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**RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR THREATS
AND THE SECURITY OF THE
BALTIC STATES**

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RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR THREATS AND THE SECURITY OF THE BALTIC STATES

Marcel H. Van Herpen

ABSTRACT

In this paper the author analyzes the Kremlin's nuclear saber-rattling. Is it only scaremongering or should these threats be taken seriously? He stresses the fact that since 1999 tactical nuclear weapons have acquired an established place in the Russian military strategy, to be used as so-called "de-escalation" weapons. This strategy makes the use or threat of use in a conflict more likely. Tactical nuclear attacks were simulated during the different *Zapad* exercises. Despite reassurances from Russian experts, such as Dmitri Trenin, that the Baltic states are safe, the author argues that Russian aggression against the Baltic states, ultimately backed by nuclear blackmail, can by no means be dismissed, and that NATO should upgrade its defenses.

After Russia's annexation of the Crimea and the start of its 'hybrid war' in Ukraine, it has become routine to speak about a new 'Cold War'. The harsh international climate, characterized by a new East-West standoff, evokes, indeed, reminiscences of the late Brezhnev years, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and deployed SS-20 missiles which could reach any place in Western Europe. However, today's situation presents important differences, also, with the Cold War. During the Cold War the nuclear arms race was seldom accompanied by verbal threats. Verbal scaremongering was not deemed necessary: the nuclear buildup was supposed to speak for itself. Things are different today.

Time and again the Russian leadership is reminding the West that it has the capability to destroy its cities and industrial centers. In 2007 General Alexander Vladimirov was already talking about “the inevitability of war between Russia and the United States within 10 to 15 years.”(1) Four years later, in 2011, General Nikolay Makarov, Chief of the Russian General Staff, said that he couldn’t “rule out that ... local and regional armed conflicts could grow into a large-scale war, possibly even with nuclear weapons.”(2) What in 2011 was still being presented as a possibility, became in March 2014, during the occupation and annexation of the Crimea, an openly expressed threat. The Kremlin warned that any attempt by Western powers to intervene militarily would be answered with nuclear strikes.(3) On March 16, 2014, the day a “referendum” on the annexation was organized in the Crimea, Dmitry Kiselyov, a popular television presenter who is backed by the Kremlin, said that “Russia is the only country in the world what is realistically capable of turning the United States into radioactive ash.”(4) The message could not have been blunter. A few months later, on August 14, 2014, Putin told the assembled factions of the State Duma that he soon planned to “surprise the West with our new developments in offensive nuclear weapons about which we do not talk yet.”(5) Two weeks later, at a Nashi youth forum, he reminded the world that “Russia is one of the most powerful nuclear nations. This is a reality, not just words.”(6) In March 2016 Igor Ivanov, Russia’s Foreign Minister from 1998 to 2004, repeated the same mantra, warning that “the risk of confrontation with the use of nuclear weapons in Europe is higher than in the 1980s.”(7)

These Russian attempts to stir up a nuclear war psychosis seemed to be starting to work, when, on the same day that Ivanov made his remarks, the British tabloid *Express* published an article titled “European NUCLEAR WAR IMMINENT as Russia relations break down” (capital letters in original).(8) The article was accompanied by a picture of Vladimir Putin against the background of a nuclear explosion. Two weeks earlier, *Bild*, a German tabloid, writing about a Russian strategic nuclear maneuver in the Arctic, had already run the headline: “Russia rehearses for nuclear war.”(9) In the spring of 2016 General Sir Richard Shirreff, NATO’s Deputy SACEUR between 2011 to 2014, joined the doomsday chorus, publishing a book titled *2017: War With Russia: An Urgent Warning from Senior Military Command*. (10) It is clear that by its threats and verbal saber-rattling the Kremlin wants to create a war psychosis – not only in the West, but also in Russia.(11) One can no longer rule

out a deliberate use of one or several tactical nuclear weapons being considered by the Kremlin as a means to support its revisionist objectives. The *Economist* warned: “The new nuclear age is built on shakier foundations [than the Cold War stand-off]. Although there are fewer nuclear weapons than at the height of the cold war ... the possibility of some of them being used is higher and growing.”(12) This warning has to be taken seriously.

WHY IS RUSSIA MAKING NUCLEAR THREATS?

There are two possible reactions to the Kremlin’s threats: the first is to belittle them, the second is to take them at face value. An example of the first are remarks made by US President Barack Obama, who – nine days after the “referendum” in the Crimea and its subsequent annexation – said that Russia was “a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors – not out of strength, but out of weakness,” adding, “to be much more concerned when it comes to our security with the prospect of a nuclear weapon going off in Manhattan.”(13) However, the president forgot that a ‘regional power’ which has the ability to destroy the United States, should be the focus of special attention by the world’s superpower, and particularly so when this ‘regional power’ is conducting a revisionist, aggressive foreign policy vis-à-vis its neighboring states. It is, therefore, more prudent to take the Russian threats seriously and to analyze how these threats are ultimately supported by military doctrines, capabilities, planning, maneuvers, and exercises.

The first thing which must be made clear is that Russia does not intend, nor does it threaten to launch a *strategic* nuclear strike against the United States. The strategy of mutual assured destruction (MAD), inherited from the Cold War period, is still valid today. The nuclear powers (not only Russia and the United States) possess a submarine-based second-strike capability, which allows them to strike back even in the ultimate scenario of their homeland having been devastated by a first strike by the enemy. It is, in particular, on the nonstrategic, “tactical” nuclear weapons, that we should focus our attention. Even before he became president, Vladimir Putin played a crucial role in Russia’s new emphasis on these weapons in the Russian military strategy.(14) In March 1999, Putin, then director of the FSB, was appointed by Yeltsin to Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian

Federation. On April 29, 1999, he attended the Council for the first time. The NATO intervention in Kosovo had begun one month earlier. This high-tech intervention with precision-guided missiles had a shock effect on the Kremlin. The Russian leadership was afraid that, confronted with the conventional weaponry superiority of the West and in particular of the United States, it could no longer defend its territory against a conventional attack. The closed meeting of the Security Council was convened to discuss the new strategic situation. The meeting lasted only one hour and a half and was so secret that even the chiefs of the Air Force, the Navy, and the Strategic Rocket Forces (the latter in charge of the Russian strategic arsenal) were not invited. After the meeting Putin said that the Council had adopted three documents: one on nuclear weapons research, one on a concept for the use of nuclear weapons, and a third document that was, according to Putin, "so secret that even its title could not be disclosed."⁽¹⁵⁾ This led to all kinds of speculation. According to the Russian defense expert Pavel Felgenhauer, who is usually well informed, the Council had taken the decision to counter the new Western superiority in high-tech conventional precision-guided weapons by developing a new generation of tactical nuclear weapons. He wrote that the Council had taken the decision to produce a new low-yield nuclear warhead. The yield was estimated to be between twenty-five and one hundred metric tons of TNT, which would give it a force of between 1/150 and 1/600 of the bomb of Hiroshima, which was about 15 kilotons.⁽¹⁶⁾ According to Felgenhauer the number of these new weapons might reach up to 10,000. It is clear that this new emphasis on low-yield tactical nuclear weapons, to be used on the battlefield, would trivialize these weapons and make their use in an early phase of a conventional conflict more probable.⁽¹⁷⁾

THE ROLE OF TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THE RUSSIAN STRATEGY

Felgenhauer's assessment seemed to be confirmed two months later, when, in June 1999, a large military maneuver was organized with the code name *Zapad* (West), in which a Western attack on the Kaliningrad oblast, the small Russian enclave between Poland and Lithuania, was simulated. During this simulation the enclave could only be held for three days. In order to avoid defeat, Russian troops deployed tactical nuclear weapons to "de-

escalate” the conflict. (“De-escalation” is, in fact, Orwellian Newspeak for escalation. The underlying assumption is that the Russian threat to launch a nuclear weapon - or its actual launch – will force the adversary to suspend the hostilities. The possibility that the adversary might, in turn, escalate the conflict is not envisaged). The simulated use of nuclear weapons during the *Zapad 1999* exercise included two TU-95 (“Bear”) and two TU-160 (“Blackjack”) heavy bombers, launching nuclear air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) against Poland and the United States.(18) The *Zapad* maneuver was a clear sign of the implementation of a new strategy. And if any doubts might have remained, these disappeared when, on January 14, 2000, the new National Security Concept was published. What immediately strikes the eye is the difference with the preceding Security Concept, dating from 1997. In the 1997 version the use of nuclear weapons was restricted to cases in which there was a threat “to the very existence of the Russian Federation as an independent sovereign state.” In the new version Russia reserved for itself the right to use nuclear weapons “in case it needs to repel an armed aggression.” In the first case the use of nuclear weapons was only reserved for extreme situations of national survival, in the second case they could also be used in small wars at Russia’s frontiers.

In September 2009, one year after the war with Georgia, Russia organized a new *Zapad* exercise, entitled *Zapad 2009*, in which the armies of both the Russian Federation and Belarus participated. Officially 12,600 troops were involved (remaining under the 13,000 limit, defined by the OSCE, which gives other OSCE countries the right to send observers). The maneuver coincided partially with another exercise in the nearby Leningrad Military District, called *Ladoga 2009*, in which 7,000 troops participated. Taken together, at least 20,000 troops were involved. According to Western estimates, the total number of troops might even have exceeded 30,000.(19) These maneuvers were very intimidating for the three Baltic states, Finland, and Poland. What was also new was the participation of three of the four Russian fleets. Naval infantry forces of the Baltic Sea Fleet, the Black Sea Fleet, and the Northern Fleet, participated in amphibious landing operations on a simulated “Polish” beach in the Kaliningrad enclave. The Russian fleets may also have been equipped with tactical nuclear weapons. In March 2009 Russian Vice Admiral Oleg Burtsev, deputy head of the Navy General Staff, had already told the news agency RIA Novosti, that “Probably, tactical nuclear weapons [on submarines] will play a key role in the future,” adding, “There is

no longer any need to equip missiles with powerful nuclear warheads. We can install low-yield warheads on existing cruise missiles...”(20) These long-range cruise missiles, launched from attack submarines were intended to attack both aircraft carrier strike groups and coastal targets.(21) Extremely disconcerting was the fact that - as in the *Zapad 1999* maneuver - *Zapad 2009* was also terminated by a simulated tactical nuclear attack on Poland,(22) which led to an outcry in Warsaw. The Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Radosław Sikorski, wrote letters to the Secretary General of NATO and to President Obama, asking the latter to station American troops on Polish soil. According to Anna Dunin, a security expert, the *Ladoga 2009* maneuver resembled “the Red Army’s preparation for the invasion of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and an attack at Finland in 1939.”(23) The Estonian defense analyst Kaarel Kaas also expressed his concern. “The scope of the exercises,” he wrote, “the weaponry used, the troops involved and the scenario rehearsed all indicate unequivocally that Russia is actually rehearsing a full-scale strategic military operation against a conventional opponent. A look at the map makes it clear that there are no other conventional forces in the region than those of NATO member states.”(24)

As was the case with the *Zapad 1999* maneuver, *Zapad 2009* was used to test a new military doctrine. In an interview to *Izvestia*, Nikolay Patrushev, the Secretary of the Security Council (and a former director of the FSB), stated that the old doctrine of 2000 was “a document of a period that has gone.”(25) The new doctrine would offer new possibilities to deploy tactical nuclear weapons. “In critical situations for the national security,” he said, “one should also not exclude a preventive nuclear strike against the aggressor.”(26) Patrushev, mentioning a *preventive* nuclear strike as a new tool in the Russian arsenal, was distancing himself still further from the old deterrence strategy, not excluding that tactical nuclear weapons could be used against non-nuclear countries that are signatories of the Nonproliferation Treaty.

In September 2013 a new *Zapad* exercise was organized on the territory of the Russian Federation and Belarus. Although officially no more than 10,000 troops would have been deployed, Western estimates came closer to 70,000.(27) This time there were no simulated nuclear strikes. According to Stephen Blank, “The absence of a nuclear element in *Zapad 2013* may reflect concern over the unfavorable publicity generated by the reports of a

simulated nuclear strike on Warsaw in Zapad 2009.”(28) However, these tactical considerations did not mean that Russia had changed its nuclear strategy.

AN IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE BALTIC STATES?

The new role, assigned to tactical nuclear weapons in the Russian strategy, is a matter of great concern, in particular for the three Baltic states, of which two: Estonia and Latvia, have significant Russian minorities. A lot has been written on the possibility of a “hybrid” scenario for these countries: the infiltration of “little green men” in the Russian-speaking provinces adjacent to the Russian frontier.(29) However, such a scenario, which was adapted to the situation in Ukraine, is not very probable in the Baltic region. There are three reasons for this. The first is that a prolonged low-intensity war, fought by proxies and Russian special forces (without insignia), does not really pay off. It would only lead to enhanced Western sanctions and the intervention of a joint Western NATO force. A war in the Baltics would for the Kremlin be rather an “all or nothing” gamble. Its objectives would be to end the separation of the exclave of Kaliningrad from mainland Russia, to conquer the Baltic sea ports of Riga and Tallinn, to “bring back” the ethnic Russian population of the Baltic states into their “homeland” Russia, and – last, but not least - to roll back NATO. The Kremlin knows that the strategic situation in the Baltic region is disadvantageous for NATO. In a series of wargames, conducted by RAND, a US defense research agency, between the summer of 2014 and the spring of 2015, the outcome of a simulated Russian invasion of the Baltic states was that NATO could not successfully defend the territory. The longest it has taken Russian forces to reach the outskirts of Tallinn and Riga was 60 hours.(30) The dire strategic situation is reinforced still more by the relative isolation of this region. The only connection between Poland and Lithuania is the “Suwalki Gap”, a 64-mile wide landstrip in north-eastern Poland. North of this “gap” is Kaliningrad, south of it is Belarus. This gap could easily be cut off by Russia. Some have compared it with the “Fulda Gap” in Cold War Germany, which, at that time, was also considered a vulnerable spot in the allied defense. General Ben Hodges, commander US Army Europe, has warned that in the exclave of Kaliningrad there is a “significant amount of capability,” including anti-ship weapons, air

defenses, and electronic warfare. “They could make it very difficult for any of us to get into the Baltic Sea if we needed to in a contingency.”(31) In 2015 the 1st Guards Tank Army, a unit formed in the Second World War and disbanded in 1999, was reconstituted. Composed of 500-600 tanks, 600-800 infantry fighting vehicles and 35,000 to 50,000 soldiers, the army paper *Zvezda* touted it as an army, “able to neutralize the threat from the Baltic countries.” (32) “Is Russia really preparing for a war with the Baltic countries?” asked Vadim Shtepa. “The overwhelming opinion in the West is that this is unlikely; but it should be noted that just three years ago, the forcible annexation of Crimea and the presence of Russian tanks in eastern Ukraine also would have sounded like nonsense.” (33)

ARE DMITRI TRENIN’S REASSURANCES CREDIBLE?

Does such a threat to the Baltic states exist? According to Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, “Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland are safe ... even if they do not feel that way: the Kremlin has no interest in risking nuclear war by attacking a NATO member state, and the sphere of Russian control to which Putin aspires certainly excludes these countries.”(34) However, the same Dmitri Trenin reassured us some years ago, that “Russia has abandoned the age-old pattern of territorial growth,” (35) adding, “The élan is gone. In the two decades since the collapse, imperial restoration was never considered seriously by the leaders, nor demanded by a wider public.”(36) These words were written *before* the annexation of the Crimea and the invasion of eastern Ukraine. In my book “Putin’s Wars,” (37) published before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, I had already criticized Trenin’s rose-colored view and insisted on my prediction that a Russian invasion was imminent. Unfortunately, I was proved to be right and Trenin wrong. In retrospect the question is whether Trenin’s predictions were *deliberately* pointing into the wrong direction. Let us take a look at the facts. In February 2014, just weeks before the annexation of the Crimea, Trenin wrote: “Despite what some Ukrainians suspect, Moscow is unlikely to try bringing about the breakup of Ukraine in order to annex its southern and eastern parts. That would mean civil war next door, and Russia abhors the idea.”(38) That Russia “abhors the idea” of a civil war next door was not confirmed by the facts. On the contrary, it was not

even a “civil war” which Russia was fomenting, but a war of aggression *tout court*. The dubious character of Trenin’s predictions was also observed by James Kirchik of the *Daily Beast*, who noted that “an analysis of his work since the Ukraine crisis began reveals a telling pattern of making oddly sanguine predictions of Russian behavior, followed by appeals to the U.S. and Europe that they assent to Russian belligerence.”(39) Each time Trenin explicitly excluded something from happening, it happened some weeks later. One should, therefore, take Trenin’s recently made reassurances concerning the safety of the Baltic states with a grain of salt, if not as a warning of imminent danger.

PATRUSHEV THREATENING TO INVADE THE BALTIC COUNTRIES?

In an interview, published by a Latvian paper, Nikolay Patrushev, secretary of the Russian Security Council and a former head of the FSB, declared that in case of a war between Russia and Turkey, “if the [NATO] alliance supports Ankara, the most logical answer from our side would be the invasion by our army into the Baltic region. And the whole Baltic region would be ours. Of course without any losses. Rather quickly. In this way NATO, for its support of Turkey, would pay with the loss of the Baltic region.”(40) StopFake.org revealed that this interview was a fake. (41) The original interviewee was Mikhail Alexandrov, an expert of the Moscow Foreign Relations institute MGIMO and the interview was published on the site of *Svobodnaya Pressa*. (42) Even if it is not Patrushev who spoke these words, they are very disconcerting, if not outright alarming. It means that the possibility of a *Blitzkrieg* to conquer the Baltic states is being considered by Russian experts as a real option. The huge *Zapad* maneuvers of 2009 and 2013 are, in fact, nothing less than realistic rehearsals of an invasion of the Baltic states. It is interesting also to listen to Alexander Dugin, who, in 2006, in an interview said the following on the Baltic states:

“For the moment our priorities are not in the Baltic region. In a way one could say that the latter is an unresolved question in the short term, although in the long term Russia will never accept it. The Eurasian construction assumes a new statute for the

Baltic region – either friendly toward Moscow, or neutral. Russia will never reach a mutual understanding with an Atlanticist Baltic region.”(43)

This was in 2006, before Moscow’s revisionist wars of aggression against Georgia and Ukraine. At that time the Kremlin had, indeed, no short term plans in the Baltic region. However, Dugin rightly called it “an unresolved question” which, *in the long run*, would reappear on Moscow’s agenda. Ten years on this seems to be the case. Dugin has often been depicted as a radical, who would be out of step with the “pragmatic realists” of the Kremlin. This might have been true ten years ago, but is no longer true today. The Kremlin, one could say, has been completely “Duginized.” In an interview in September 2008, for instance, Dugin, when asked how Russia would react to Ukraine moving into NATO, said: “I think that Russian reaction would be to support an uprising in eastern parts and Crimea and I could not exclude the entrance of armed force there, as in the Ossetian scenario.”(44) At that time it sounded like provocation. It became a reality six years later.

In my book *Putin’s Wars* I described three phases in Russia’s war against Georgia: respectively a cold war, a lukewarm war, and a hot 5-day war. In the same way we can discern different phases in Moscow’s war with the Baltic states. Moscow’s aggressive behavior in the spring of 2007 against Estonia on the occasion of the removal of the Bronze Soldier - a Soviet war monument - from the center of Tallinn (45) is part of the cold war. At that time members of the Nashi youth movement blocked the street of the Estonian embassy in Moscow, playing loud music day and night and there were even attempts to physically attack the Estonian ambassador, Marina Kaljurand. The cyber attacks on Estonian government websites, which accompanied the Russian actions, could already be characterized as part of a ‘lukewarm war.’ It is only in recent months that NATO is waking up to the danger of a hot war. In a report by an Estonian defense think tank the authors write that “NATO’s current posture, which is reliant on the reinforcement of the Baltic states, lacks credibility.”(46) NATO’s strategy, the deployment of a few multinational battalions in the Baltic states, which, in times of crisis, can be reinforced with additional troops, seems not sustainable. In the event of a Russian Blitzkrieg against the Baltic states, Russia would be able to close the Suwalki Gap with its army. At the same time it would use its anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, such as air defense, coastal defense, and cruise missiles, to

create a “bubble” above the Baltic states and the Baltic Sea, which would be difficult, if not impossible to penetrate – thus making the arrival of NATO reinforcements impossible.

CREATING A ‘CASUS BELLI’?

The only element lacking for Russia at this moment seems to be the creation of a credible *casus belli*. The remarks of Mikhail Alexandrov on “taking the Baltics” as a “tit for tat” in the case of armed conflict with Turkey, is the writing on the wall. Recent “incidents”, such as the simulated attacks by Russian SU-24 jets on the US destroyer Donald Cook in the Baltic Sea on 11 and 12 April 2016, must, therefore, be taken for what they are: not “incidents,” but intimidation and, ultimately, a rehearsal for the creation of a *casus belli*. Secretary of State John Kerry said after the event: “It is reckless. It is provocative. It is dangerous. And under the rules of engagement, that could have been a shoot-down.”(47) Indeed. Nuclear threats and this reckless behavior are not only meant as a deliberate provocation to test the nerves of the Western alliance, but also as a rehearsal for creating an incident, which can be used as a pretext for Russian military action.(48) It should not be forgotten that *The Art of War*, written by the Chinese strategic thinker Sun-Tzu around 500 BC, is still a classic in the curriculum of Russian military academies. In *The Art of War* Sun-Tzu writes that “the way of war is a way of deception,”(49) and that “ultimate excellence lies not in winning every battle, but in defeating the enemy without ever fighting.”(50) This idea of winning a war without fighting has in contemporary Russia been translated into a strategy, called “reflexive control,” (51) which means influencing the opponent’s thinking, so that they do not thwart Russia in realizing her foreign policy objectives. In Putin’s Russia these objectives are clear: they intend to redraw the map of Europe and revise the existing territorial status-quo - if necessary with the use of arms, as we have witnessed in Georgia and Ukraine. The Kremlin might be inclined to think that occupying the Baltic states in a *Blitzkrieg* operation, followed by nuclear blackmail, threatening to launch tactical nuclear weapons, accompanied by an offer “to negotiate a just peace,” could lead the West to make concessions – or at least delay a Western response, which is long enough to sow discord within the NATO ranks. Intimidation of the West would in this scenario lead to “de-escalation” on Russian terms.

Pavel Felgenhauer wrote: “Of course, a lot of this nuclear war threat talk is intended to scare the West into concessions ... in the best Cold War tradition of so-called “brinkmanship,” known in Russian as “balancing on the verge of war” (balansirovat na grani voyni).”(52) Felgenhauer warned that Western attempts to appease the Kremlin could lead to “an emboldened Russia brandishing nuclear weapons each time it wants something.”(53) This is what is happening today. According to Agnia Grigas, “Before Russia’s war in Ukraine, a territorial assault on the Baltic states seemed implausible ...” (54) However, she added, “nowhere are the Russian reimperialization trajectory and compatriot policies of greater concern for the current European post-Cold War order as in the Baltic States.” (55) This assessment is shared by Putin’s former aid Andrey Illarionov. According to him the annexation of Crimea has demonstrated that the old international consensus about the inviolability of borders has been broken: “The situation has changed. People in the Baltics cannot sleep peacefully.”(56) However, it is not only the people in the Baltics who cannot sleep peacefully. Putin’s propensity to act unpredictably risks igniting a wider conflict in the heart of Europe, which could lead to a global conflagration.(57)

NOTES

- 1) Quoted in Theo Sommer, "Moscow Is Elbowing into Its Place in the Sun," *The Atlantic Times*, August 2007.
- 2) Cf. "Russian General Sees Growing Threat of Nuclear War," *NTI*, November 18, 2011. Available at <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/russian-general-sees-growing-threat-nuclear-war/>
- 3) Cf. Zachary Keck, "Russia Threatens Nuclear Strikes Over Crimea," *The Diplomat*, July 11, 2014.
- 4) Lidya Kelly, "Russia can turn US to radioactive ash – Kremlin-backed journalist," *Reuters*, March 16, 2014. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-russia-kiselyov-idUSL6N0MD0P920140316>
- 5) Jeffrey Taylor, "Putin's Nuclear Option – Would Russia's president really be willing to start World War III?" *Foreign Policy*, September 4, 2014.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) Robin Emmott, "Risk of nuclear war in Europe growing, warns Russian ex-minister," *Reuters*, March 19, 2016.
- 8) "European Nuclear War Imminent as Russia relations break down," *Express*, March 19, 2016.
- 9) "Putin probt den Atomkrieg," *Bild*, March 6, 2016.
- 10) Richard Shirreff, *2017: War With Russia: An Urgent Warning from Senior Military Command*, (London: Coronet, 2016). In a book review the *Financial Times* wrote: "... For all the clumsy writing, it is of profound importance when a former Nato deputy commander is screaming at us that the alliance's high readiness task force is a sham and that it takes a fortnight to move ammunition from Germany to Poland. All of this while Russia reverts to Soviet type, issuing nuclear threats of a kind rarely heard outside North Korea." (Shashank Joshi, "'2017: War With Russia: An Urgent Warning from Senior Military Command', by Richard Shirreff," *Financial Times*, May 20, 2016).
- 11) In a recent article in the *Voенно-Промышленны Kuryer*, for instance, a military analyst called for "the spiritual mobilization" of the people, "to show the West that we have prepared the population for a war against us." She called it a "civil defense

with God's help," proposing to use the infrastructure of the Russian Orthodox Church, opening churches, monasteries, and schools in times of crisis and organizing in the parishes groups of up to 100 persons for civil defense. (Cf. Tatyana Gracheva, "Kogda obyavlyat mobilizatsiyu," *Voенно-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, September 23, 2015).

12) "The unkicked addiction," *The Economist*, March 7, 2015.

13) Carrie Dann, "Obama: Russia Is 'A Regional Power' Not Top Geopolitical Foe," *NBC News*, March 25, 2014. Available at <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/obama-russia-regional-power-not-top-geopolitical-foe-n61601>

14) See Marcel H. Van Herpen, "Russia's Embrace of Tactical Nuclear Weapons – Its negative Impact on U.S. Proposals for Nuclear Arms Reductions," *Cicero Foundation Great Debate Paper*, No. 11/04, September 2011. Available at http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/Marcel_H_Van_Herpen_RUSSIA_EMBRACE_OF_TACTICAL_NUCLEAR_WEAPONS.pdf

15) Cf. Nikolai Sokov, "The April 1999 Russian Federation Security Council Meeting on Nuclear Weapons," Center for Nonproliferation Studies CNS, Monterey Institute, June 1999. Available at <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/april-1999-russian-federation-security-council-meeting-nuclear-weapons/>

16) Pavel Felgenhauer, "Ogranichennaya Yadernaya Voyna? A Pochemu By I Net?" (A Limited Nuclear War? And Why Not?), *Segodnya*, May 6, 1999.

17) This role for non-strategic nuclear weapons is for instance sketched by the Russian analyst N.P. Bagmet, who wrote: "At the stage of outbreak of a regional armed conflict ... deterrence can be ensured by implementing a complex of measures for partial or full-scale strategic deployment of the RF Armed Forces, putting *non-strategic* and strategic nuclear forces on appropriate levels of alert, *and using them on a limited basis by delivering demonstration and de-escalating strikes* with various types of weapons." (N.P. Bagmet, "Nuclear Deterrence," *Military Thought*, July 1, 2002. My emphasis, MHVH).

18) Cf. David S. Yost, "Russia and Arms Control for Non-Strategic Forces," in Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kurt J. Klingenberger (eds), *Controlling Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons – Obstacles and Opportunities*, United States Air Force Institute For National Security Studies, Fairchild Drive, Co., July 2001, p. 131.

- 19) Anna Dunin, "Intel Brief: Poland On Edge Over Russian Drills," *ISN Security Watch*, November 18, 2009. Available at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?id=109702&lng=en>
- 20) "Russia could focus on tactical nuclear weapons for subs," *RIA Novosti*, March 23, 2009.
- 21) Cf. *Aviation Week*, April 12, 2009.
- 22) Cf. Matthew Day, "Russia 'simulates' nuclear attack on Poland," *The Telegraph*, November 1, 2009.
- 23) Anna Dunin, "Intel Brief: Poland On Edge Over Russian Drills," op. cit.
- 24) Kaarel Kaas, "Words and Steel," International Center for Defence Studies, Tallinn, September 19, 2009. Available at <http://www.icds.ee/publications/article/words-and-steel/>
- 25) "Menyayetsya Rossiya, menyayetsya i ee voyennaya doktrina," (When Russia changes, its military doctrine changes too), *Izvestia*, October 14, 2009.
- 26) Ibid.
- 27) Cf. Stephen Blank, "What Do the Zapad 2013 Exercises Reveal? (Part One)," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 10, Issue 177, October 4, 2013.
- 28) Ibid.
- 29) This scenario (but without "little green men") was already suggested by Alexander Motyl in 2008, writing: "But would Europe – especially Germany, France, and Italy – really send troops to Estonia if its Russian-populated enclave of Narva were to be annexed by Russia?" (Alexander Motyl, "Would NATO Defend Narva?" *New Atlanticist*, September 8, 2008). <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/would-nato-defend-narva>
- 30) Shlapak, David A., and Michael Johnson. "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016). http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html.
- 31) Marcus Weisgerber, "Russia Could Block Access to Baltic Sea, US General Says," *Defense One*, December 9, 2015. <http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2016/06/07/us-air-force-supports-major-exercises-europe-all-month/85561954/>

- 32) “Novye Rossiyskie divizii stanut molotom, kotoryy slomit lyubuyu oboronu – eksperty,” (The new Russian divisions become the hammer with which to break any defense), *Zvezda*, May 11, 2016.
- 33) Vadim Shtepa, “Russian First Guards Tank Army as an Instrument of Hybrid War Against Baltic States,” *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, Volume 13, Issue 112, June 22, 2016. http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45534&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=74db6cd10438fc6dcf6b9dd9068be21f
- 34) Dmitri Trenin, “The Revival of the Russian Military,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 95, No. 3, May/June 2016, p. 29.
- 35) Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), p. 142.
- 36) *Ibid.*, p. 233. Trenin’s mantra that Russia has no imperialist objectives was already to be found in 2006 in an article in *Foreign Affairs*, where he wrote: “Russia today is not, and is not likely to become, a second Soviet Union. It is not a revanchist and imperialist aggressor bent on reabsorbing its former provinces.” (Dmitri Trenin, “Russia Leaves the West,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 85, No. 4, July/August 2006, p. 95).
- 37) Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars – The Rise of Russia’s New Imperialism*, (Lanham & Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), pp. 2-5.
- 38) James Kirchick, “How a U.S. Think Tank Fell for Putin,” *The Daily Beast*, July 27, 2015. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/07/27/how-a-u-s-think-tank-fell-for-putin.html>
- 39) *Ibid.* Kirchick added that “a former U.S. government official who has worked on Russia characterized Carnegie to me as a “Trojan horse” of pro-Kremlin sentiment in Washington.”
- 40) “Sekretar Sovbeza RF: pervoe, chto my sdelaem – eto voydem v Pribaltiku,” *Baltnews*, February 1, 2016. <http://baltnews.lt/world/20160201/1014876966.html>
- 41) “SMI pridumali intervyu s sekretarem Sovbeza RF,” *StopFake.org*, January 4, 2016. <http://www.stopfake.org/smi-pridumali-intervyu-s-sekretarem-sovbeza-rf/>
- 42) Svetlana Gomzikova, “Pora ispravit oshibku Gorbacheva,” *Svobodnaya Pressa*, December 12, 2015. <http://svpressa.ru/war21/article/138968/>
- 43) Alexandre Dougine, *Le prophète de l’eurasisme, Alexandre Dougine*, (Étampes: Avatar Éditions, 2006), p. 262.

- 44) Megan Stack, "Russian nationalist advocates Eurasian alliance against the U.S." *Los Angeles Times*, September 4, 2008. <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fgw-dugin4-2008sep04-story.html> One should pay attention when the Russian political elite speaks about "unresolved" or unsettled questions. Referring to Russia-Ukraine relations the prominent Russian political scientist Fyodor Lukyanov wrote, for instance, in 2009: "Both countries are in the process of nation-building within borders that they never before occupied. That determines an awful lot. And there's a temptation for Russia to make use of the still unsettled configuration of the post-Soviet space, particularly when it involves land with a disputed history." (Fyodor Lukyanov, "Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev changes tack over Ukraine," *Russia in Global Affairs*, September 1, 2009). To call the post-Soviet order, written down in international treaties and recognized by the international community – including by the Russian Federation, an "unsettled configuration" reveals already the revisionism which led some years later to the Russian annexation of the Crimea and the occupation of eastern Ukraine.
- 45) The row between Estonia and Moscow started in April 2007, when the Estonian government decided to remove a Soviet Red Army war memorial from the center of Tallinn. For Russians this memorial was erected to commemorate the heroic soldiers who fought German fascism. For the Estonians it was a monument dedicated to their Stalinist oppressors. On the *Bronze Soldier* affair, see Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putinism – The Slow Rise of a Radical Right Regime in Russia*, (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 69.
- 46) Wesley Clark, Jüri Luik, Egon Ramms, Richard Shirreff, "Closing NATO's Baltic Gap," (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, 2016), p. 6. One of the authors, General Richard Shirreff, who was NATO's Deputy SACEUR between 2011 and 2014, warned in an interview on BBC radio 4 that a Russian attack on the Baltic states was "entirely plausible." "The chilling fact is that because Russia hardwires nuclear thinking and capability to every aspect of the defense capability, [if Russia did attack the Baltic] this would be nuclear war." ("NATO Risks Nuclear War with Russia, Retired General Warns," *The Moscow Times*, May 18, 2016).
- 47) "Kerry: Shooting down Russia's jets 'would have been justified'." *BBC*, April 14, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36050689>

- 48) An article on the website of *Zvezda*, in which it is argued that NATO is preparing former Soviet bases in the Baltic states for a “Global Strike” on Russia, fits into this scenario. (Cf. “NATO vozrozhdaet sovetskie voennye bazy v Pribaltike dlya ‘globalnogo udara’ po Rossii,” *Teleradiokompaniya Zvezda*, June 14, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36050689>)
- 49) Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, edited, translated and with an introduction by John Minford, (New York: Penguin, 2002), p. 6.
- 50) *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 51) Timothy L. Thomas defines “reflexive control” “as a means of conveying to a partner or an opponent specially prepared information to incline him to voluntarily make the predetermined decision desired by the initiator of the action.” (Timothy L. Thomas, “Russia’s Reflexive Control Theory and the Military,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 17, 2004, p. 237). This strategy “involves the specific process of imitating the enemy’s reasoning or imitating the enemy’s possible behavior and causes him to make a decision unfavorable to himself.” (*Ibid.*, p. 241).
- 52) Pavel Felgenhauer, “Russian Military Command Sees Need to Counter Growing Western Threat,” *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, Vol. 12, Issue 23, February 5, 2015.
- 53) *Ibid.*
- 54) Agnia Grigas, *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 145.
- 55) *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- 56) “Putin’s former aid: Russia has been preparing for global war since 2003,” *Delfi*, September 26, 2014. <http://en.delfi.lt/central-eastern-europe/putins-former-aid-russia-has-been-preparing-for-global-war-since-2003.d?id=65957992>
- 57) In a recent report former NATO SACEUR James Jones and Former US Representative to NATO, R. Nicholas Burns, share these concerns, pleading for a “more consistently strong, determined American presidential leadership” and “the permanent stationing of land, air, and sea forces” in the Baltic states and Poland. According to the authors, “the current missile defense architecture ... has taken on added political importance given Russia’s nuclear saber-rattling and newly aggressive posture in Europe.” (Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns (Ret.) and General James L. Jones, Jr., USMC (Ret.), *Restoring the Power and Purpose of the NATO Alliance – Deter Our Adversaries*,

Stabilize Our Partners, and Strengthen the North Atlantic Area through US Leadership in NATO, (Washington: Atlantic Council – Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, June 2016. Project Facilitator: Damon Wilson, Project Rapporteur: Jeff Lightfoot).

http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Restoring_the_Power_and_Purpose_of_the_NATO_Alliance_web_0624.pdf

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