' Their Country Will Use Nukes," *Russia Matters*, June 10, 2022, available at <https://www.russiamatters.org/blog/levada-nearly-13-russians-are-not-very-afraid-their-country-will-use-nukes>.

<sup>8</sup> Maxim Starchak, "Russians Will Accept Nuclear Doomsday," *Europe's Edge*, August 16, 2023, available at <https://cepa.org/article/russians-will-accept-nuclear-doomsday/>.

<sup>9</sup> Michaela Dodge, *U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation: Alliance Politics in Action* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2020); and Ian Traynor, Luke Harding, and Helen Womack, "Moscow warns it could strike Poland over US missile shield," *The Guardian*, August 15, 2008, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/15/russia.poland.nuclear.missiles.threat>.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Kramer, "Russian General Makes Threat on Missile-Defense Sites," *The New York Times*, May 3, 2012, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/04/world/europe/russian-general-threatens-pre-emptive-attacks-on-missile-defense-sites.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Robin Emmott, "U.S. activates Romanian missile defense site, angering Russia," *Reuters*, May 12, 2016, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-shield/u-s-activates-romanian-missile-defense-site-angering-russia-idUSKCN0Y30JX>.

<sup>12</sup> Jake Epstein and Charles R. Davis, "Putin thought Russia's military could capture Kyiv in 2 days, but it still hasn't in 20," *Business Insider*, March 15, 2022, available at <https://www.businessinsider.com/vladimir-putin-russian-forces-could-take-kyiv-ukraine-two-days-2022-3>.

<sup>13</sup> "Russia's Tank Losses in Ukraine Surpass 2,000 - OSINT Report," *Moscow Times*, May 31, 2023, available at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/05/31/russias-tank-losses-in-ukraine-surpass-2000-osint-report-a81346>.

<sup>14</sup> "Ukraine invasion: Putin puts Russia's nuclear forces on 'special alert'," *BBC*, February 28, 2022, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60547473>.

<sup>15</sup> Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali, "No Russian 'muscle movements' after Putin's nuclear readiness alert, U.S. says," *Reuters*, February 28, 2022, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/no-russian-muscle-movements-after-putins-nuclear-readiness-alert-us-says-2022-02-28/>.

<sup>16</sup> Presidential Executive Office, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation," February 24, 2022, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>.

<sup>17</sup> Guy Faulconbridge, "Russia's Putin issues new nuclear warnings to West over Ukraine," *Reuters*, February 21, 2023, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-update-russias-elite-ukraine-war-major-speech-2023-02-21/>.





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<sup>19</sup> "Why is Belarus admitting Wagner leader and backing Russia against Ukraine?," *BBC News*, June 26, 2023, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-65964623>.

<sup>20</sup> Vladimir Putin, Remarks at the Plenary session of the St Petersburg International Economic Forum," June 16, 2023, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71445>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Vladimir Putin, "State of the Nation Address 2018," *C-Span*, March 1, 2018, available at <https://www.c-span.org/video/?441907-1/russian-president-vladimir-putin-state-nation-address>.

<sup>23</sup> "Russia's Putin unveils 'invincible' nuclear weapons," *BBC News*, March 1, 2018, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43239331>.

<sup>24</sup> A more complete list of Medvedev's nuclear threats can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>25</sup> Guy Faulconbridge and Kevin Liffey, "Western arms for Ukraine make 'nuclear apocalypse' more likely – Russia's Medvedev," *Reuters*, May 23, 2023, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-medvedev-western-arms-ukraine-make-nuclear-apocalypse-more-likely-2023-05-23/>.

<sup>26</sup> David Ljunggren, "Russia's Medvedev says arms supplies to Kyiv threaten global nuclear catastrophe," *Reuters*, February 27, 2023, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-medvedev-says-arms-supplies-kyiv-threaten-global-nuclear-catastrophe-2023-02-27/>.

<sup>27</sup> "Russia may use nuclear weapons in face of threat to its existence," *Interfax*, April 25, 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Maighna Nanu, "Ukraine-Russia war: Russia 'will send disgustingly damp Britain into the abyss'," *The Telegraph*, April 21, 2023, available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/04/21/ukraine-russia-war-latest-news-putin-bakhmut-kyiv-nato/>.

<sup>29</sup> Tom Watling, Tim McNulty, Sean Meleady, "Putin ally threatens West with nuclear war if Russia defeated in Ukraine," *Express*, January 20, 2023, available at <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1723253/Russia-war-Ukraine-tanks-T-14-Ramstein-putin-Volodymyr-Zelensky>.

<sup>30</sup> Caleb Davis, "Russia's Medvedev: new regions can be defended with strategic nuclear weapons," *Reuters*, September 22, 2022, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-medvedev-strategic-nuclear-weapons-can-be-used-defend-new-regions-2022-09-22/>.

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<sup>32</sup> Adam Withnall, "Russia threatens Denmark with nuclear weapons if it tries to join Nato defence shield," *The Independent*, March 22, 2015, available at <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-threatens-denmark-with-nuclear-weapons-if-it-tries-to-join-nato-defence-shield-10125529.html>.

<sup>33</sup> "Countries Joining NATO Face Security Risks Including Nuclear - Russian Envoy to Canada," *Sputnik News*, April 20, 2023, available at <https://sputnikglobe.com/20230420/countries-joining-nato-face-security-risks-including-nuclear---russian-envoy-to-canada-1109713089.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Damien Sharkov, "Russia Has Threatened Nuclear Attack, Says Ukraine Defence Minister," September 1, 2014, available at <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-has-threatened-nuclear-attack-says-ukraine-defence-minister>.



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<sup>35</sup> Testimony by Greg Weaver, Senior Associate (Non-Resident), Project on Nuclear Issues, CSIS, before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Regional Nuclear Deterrence, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, March 28, 2023, p. 3, available at <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Mr.%20Gregory%20Weaver%20Written%20Statement%20-%20Regional%20Nuclear%20Deterrence%20-%202003.28%20SASC%20FINAL.pdf>. (Emphasis in original.)

<sup>36</sup> John Isaacs, “Old Think’ Is Driving U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy,” *The National Interest*, December 17, 2022, available at <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/%E2%80%98old-think%E2%80%99-driving-us-nuclear-weapons-policy-206024>.

<sup>37</sup> John Mueller, “Nuclear Weapons Don’t Matter,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 15, 2018, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/nuclear-weapons-dont-matter>.

<sup>38</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Remarks at the Plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum,” June 16, 2023, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71445>.

<sup>39</sup> “Russia today is not interested in U.S.-proposed arms reduction – Sergei Ivanov,” *Interfax*, March 5, 2013; quoted in *Russian Strategy: Expansion, Crisis, and Conflict* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2016), p. 85, available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FINAL-FOR-WEB-1.12.16.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> *Russian Strategy: Expansion, Crisis, and Conflict*, op. cit., pp. 69-71.

<sup>41</sup> Vladimir Putin, Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” September 21, 2022, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/69390#sel=8:18:Wvp,8:33:41G>.

<sup>42</sup> Lt. Gen. Robert P. Ashley, Jr., “The Arms Control Landscape,” *Remarks at the Hudson Institute*, p. 4, available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.hudson.org/Hudson%20Transcript%20-%20The%20Arms%20Control%20Landscape.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

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