

THE STRATEGIC DETERRENCE MEASURES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: TERMINOLOGY, DEFINITIONS AND SOME ASPECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN THE UKRAINE CONFLICT IN 2022*

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The paper analyses the theory and doctrine of strategic deterrence of the Russian Federation and compares them with measures of their implementation in the conflict in Ukraine during 2022. Strategic deterrence is defined as a holistic approach that integrates non-military and military measures to shape the adversary's decision-making in all phases of conflict. From the point of view of military theory, it does not represent a crude force strategy, but coercion aimed at manipulating the perception of the opponent and influencing their strategic behaviour. The analysis of Russian theoretical and doctrinal positions indicates that the role of non-military measures in achieving strategic goals has increased, and in some cases has surpassed the power of weapons in terms of their effectiveness. On the other hand, although the current Russian concept of deterrence may appear to be of a too non-military character, it leans, to some extent, towards military or violent measures. This is a consequence of the existence of dualism in the

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Russian theory of strategic deterrence, where the current military leadership of the Russian Armed Forces, which attaches crucial importance to military kinetic measures, especially in the phase of an armed conflict, is a stronger current. The implementation of strategic deterrence measures in the conflict in Ukraine, during 2022, confirms the hypothesis of the currently greater correctness of the direction in Russian military theory, which in strategic deterrence attaches greater importance to the implementation of military kinetic measures.

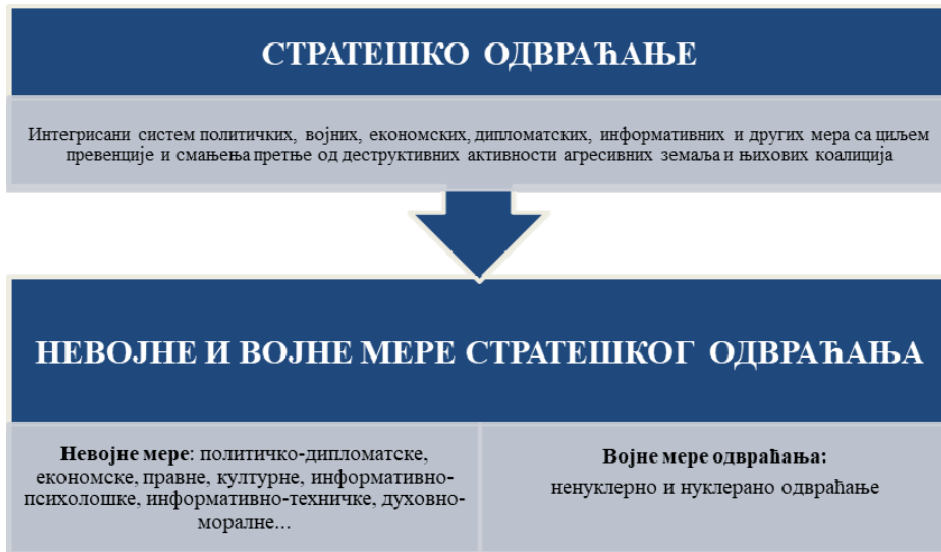
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Introduction

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian deterrence theory has evolved through debates of various schools of strategic thought in the Russian Federation. As a result of the fact that Russian military theory has often lacked a consistent terminological apparatus, Russian experts among themselves, as well as Western theorists, often mean different things when using the same terms. The Russian view of deterrence differs from the Western conceptualization of the term. In short, from the Russian point of view, deterrence means the use of threats, sometimes accompanied by limited use of force, with the aim of: a) maintaining *status quo* ("deterrence" in the language of the West), b) changing *status quo* ("coerce" in the Western language), c) shaping the strategic environment within mutual interaction with other strategic factors, and d) preventing escalation or leading to de-escalation (Adamsky, 2020:161-175). The term is used to describe activities both before and during a military conflict, and includes all phases of war.

The current concept and measures of strategic deterrence

Strategic deterrence, in the sense used by Russian military theory, is a holistic concept that means the integration of non-military and military measures to shape the adversary's decision-making. This concept integrates the state non-military instruments of national power and specific military capabilities that are "strategic" due to the expected effects when used for deterrence purpose. According to the Russian view, strategic deterrence is a concept that is adaptable, as it can be implemented in the management of contingencies, ranging from local wars with one state, through regional conflicts against coalitions, to large-scale wars against global powers with nuclear weapons (Kofman et al, 2020:5).

Table 1 – *The current strategic deterrence measures of the Russian Federation*

The 2015 Russian National Security Strategy has defined strategic deterrence as a series of interrelated political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic and information measures aimed at preventing the use of force against Russia, in order to defend sovereignty and preserve territorial integrity (Russian National Security Strategy, 2015, p. 4). The official military dictionary of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation defines strategic deterrence as "a system of violent (military) and non-violent (non-military) measures aimed at restraining the other party from using force against the Russian Federation, especially on a strategic scale." "Strategic deterrence measures are used continuously in peacetime, not only for deterrence, but also for containment, and in war to manage the escalation of conflict (Encyclopedia of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, 11). Non-military measures include political, information, diplomatic, legal, economic, ideological, technical-scientific and other measures. The list of military measures is more extensive, which shows that it is a concept that primarily relies on the end of the spectrum that is related to the use of force. They include the demonstration of military presence and military power, the raising of readiness to war levels, the deployment of forces, demonstrations of readiness within the forces and weapons intended for a strike (including nuclear weapons) and the execution or threat of execution of individual strikes, which again includes nuclear weapons (Ibid). Such measures are implemented in peacetime to prevent direct aggression or the use of military pressure against Russian interests. In wartime they are meant to manage escalation and to de-escalate or end war in the early stages under conditions

favourable to the Russian Federation (Khryapin, Braichev, 2008). The current Russian military theory and doctrine of deterrence is an integrated complex of nuclear, non-nuclear, non-military and information measures of influence contained in a single multi-domain programme. Strategic deterrence has harmonised nuclear capability, without diminishing its role, with other means of coercion.

The importance of non-military and information measures in the concept of strategic deterrence

In the period from 2000 to the first years of the second decade of the 21st century, two "schools of military strategic thought" can be distinguished in the Russian Federation. The first one is traditional and conservative, and the second one is new and innovative, within which the theory of conflict management in the information sphere stands out (Miljković, Jevtić, 2021, pp. 105-131). Proponents of traditional military thought do not deny the change in the content of war, but they believe that the role of the "non-military factor" in achieving final success in war, including the concept of strategic deterrence, is exaggerated.

The aforementioned dualism in military theory has transferred to the Russian military practice of strategic deterrence, because it is evident that there are two points of view, which similarly point to the importance of non-military and information measures, but evaluate differently the importance of military or non-military measures in certain phases of conflict.

Using the analysis, it can be concluded that the representative of the traditional view is General Valery Gerasimov, who advocates the position that strategic deterrence is primarily based on the implementation of military kinetic measures, which are supported by the implementation of non-military measures (Gerasimov, 2013). In his speech, in March 2019, at the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, he stated that "the emergence of new spheres of confrontation in modern conflicts and methods of warfare is increasingly moving towards the integrated implementation of political, economic, information and other non-military measures, whose use should rely on military force" (Gerasimov, 2019). According to him, the military takes into account all other non-military measures that affect the course and outcome of war, provide and establish conditions for the effective use of military force. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that the main content of military strategy consists of issues about preparations for war and its conduct, primarily by the Armed Forces. Gerasimov continues to set the tone for discussions of the Russian deterrence strategy, which he views as the use of armed force as the key to supporting non-military forms of competition in peacetime.

A different point of view is offered by certain Russian theorists, such as Chekinov and Bogdanov, who believe that one of the essential future roles of kinetic military operations is to support information campaigns, which achieve the ultimate, political goal of war. They state that the growing importance of information operations has

changed today's understanding of traditional kinetic operations into the "final measure of defeat" only after full information superiority has been achieved (Chekinov, Bogdanov, 2017). Like them, other Russian theorists believe that "information superiority" is now necessary to enable a successful kinetic operation. Russian analysts claim that the success of "not only the initial phase of military operation, but also the outcome of the entire campaign depends on a skillful, clearly calculated and explained" information operation (Pechurov, Sidorin, 2017). They think that a kinetic operation cannot succeed without a successful information operation that would enable it (Chekinov, Bogdanov, 2013, pp. 12-23). Therefore, some Russian military theorists and practitioners believe that the key to changes in future conflicts lies in the reversal of the historic pattern and the role of non-military measures that support military operations, i.e. that in modern wars, information campaigns support and influence the manner kinetic operations are used (Gerasimov, 2016).

The activities of information deterrence measures

By entering the era of the information society, the defence of every state in the modern age essentially depends on the protection of national interests in the information dimension of the security environment, and in the future course of technological progress this dependence will increase even more, and the information resource will be an increasingly important part of the state potential for strategic deterrence by non-military means (Miljković, Jevtić, 2022, pp. 18-40).

Information means have a prominent place in the Russian concept of strategic deterrence. They are also key to actions or measures taken during the pre-conflict phase and the Russian deterrence and escalation management strategy. Activities that fall into the domain of deterrence by information action are known in Russian military theory as information warfare and reflexive control (Miljković, 2010, pp. 257-284).

Russian military theorists advocate the position that according to the used means information warfare is classified into conflicts which are carried out by:

1) information and technical means (an attack on critical facilities of the national infrastructure, cyber attacks) and

2) informative and perceptive means, propaganda, managing the opponent's perception, deception, misinformation, psychological operations and deceit.

On the other hand, reflexive control is a process in which the controlling party deliberately conveys a selected set of information to selected decision-makers within the opposing leadership structure that compel these actors to perform actions in accordance with their intentions. It essentially involves the process of understanding the adversary's motivation and wishes, then developing a strategy related to the adversary's behaviour and, finally, conveying information in accordance with the adversary's thinking and interests that lead them to behave in a manner beneficial to the other party controlling them (Pečatnov, 2012).

While reflexive control is useful in the pre-conflict period, Russian articles describe it as most useful when the situation threatens to escalate into a full-scale military conflict. This means that it is effective in inducing the adversary to take actions that are beneficial to the party using reflexive control in the initial period of military operations (Raskin, Sorokin, 2008, pp. 26-30). Thus, this concept is more applicable to demonstrations held during vulnerable periods of conflict, especially direct threats to vital infrastructure. Major General M.D. Ionov, one of the famous Russian military experts, identified four main methods used to pass on information to the enemy in order to gain control over them. These methods include: a) promotion of force; b) measures to convey false information about the situation; c) influencing the enemy's decision-making process; and g) speeding up and shortening the adversary's decision-making time (Ionov, 1995, pp. 47-131).

The implementation of strategic deterrence measures in the conflict in Ukraine in 2022

In the conflict in Ukraine, during 2022, the Russian Federation used military nuclear and non-nuclear, as well as some non-military measures of strategic deterrence, through several domains of influence. The most visible were the measures of nuclear deterrence, non-nuclear deterrence using long-range weapons, deterrence by measures in energy policy and information warfare.

Strategic nuclear deterrence measures began to be implemented before February 24, 2022, and continued unabated during the conflict (McDermott, 2022). These measures affected the engagement of Western states in the conflict, because deterrence was based on earlier threats and exercises of Russian nuclear forces that "convinced" the West that the Russian Federation would use tactical nuclear weapons in a conventional conflict to impose its terms (Holloway, Blair, 2022). In other words, Russian threats of nuclear weapons are assessed in the West as implicitly credible (Ignatius, 2022). In December 2021, senior Russian officials warned that NATO's eastward expansion would trigger Russian deployment of tactical nuclear weapons (VOA News, 2021). The rhetorical inclination towards escalation also appeared in the speeches of the Russian representatives on February 21 and 23, 2022, in which a special military operation was announced (Obrashchenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2022). Furthermore, on February 27, 2022, President Vladimir Putin announced that he was raising the readiness status of Russian nuclear weapons due to Western threats (Roth et al, 2022). The rhetorical threats of the Russian political leadership continued in the following months, suggesting the possibility of nuclear escalation in the event of an "existential crisis" for Russia emerging from the war in Ukraine (Paybarah, 2022). As a consequence of deterrence by intimidation, efforts by the West to provide full military assistance to Ukraine, such as e.g. a campaign to introduce a "no-fly zone" or send fighter aircraft to the Ukrainian party, were

partially prevented. The efforts to "intimidate" NATO are constantly made, including measures of information warfare against European states, in order to weaken the alliance of the US and other NATO members. Therefore, senior representatives of the Alliance emphasize that maintaining unity is the most important task of NATO in this conflict (BBC News, 2022).

The conflict in Ukraine also shows that Russian non-nuclear strategic deterrence is conceptually valid and has clear practical implementation, but that the potential restrictions of its effects depend on the sufficiency of the effectiveness of long-range and high-precision weapons (Akimenko, 2021). In the case of the Russian Federation, there are open issues regarding the capacity of these weapons. For example, it is estimated that the Russian Navy has a limited number of *caliber* missiles that it can deploy, bearing in mind their use in the war in Syria so far, as well as a limited number of ships that can be equipped with these long-range missiles (Wordpress, 2020). On the other hand, the shorter range of the *Iskander* surface-to-surface missile system is compensated by their much greater number. In the substrategic hypersonic category, it is considered that the availability of *Kinzhal* missiles, which have great destructive power and speed, as well as the capability of manoeuvre along the entire flight path to target, is limited, given the relatively small number of the MiG-31K platforms for their use, despite information about the use of their adaptations for other air platforms, such as the *Tupolev Tu-22M3/-22M3M*. In contrast, the use of the *Zircon* missile will be widely implemented, according to expert assessments, as it will be launched from universal vertical launch systems on submarines and ships. Therefore, to be truly effective, conventional strategic deterrence has to rely on a vast arsenal of weapons (Bukkvoll, McDermott, 2017). The question remains whether Russia possesses enough such weapons in this conflict. According to Western and Ukrainian sources, Russian long-range missile stockpile has been depleted (BBC News in Serbian, 2022), which they conclude on the basis of the use of surface-to-air missiles to engage ground targets, indicating a shortage of more suitable ammunition. It can be assessed that, despite possible capacity limitations, the Russian non-nuclear deterrence measures still deserve attention.

In the domain of deterrence by non-military means, energy-related measures are particularly visible and, according to Western experts, the Russian Federation has the initiative and is currently winning the "energy war" (Consilium Europa, 2022). Due to the energy crisis, caused by interruptions in Russian supply, there is a shutdown of industrial capacities in European countries, so that Great Britain is potentially threatened with the shutdown of about 60 percent of production capacities, and a similar scenario relates to Germany, as well. The extent of this energy crisis, which is still ongoing, as well as the collateral damage (inflation, jobs and export to the EU) now depend on what happens due to the war in Ukraine (Mills, 2022). The energy stand-off between Russia and Europe reached its peak in early September 2022 since the Russian Federation shut down, indefinitely, its main Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline to the West. It is believed that European countries will be less capable of bearing high winter energy bills and possible shortages, which is why the

energy crisis can be expected to affect European unity towards the conflict in Ukraine (Financial Times, 2022).

Information warfare in the conflict in Ukraine is an aspect of the Russian strategic deterrence that has been largely implemented, but whose effects can be assessed as secondary to the effects of kinetic weapons, so for now the hypothesis that they retain their importance as an auxiliary component of the overall Russian deterrence strategy in the conflict in Ukraine is confirmed. A general observation is that the Russian Federation, before and after February 24, 2022, failed to achieve information superiority in relation to the opposing party, which negatively affected the effectiveness of the implementation of deterrence measures by information. Conflict and deterrence in the information space in this conflict was conducted by operations in cyberspace, at the propaganda and intelligence level, as well as competition on the mastery of the opponent's communication systems. The preliminary conclusion is that the Russian party was expected to achieve much more results in terms of deceiving the adversary, cyber operations, propaganda activities in the field of strategic communication or influencing the communication of the adversary on the battlefield, which is placed at the top of the list of goals in the Russian military theory and doctrine of deterrence.

International military experts were surprised by the fact that at the beginning of hostilities, as of February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation did not undertake a cyber attack on the Ukrainian telecommunications infrastructure. Ukraine remained online throughout the special military operation, although Russian military doctrine entails the use of cyber effects in addition to traditional kinetic warfare. There are reports that Russia has tried to cause cyber effects on Ukrainian Internet, but these have been mitigated by a new link via SpaceX's StarLink space-orbital information network (O'Neill, Patrick, 2022). Russia has failed to shut Ukraine off from cyberspace, allowing it to successfully maintain internal communications and the means to pass its message to the world, either through traditional news channels or through YouTube, TikTok and other online media. Moreover, the absence of a massive cyber attack targeting Ukrainian critical infrastructure was a surprise, given the experience from 2015 and 2016, when Russia carried out some of the most complex cyber attacks on electrical infrastructure against Ukraine so far. According to foreign sources, such attacks were launched, but were unsuccessful, as they were quickly repaired (Collier, 2022). In addition, there is information that the Cyber Command of the US Department of Defence has made a major contribution to the cyber defence of Ukraine (Mehul et al, 2022). All of this leads to the conclusion that the effect of cyber operations in Russian deterrence was secondary in comparison to kinetic military attacks.

When considering the conflict in the field of communications, it is assessed that the multiple disruption of communications between Russian units engaged in Ukraine and trying to coordinate complex operational manoeuvres in multiple attacks across hundreds of kilometres of front was not expected (Cranny-Evans, Withington, 2022). There are findings that indicate that certain Russian units had unsafe

communications at tactical and operational level (Greg, 2022). Faced with insecure battlefield communications, Russian commanders switched to what worked, mostly mobile phones, which often operate on the Ukrainian telephone network (Horton et al, 2022; Schogol, 2022). In contrast, Russian forces were expected to be successful in hacking Ukrainian mobile network, especially given their electronic warfare capabilities (Tanmay, 2022). Such events can be explained by the evident assistance of the US Armed Forces that helped Ukraine weaken Russian cyber attacks in this conflict (Mehul et al, 2022).

The field in which the Russian Federation was expected the most is propaganda operations of influence, which are conducted through classical and modern media and cyberspace. However, the violent shutdown of Russian media in the US and EU, as well as the great involvement of Western intelligence services in locating and removing social networks that promote pro-Russian views to Western public opinion, and the fact that Ukraine has remained connected to the global network with the assistance of the Starlink space system for the Internet, has further reduced the possibility for the Russian Federation to achieve information superiority (Balkans Aljazeera, 2022). All of this has contributed to Ukraine retaining the capacities that, with the assistance of the West, it effectively uses to compete in the information and propaganda war for the support of the foreign and national public (Pomerlau, 2022). On the other hand, due to the aforementioned information blockade by the West, Russian propaganda turned to the national public and public opinion in the "Third World" countries, Asia and Africa, in order to encourage the division of "the West against the rest of the world".

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conflict, relying on the possession of greater capacities than NATO and the development of tactical nuclear weapons. The conflict in Ukraine also shows that non-nuclear strategic deterrence is conceptually valid and has clear practical implementation, but that the potential limitations of its effectiveness depend on the sufficient quantity and effectiveness of long-range and high-precision weapons.

Finally, it is a general observation that the Russian Federation has so far failed to achieve information superiority in relation to the opposing party, both at global level in relation to the US and EU, and at regional level in the territory of Ukraine. The continuation of the development of the Russian strategic concept of deterrence will probably involve greater implementation of information deterrence measures, whereby Russia will have to develop greater organisational and technical capacities to break through the information blockade of the West and gain information superiority. In this regard, the assessment remains that non-military, and within them, information means, have a prominent place in the Russian concept of strategic deterrence, but still have only an auxiliary role in relation to military kinetic deterrence measures. In the end, a general conclusion can be drawn that the concept of strategic deterrence of the Russian Federation in practice is mainly based on military force measures, without which non-military measures prove to be ineffective, which is particularly reflected in the case of the effectiveness of information deterrence measures.

Key words: strategic deterrence, coercion and intimidation, military and non-military measures, effectiveness

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