



# DOCUMENTATION

This issue's Documentation section features, first, select excerpts from the Department of Defense's 2024 *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China* report, with a special focus on changes in China's nuclear strategy and posture. Following that, we highlight NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte's December 2024 speech that urges alliance members to make urgent changes to their threat perceptions and right size their spending levels. Documents three and four offer contrasting nuclear policy statements by Russia and the United States, both recently published in an unclassified setting: Russia's *Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence* and the U.S. 2024 *Report on the Nuclear Employment Strategy of the United States*. Finally, document five features select excerpts from a Centre for Eastern Studies report titled, *Winning the War with Russia (Is Still Possible): The West's Counter-Strategy Towards Moscow*.

**Document No. 1. U.S. Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China* (Washington, D.C., Department of Defense, December 2024), select excerpts.<sup>1</sup>**

## NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES

### Key Takeaways

- Over the next decade, the PRC probably will continue to rapidly modernize, diversify, and expand its nuclear forces. The PLA seeks a larger and more diverse nuclear force, comprised of systems ranging from low-yield precision strike missiles to ICBMs with multi-megaton yields to provide it options at every rung of the escalation ladder.
- Beijing continued its rapid nuclear expansion. DoD estimates the PRC has surpassed 600 operational nuclear warheads in its stockpile as of 2024.
- DoD estimates that the PRC will have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030, much of which will be deployed at higher readiness levels, and will continue growing its force to 2035 in line with its goal of ensuring PLA modernization is "basically complete" that year, an important milestone on the road to Xi's goal of a "world class" military by 2049.
- The PRC probably will use its new fast breeder reactors and reprocessing facilities to produce plutonium for its nuclear weapons program, despite publicly maintaining these technologies are intended for peaceful purposes.

The PRC probably continues to arm solid-propellant silo fields, which consist of 320 silos across its three new silo fields. The PLA is more than doubling the size of its DF-5 liquid-silo force, which probably will have about 50 silos by the end of the effort. The large growth of the PLA silo force suggests Beijing is making progress in establishing its "early warning counterstrike" posture to increase the survivability and responsiveness of these launch sites. [p. 101]

<sup>1</sup> This report is available at <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Dec/18/2003615520/-1/-1/0/MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-2024.PDF>.



The PRC probably is developing advanced nuclear delivery systems, in part due to long-term concerns about United States missile defense capabilities. The PRC monitors U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons programs and probably has developmental efforts for additional PLA advanced nuclear capabilities if Beijing elects to progress these efforts through fielding.

The PLA's expanding nuclear force will enable it to target more U.S. cities, military facilities, and leadership sites than ever before in a potential nuclear conflict. While PRC leaders have historically judged that being able to inflict even limited damage during a nuclear counterstrike was sufficient for deterrence—an "assured retaliation" capability—the PRC's force modernization suggests that it seeks to have the ability to inflict far greater levels of overwhelming damage to an adversary in a nuclear exchange as well as engage in multiple rounds of counterstrike, including through more discriminate forms of nuclear employment, such as with lower-yield weapons.

### **Strategy**

The PRC's approach to using nuclear force is based on PLA "deterrence" of an enemy first strike and "counterstrike" when deterrence fails, threatening retaliation against an adversary's military capability, population, and economy. The PRC's nuclear weapons policy prioritizes maintaining a nuclear force able to survive a first strike and respond with sufficient strength to conduct multiple rounds of counterstrike, deterring an adversary with the threat of unacceptable damage to its military capability, population, and economy. The PLA probably selects its nuclear strike targets to achieve conflict de-escalation and return to a conventional conflict with a remaining force sufficient to deter its adversary. PLA planners would probably avoid a protracted series of nuclear exchanges against a superior adversary and state that the scale and intensity of retaliatory force needs to be carefully controlled.

The PRC's approach to nuclear force includes a declaratory no-first-use (NFU) policy, stating it will never use nuclear weapons first at any time under any circumstances, including unconditionally not using or threatening to use of nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear weapon state or in nuclear-weapon-free zones. Despite publicizing this policy, the PRC's nuclear strategy probably includes consideration of a nuclear first strike in response to nonnuclear attacks that PRC leaders perceive as threatening the viability of the PRC's nuclear forces or C2, or that approximate the strategic effects of a nuclear strike. Beijing probably would consider nuclear first use if a conventional military defeat in Taiwan gravely threatened CCP regime survival.

The PRC's commingling of some of its conventional and nuclear missile forces during peacetime and ambiguities in its NFU conditions could complicate deterrence and escalation management during a conflict. If a comingled PRC missile launch is not readily identifiable as a conventional or nuclear missile, it may not be clear what the PRC launched until it detonates. Furthermore, potential adversary attacks against the PRC's conventional missile

force-associated C2 centers could inadvertently degrade the PRC's nuclear C2 and generate nuclear use-or-lose—the pressure to use weapons before they are targeted. Once a conflict has begun, the PRC's dispersal of mobile missile systems to hide sites could further complicate the task of distinguishing between nuclear and conventional forces and, thus, increase the potential for inadvertent attacks on the nuclear forces. PRC leadership calculus for responding to conventional attacks on nuclear forces remains a key unknown. [p. 102]

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### **Nuclear Warhead Stockpile**

In 2020, DoD estimated the PRC's operational nuclear warhead stockpile was in the low-200s and was expected to at least double by 2030. However, Beijing has accelerated its nuclear expansion, and DoD estimates this stockpile has surpassed 600 operational nuclear warheads as of 2024, on track to exceed previous projections. The PRC is establishing new nuclear materials production and reprocessing facilities very likely to support its nuclear force expansion. Although these efforts are consistent with the PRC's goals to increase nuclear energy generation and close its nuclear fuel cycle, Beijing likely considers this dual-use infrastructure as crucial to supporting its military goals, judging from PRC nuclear industry reporting and think tank publications. The PRC has not produced large quantities of plutonium for its weapons program since the early 1990s and probably will need to begin producing new plutonium this decade to meet the needs of its expanding nuclear stockpile. Despite its public support for a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, the PRC has rejected calls for a moratorium on production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. It is likely that Beijing intends to produce nuclear warhead materials for its military in the near term.

**Weapons-Grade Material Production.** The PRC has probably completed constructing one of its two CFR-600 sodium-cooled fast breeder nuclear reactors at Xiapu and continues to construct the second. Russia is assisting with these reactors, providing highly enriched uranium (HEU) nuclear fuel assemblies. Each reactor can produce enough plutonium for dozens of nuclear warheads annually from blankets surrounding the core (referring to natural uranium around the fuel core for breeding plutonium), according to think tank estimates and informed by PRC state media and nuclear industry reporting. The PRC originally planned to use Russian-sourced mixed-oxide (a blend of uranium and plutonium) fuel for these reactors but changed the order to HEU fuel through 2030, according to nuclear industry reporting. By using HEU fuel, the PRC has the potential to generate additional weapons-grade plutonium. PRC officials claim the CFR-600 reactors are intended to help the PRC achieve its civilian nuclear power and carbon neutrality objectives but the PRC has described the CFR-600s as a “national defense investment project” subject to military nuclear facility regulations. By December 2022, Russia delivered the first three batches of HEU nuclear fuel assemblies to the PRC for the first core loading and the first refueling of the CFR600. In early 2023, think-tank reporting indicates the quantity of HEU transferred from Russia to the PRC for its CFR-600 reactors is more than the entire amount of HEU removed

worldwide under U.S. and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) auspices in the last three decades. In [p. 107] March 2023, the PRC and Russia signed an agreement with commitments for continued cooperation on fast reactor and reprocessing technology development, extending this relationship for “the decades ahead.”

**Plutonium Extraction.** The PRC could extract the WGPu at its 50-ton per year reprocessing plant at Jiuquan (Plant 404) or one of the 200-ton per year reprocessing plants under construction at the CNNC Gansu Nuclear Technology Industrial Park in Jinta, Gansu Province, the first of which is expected to be operational by 2025. The PRC has reduced transparency in its nuclear program as its capabilities are increasing and has not reported its stockpile of separated plutonium to the IAEA since 2017, according to a Western think tank. The PRC has a Voluntary Offer Agreement that makes some of its civilian nuclear facilities eligible for IAEA safeguards but the IAEA has applied safeguards only to one enrichment plant and one reactor in the PRC.

**Uranium and Tritium.** In the past several years, the PRC’s organization traditionally associated with military uranium enrichment has expanded production capacity and likely will continue to do so. The PRC is also working to expand and diversify its capability to produce tritium by methods, such as using tritium production targets in reactors and extraction from tritiated heavy water, according to PRC nuclear industry reporting.

**Nuclear Warhead Production.** The PRC is expanding its nuclear warhead production infrastructure. This infrastructure enables the PRC to produce, maintain, and refurbish a greater number of warheads in support of its nuclear stockpile expansion. [p. 108]

**Nuclear Testing.** The PRC’s possible preparation to operate its Lop Nur nuclear test site yearround and lack of transparency on its nuclear testing activities have raised concerns regarding its adherence to the U.S. “zero yield” standard adhered to by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France in their respective nuclear weapons testing moratoria.

### **Future Nuclear Force**

The PRC has not publicly or formally acknowledged or explained its nuclear expansion and modernization. The buildup almost certainly is due to the PRC’s broader and longer-term perceptions of progressively increased U.S.-PRC strategic competition. The PLA’s nuclear expansion and modernization very likely are tied to its overall military strategy—seeking to close capability gaps and become a competitive global power. As a result, the PRC probably perceives that a stronger nuclear force is needed to deter U.S. intervention, check potential nuclear escalation or first strike, and will allow for increased control of the scope and scale of escalation during a conflict in a way its previously smaller and less diverse nuclear force could not.

The PLA seeks a larger and more diverse nuclear force, comprised of systems ranging from low-yield precision strike missiles to ICBMs with multi-megaton yields to provide it options at every rung of the escalation ladder. Developing robust nuclear strike options likely is intended to predominantly deter against a “strong enemy” as well as to deny an adversary victory if a war escalates to the nuclear domain. The PLA’s expanding nuclear force will enable it to target more U.S. cities, military facilities, and leadership sites than ever before in a potential nuclear counterstrike. While PRC leaders have historically judged that being able to inflict even limited damage during a nuclear counterstrike was sufficient for deterrence—an “assured retaliation” capability—the PRC’s force modernization suggests that it seeks the ability to inflict far greater levels of overwhelming damage to an adversary in a nuclear exchange.

**Stockpile Size.** By 2030, DoD estimates that the PRC will have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads, most of which will be fielded on systems capable of ranging CONUS. Beijing has not declared an end goal nor acknowledged the scale of its expansion, has resisted calls bilaterally with the United States and in multilateral fora for efforts to practically manage nuclear risks and increase transparency, and has declined to engage in substantive arms control discussions. The PRC’s long-term nuclear requirements—and the relationship between the PRC’s nuclear requirements and its national strategy and goal to field a “world-class” military by mid-century— remain unclear from public sources.

**Hypersonics and Fractional Orbital Bombardment.** The PRC probably is developing advanced nuclear delivery systems, such as a strategic HGV and a FOB system, in part due to long-term concerns about United States missile defense capabilities as well as to attain qualitative parity with future worldwide missile capabilities. A “long-range” DF-27 ballistic missile is deployed to the PLARF and likely has a HGV payload option as well as conventional land-attack, conventional antiship, and nuclear capabilities. Official PRC military writings indicate this range-class spans 5,000–8,000 km, designating the DF-27 as an IRBM or ICBM, and PRC media indicates that it can potentially range as far as Alaska and Hawaii. In 2023, a PRC-based commentator stated that the DF-27 can be used to strike high-value targets on Guam, indicating that the DF-27 would primarily be used for regional conventional strikes during a conflict. On July 27, 2021, the PRC tested an ICBM-range HGV that travelled 40,000 km. The test likely demonstrated the PRC’s [p. 109] technical ability to field a FOB system, which can facilitate difficult to track attacks on the U.S. homeland. The PRC does not appear to have tested a FOB system in 2022 or 2023.

**Lower-Yield Nuclear Weapons.** The PRC probably seeks lower yield nuclear warhead capabilities for proportional response options that its high-yield warheads cannot deliver. PRC strategists have highlighted the need for lower-yield nuclear weapons to increase the deterrence value of the PRC’s nuclear force, though they have not defined specific nuclear yield values. A 2017 defense industry publication indicated a lower-yield weapon had been developed for use against campaign and tactical targets that would reduce collateral damage.

By late 2018, PRC concerns began to emerge that the United States would use low-yield weapons against its Taiwan invasion fleet, with related commentary in official media calling for proportionate response capabilities. The DF-26 is the PRC's first nuclear-capable missile system capable of precision strikes and, therefore, is the most likely weapon system to field a lower-yield warhead in the near term.

**Launch on Warning.** The PLA is working to implement a launch on warning (LOW) posture this decade, called “early warning counterstrike” (预警反击), where warning of a missile strike leads to a counterstrike before an enemy first strike can detonate. PLA writings suggest multiple manned C2 organs are involved in this process, warned by space- and ground-based sensors. This posture is broadly similar to the U.S. and Russian LOW posture. The PRC probably seeks to keep at least a portion of its force, especially its new silo-based units, on a LOW posture. Since 2017, the PLARF has conducted exercises involving early warning of a nuclear strike and LOW responses.

The PRC's desire to attain a LOW posture date back to the 1970s and 1980s, when the PRC considered using land-based ballistic missile early warning radar to support a LOW posture for its silo-based CSS-4 ICBMs but, apparently, this early warning system was unreliable. In recent years, the PRC has been able to make advances in early warning needed to support a LOW posture. The PRC has several ground-based, large-phase array radars—similar in appearance to U.S. PAVE PAWS radars—that could support a missile early warning role. Progress has likely been made in space-based early warning as well. As of 2022, the PRC likely has at least three early warning satellites in orbit. In 2019, President Putin of Russia stated that Russia is aiding the PRC in developing a ballistic missile early warning system.

Despite these developments, the PRC has called on other states to abandon similar LOW postures to enhance strategic stability while declining to engage in substantive dialogue on risk reduction. The PRC seems to believe a LOW posture is consistent with its NFU policy, given that it involves a retaliatory strike that occurs after warning of an inbound first attack from an adversary. At the same time, PRC military writings note that C2 systems—including early warning systems—can be a source of accidental nuclear war. In November 2023, China engaged with the United States in discussions on issues related to arms control and nonproliferation but since has refused to return to arms control talks. The PRC has refused to join the Hague Code of Conduct or participate in other confidence-building measures (CBMs), such as a launch notification arrangement with the United States, to reduce the risk of accidental nuclear war. However, the PRC does have a bilateral missile and carrier rocket launch notification agreement with Russia called the Russian-PRC intergovernmental agreement signed in 2009, which was extended for 10 years in 2021—though little additional information regarding the implementation of the agreement is known. [p. 110]

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**Document No. 2. Speech by NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte at the Concert Noble, Brussels, “To Prevent War, NATO Must Spend More,” December 12, 2024 (as delivered).<sup>2</sup>**

Thank you very much Rosa, and many thanks to Carnegie Europe for organising this event today in this spectacular venue.

And it’s great to see so many people here in the room and I know many more join us online, from all over the world.

So good morning, afternoon, evening to you all!

I’m very honoured to start a crucial conversation with the citizens living in NATO countries, especially in Europe and Canada.

It’s you I’m talking to.

It’s your support I need.

It’s your voices and actions that will determine our future security.

I’ll be honest: the security situation does not look good.

It’s undoubtedly the worst in my lifetime.

And I suspect in yours too.

From Brussels, it takes one day to drive to Ukraine.

One day –

That’s how close the Russian bombs are falling.

It’s how close the Iranian drones are flying.

And not very much further, the North Korean soldiers are fighting.

Every day, this war causes more devastation and death.

Every week, there are over 10.000 killed or wounded on all sides in Ukraine.

Over 1 million casualties since February 2022.

Putin is trying to wipe Ukraine off the map.

He is trying to fundamentally change the security architecture that has kept Europe safe for decades.

And he is trying to crush our freedom and way of life.

His pattern of aggression is not new.

But for too long, we did not act.

Georgia in 2008.

Crimea in 2014.

And many did not want to believe he would launch all-out war on Ukraine in February 2022.

How many more wake-up calls do we need?

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<sup>2</sup> This speech can be accessed at [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_231348.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_231348.htm).

We should be profoundly concerned.  
I know I am.

Russia's economy is on a war footing.  
In 2025, the total military spending will be 7 to 8% of GDP, if not more.  
That's a third of Russia's state budget – and the highest level since the Cold War.

And Russia's defence industry is producing huge numbers of tanks, armoured vehicles, and ammunition.  
What Russia lacks in quality, it makes up for in quantity – with the help of China, Iran and North Korea.

This all points in one clear direction:  
Russia is preparing for long-term confrontation.  
With Ukraine.  
And with us.

Hostile actions against Allied countries are real and accelerating.  
Malicious cyber-attacks on both sides of the Atlantic.  
Assassination attempts on British and German soil.  
Explosions at an ammunition warehouse in Czechia.  
The weaponization of migrants crossing illegally into Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland.  
Jamming to disrupt civil aviation in the Baltic region.

These attacks are not just isolated incidents.  
They are the result of a coordinated campaign to destabilise our societies and discourage us from supporting Ukraine.  
They circumvent our deterrence and bring the front line to our front doors.  
Even into our homes.

Putin believes that “a serious, irreconcilable struggle is unfolding for the formation of a new world order.”  
These are his own words.  
Others share his belief.  
Not least China.

We need to be clear-eyed about China's ambitions.  
China is substantially building up its forces, including its nuclear weapons – with no transparency and no limitations.  
From 200 warheads in 2020, China is expected to have more than a 1,000 nuclear weapons by 2030.  
Its space-launch investments are skyrocketing.



China is bullying Taiwan, and pursuing access to our critical infrastructure in ways that could cripple our societies.

Russia, China, but also North Korea and Iran, are hard at work to try to weaken North America and Europe.

To chip away at our freedom.

They want to reshape the global order.

Not to create a fairer one, but to secure their own spheres of influence.

They are testing us.

And the rest of the world is watching.

No, we are not at war.

But we are certainly not at peace either.

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I want to be clear:

There is no imminent military threat to our 32 Allies.

Because NATO has been transforming to keep us safe.

Defence spending has gone up.

Innovation has accelerated.

We have more forces at higher readiness.

Larger and more frequent military exercises.

More troops and hardware on our eastern flank.

And, with Finland and Sweden, more NATO Allies.

With all this, our deterrence is good – for now.

But it's tomorrow I'm worried about.

We are not ready for what is coming our way in four to five years.

Danger is moving towards us at full speed.

We must not look the other way.

We must face it:

What is happening in Ukraine could happen here too.

And regardless of the outcome of this war, we will not be safe in the future unless we are prepared to deal with danger.

We can do that.

We can prevent the next big war on NATO territory.

And preserve our way of life.

This requires us all to be faster and fiercer.  
It is time to shift to a wartime mindset.  
And turbo-charge our defence production and defence spending.

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On defence production, I am absolutely convinced that ramping it up is a top priority.

Since starting at NATO, I've been to Ukraine and seen what they need to fight for freedom. I have visited engineers at Thales in France, a Rheinmetall factory –no, not in Germany, in Italy and Turkish Aerospace Industries in Türkiye and I saw the capabilities they provide. And I have met with industry representatives who have told me that they require –what they require, to increase their production.

I can tell you:

There is a lot that needs to be done to ensure long-term deterrence and restore peace.  
We are not where we want to be.

Our defence industry, here in Europe, has been hollowed out by decades of underinvestment and narrow national industrial interests –  
when our continent was at peace, and defence became an optional extra.  
As a result, our industry is too small, too fragmented and too slow.

Meanwhile, Russian arms factories are churning out war equipment around the clock.  
And despite the heroic efforts of our Ukrainian friends,  
Russia is reconstituting its forces much quicker than we had anticipated.  
They are learning fast from the battlefield.

China's military industrial base is also growing.  
According to some sources, China is acquiring high-end weapons systems and equipment five to six times faster than the US.  
It is heavily investing in munitions, accelerating space capabilities and expanding its nuclear arsenal – I repeat – without any transparency or limitations.  
China is also challenging our technological edge – by investing massively in the disruptive technologies of tomorrow, including AI, quantum and space.  
All this will help China with planning, command and control, and targeting.

Russia and China are racing ahead.  
We risk lagging behind.  
This is very dangerous.  
But it does not have to be.  
If we boost our industry, we can outpace our competitors.

So what are we waiting for?

We already have robust defence plans in place.

We know exactly how we will defend our Alliance and what future assets and capabilities we need –

from ships, tanks, jets, munitions and satellites to new drone technologies.

Ukrainians are fighting against Russian swarms of drones.

That's what we need to be prepared for.

We also already have committed to accelerating the growth of defence industrial capacity and production across the Alliance.

Now, we must deliver – I repeat deliver – on our commitments.

We all have a part to play to make this happen.

To governments I say:

Give our industries the big orders and long-term contracts they need to rapidly produce more and better capabilities.

Buying only big-ticket items that are delivered too late will not keep us safe.

We also need modern capabilities that use the most advanced technologies. And we need them now.

So embrace risk and invest in the pool of innovators across our countries.

Embracing risk requires you, governments, to change outdated procurement rules.

And to reconsider your detailed national requirements.

With a million casualties on our doorstep, you have no time to waste.

As an example, related to armoured personnel carriers:

One nation needs to have the rear door opening to the left.

Another needs it to open to the right.

And a third one needs it to open upwards.

All these requirements are mandatory.

Is this how we define our needs and priorities, especially when time is of the essence?

This has got to change!

I also say to governments:

Stop creating barriers between each other and between industries, banks and pension funds. Instead, tear these barriers down.

They only increase production costs, stifle innovation and ultimately hamper our security.

To the defence industry I say:

You need to do everything you can to keep us safe.

There's money on the table, and it will only increase.  
So dare to innovate and take risks!  
Come up with solutions to the swarms of drones and other new war tactics.  
Put in the extra shifts and new production lines!

And finally, to the citizens of NATO countries, especially in Europe, I say:  
Tell your banks and pension funds it is simply unacceptable that they refuse to invest in the defence industry.  
Defence is not in the same category as illicit drugs and pornography.  
Investing in defence is an investment in our security.  
It's a must!

And this brings me to my main point.  
Defence spending.

It is true that we spend more on defence now than we did a decade ago.  
But we are still spending far less than during the Cold War.  
Even though the threats to our freedom and security are just as big – if not bigger.

During the Cold War, Europeans spent far more than 3% of their GDP on defence.  
With that mentality, we won the Cold War.  
Spending dropped after the Iron Curtain fell.  
The world was safer.  
It is not anymore.

A decade ago, Allies agreed it was time to invest in defence once again.  
The benchmark was set at 2%.  
By 2023, NATO Allies agreed to invest 'at least' 2%.  
At least...  
I can tell you, we are going to need a lot more than 2%.

I know spending more on defence means spending less on other priorities.  
But it is only a little less.  
On average, European countries easily spend up to a quarter of their national income on pensions, health and social security systems.  
We need a small fraction of that money to make our defences much stronger, and to preserve our way of life.

Prioritising defence requires political leadership.  
It can be tough and risky in the short term.  
But it's absolutely essential in the long term.  
Some people will tell you otherwise.

They think strong defence is not the way to peace.  
Well, they are wrong.  
Because without strong defence, there is no lasting security.  
And without security, there is no freedom for our children and grand-children.  
No schools, no hospitals, no businesses.  
There is nothing.

Those who lived through the Second World War know this.  
And our Ukrainian friends are living it every day.

When I was in Kharkiv earlier this year, I saw so many buildings completely destroyed.  
I stood in rubble where homes used to be.  
Where families used to live.  
I saw schools moved underground, into metro stations.  
It was very moving to see children so eager to learn, and teachers so eager to teach...despite their lives being completely disrupted.  
I visited the wounded in hospitals.  
Soldiers that lost limbs.

War is brutal and ugly.

War is also very costly in economic terms.

Ukraine, as we speak, is allocating nearly a quarter of its GDP for defence next year.  
That is more than 10 times what European NATO Allies spend.  
A harsh reminder that freedom does not come for free.

If we don't spend more together now to prevent war, we will pay a much, much, much higher price later to fight it.  
Not billions, but trillions of euros.  
That's if we come out on top...and that's if we win.

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In politics, there is a time to talk, a time to decide, and a time to act.  
I know politicians talk – a lot.  
That's what I do here today!  
They make decisions, when needed.  
Sometimes difficult ones.  
But to act, people must support those decisions.  
It's in your hands.  
Today, I call for your support.

Action is urgent.

To protect our freedom, our prosperity, and our way of life, your politicians need to listen to your voices.

Tell them you accept to make sacrifices today so that we can stay safe tomorrow.

Tell them they need to spend more on defence so that we can continue to live in peace.

Tell them that security matters more than anything.

I am confident that collectively at NATO, we can continue to keep our one billion people safe.

We have enormous advantages.

We are 32 Allies strong.

Together, NATO Allies represent half of the world's economic and military might.

We have exceptional intelligence services.

Innovative industries and businesses.

Some of the best universities and research institutions in the world.

And we have many partners across the globe.

When we put our minds and political will to it, there is nothing we cannot do – Europe and North America together.

Our adversaries think they are tough, and we are soft.

They invade other countries, while we uphold international rules.

They oppress their people, while we cherish freedom.

They should remember that there is no greater power than democracies coming together.

When we are attacked, our response is fierce.

To ensure no one ever considers attacking us, we must maintain long-term deterrence.

We can do this.

We have done it before.

We can do it again.

Thank you very much.

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**Document No. 3. President of the Russian Federation, *Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence* (Moscow, RU: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 3, 2024).<sup>3</sup>**

## **Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence**

### **I. General Provisions**

1. These Fundamentals are a strategic planning document in the area of ensuring defence that reflects official views on the essence of nuclear deterrence, identifies military risks and threats intended to be neutralized by the implementation of nuclear deterrence, as well as defines the principles of nuclear deterrence and the conditions for the transition of the Russian Federation to the employment of nuclear weapons.
2. Assured deterrence of a potential adversary from aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies is one of the highest state priorities. Deterrence of aggression is ensured by the totality of the military might of the Russian Federation, including nuclear weapons.
3. The state policy of the Russian Federation on nuclear deterrence (hereafter referred to as “state policy on nuclear deterrence”) is a set of coordinated political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, information, and other measures, unified by a common concept and implemented with reliance on nuclear deterrence forces and means to prevent aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies.
4. The state policy on nuclear deterrence is defensive in nature, aimed at maintaining the capabilities of nuclear forces at a level sufficient to ensure nuclear deterrence, and guarantees the protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, deterrence of a potential adversary from aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies, and – in the event of an outbreak of a military conflict – the prevention of the escalation in hostilities and their cessation on terms acceptable to the Russian Federation and (or) its allies.
5. The Russian Federation considers nuclear weapons as a means of deterrence, the employment of which is an extreme and compelled measure, and makes all the necessary efforts to reduce the nuclear threat and prevent aggravation of interstate relations that could trigger military conflicts, including nuclear ones.

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<sup>3</sup> This report can be accessed at available at [https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/international\\_safety/1434131/](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/international_safety/1434131/).

6. The statutory legal basis of these Fundamentals consists of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, generally recognized principles and norms of international law, international treaties of the Russian Federation, federal constitutional laws, federal laws, and other statutory legal acts and documents regulating defence and security matters.

7. The provisions of these Fundamentals are binding on all federal government authorities and other government bodies and organizations involved in ensuring nuclear deterrence.

8. These Fundamentals may be adjusted to account for external and internal factors that shape defence requirements.

## **II. The Essence of Nuclear Deterrence**

9. The Russian Federation exercises nuclear deterrence toward a potential adversary, defined as individual states and military coalitions (blocs, alliances), that consider the Russian Federation as a potential adversary and possess nuclear and (or) other types of weapons of mass destruction or significant combat capabilities of general purpose forces. Nuclear deterrence is also exercised toward states that provide territory, air and (or) sea space under their control, as well as resources for preparing and committing aggression against the Russian Federation.

10. Aggression by any state from a military coalition (bloc, alliance) against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies is considered as the aggression by this coalition (bloc, alliance) as a whole.

11. Aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies by any non-nuclear state with the participation or support of a nuclear state is considered as their joint attack.

12. Nuclear deterrence is aimed to ensure that a potential adversary realizes the inevitability of retaliation in the event of aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies.

13. Nuclear deterrence is ensured by the presence in the structure of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation of combat-ready forces and means capable of inflicting assured unacceptable damage on a potential adversary under any circumstances through the employment of nuclear weapons, as well as by the readiness and resolve of the Russian Federation to employ such weapons.

14. Nuclear deterrence is implemented continuously in peacetime, during the period of immediate threat of aggression, and in wartime, up to the beginning of nuclear weapons employment.

15. The main military risks that, depending on changes in the military-political and strategic situation, can evolve into military threats to the Russian Federation (threats of aggression) and that are intended to be neutralized by the implementation of nuclear deterrence are as follows:

- a) possession by a potential adversary of nuclear and (or) other types of weapons of mass destruction that can be employed against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies, as well as of delivery means for these types of weapons;
- b) possession and deployment by a potential adversary of missile defence systems and assets, intermediate- and shorter-range cruise and ballistic missiles, high-precision non-nuclear and hypersonic weapons, unmanned combat vehicles of various basing modes, directed energy weapons that can be used against the Russian Federation;
- c) buildup by a potential adversary on the territories contiguous to the Russian Federation and its allies and in adjacent waters of general purpose forces groupings, which include nuclear weapons delivery means, and (or) military infrastructure ensuring the employment of such means;
- d) development and deployment by a potential adversary of missile defence and anti-satellite warfare assets, as well as of strike systems in space;
- e) deployment of nuclear weapons and their delivery means on the territories of non-nuclear states;
- f) establishment of new or expansion of existing military coalitions (blocs, alliances), leading to the advancement of their military infrastructure to the borders of the Russian Federation;
- g) actions by a potential adversary aimed at isolating a part of the territory of the Russian Federation, including blocking access to vital transport communications;
- h) actions by a potential adversary aimed at defeating (destroying, eliminating) environmentally hazardous facilities of the Russian Federation that may lead to technogenic, ecological or social disasters;
- i) planning and conduct of large-scale military exercises by a potential adversary near the borders of the Russian Federation;
- j) uncontrolled proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, technologies and equipment for their manufacture.

16. The principles of nuclear deterrence are as follows:

- a) continuity of activities ensuring nuclear deterrence;
- b) adaptability of nuclear deterrence to military risks and threats;
- c) uncertainty for a potential adversary in terms of scale, time, and place of the possible employment of nuclear deterrence forces and means;
- d) centralization of state governance over the activities of federal executive authorities and organizations involved in ensuring nuclear deterrence;

- e) rationality of the structure and composition of nuclear deterrence forces and means, as well as their maintenance at a level sufficient to fulfil the assigned tasks;
- f) maintaining constant readiness of a designated part of nuclear deterrence forces and means for combat employment;
- g) centralization of the command over the employment of nuclear weapons, including those located outside the territory of the Russian Federation.

17. The nuclear deterrence forces of the Russian Federation include land-, sea- and air-based nuclear forces.

### **III. Conditions for the Transition of the Russian Federation to the Employment of Nuclear Weapons**

18. The Russian Federation reserves the right to employ nuclear weapons in response to the employment of nuclear and (or) other types of weapons of mass destruction against itself and (or) its allies, as well as in the event of aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) the Republic of Belarus as participants in the Union State with the employment of conventional weapons, which creates a critical threat to their sovereignty and (or) territorial integrity.

19. The conditions that enable the possibility of nuclear weapons employment by the Russian Federation are as follows:

- a) receipt of reliable data on the launch of ballistic missiles attacking the territories of the Russian Federation and (or) its allies;
- b) employment of nuclear or other types of weapons of mass destruction by an adversary against the territories of the Russian Federation and (or) its allies, against facilities and (or) military formations of the Russian Federation located outside its territory;
- c) actions by an adversary affecting elements of critically important state or military infrastructure of the Russian Federation, the disablement of which would disrupt response actions by nuclear forces;
- d) aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) the Republic of Belarus as participants in the Union State with the employment of conventional weapons, which creates a critical threat to their sovereignty and (or) territorial integrity;
- e) receipt of reliable data on the massive launch (take-off) of air and space attack means (strategic and tactical aircraft, cruise missiles, unmanned, hypersonic and other aerial vehicles) and their crossing of the state border of the Russian Federation.

20. The decision to employ nuclear weapons is made by the President of the Russian Federation.

21. The President of the Russian Federation may, if necessary, inform the military-political leadership of other states and (or) international organizations about the readiness of the Russian Federation to employ nuclear weapons or of the decision taken to employ nuclear weapons, as well as of the fact of their employment.

#### **IV. Tasks and Functions of Federal Government Authorities, Other Government Bodies and Organizations on the Implementation of State Policy on Nuclear Deterrence**

22. The state policy on nuclear deterrence is directed by the President of the Russian Federation.

23. The Government of the Russian Federation takes measures to implement economic policy aimed at maintenance and development of nuclear deterrence means, as well as shapes and implements foreign and information policy in the nuclear deterrence area.

24. The Security Council of the Russian Federation sets the main directions of military policy in the nuclear deterrence area, as well as coordinates the activities of federal executive authorities and organizations involved in the implementation of the decisions by the President of the Russian Federation related to ensuring nuclear deterrence.

25. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, acting through the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, directly plans and implements organizational and military activities in the nuclear deterrence area.

26. Other federal executive authorities and organizations participate in the implementation of the decisions by the President of the Russian Federation related to ensuring nuclear deterrence in accordance with their authority.

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**Document No. 4. U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on the Nuclear Employment Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, November 15, 2024).<sup>4</sup>**

### **Report on the Nuclear Employment Strategy of the United States**

#### **Introduction**

On behalf of the President, and in accordance with 10 U.S.C., section 491 (Section 491), the Secretary of Defense is submitting this report on the Nuclear Employment Strategy of the

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<sup>4</sup> This report can be accessed at <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Nov/15/2003584623/-1/-1/1/REPORT-ON-THE-NUCLEAR-EMPLOYMENT-STRATEGY-OF-THE-UNITED-STATES.PDF>.

United States. With the President's issuance of new nuclear weapons employment guidance, and in advance of implementation of this guidance through Department of Defense (DoD) military guidance and updated plans, this report fulfills the requirements of Section 491.

## **Background**

The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) established the Biden Administration's nuclear policy and posture. Building on the NPR, the President issued updated Nuclear Weapons Employment Planning Guidance of the United States (Guidance). This Guidance directly informs DoD's development of nuclear employment options for consideration by the President in extreme circumstances and establishes requirements that shape U.S. nuclear weapons capabilities and posture. Updating U.S. nuclear employment guidance is critical to ensuring that the Nation's nuclear forces, plans, and posture continue to adapt to a changing world.

## **Security Environment**

The United States confronts multiple nuclear competitors, with each adversary presenting unique challenges for U.S. strategists to confront, stressing strategic stability in diverse ways, and complicating deterrence challenges around the globe. Russia poses an acute threat with its large, modern, and diversified nuclear arsenal of strategic and theater-range weapons as well as its pursuit of novel nuclear systems. It has demonstrated its willingness to brandish nuclear weapons to shield its illegal and dangerous behavior. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has embarked on an ambitious expansion, modernization, and diversification of its nuclear forces and established a nascent nuclear triad. The PRC's lack of transparency and growing military assertiveness raise questions regarding its intentions, nuclear strategy, and doctrine. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) also continues to expand, diversify, and improve its nuclear, ballistic missile, and non-nuclear capabilities.

Any one of these nuclear challenges would be formidable itself, but the evidence of growing collaboration and collusion between Russia, the PRC, the DPRK, and Iran makes the situation even more challenging. There is a possibility of coordinated or opportunistic aggression by a combination of adversaries in a crisis or conflict, which requires U.S. strategists to think carefully about complex escalation dynamics and deterring multiple adversaries simultaneously, including in extended crises or conflicts.

## **Updated Guidance**

Because U.S. nuclear strategy and the U.S. nuclear deterrent remains flexible and resilient, the President's Guidance reflects more continuity than change with the approach of previous Administrations. Among other examples, the Guidance reaffirms that the President remains the sole authority to direct U.S. nuclear employment, and that the fundamental role of nuclear



weapons is to deter nuclear attack on the United States or its allies and partners. As the NPR notes, the United States would consider employing nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States and its allies and partners.

Updated elements of the Guidance evolved from prior iterations by:

- Requiring that planning accounts for the new deterrence challenges posed by the growth, modernization, and increasing diversity of potential adversaries' nuclear arsenals;
- Directing that the United States be able to deter Russia, the PRC, and the DPRK simultaneously in peacetime, crisis, and conflict;
- Effectuating the 2022 NPR decision to rely on non-nuclear overmatch to deter regional aggression by Iran as long as Iran does not possess a nuclear weapon;<sup>5</sup>
- Requiring the integration of non-nuclear capabilities into U.S. nuclear planning where non-nuclear capabilities can support the nuclear deterrence mission;
- Stressing the importance of managing escalation in U.S. planning for responding to limited strategic attack; and
- Enabling deeper consultation, coordination, and combined planning with NATO and Indo-Pacific allies and partners in order to strengthen U.S. extended deterrence commitments.

## **Guiding Principles**

The Guidance is consistent with U.S. declaratory policy as articulated in the 2022 NPR. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack on the United States or its allies and partners. The roles of nuclear weapons in United States strategy are to deter strategic attack, assure allies and partners, and enable achievement of national objectives in extreme circumstances if deterrence fails.<sup>6</sup> These roles are interrelated and complementary and provide the basis for developing and assessing U.S. nuclear strategies, policies, and capabilities. They also undergird all U.S. national defense priorities.

The United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states that are party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations. For all other states, there remains a narrow

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<sup>5</sup> The United States remains resolved to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon and is prepared to use all elements of national power to ensure that outcome.

<sup>6</sup> Strategic attack is defined as a nuclear attack of any scale as well as a significant, high-consequence, non-nuclear attack that has strategic-level effect.

range of contingencies in which U.S. nuclear weapons may still play a role in deterring attacks that have strategic effect against the United States or its allies and partners.

U.S. nuclear strategy can best be described as tailored deterrence with flexible capabilities. Deterrence is at its core an effort to influence an adversary's decision calculus. As such, U.S. strategy to deter a potential adversary is a function of the unique characteristics of that adversary - from its geopolitical goals to leaders' perceptions, to strategy, doctrine and capabilities.

### **Planning Guidance**

Planning for nuclear operations supports deterrence on a daily basis, and provides options to the President in extreme circumstances. The Guidance continues to direct that DoD planning focus on only those objectives and missions that are necessary in the evolving security environment. It also instructs that the United States seek to end any conflict at the lowest level of damage possible on the best achievable terms for the United States and its allies and partners.

The Guidance requires DoD to conduct both deliberate and adaptive nuclear planning. Deliberate nuclear plans are tailored to deter and, if necessary, achieve objectives against specified nuclear-armed adversaries that pose a potential strategic threat to the United States and its allies and partners. All deliberate nuclear employment plans must contain the flexibility to tailor each response to the unique circumstances that would surround any nuclear crisis. Adaptive nuclear planning would be implemented as needed in a crisis or conflict to tailor deterrence operations and employment options in accordance with the emerging circumstances of a contingency.

Adaptive nuclear planning is required to facilitate integration with non-nuclear planning; support a flexible, responsive, and tailored nuclear strategy; and enable effective employment of nuclear weapons in a conflict. Deliberate plans are routinely reviewed by DoD's senior leadership, and adaptive planning is regularly exercised.

The Guidance continues to emphasize the need to, first and foremost, hold at risk what adversaries value most. It also reiterates the need to maintain counterforce capabilities to reduce potential adversaries' ability to employ nuclear weapons against the United States and its allies and partners, and does not rely on a counter-value or minimum-deterrence approach. The Guidance also requires that all nuclear plans must be consistent with the Law of Armed Conflict, which regulates the conduct of war. It reaffirms that the United States will continue the practice of not targeting any country on a day-to-day basis and instead relies on open-ocean targeting. It also instructs DoD to continue to minimize the number of nuclear weapons needed to achieve objectives.

While recognizing that nuclear weapons continue to provide unique deterrence effects that no other element of U.S. military power can replace, the Guidance places greater emphasis on the use of non-nuclear capabilities to support the nuclear deterrence mission, where feasible. Such integration allows the Joint Force to combine nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities in complementary ways that leverage the individual characteristics of diverse forces. Further, allies can contribute to nuclear deterrence by alleviating burdens on U.S. conventional or dual-capable forces, or by augmenting their own conventional support to enable U.S. nuclear operations in a contingency.

The Guidance requires that all plans for responding to limited nuclear attack or significant, high-consequence non-nuclear attack that has strategic-level effect include an associated concept for favorably managing escalation, including reducing the likelihood of a large-scale nuclear attack against the United States or its allies and partners. This escalation management is increasingly important as the operating environment becomes more complex and creates the possibility of pathways for conflict escalation that may not be well understood or easy to predict.

### **Nuclear Force Levels and Posture**

The requirement to develop and maintain a tailored deterrence strategy in support of both deliberate and adaptive nuclear planning in a dynamic security environment requires nuclear capabilities that are highly flexible and that can support a wide range of employment options.

To enable this tailored strategy, the United States is committed to retaining a nuclear Triad of strategic systems, capabilities suited to deter and respond to limited nuclear employment, and a modern and enduring nuclear command, control, and communication (NC3) system. The Triad provides mutually supporting attributes that, taken together, best maintain strategic stability while mitigating programmatic, technical, geopolitical, or operational risk. The United States also retains capabilities, such as dual-capable fighter aircraft, that contribute to deterrence of regional conflict and limited nuclear employment.

Modern, flexible, and tailorable U.S. nuclear forces are key to assuring allies and partners that the United States is committed to and capable of deterring the range of strategic threats that they face, and contribute to U.S. nonproliferation goals by convincing allies and partners that they do not need to pursue their own nuclear capabilities. Meeting this goal requires continuing to modernize U.S. nuclear forces and NC3 capabilities, and to sustaining legacy nuclear capabilities and NC3 systems until their modern replacements are fielded. It also requires a nuclear enterprise capable of managing geopolitical, technological, operational, and programmatic risks.

The United States will retain nuclear forces at current readiness levels unless circumstances warrant a change: intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) on day-to-day alert, and a portion of ballistic missile submarines at sea day-to-day. Other nuclear forces, including nuclear-capable bombers, remain in various stages of readiness. This combination of alert postures and capabilities contributes to strategic stability.

All U.S. nuclear systems are subject to multiple layers of control, and the United States maintains rigorous procedural and technical safeguards to prevent misinformed, accidental, or unauthorized launch. In all cases, the United States will maintain a human "in the loop" for all actions critical to informing and executing decisions by the President to initiate and terminate nuclear weapons employment.

While the United States maintains the capability to launch nuclear forces under conditions of an ongoing nuclear attack, it does not depend on a launch-under-attack policy to ensure a credible response. The Guidance instructs DoD to continue to prioritize reducing any potential pressure to launch nuclear forces while under attack.

In an evolving security environment with multiple adversaries who are making nuclear weapons more central to their national security strategies, it may be necessary to adapt current U.S. force capability, posture, composition, or size in order to be able to fulfill the three stated roles of nuclear weapons. The Guidance instructs DoD to continuously evaluate whether adjustments should be made, considering a number of relevant factors, and, when appropriate, make recommendations to the President.

### **Arms Control, Risk Reduction and Strategic Stability**

The Guidance reinforces that deterrence alone will not address strategic dangers. Arms control, risk reduction, and nuclear nonproliferation play indispensable roles as well. Together, these are mutually reinforcing tools for preserving stability, increasing predictability, deterring aggression and escalation, reducing the consequences if deterrence fails, and mitigating the risk of nuclear arms racing and nuclear war.

The United States will abide by the central limits of the New START Treaty for the duration of the Treaty as long as it assesses that Russia continues to do so. The United States is also committed to future arms control with its nuclear-armed competitors, understanding that progress requires willing partners who are committed to reducing risks and who understand that managing rivalry through arms control is preferable to unrestrained competition.

The types of limits that the United States will consider in future negotiations will be influenced by the actions and trajectories of other nuclear-armed actors. Future bilateral agreements or arrangements with Russia, for example, will need to account for U.S. deterrence requirements and other strategic threats globally.

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**Document No. 5. Marek Menkiszak, *Winning the War with Russia (Is Still Possible)*. *The West's Counter-Strategy Towards Moscow*, Centre for Eastern Studies, October 2024, select excerpts.<sup>7</sup>**

### **Main Points**

- Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is not an escalation of a local conflict over limited territory. It is an armed aggression aimed at subjugating or destroying an important European state, and simultaneously a stage in Russia's long-standing war against the Western community. At stake is an overturning of the current political and security order in Europe and the implementation of a fundamental revision of the global order by replacing democratic leadership with a coalition of dictatorships, including Russia. This conflict is systemic and there is no chance of de-escalation, at least as long as the dictatorial Putin regime remains in power in Moscow.
- Although Russia has regained the tactical initiative at the front, it still faces failure at the strategic level. [...] However, there are no signs that Moscow is abandoning its maximalist and hostile goals towards the West. Putin has become a hostage to the conflict, and thus making the entire Russian state and society hostages to it. The Kremlin is counting on the resolve of countries supporting Ukraine waning due to the protracted nature of the confrontation and its increasing human, economic, and political costs, as well as the Russian threats of escalation. If Ukraine does not face complete defeat or cease to exist as a state, it should at least be forced to accept Russian conditions for a temporary freeze of the conflict, which would severely limit its sovereignty. This would allow Russia to reconstitute and prepare for the next phase of the conflict, not just with Ukraine, but primarily with the West.
- Therefore, it is crucial to maximally weaken Russia's ability to wage war against Ukraine and the West, and in the long term, create conditions conducive to regime change, to replace the current dictatorial Putin regime. There are no easy or cost-free solutions in this regard. Measures should be taken in three stages. In the first phase, over the course of the next several months, it will be necessary to amass military support for Ukraine to stabilise the front and prepare for a future Ukrainian offensive. Its successes would open the way to political negotiations and a ceasefire on terms relatively favourable to Kyiv. In the second phase (over the course of several years), the goals would be to strengthen Ukraine through reconstruction, reform, and accession to Western structures, while simultaneously weakening Russia to the highest extent possible, primarily by intensifying sanctions. The third phase (over the next 15 years at least) would aim to achieve the strategic defeat of the Russian regime

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<sup>7</sup> This report can be accessed at [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/OSW-Report\\_Winning%20the%20war%20with%20Russia%20is%20still%20possible\\_net.pdf/](https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/OSW-Report_Winning%20the%20war%20with%20Russia%20is%20still%20possible_net.pdf/).

through systematic pressure, the deepening of long-term trends unfavourable to Moscow, and the strengthening and correction of the global order.

- To maximise the chances of success, Western policy should be based on several pillars of political, economic and security actions, summarised as the five “D’s”: (1) **denying Russia the possibility of victory in the war** and ensuring Ukraine’s success, (2) **denying the Putin regime political legitimacy**, (3) **decoupling Russia economically from the West** and applying economic pressure, (4) **deterring** Moscow, and (5) **defending** the NATO and partner states. There are no magical solutions, and political will is essential.
- For this strategy to succeed, the continued consolidation of the Western community in the political, security and economic spheres is especially important. Its objectives must be consciously accepted by the public. Additionally, it is necessary to build the broadest possible global coalition of states defending the fundamental principles of the international order against the countries that violate them, such as Russia. [...]

The primary goal of this text is to challenge the false belief that there is no alternative to the swift freezing of the armed conflict in Ukraine, which would, in practice, have to occur on terms dictated by the Kremlin. [...] In reality, entering peace negotiations with Russia now – essentially from a position of Ukrainian weakness – would almost exclusively benefit Moscow. [...]

Achieving this [victory] requires, above all, the recognition of the necessity to pursue a long-term, multi-faceted strategy – one that is calculated to span years, or even decades, of systemic conflict, likely to be more brutal than the Cold War era. This also entails accepting the need to bear the various costs of such a confrontation, costs that are certainly more advantageous than the alternative: facing the consequences of Moscow’s strategic success and that of its allies. [...]

Russia’s minimum objective is to gain strategic political control over the entire Ukrainian state. Conversely, the Ukrainian government and society (the latter being, unlike Russian society, a genuine political actor) will not, in the long term, accept any settlement that significantly limits their sovereignty or formally and permanently violates the territorial integrity of the state. [...]

The nature of the Russian power system – with its centralisation, personalisation of authority and traditional political and strategic culture, which values strong and determined leadership – has made Putin a hostage to the war in Ukraine, and the Russian people hostages to Putin. A clear defeat for Russia in this conflict would deal a massive blow to the regime’s reputation, potentially leading to internal destabilisation and, ultimately, the regime’s collapse.



However, a Russian success – achieving victory in Ukraine through a combination of military and diplomatic actions – would lead, if not to the destruction of the Ukrainian state, then at least to a significant limitation of its sovereignty [...]. This success would also likely push Moscow, perhaps after a brief pause, towards the implementation of further aggressive plans. [...]

The Kremlin seems to believe that the decisive factor for the outcome of the war in Ukraine is the level (more in terms of quality than quantity) of Western (especially American) military support. [...] **Moscow's immediate (short-term) goal**, therefore, is to deter and discourage the West from providing Ukraine with enough support to allow Kyiv to stabilise the front line and, at a later stage, even move to a counteroffensive. In the short- to medium-term, the Kremlin's next objective is to push for a revision of the current US and EU policies towards Ukraine, aiming for them to pressure Kyiv into accepting Russian terms for a ceasefire (or, ideally for Russia, a partial settlement of the conflict).

Russia's main intention is to convince the West that its own resources, determination, resilience, and willingness to bear the costs of the war exceed those of the West. This would mean it is in the West's interest to seek a quick freezing of the conflict at the cost of concessions to Moscow, which Ukraine would have to pay. In this scenario, at least some of the original goals of Russia's plan would be achieved, the Putin regime would be significantly strengthened, and the temptation to continue its aggressive policy towards the West would grow. [...]

The key to political stability in Russia, however, is not the mood of the masses but the views and attitudes of the political and business elites. [...] It appears that the relative stability of Putin's regime is based on two main factors. First is the longstanding fear among Russians (likely heightened in wartime) of the personal security consequences of opposing the Kremlin. For ordinary citizens, this includes a range of repressive measures stemming from draconian laws and their enforcement (job loss, expulsion from universities, fines, imprisonment, or even long-term detention). Disloyal members of the political-business elite risk not only losing their positions, financial benefits and a significant portion of their wealth and assets but, in extreme cases, also their lives and those of their loved ones. As long as this fear outweighs frustration over personal and collective losses, and the risk of taking active action against Putin and his associates is subjectively perceived as too high, it is unlikely that the current situation will change. [...]

The second key factor behind this status quo is the still-prevailing, though difficult to quantify, belief among at least part of the elite in the official propaganda's promise of a future "victory" for Russia in its confrontation with Ukraine and the West. [...] It seems that a growing portion of Russia's elite shares the belief that Ukraine's ability to resist and the West's willingness to provide long-term support are inevitably declining, and that there is a worsening crisis within the Western alliance and its member states. As long as this belief

persists, along with entrenched Russian stereotypes about the West (especially Western Europe) being weak, risk-averse, and prone to intimidation and corruption, the Kremlin may be able to maintain this confidence, thus ensuring the survival of the regime.

Ongoing **demographic crisis** is having a negative impact on internal stability. [...]

All of these factors and trends suggest that **in the next few years** (at least until 2026) – if Ukrainian resistance and Western pressure remain at current levels – **Russia will likely retain the ability to wage a high-intensity war without the threat of internal destabilisation. However, the longer the conflict drags on, the more the costs and risks will accumulate for Russia**, especially if Western support for Ukraine increases and sanctions on Russia are tightened. This is why Moscow prefers a relatively quick resolution to the conflict with Ukraine in its favour. [...]

**Putin's aggressive Russia poses a direct and serious threat to the security of the Euro-Atlantic region, as well as a challenge to global security.** For Ukraine and the majority of Central, Eastern and Northern European states, especially those bordering the Russian Federation (as well as those in the South Caucasus and Central Asia), this threat is existential [...] For other Western states, the danger lies in the negative consequences of Russia's ongoing aggressive policy, which could lead to the weakening or disintegration of key political, economic, and security structures (particularly NATO and the EU). Russia may also attempt to destabilise internal situations through political and economic subversion, acts of sabotage, cyberattacks and other hostile actions.

Globally, the Kremlin's policies increase the risk of regional crises, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the continued threat of energy, food and trade crises, as well as the further erosion of international law and the basic principles of state interaction. [...]

The root of these threats is the current Russian regime itself – its dictatorial, neo-totalitarian nature, the composition of the narrow ruling group, and its perception of reality, its political objectives, and methods of achieving them. As long as this regime exists, and Putin – the chief instigator of the war with Ukraine and the West – remains in power along with his closest collaborators, who share his views and are actively involved in planning and leading the war, this threat will persist. [...]

[T]he main goal of the West and other countries that share its values and commitment to defending freedom should not merely be to halt Russia's ongoing aggression and minimise its damage. Of equal importance is the **creation of conditions that will lead to the removal of members of Putin's regime from power and enable a deep systemic change in the Russian Federation**, providing hope for a positive revision of its foreign policy [...]. Of course, this process will not be a direct result of Western actions, as the West does not

possess the tools to enact it. It will rather involve a series of political, economic, and informational measures designed to shape circumstances conducive to internal Russian actors (opposition activists, but primarily members of the broader elite) bringing about this change themselves. Achieving this goal will be very difficult [...]. However, the alternative – the continuation of the regime and its further pursuit of aggressive policies, likely with escalation – would be even worse for Western security and, more broadly, the international community. [...]

### **1. Short-term: stop Russia**

**In the short-term** (up to mid-2026), the primary objective of Western policy should be to concentrate and maximise political, economic, and military efforts, a strategy referred to as a “**surge**”. The goals of this surge should be: first, halting the current minor advances of Russian forces on the Ukrainian front; stabilising the front line; strengthening Ukraine’s overall resilience, especially to survive the winter of 2024/2025; and, in the meantime, equipping Ukrainian forces to launch offensive operations between summer 2025 and spring 2026. The success of these offensive actions would create a favourable backdrop for diplomatic talks, aiming – by 2026 – for a ceasefire and a temporary freezing of the conflict.

At this stage, it would be crucial to provide maximum support to Ukraine through the supply of both offensive (particularly continued provision of long-range missiles such as ATACMS and Storm Shadow/SCALP, as well as fighter jets in numbers that would bear a significant impact on the battlefield) and defensive weaponry (especially air defence systems), artillery ammunition (through increased production in Western countries by 2025), tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, and emergency assistance in the energy sector (electricity, fuel, heating materials, generators, and other energy-related equipment). Another critical element of this policy would be the **removal of existing restrictions on the use of advanced Western weapons against military and critical infrastructure targets (especially energy facilities) deep inside Russia**. It would also be essential to resist Moscow’s pressure – using both threats of escalation and pseudo-offers of “peace” (on its terms) – to rush into negotiations that would weaken support for Ukraine and ease pressure on Russia.

The political goal of this phase would be to convince Russian elites that achieving the Kremlin’s political objectives in Ukraine is impossible in the near future – whether by military or diplomatic means – and that the costs for Russia (in political, economic and security terms) are rising sharply, especially if large-scale fighting were to extend onto Russian territory. [...]

Continuing the war, even in a limited form, is necessary for the Putin regime to maintain a sense of threat, an instrument of social control and disciplining the elites, while also justifying economic difficulties. It thus seems likely that Russia will aim to initiate “peace talks” without halting military actions, maintaining pressure on both Ukraine and the West,

hoping that increasing war fatigue will improve its chances of negotiating the most favourable terms for a temporary freezing of the conflict. Simultaneously, we can expect the Kremlin to attempt to intimidate key Western states further and push them to accept Russian demands by escalating hybrid warfare against the West in a limited fashion.

## **2. Medium-term: weaken Russia**

It is important to understand that the ceasefire agreement outlined in the previous phase would not signify the end of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, much less the hybrid war that Russia is waging against the West. [...] Its inevitable consequences would include reducing the burdens and costs for Russia from intense military operations and increasing the efficiency of its preparations for a future armed confrontation, not only with Ukraine but also with NATO states. [...] Furthermore, this would likely coincide with a similar process being undertaken by China, and by around 2030, both Russia and China would have developed the capability to launch significant offensive actions against the West in their respective theatres (Moscow in Europe and Beijing in East Asia). This would substantially increase the risk of either the opportunistic exploitation of one power's offensive by the other for its own strategic gains or even fully coordinated action by both states in a quasi-alliance. [...]

On the other hand, this would reduce Ukraine's substantial current costs of waging high-intensity warfare (including human and material losses), enabling the implementation of an ambitious economic recovery plan for Ukraine with Western support, while it would also make significant progress in its integration into Western structures [...]. This would strengthen Ukraine's state, economy and military, giving it several years to build up its military potential in cooperation with the Western countries. In particular, the rebuilding and training of Ukrainian reserves and specialised personnel, as well as the creation of efficient logistics chains to support the armed forces, would be crucial. For the West, this scenario would also slightly reduce the current economic burdens and lower the internal political risks associated with an increasingly unpopular war. Most importantly, it would provide time for the development of its own industrial potential, including the defence sector (such as weapons and ammunition production both for internal needs and support for Ukraine), and the implementation of plans to enhance military capabilities.

While Western military support for Ukraine would be essential in the short-term phase, in the medium-term (up to around 2030), economic pressure on Russia would take on greater significance. The primary political goal during this period would be to weaken the Putin regime as much as possible by maximising Russia's socio-economic and political problems, and particularly by hindering the development of its military potential [...].

At the same time, the aim would be to strengthen Ukraine and other countries threatened by Russia's neo-imperial policies (such as Moldova) to the point where, with Western support, they can effectively defend themselves. Other key objectives would include maximising the

resilience of the West itself, skilfully managing the political challenges, boosting economic capacity and, above all, expanding defensive capabilities – particularly in European countries. The political goal of these actions would be to reach a sufficiently high level of deterrence to prevent Russia from resuming large-scale aggression against Ukraine or NATO member states. This would be served especially by the potential accession of Ukraine to NATO and the EU. [...]

### **3. Long-term: defeat Russia**

Given the systemic nature of the conflict with the Russian Federation, the West must be prepared for a **prolonged and exhausting confrontation with Russia**, especially if the aforementioned strategy of a surge does not lead to a turning point. In this scenario, economic pressure tools, particularly **sanctions** and measures aimed at gradually isolating the Putin regime internationally, will become increasingly important. Simultaneously, a deeper consolidation and strengthening of the West's capacity and resilience will be necessary. [...]

**The long-term goal (over the next several decades) of Western policy towards Russia should be to deliver a strategic defeat to Russia** – understood primarily as the maximal weakening of its ability to conduct aggressive foreign policy and the prevention of the Kremlin's ambitions to fundamentally revise or destroy the regional and global order.

**The optimal scenario would involve a profound political transformation in Russia [...].**

However, the realisation of this scenario would likely require several significant factors to occur simultaneously, including a serious shock triggered by external circumstances (such as losing a war and/or a deep economic crisis) and the loss of system stability due to internal tensions. Although this situation is not impossible (it is difficult to predict), a more probable scenario at present seems to be the **gradual decay of the neo-totalitarian Putin system until it reaches a crisis or implosion** due to growing internal problems, largely driven by external pressures. [...]

In the long term, maintaining or – optimally – systematically increasing sanctions pressure on Russia, as well as Western countries refusing to return to pre-2022 trade and economic cooperation (especially in energy and technology), is of particular importance.

The greatest challenge to this policy is, on one hand, the direct and indirect costs borne by the West, which are causing growing resistance in some countries [...], and on the other, the actual support Russia receives from non-Western states. [...] It is therefore crucial to clearly define a “red line”, the crossing of which would result in sanctions against any third-party entities (including those in Western countries) that violate it. Furthermore, large-scale economic cooperation with Russia, especially in the energy sector (such as the import of

Russian resources, transportation, and insurance), remains problematic. Dialogue and persuasion, including offering alternative cooperation projects, play a vital role in addressing this issue. [...]

## **V. WESTERN POLICY TOOLS TOWARDS RUSSIA: THE FIVE “D’s” [...]**

### **1. Denying Russia a chance for victory**

A key factor legitimising the Putin regime and maintaining the political loyalty of the broader elite to the Kremlin – apart from the fear of repression – is fostering the belief in a future victory (even if distant and achieved at great cost in lives and sacrifices). Depriving these elites of hope for Russia’s success in the war (optimally through delivering a spectacular defeat to Russian forces, humiliating Putin and his associates, and exposing their inefficiency and impotence), which would compound the rising costs of isolation and sanctions is essential and the only way to create strong incentives for internal conflicts within the Russian elite. [...]

One alternative is to achieve a similar effect by intensifying long-term political, economic and security pressure on Russia, while continuing support for Ukraine. This will systematically increase the costs of Russian aggression, while simultaneously denying Moscow any hope of achieving its strategic objectives regarding Ukraine and the West. [...]

Preventing Ukraine’s defeat and, even more so, increasing the chances of a convincing victory, would require an increase in the already significant military, financial-economic, and political efforts of the Western community. [...]

It is crucial to avoid statements that suggest a lack of confidence in the long-term resilience and effectiveness of Ukraine’s resistance or Western support for it, as well as any indication of serious concern about Russia’s capabilities, its willingness to escalate and the potential consequences. Furthermore, the West should avoid rhetoric that encourages self-restraint, particularly in military security. Declarations of unwillingness to seriously harm Russia, setting “red lines” for Western policy (rather than for Russia’s), or suggesting a time frame for the end or freezing of the conflict are politically and psychologically harmful.

Statements of this kind reinforce the Kremlin’s belief (and that of the broader Russian elite) that the West is not sufficiently determined to endure the current confrontation, especially in the long term, and thus can be “waited out” until a final success is achieved. This strengthens the belief in the future effectiveness of Russia’s aggressive policies and discourages any potential revision of these policies by the Kremlin. It also increases the temptation for further escalation on Russia’s part and bolsters its image in the eyes of the domestic elite, thereby enhancing the cohesion of the regime. [...]



It [effective Western strategic communication] should emphasise confidence and a lack of hesitation or concern, convey calm determination, highlight the inevitability of fulfilling previous commitments, and focus on the negative consequences for Russia that result from the use of these measures. At the same time, Western communication should ignore Russian threats. [...]

## **2. Denying the Putin regime political legitimacy**

It is crucial to continue active diplomacy and efforts aimed at maximising Russia's political isolation. It is important to remember that any high-level dialogue with Moscow, regardless of the stated intentions or content, is used by the Kremlin and Russian state propaganda to bolster Putin's prestige and convince the Russian elites and society that Russia cannot be isolated. This dialogue also reinforces the belief that the West still fears Russia and is willing to make concessions to de-escalate the conflict, as it has grown tired of it. [...]

## **3. Decoupling Russia from the West and economic pressure**

In the economic sphere, it is crucial to pursue a rapid and complete decoupling from economic cooperation with Russia, particularly in importing energy resources and other strategic materials (e.g. rare earth metals, noble gases, etc.). This process is already underway but needs to be accelerated and made irreversible. This necessitates significant investments in diversifying both the sources and routes of raw material imports, including energy, and in securing alternative energy sources. Additionally, it will be vital to further support the development of energy-saving technologies, renewable energy sources (RES), and nuclear energy. This effort also requires a shift in the economic model (especially in industry) in the EU and other Western countries towards being less energy-intensive and more technologically advanced, thereby enhancing competitive advantages in these areas.

**Western policy should not only focus on maintaining but also on increasing pressure on Russia, primarily through sanction mechanisms** (and this should equally apply to Belarus, as Lukashenka's dictatorial regime is a co-participant in the aggression against Ukraine and lacks political independence). It is essential to prevent the Russian elite from perceiving that the West is growing weary of the costs of sanctions and might gradually withdraw from them under some pretext, even without concessions from Moscow.

Although the current Western sanctions have not caused a collapse of the Russian economy, they have condemned it to a prolonged crisis, gradual de-modernisation, a decline in living standards, and a weakening of its international position. However, to achieve the desired effect, long-term actions will be required. [...]



#### **4. Deterrence and defence**

There is no indication that Putin's Russia has abandoned its aggressive strategic objectives, not only towards Ukraine but also against the Western community. Therefore, it is crucial to deprive the Kremlin of any hope of achieving these goals in the foreseeable future and to deter Russia from further escalation of aggression against Ukraine and NATO member states.

Maintaining and enhancing Western military capabilities, especially NATO's collective defence, is essential to prevent any miscalculation by Moscow. Strengthening defensive and deterrent measures through robust military deployments, strategic planning, and effective coordination among Western allies must continue to be a central priority. Additionally, ensuring long-term support for Ukraine to bolster its defensive capabilities remains critical to countering Russia's expansionist agenda. [...]

Ukraine is today the place where not only its own fate and that of Eastern Europe, the European continent, Russia and the so-called post-Soviet space are being determined. The ongoing war will largely decide the future of the West as a political community based on shared or converging values, interests and institutions and, ultimately, the global balance of power and the principles of the international order. [...]