

MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE IN THE LIGHT OF RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

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ABSTRACT. For Putin to fulfill his vision of national and personal greatness, primarily through Russian aggression against Ukraine, which has absolutely no basis in the legal regulations of international law, nor in other laws and legal acts, the fact is that Russia, and Putin personally are responsible for tens of thousands of deaths in Ukraine. The aim of this paper is to highlight the means and methods of warfare in the Russian-Ukrainian war aimed at the eastern and southern territories of Ukraine, as well as frequent pressure directed at Western society using sabotage and destruction of infrastructure in the West. Putin's indispensable strategy of waging war also includes constant threats about the use of nuclear weapons. Russia's „escalation to de-escalation” strategy of using conventional weapons on the battlefield and changing the course of conventional warfare that threatens Russia's survival allows for the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Considering the thesis presented by the US Department of Defense in 2018, Russia has non-negligible and certain advantages in tactical nuclear forces. According to such a claim, as well as Putin's fiction of a “special military operation”, all under the pretext of preventing Russian progress, the Russian military doctrine that developed the Russian strategy of “escalation to de-escalation” is more precisely called “escalation to victory”. In this sense, Europe must free itself from Russian energy dependence, and NATO needs a huge injection of funds to strengthen it to free Ukraine from Russian aggression and Putin's intensity of doubling the war, instead of slowing it down. Although the author of this paper does not intend to give an outcome about the Russian-Ukrainian war, the author nevertheless dares to point out that this war is not coming to an end, but rather to the end of its beginning.

Keywords: Means and methods of warfare, nuclear weapon, nuclear war, NATO, Russian invasion of Ukraine

INTRODUCTION

Putin's rise to power in 1999 can be seen as a turning point for European security. In fact, Putin himself considered the collapse of the USSR as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century and therefore focused on one goal-the re-establishment of Russian hegemony

in Eastern Europe with the inevitable strengthening of military power. In fact, it is about adopting a new military strategy that, according to Russian thinking, refers to nonlinear and non-military conflicts. Putin's "art of war" is aimed against the West, mass armies in the East, and unconventional threats in the South. In other words, aspects of modern technology and modern society in war with military armaments will precede the stages of political destabilization and destruction (Karber, 2015).

This holistic approach to Russian warfare that NATO itself has described as hybrid warfare involves the broad application of legal, political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and non-military measures, all for the purpose of achieving a political and strategic goal. The retaliation against the Ukrainian people by Russian military troops acting on the orders of Russian President Putin, points to a situation that the West may already be at war. In fact, Russia, criticized for targeting civilian Ukrainian zones and infrastructure, has been described as the West's most serious opponent and a threat to the international legal order (Galeotti, 2019). The reason for this is precisely the new art of war that Russia has developed in accordance with the increasingly developed new technology, using "new" modified and modernized means and methods of warfare, i.e., hidden and cyber resources to change the balance of power exclusively in its own interests. That is why the Russian strategy of "escalation to de-escalation" is more precisely called "escalation to victory" or even conquest of the battlefield. All the above points to Putin's high appetites, from conquering the territory of Ukraine under threat of force to taking power over the world energy market, i.e., waging war on two fronts, the eastern and southern territory of Ukraine and the destruction of Western infrastructure.

These new achievements of the Russian way of waging war, reflected in the integration of military and non-military means and methods of warfare, give Putin hope that the western population will turn against their heads of States. Furthermore, this reflection is reflected in the obvious truth in which Putin seeks to destroy the link between the West and Ukraine in terms of Ukraine's financial and military dependence on the West. Such a political movement for Putin's Russia would represent a victory on the battlefield where his army failed to win (Laurence, 2022). Will Putin succeed? Will Russia's threats to destroy the infrastructure and use of nuclear weapons, and especially the fear of energy insecurity and dependence on Russian gas, succeed in deterring the rest of the people from their leaders' decisions? The following question also arises from the above; What is the possible scenario if, over time, Putin is proven to be greatly mistaken, that is, is the only possible answer the beginning of World War III and the use of nuclear warheads?

In this regard, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a direct violation of the fundamental rules of international law concerning the responsibility of states for their internationally unlawful acts. With an emphasis on the secondary rules of state responsibility, i.e., the general terms and conditions under international law, the state is considered to be responsible for the illegal actions resulting from legal consequences (United Nations Draft, 2001). Without a doubt, given the circumstances, Russia's international legal responsibility stems from its aggression against Ukraine as an act contrary to international law, international humanitarian law, namely the attack on the infrastructure of Ukraine, in particular the aggression and killing of the Ukrainian civilian population and the use of those types of weapons that have

proven to be very effective in Ukraine, and are deployed in nuclear, biological and chemical defense facilities, instead of artillery units of regular Russian military forces

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The problem of means and methods of warfare, at the time of intensification of international relations, can lead to violations of prescribed legal norms of international humanitarian law and international law in general, and thus to violations of bilateral and multilateral relations, international security, control of conventional weapons, nuclear disarmament, as well as violations of prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, export control of military and dual use goods, transnational threat, organized crime, Human Rights, international restrictive measures aimed at establishing and preserving international peace and security and recently developed autonomous weapons.

The general rule of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 stipulates that “in any armed conflict, the right of the parties to the conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited” (Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Art. 35), but also the Additional Protocol I prescribes a prohibition on the use of such weapons, missiles or materials, and accordingly a method of warfare of such a nature that consequently causes excessive injury or unnecessary suffering, as well as long-term serious damage to the natural environment. However, outside the framework of the Geneva Conventions and its protocols, given the existence of several international treaties, certain types of weapons, due to their specific characteristics, are either prohibited or restricted in all circumstances in their use. In this regard, the Protocol between the United States and other governments to the Convention Prohibiting or Restricting the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be considered to cause excessive harm or act indiscriminately in its Article 1 prohibits the use of laser weapons which are specifically designed as a single combat function or as one of the combat functions to cause permanent blindness and shall not hand over such weapons to any state or non-governmental entity (Protocol IV to the CCW of 1980). Furthermore, the Protocol on Prohibition or Restriction of the Use of Incendiary Weapons defines “incendiary weapons” as any weapon or ammunition intended primarily to ignite objects or to cause burn injuries to people, by the action of flame, heat, or a combination thereof, resulting from a chemical reaction of a substance hitting a target (Protocol III to the 1980 Convention). Such incendiary weapons may, for example, take the form of flamethrowers, landmines, grenades, rockets, bombs, and other incendiary tanks. For protecting the civilian population, it is prohibited in all circumstances to make civilians or civilian objects the target of incendiary weapons, just as it is prohibited in all circumstances to turn any military object located within a crowd of civilian population into the target of an attack with incendiary weapons delivered from the air or weapons other than weapons delivered by air.

In terms of the method of warfare, however, the situation is somewhat different. There is no taxable list of prohibited methods of warfare. Additional Protocol I lay down provisions on deprivation of mercy and perfidy, which however are not specifically related to the type of weapon. On the other hand, the spread of terror and repression, according to the author, could also be considered as a special prohibited method of warfare used by Putin in his so-called “special military operation” in Ukraine.

Furthermore, it is necessary to distinguish the term “means of warfare”, which refers to weapons, and thus to the delivery of weapons and launch systems, from the term “method of warfare”, which refers to the actual use of available weapons as well as to the concrete military tactics of warfare (Hulme, 2013). This is because it is necessary to investigate the problem of applying the norms of international humanitarian law for the legal qualification of the application of new means and methods of warfare. In other words, any means, and methods of warfare prior to their selection and comparison with already known means and methods of warfare should be considered as “new” means and methods of warfare, which in essence points to the fact that the nature of warfare, and thus legal limitations in accordance with the “new” means and methods of warfare, is difficult to predict. Why is that so? For example, today, at the international community level, there are weapons that can destroy the entire human population, such as laser weapons, but also invisible weapons with lethal effects, only because of the used method of warfare, such as the collision of aircraft with the aim of destroying a certain group of people. Therefore, there is a need to systematize the research of “new” means and methods of warfare with caution that all weapons, and thus methods of warfare are not new, but, however, they are subject to their modification or modernization in accordance with the increasingly developed new technology.

RESULTS

The Russian leadership, primarily Putin, understands all the ways of using military force, and in this regard the choice of means and methods of warfare (Myers, 2015). We shall begin with the methods that are manifested in five components. First, political subversion consists in the use of modern mass media to exploit ethnic and class differences, including terrorism and intimidation of local authorities. As an example, we can cite the mining of a dam in the southern occupied territory of Ukraine by Russian troops, whose damage can lead to the threat of flooding of a total of eighty settlements, as well as the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant. Furthermore, missile and drone attacks on the entire territory of the Ukrainian energy infrastructure are inevitable, which indicates that Moscow and Putin aim to create as many problems as possible for Ukraine through electricity and heat, i.e., to encourage a “wave of migration” of the Ukrainian people to other countries of the West (Donahue; Choursina, 2022).

The consequence resulting from such an attack, as well as the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a whole, among other, is a violation of International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (Terrorist Bombings Convention (TBC) from 1997). Article 2 of TBC provides that any person who intentionally places, drops or activates explosives or other lethal devices against measures of public use, or, inter alia, an infrastructure facility, shall be considered to be the commission of an offence.

Although Article 2 mentions the term “any person” which automatically indicates a natural person who intentionally committed unlawful acts that would result in death or mass destruction of a place, and accordingly we cannot even speak of the state’s responsibility for committing an international unlawful act, nevertheless Article 2 in its paragraph 3 (b) indicates that “any person” is also a person who organize or directs others to commit an offence. Since any threat and order comes from Putin as the highest authority in Russia,

it can be concluded that Putin is directly responsible for the occupation of Ukraine, which therefore entails international responsibility of Russia. In other words, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a behavior that under Putin's leadership can be identified and attributed to Russia as an internationally unlawful act that violates an international legal obligation.

Second, the creation of a quasi-state on enemy territory by arming, creating checkpoints, conquering local authorities, and conducting a quasi-referendum under Russian patronage. After Russian troops took control of more than 70% of Zaporozhye, on July 11, 2022, Putin issued a decree on the simplified procedure for obtaining Russian citizenship (Kaul, 2023), while on September 23, 2022, Moscow opened polling stations in the largest city of eastern Ukraine in Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as in the Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Zaporozhye to hold a referendum on the accession of these territories to Russia (Petrov 2022). Although such referendums are contrary to the norms and obligations of international and humanitarian law and therefore the results as such could not be legally binding, however, for Putin and his Russia they are opening the way to Russia's annexation of the aforementioned territories, and in this regard the attack of the Ukrainian counteroffensive would be considered as an excuse as an attack on Russia itself ("Ukraine's Occupied Regions Vote on Russia Accession in 'Fake' Referendums", 2022), which would allow Russia and Putin "so-called legal fiction" and "defense strategy" with the use of nuclear weapons, all in order to systematically protect against "the so-called crime caused by the invasion of Russian territory". It is absolutely clear that with this action Putin is trying to re-establish the great USSR, the world's largest state based on communism and bolshevism, but also the largest military power.

Third, an intervention involving Russian military forces on the very border with Russia, the strengthening of the same land, sea and air forces, and the creation of combat tactical groups. Since October 2021, Russia has been building up a total of 190,000 Russian troops in or near Ukraine, and this number of Russian factions increased significantly in February 2022. Given the presence of Russian troops in military bases and military training grounds and combat units deployed in tactical formations, Putin has made it clear that he intends to attack Ukraine from the East, North and South. Putin's intentions came true on February 24 with an attack on Ukraine from land, sea and air, with Russian troops landing in the port city of Odessa in the south, crossing the eastern border in Kharkov, advancing in their attacks in areas north of Kiev and Chernigov, about 80 miles from the capital (Reinhard, 2022). Thus, Russia has used combat and attack aircraft and helicopters, elite units of paratroopers and special forces, medium and short-range ballistic missiles, as well as naval missiles from warships in the Black Sea, targeting cities, airports and military infrastructure in an aggressive attack on Ukraine.

Fourth, deterrence by force, which means putting strategic forces on alert in secret while simultaneously threatening the use of tactical nuclear systems. In this regard, Putin put Russia's nuclear deterrent forces on high alert in February, pointing to a wide range of nuclear war (Johnson; Jackson, 2022). Given this fact, taking into account his statement that any country that stands in his way will face enormous consequences unlike any other country in history, it can be surmised that this is not only about Russia's nuclear deterrent forces, but also the threat of a nuclear war that Putin considers necessary to launch himself.

Fifth, manipulation of negotiations, or rather manipulation of the possible conduct of negotiations that point precisely to the Russian doctrine of war escalation to victory. Therefore, negotiations and the possibility of a ceasefire for arming forces in the field of operations are possible only if Ukraine accepts two Russian conditions, namely the demilitarization of the country and the recognition of Russia's capture of the southeastern region of Crimea, for which demands Putin himself is sure that Ukraine will not accept (Ahmed, 2022). Therefore, it is clear that Russia has left Ukraine absolutely no room for negotiations and that there is a little chance, almost none, of a situation in which there would be a ceasefire. Ukraine led by Zelenskyy has no intention to cede its territory to Russia. Given the situation, considering the great appetites that Putin has, among other things, to rebuild an even stronger Soviet Union, it can only point to one thing: an increase in Russian weapons, a military force headed by new generals that will launch a new, even bloodier offensive (Weitz, 2011).

Thus far, Russia wants to appear on the scene as the greatest great power. Since 2010, Russia has begun a significant review of the international order, and it is more than obvious that by attacking Ukraine it is ready to impose its will on neighboring countries through the threat of using nuclear weapons. Among other things, Russia's violation of an international legal obligation, as well as of a political obligation, which directly affects the security of other countries, stems from the violation of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty, 1987), the Open Skies Treaty (Treaty on Open Skies, 1992), and the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs 1991). The violation of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994's obligation to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine is a clear indication that Russia is ready for all or nothing, that is, for such a large force to ultimately change the map of Europe (US Office of the Secretary Defense, 2018).

Referring to the INF Treaty, the INF Treaty requires the destruction of ballistic and land-based cruise missiles of the parties to the Treaty, i.e., the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with the aim of strengthening strategic stability, international peace and security and the awareness that nuclear war can cause devastating consequences for all humanity. By signing the INF Treaty, they undertook the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In accordance with Article 1 (INF Treaty, Art. 1), both parties have committed to liquidate medium-range and short-range missiles, while Article 6 (INF Treaty, Art. 6) has agreed not to produce or conduct flight tests of any medium-range missile, as well as not to launch them. Furthermore, the INF Treaty stipulates the obligation to crush and destroy nuclear warheads and guidance elements together with the missile. Memorandum Of Understanding Regarding the Establishment of the Data Base for the Treaty Between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (1987) regulates the removal of missile systems.

Therefore, for both the US and the USSR, training missiles and their stages, training launch tanks and training launchers must be destroyed, and all phases of GLBMs medium and short range are subject to liquidation, while all forward parts of deployed medium and short-range missiles must be eliminated.

Thus, Russia knowingly entered INF Treaty with the intention of preserving international peace and security, as well as of preserving humanity from the grave consequences that

can be caused by nuclear weapons. However, with Putin's rise to power, Russia's political and geographical interest has changed, and with it the security of its neighbors. For Putin, the biggest mistake of the century is the collapse of the USSR, as evidenced by the fact that defense spending has soared since his takeover of power. More precisely, with the beginning of 1999, Putin began the implementation of a new hybrid warfare (Renz; Smith, 2016) that ultimately resulted in an attack on the territorial integrity and security of Ukraine, which entails the consequence of a major energy crisis, i.e., energy instability and insecurity for European countries, but also for the whole world (Tomljenović, Srdoč, 2022).

Russia's perception of Modern Warfare, in addition to the existing threats of the use of nuclear weapons, also lies in the selection and use of inhumane weapons used by Russian military troops in attacks on Ukraine, but also in the deliberate targeting of Ukrainian civilians, which is contrary to the prescribed rules of international humanitarian law (Bloomberg News, 2023). Specifically, the prohibition on the use of weapons whose nature causes excessive injury or unnecessary suffering, dates back to the Saint Petersburg Declaration of 1868 (Saint Petersburg Declaration, 1868).

Since the Saint Petersburg Declaration prohibits for humanitarian reasons the use of certain weapons in war resulting from the advancement of technology, in this sense it has the force of law and confirms the customary rule in which the use of weapons, projectiles and materials capable of causing unnecessary suffering is prohibited. This rule was later translated into The Hague Declarations which refer to the Saintt. Petersburg Declaration in their preamble, while the latest wording prohibiting the use of weapons capable of causing excessive injury or unnecessary suffering is found in Additional Protocol I (Additional Protocol I, Art. 35 (2)). This fundamental principle of international humanitarian law has been defined by the International Court of Justice as a norm of customary international law (International Court of Justice, Nuclear Weapons Advisory Opinion, 1996).

However, an expressly restricted weapon does not automatically mean that it is prohibited under Art. 35 (2) of Protocol I. Namely, excessive injury or unnecessary suffering implies, for example, that suffering which, in relation to military advantage, can be expected from resorting to the weapon in question, i.e., at a certain point military necessity is obliged to yield to the demands of humanity. In other words, the use of inhumane weapons that cause extreme injury and suffering in contact with the human body has been rejected, and this important principle of humanity in times of war since the signing of the Saint Petersburg declaration along with three fundamental principles, the principles of distinction, the principles of proportionality and the prohibition of unnecessary suffering (Bothe; Partsch; Solf, 1982), have become the main key that opens the door to the development of international humanitarian law that we know today. What is very important to note is the fact that certain weapons that cause excessive suffering are not per se prohibited.

The ratio of this is the difficulty of reaching inter-state compromises on the production and selection of "new" means and methods of warfare, but also weapons in general. Why is that so? In fact, States, especially major military powers, including Russia, are reluctant to accept the theory that certain weapons would only be prohibited under Article 35(2) of the Additional Protocol I. Therefore, it is to be concluded that this legal framework is exclusively limited by the perception of states and their own interests. The same could be said for

explicitly prohibited weapons. Although, the Additional Protocol I (Additional Protocol I, Art. 36) places restrictions on the development of new weapons, there is also a need for consensus among states in accepting the explicit prohibition of certain means and methods of warfare, especially weapons of war, primarily because of the greater effectiveness of protecting civilians and combatants engaged in combat actions. To put it more simply, a compromise must be reached between humanity and military necessity.

Why is this thesis important in relation to the Russian invasion of Ukraine? If we look at not so distant history, examples from this area that we can cite are: the Declaration On the Use of Bullets Which Expand or Flatten Easily In the Human Body, adopted at the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899 (Declaration III); the Declaration On the Use of Bullets With Asphyxiating or Poisonous Gases, also adopted at the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899 (Declaration II), as well as Declaration Prohibiting the Firing of Projectiles and Explosives From Balloons (Declaration I). Since the war technology at that time was in full growth at the second Hague Conference of 1907, the Convention On the Prohibition of the Laying of Submarine Automatic Contact Mines was adopted (Convention VIII), while the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which was not adopted at the Hague Conferences, permanently forbids the use in war of asphyxiating, toxic or similar gases and bacteriological methods. The Convention On the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxic Weapons and On Their Destruction (BTWC), as well as the UN Convention On the Prohibitions or Restrictions of Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects and subsequent Protocols (CCW, 1980) are indispensable. The CCW of 1980 is of great importance to us in relation to the Russian means of warfare and current Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Before we offer an explanation of the relationship between the Russian means of war and the Russian-Ukrainian war within the frame of the CCW of 1980, it is also necessary to analyze the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993, which contains a detailed overview of all types of prohibited activities, as well as the prohibition of their use (Bothe, 1998), with a detailed regime of destruction of chemical weapons under the international supervision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. One such brief analysis is necessary due to the progress in the production of military technology, and thus the selection of “new” means of warfare in relation to weapons of indiscriminate action. For example, the Chemical weapons convention among other things contains a provision in which “each state party undertakes not to use riot control as a method of warfare.” (Chemical Weapons Convention, 1993, Art. 1 (5)).

We interpret this provision in such a way that in armed military conflicts chemical warfare is prohibited for the benefit of all mankind, but also that the field of chemistry is to be used solely for the purpose of promoting economic and technological development on the basis of cooperation and exchange of scientific and technical information by all member states. Furthermore, when interpreting this provision, it is important to emphasize that it must be about warfare, which means that if the threshold of armed conflicts is not crossed, tear gas, for example, can be used as a legal tool with the purpose of dispelling the rebel mass (Boothby, 2009). Since the Chemical Weapons Convention, apart from chemical weapons and their precursors, military equipment and devices specifically designed to cause death

or other injury by toxic properties, prohibits all other means, (i.e., equipment specifically intended for the direct use of military equipment and devices intended to cause injury by toxic means or to cause death), the CCW of 1980 does not provide as comprehensive overview of the prohibited means of warfare as does the consensus between member states.

The fact is that this convention, also known as the Convention On Non-Human Weapons, constitutes the basis for the adoption of certain or perhaps better said specific means of warfare, and that the convention and its protocols apply to both international and non-international armed conflicts. However, in view of the impossibility of reaching consensus (The Economist, 2018), for example on the international prohibition of lethal autonomous weapons systems or the compliance mechanism in order to achieve the most effective performance of contractual obligations, it makes the convention a weak international instrument because it is precisely this lack of a mechanism of verification and implementation of the convention that allows states to refute the fulfilment of their obligations under the convention. We will give one example which in fact leads us to the problem in which states selectively apply international legal rules regarding the selection of “new” means of warfare which also, as mentioned earlier, protects exclusively state interests while humanity have fallen into the background. Due to its indiscriminability and its destructive power, thermo-baric armament because of the effect of the so-called “vacuum bombs” (Military Watch Magazine, 2018) should also be an exclusively prohibited means of warfare under the CCW of 1980. This latter thesis is a direct link between the CCW of 1980 and the Russian thermo-baric weapons that have been proven to be a very effective means of warfare in Ukraine, whose systems deployed in nuclear, biological, and chemical defense units, rather than in artillery units of the regular Russian army, also use sophisticated software including topographic and geodetic references, to maximize efficiency. It is to be noticed that attacks with one such weapon wound the opponent in deep cover and even trenches.

The fact that the thermo-baric weapon could tear apart the lungs of the opponent in the immediate vicinity of any strike (Military Watch Magazine, 2023), also indicates the fact that such a means of warfare can also target the civilian population. Although the current range is relatively modest, the question arises of modifying and modernizing such “flamethrowers” with the purpose of improving their mobility or easier air transport, as well as accuracy of shooting. Therefore, it is of enormous necessity to introduce another in a series of protocols to the Convention On Certain Conventional Weapons, which would completely prohibit thermo-baric weapons in all their forms, all with the aim of achieving the reduction of civilian casualties of wars, as well as the destruction of civilian objects and infrastructure, but also to prevent the development of means for precision warfare to the extent that the targets are no longer only objects but also individuals (military or civilian). However, for the adoption of the new protocol remains the necessary condition for the adoption of the protocol, which is the consensus of states, the will of state leaders to put humanity and protection of civilians and international security ahead of warfare and competition in the production of lethal weapons. Given the current state of war in Ukraine and Russia’s persistence in modifying and modernizing such inhumane weapons, it is assumed that Putin will not put the humanity and protection of the Ukrainian population, as well as international security before his pretensions.

DISCUSSION

Despite accepting obligations under the INF Treaty, Russia has not reduced the role of nuclear weapons. On the contrary, it started with its increase. Such an opposite direction could result in a nuclear attack in crisis conflicts. Putin's "special military operation", as he calls it since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine, has led to the likelihood of a nuclear escalation, and in this connection to the undermining of the global security strategy. What is Putin ready for? Moscow and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu are trying to bring the current aggressive events on the territory of Ukraine to an "uncontrolled escalation" by providing false information about the possibility of detonating a radioactive "dirty bomb", which, according to Shoigu, is in the hands of Ukraine (Tadeo, 2022).

However, there is no evidence of such a "dirty bomb" by which Ukraine would attempt to discredit Moscow, so it can be concluded that the real state of affairs is an excuse that can be subsumed under the Russian manipulation of providing false information, all in order to achieve the Russian goal, i.e. nuclear escalation by Russia.

According to the Russian perception as well the fact that Russia considers NATO as its main enemy, it is an indispensable and even more important fact that the Russian means and methods of warfare precisely encourages the use of nuclear weapons, and accordingly the modernization of the nuclear arsenal, namely land and sea missiles and strategic bombers (Kristensen; Korda, 2021). Therefore, it is clearly visible that the goal of Russia is by no means the reduction of nuclear weapons, so it is possible to draw from one such goal the recognition that Russia has the current advantage in terms of nuclear weapons production, but also in terms of the development of non-strategic nuclear forces, in relation to its allies, the United States and the countries of Europe.

Nuclear weapons in Russia and their use in accordance with Russian means and methods of warfare play an important role for Russian policy. According to the latest updated data on Russia's deterrence policy from 2020, Russia can and has the right to retaliate with nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction. According to the same data, even if the existence of a state is threatened using conventional weapons, Russia has the right to use nuclear weapons (Weitz, 2011). Given that, Russia has about 2,565 warheads in its possession since January 2022. It can be assumed that the possession of these warheads' points to the potential use of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, with the purpose of defending the territory of Russia in 2021, Putin began upgrading military aircraft, as well as launching the production of military troops and restoring Launch Control Centers, mines, and auxiliary facilities (SIPRI Yearbook, 2022). Following this, a logical question arises. If the role of nuclear weapons relates solely to the defense of the Russian territory by the enemy, why does Putin threaten the use of nuclear weapons to Western states? Russia's existence and integrity are not in question, nor is Russia's existence and security.

Also, as already mentioned in this paper, the manipulation of false information about the "dirty bomb", given the tiny and small steps that Putin began to undertake since 1999 (Klein, 2016), that is, since his takeover of power, is a clear indication that Putin does not recognize Ukraine's sovereignty even then and today. Therefore, the production and possession of warheads and the potential use of nuclear weapons serve solely and exclusively as an excuse for a possible attack on Ukraine with more powerful, penetrating and mass weapons

for the destruction of humanity, which ultimately results in the beginning of a nuclear war. After this statement, the next question arises, and not only about Putin's possible steps in the future, which, given his rule, aggression against Ukraine and violation of international treaties, manipulation of negotiations, and ultimately the threat of nuclear weapons use, can be assumed.

The question concerns precisely the existence of the Ukrainian people as a separate nation. What Putin considers and only recognizes is a single nation divided between the two countries (Putin, Zelenskyy, 2022) by the "biggest mistake of the century" (the collapse of the Soviet Union). Therefore, Putin exclusively recognizes the Russian people who are divided between Russia and Ukraine. Such Putin's pretensions, in fact, as a final goal, may also have the characteristics of genocide, i.e., the destruction of Ukraine as a state, that is, the deletion of Ukraine from the map, and immediately the deletion of the Ukrainian people in the form of its concept (ISW, 2022).

The only role of nuclear weapons in Russia is not exclusively a terrorist act undertaken by illegal means contrary to those prescribed by international law, to challenge the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine, but the role of nuclear weapons in Russia is at the same time linked to the destruction of production capacity in trade, as well as the destabilization of fiscal and monetary policy. Russia's invasion of Ukraine may in the future be considered as large-scale war that will transform legal, political, economic, and social life. The war in Ukraine will leave behind permanent consequences in terms of inflation, energy stability, and ultimately energy security, whose predictions are already highly questionable (Ferguson, 2022).

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and after Putin's statement that any country that stands in his way will face enormous consequences like never before in history, especially the threat of nuclear weapons use, and after his denial of the intention to use nuclear weapons, but nevertheless simulated mass nuclear attacks during exercises of Russian military forces supervised by Putin himself, Russia simply "showed" that it does not hesitate to launch a nuclear attack (Bloomberg News, 2022). As a key to Russia's survival and a guarantee of Russian security, in pursuing its assertive foreign policy, Putin has been actively working on the Russian military modernization program since 2010 (Shoumikhin, 2011).

Already from 2004, Putin began introducing measures against Western subversion, while reinforcing his rhetoric against the US and NATO through foreign policy campaigns that led to open conflict. One of the measures concerned a subversive campaign against the Baltic States after their accession to NATO, as well as diplomatic pressure on them and also a ban on some imports from Latvia in 2006 (Bugayova, 2019). Today, as in the previous decade, Putin viewed cooperation between Ukraine and the United States and NATO as a threat to Russia's national security and territorial integrity.

As far as the West is concerned, he said that the West uses international organizations as a means of presenting the opinions of one group in a way that ultimately looks like the opinion adopted by the entire world community. With these convictions, Putin formulated a policy whose main task is to protect Russia's sovereignty and the right to its existence (Nakashima; Harris; Horton; Birnbaum, 2022). In order to "reason with" his Ukrainian neighbors and show the world that his measures are purely protective measures, among other things

against NATO military construction, in his address to the Russian Federal Assembly in 2018, Putin clearly outlined his main goals (President of Russia, News, Transcripts, 2018).

Under the pretext of ensuring international peace and security, preserving Putin's current regime is one of the goals by which Putin will start to conduct his future matches. The first of these is the destruction of American global hegemony with the purpose of creating a new and stronger Russia, a power so powerful that it will take the first place on the international scene. The second match is closely related to the West and is focused on resources, more precisely, on the dependence of the West on obtaining Russian energy. Although the way of achieving its goals has not been determined, the modernization of Russian military weapons, nuclear weapons, the deployment of Russian troops along the Ukrainian border, and the Russian war in Ukraine, which the author believes is not coming to an end, are clear indicators of Putin's ways in which he will strive to fulfill his visions.

The obvious truth is that Putin has not stopped the threat of missile attacks on Ukraine, targeting the civilian population, which ultimately equates to a war crime that represents a new unacceptable escalation of the Russian war. The bombings also did not omit the infrastructure of Ukraine, with infrastructure facilities affected in eight Ukrainian regions, which automatically results in a reduction in energy consumption (Donahue; Safronova, 2022). Such an act is the result of "profound changes" in the conduct of the Russian war, which since its inception has been reflected in the West and the rest of the world.

Furthermore, Putin is leading the so-called peacekeeping mission under threat to the survival of the Russian people, trying to change Europe's borders in its essence. Putin sees the threat in Ukraine's NATO membership, arguing that Ukraine denies a common link with communist Russia, but by joining NATO, Ukraine shows its ambition to destroy Russia, to say the least, weaken it (Trojanovski; Hopkins, 2022). Consequently, we can expect from Putin, because of his goal of creating a greater Russia, enormous mass attacks throughout Ukraine, or the destruction of Ukraine in some parts of it.

The author is more inclined to the first intention of achieving Putin's goal, i.e., the destruction of Ukraine. The reason is very logical. The destruction of Ukraine as a whole, the takeover of the Ukrainian government, for Putin also means the expansion of Russian territory, the deletion and creation of new borders, a single Russian government with dictator Putin at the head of the new and Greater Russia. In this case, if Putin succeeds in his intention (in the hope that this will not happen), the only possible scenario that can happen is not the end of the war, but it's beginning to take over European territory and create a "European Russia", and in this connection take over the European Economic network, to the point that the whole situation could escalate into a third world war.

Already, the Russian aggression on Ukraine has caused great economic damage in the countries of Europe and worldwide, especially in terms of constantly rising oil prices (Statista, 2024). Energy prices, most importantly, gas prices, but food prices are constantly increasing. Such an overall situation leads to inflation and energy instability and uncertainty, which is impossible to predict the end.

Russia is very important in terms of oil and gas. Total consumption of Russian natural gas in Europe is more than 40% and 25% of oil (Energy system of Russia, 2024). The situation is such that Russia earns about 100 million a day on oil, which Putin further invests in

financing the war in Ukraine what constitutes a violation of the International Convention for The Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

Further pressure using sabotage and destruction of infrastructure (Jonsson, 2019) in the West is a possible attack by Russia on the “soft belly of Europe” as the weakest and most critical point. Explosions along the Nord Stream pipeline in September 2022, whose pipelines leading from Russia to Germany across the Baltic Sea, although having very little direct impact on Europe’s energy and communication infrastructure, nevertheless showed all its weaknesses and therefore pose a threat to the transport Baltic Sea surrounded by NATO members whose large northern waterways are home to crucial energy facilities and communication networks (Mackinnon; Lu, 2022).

We can agree that the Russian invasion of Ukraine can be better described as “control over escalation”, which in the best and most favorable case for Russia leads to “escalation to victory” (Ross, 2018). The current situation is such that it is Putin who controls the course and level of escalation of the conflict in a way that, in violation of international treaties resulting in obligations and duties for Russia, dominates the nuclear spectrum of the conflict and the energy market. Therefore, for both Europe and NATO, a change in the understanding of the term “escalation to de-escalation” is necessary, and it is extremely important to understand this concept beyond the scope of Putin’s threats related to the use of nuclear weapons.

With such thinking and understanding, Europe and NATO may be able to anticipate Putin’s future steps in the choice of means and methods of warfare and accordingly prevent Putin and Moscow from turning the words of the threat of using nuclear weapons into actions. Therefore, the concept of diplomatic and, if necessary, military actions of states is of utmost importance, for the reason that Russia would be completely disabled from its action, in a way that Europe, but ultimately NATO, would take over the “control of escalation” of such a border that Putin and Moscow will no longer be able to influence (Monaghan, 2017). In this case, the “control of escalation” will be on the side of the West and NATO by which they will turn the attacks to their advantage to take-over the “escalation to victory.”

In addition to the above written, one of the concepts of diplomatic action is precisely the reduction of dependence on Russian gas, up to 80% until the end of 2024 (Krukowska; Nardelli, 2022), which in the foreseeable future leads to its full independence. It is crucial to achieve global energy security, which under no circumstances should be identified with energy independence from Russian gas, nor should it look for similarities in it (Clifford, 2022). Energy security in its entirety would mean ensuring affordable energy prices, as well as securing and storing new energy sources (European Commission, 2022). Therefore, the importance of such diplomatic actions lies in establishing so strong partnerships with suppliers to the extreme line that can solidify political, economic and security policy. In the long term, it is likely that the huge injection of NATO funds to reduce Russian aggression on Ukraine and restore peace lies in the “birth” of a new NATO alliance, more precisely, an “energy” NATO (Butler, 2022) alliance that will unite the exporting and importing countries with the aim of directing the establishment, ensuring, and maintaining energy security.

Furthermore, what is crucial for NATO is their predictions for the future development of the Russian war in Ukraine, with factors other than the choice of means and methods of warfare, i.e., Russian weapons in general, to be considered. One of them is the information

war, which leads to the idea that NATO in the information sphere, due to the possibility of escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the rest of the world, should continuously work on improving its competitiveness, due to the possible continuous expansion of Russian irregular formations through various disinformation, and the potential development of artificial intelligence and counterfeiting of advanced technology.

The role of non-state actors is also one of the factors that NATO cannot ignore. Namely, a major role in the further development of the Russian war can be played by non-state actors, due to the possible tendency of growth of intra-state wars in which Russia could hide its irregular military units, which can present a major problem for NATO and the international community because such irregular military forces are difficult to detect and control. In this regard, we also add to the role of various military formations that are of crucial importance for Russia because they are far cheaper than regular military costs, and intentional violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms is absolutely no problem for them, which has been shown through the war in Ukraine so far, and on the other hand, for Russia, violation of human rights is a modern course of waging war.

Furthermore, NATO should without any exception strengthen its foreign intelligence service, due to the increasing unpredictability of warfare, but also to prevent any possibility of a potential formation of Russian leadership in other countries of the world.

CONCLUSION

Russia's perception of the conduct of the war is focused on all available means and methods of warfare to achieve increasing superiority over Ukraine, but also over the West and NATO. In this regard, as well as the modernization of the already existing lethal weapons, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has no basis in international law, as well as international humanitarian law, but on the other hand, in the future it will be able to serve as an example in the further development of international humanitarian law in the form of the adoption of new conventions and protocols that would prohibit and classify certain weapons and methods of warfare in their modification as illegal. Further conclusion of this paper points to the great mistrust that exists between Russia and NATO, mainly because of NATO's expansion to the East. Considering that Ukraine is a NATO partner country, under the pretext of protecting Russia's sovereignty and national interests Russia wants Western assurances that Ukraine will not join NATO, what is contrary to the legal values of the West and the rights of every country. Ukraine has the right to decide for itself where it wants to belong - to be part of Russia or part of Euro-Atlantic integration. If the West were to decide on this issue, human rights would be violated.

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