

# INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

№03 16.02.2024-29.02.2024

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- Ukraine – European Union
- Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine
- The course of the Russian-Ukrainian war

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## Ukraine – European Union

- **THEME ANALYSIS:** *The blockade of the Ukrainian border by Polish farmers: blackmail by the EU or assistance to Russia in the war against Ukraine?*



Photo: Getty Images

The blocking of Ukrainian trucks on the Polish-Ukrainian border continues. On the morning of 29 February, about 2,200 trucks were queuing up at six checkpoints on the border with Poland. The situation has already become critical. **It is clear that this action was organised by pro-Russian political forces on the initiative of Russia.** But it seemed that Poland, as perhaps the most loyal ally of Ukraine, should have facilitated the rapid unblocking of the border on the part of the government. However, Polish politicians took a rather unexpected position.

For example, Polish President Andrzej Duda stressed the legitimacy of the Polish farmers' action and said that the government would defend it. He also reacted to the situation on the Polish-Ukrainian border, blaming the protests on Russian aggression. The President hopes that the conflict will be resolved through trilateral talks between the Polish authorities, Ukraine and the protesters. He added that problems with Ukrainian food have existed since the beginning of the Russian invasion. "It started because of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Because let's remember that it is the Russian aggression against Ukraine that is to blame for everything, not anyone else. If there had been no Russian aggression against Ukraine, this problem would not have arisen at all. The problem is that Russia attacked Ukraine," he explained. "We had some time ago protests by drivers, trade unions, and truck drivers' associations. And this protest was stopped as a result of negotiations with the authorities, as a result of agreements reached, so to speak, in a trilateral formula Poland-

Ukraine-drivers," he said. <sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture does not want farmers to stop protesting until the issue of Ukrainian agricultural products is resolved. Polish Deputy Minister of Agriculture Michal Kolodziejczak has issued an ultimatum: *either Kyiv comes to an agreement with Warsaw or there will be new restrictions on imports*. The Polish official said this in an interview with Polsat news. "Tomorrow (21 February - ed.) we will have talks with Ukrainian Minister Solsky at 8 am. It is headed by our Minister Sikerski. We will see how the Ukrainians behave, what policy I will pursue regarding exports to Poland, and whether they want to reach an agreement. The ball is now in Ukraine's court," he said. He noted that if this fails, the Polish government will introduce new restrictions. "I am in favour of starting a conversation with farmers today, first of all. Are the problems in agriculture only Ukraine's problem? Today, it has boiled over and is now boiling over that the market in Poland has been taken over by supermarkets. If someone wants to base their policy solely on imports from Ukraine, this is not enough. I want to solve the problem," Kolodziejczak said. <sup>2</sup>

**He added that he does not want farmers to stop protesting until the problem with imports of Ukrainian agricultural products is resolved.** "We don't want to stop the protests, we just want to solve the problem. We need to create an action plan. There are people who want the protests to lead to despondency, so that farmers are left alone," the Deputy Minister said.

Polish farmers continue to actively block the import of Ukrainian grain into their country, as if to protect their own farms. However, Russia imported 12 million tonnes of grain to Poland in 2022-2023. At the same time, only 4.3 million tonnes of Ukrainian grain entered the country. This was reported by the National Security and Defence Council's Disinformation Countermeasures Centre. Alina Bondarchuk, head of the Disinformation Collection and Monitoring Department at the Centre, said that the farmers' actions in Poland were funded by the Kremlin. Representatives of Poland and Ukraine are negotiating to close the border between the countries for trade. This was also stated by Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

According to Tusk, the topic of closing the borders will also be raised during his meeting with the country's farmers. He noted that there had already been an attempt to limit the supply of agricultural products from Ukraine. That is, to allow as much to enter duty-free as the average in 2022-2023. However, in Brussels, Poland plans to propose that the reference period should be the time before the war, not 22/23. "To make the limits more restrictive, so that they do not threaten Polish producers," he explained. According to him, negotiations are also underway with the Ukrainian side on "a temporary closure of the border for the exchange of goods". "It is known that this will be a temporary and mutually painful solution. I am ready to take even tough decisions when it comes to the border with Ukraine, always in consultation with Kyiv, so that there is no unnecessary tension between Warsaw and Kyiv, but we must find a solution that will be long-lasting," Tusk said.

These are, of course, rather disappointing words for Ukraine. Especially given that Poland has recently joined the G7 declaration on security guarantees for Ukraine. This became known following a meeting between President Volodymyr Zelensky and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, the press service of the Office of the President of Ukraine reports.

In a telephone conversation with the Polish president, Zelensky said that there should be no borders between the two countries and expressed his readiness to start working on a bilateral agreement between the two states. **But now Poland has effectively become Russia's ally in destroying Ukraine, not militarily but economically.** At the same time, Russia itself is taking advantage of Poland to ease its economic situation. The only hope is that negotiations

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<sup>1</sup> Дуда назвав винних у блокаді українського кордону. 21.02.2024. <https://glavcom.ua/world/world-politics/duda-nazvav-vinnikh-v-blokadi-ukrajinskoho-kordonu-987046.html>

<sup>2</sup> Повна блокада українського кордону: польський урядовець погрожує Києву розширити обмеження. 21.02.2024 <https://tsn.ua/svit/povna-blokada-ukrayinskogo-kordonu-polskiy-uryadovec-pogrozhuje-kiyevu-rozshiriti-obmezheniya-2518378.html>

are ongoing and a solution can be found quickly. Still, Poland's leading politicians *remain committed to a strategic partnership with Ukraine*. Therefore, their behaviour can most likely be explained by the moment of political crisis in the country. Unfortunately, this is not a relief for Ukraine today. Therefore, Kyiv must quickly mobilise all its diplomatic resources to unblock the border. *But it is also a sign for Ukraine that it should not rely entirely on its allies, no matter how strong those ties may seem.*

## Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine

- *THEME ANALYSIS: Munich Security Conference 2024: an epiphany of reality after a long, lethargic sleep*



Source: Getty Images

On 16-18 February, Munich hosted the annual International Security Conference. For a few days, Munich became a place of public activity and meetings of world leaders and representatives of the political elite from around the world. The main question journalists ask about the outcome of the Munich Security Conference usually has no clear answer. This conference, like Davos, does not adopt joint resolutions. One can form an idea of this event based on the topics of discussion, resonant statements by world leaders and conference participants, as well as the reaction of the international media to the discussions held at the conference.

The first day of the conference was devoted to various security issues, such as economic and food security, European nuclear security, global order, the role of the United States in the world, the protection of international humanitarian law, etc.

However, *the main news* that influenced the content and tone of the discussions during the conference on 16 February was the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. This event caused shock among the Western participants of the conference and once again drew attention to the criminality of the Putin regime. The idea that **Vladimir Putin represents a global evil that must be stopped was repeatedly voiced at the conference**. Navalny's death confirms that Putin is sowing death around him, and he can only be stopped by force. The reaction of many Western leaders to this event suggests that helping Ukraine could be an important step in stopping Putin.

*The main topic of criticism was the situation in the United States*, which was reflected in the Munich discussions. Internal political confrontations in the United States have drawn the attention of conference participants, which has had a negative impact on the provision of assistance to Ukraine and overall international security. Behind the scenes, there were hints of a possible decision on assistance to Ukraine in March, but probably only through direct supplies of arms and ammunition, without further financial support.

European policymakers are increasingly aware of the *direct military threats from Russia and the lack of political leadership from the United States*. However, there is also a lack of

*leadership among Europeans themselves*, who are accustomed to NATO and US security support and do not want to fight on their own. Nevertheless, the need to support Ukraine, direct security threats from Russia, and fears of a possible second Trump presidency are pushing European leaders to take more decisive action in the security sphere. The European Commission is considering a plan to create a separate defence commissioner and expand military production for its own needs and those of Ukraine. Many EU countries have already expressed their readiness to provide military assistance to Ukraine, although funds to pay for it are still needed.

The Ukrainian issue was discussed on the second day of the conference, 17 February. It was on this day that the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, spoke, which triggered a large media and political discussion. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, also spoke. On the same day, the Victor Pinchuk Foundation organised its traditional Ukrainian Lunch. In his speech at the Ukrainian Lunch, Victor Pinchuk noted that at the beginning of the war, the world underestimated Ukraine, Ukrainians and later Russians. And now, in the third year of the war, we can say that we still underestimate our Western partners or have been disappointed in them too quickly. Some participants of the conference noted that the collective West has a significant economic and military potential, which exceeds Russia's many times over. It is therefore important to use this potential effectively to support Ukraine.

President Zelensky spoke at one of the conference panels and made several important statements. The speech focused on five key messages:

1. The West must step up its efforts, because the aggressors will not give time to prepare;
2. Putin's regime must be overthrown to prevent a repeat of the catastrophe;
3. All "holes" in the sanctions policy must be closed;
4. The West must be united in the face of today's challenges;
5. At the peace summit in Switzerland, the world must force the aggressor to comply with the UN Charter.

Kyiv believes that the **West should not agree to a humiliating truce on the Kremlin's terms. In addition, there are still untapped opportunities to influence Moscow.** "Please do not ask Ukraine when the war will end. Ask yourselves why Putin is still able to continue it," the president said. Zelenskyy said that the only advantages of Putin's Russia are based on a complete disregard for human life. Therefore, a return to international stability is possible only when the criminal regime falls. "We should not be afraid that Putin will lose. Putin is a threat to all free nations... And yes, just yesterday he tried to send us all a clear message when the Munich Security Conference opened: Putin has killed another opposition leader. So please, let's not be afraid that Putin will lose and his regime will fall. Instead, let's work together to destroy what he stands for. It is his destiny to lose, not the destiny of the rule-based world order to disappear," Zelensky urges.<sup>3</sup>

He also thanked Western partners for their friendly attitude towards Ukrainians, but called for facilitating their return to their homeland. The President believes that this will happen if security from the air can be guaranteed. "We know for sure - all of us - that with a sufficient number of 'patriots' and some other Western air defence systems, we can shoot down any Russian missiles. And if there are enough air defence systems in Ukraine, we will be able to bring home millions of Ukrainians, millions of our people, millions of our refugees," Zelensky said.

The processes at the Munich Conference clearly show that democratic countries need to act faster and more effectively to ensure both their own security and support for Ukraine. One

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<sup>3</sup> "Не питаєте Україну, коли закінчиться війна, а запитайте себе, чому путін може це продовжувати" — ключове з візиту Зеленського в Мюнхені.18.02.2024 <https://informato.ua/uk/ne-pitayte-ukrajinu-koli-zakinchitsya-viyna-a-zapitayte-sebe-chomu-putin-mozhe-ce-prodovzhuvati-klyuchove-z-vizitu-zelenskogo-v-myunhen>



cannot help but draw parallels with Vladimir Putin's Munich speech in February 2007, which became a watershed in relations between Russia and the West.

Back then, unexpectedly for the guests of the security conference, the Russian president declared that he no longer intended to accept "unipolarity" in the world: "Certain norms, yes, in fact, almost the entire system of law of one state - first of all, of course, the United States - has crossed its national boundaries, and, in fact, in all areas - in the economy, in politics, and in the humanitarian sphere - is being imposed on other states. Who would like that?" Putin accused the West, in particular the United States, of interfering in Russia's internal affairs and obstructing its foreign policy. He drew attention to the actions of NATO, which, in his words, "is pulling its advanced forces to our state borders." Putin argued that "the expansion of the alliance has nothing to do with its modernisation or ensuring security in Europe".

It is worth noting that several countries, such as Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Slovenia, were admitted to NATO three years before Putin's speech because they had expressed a desire to become members and NATO had no formal reason to reject their application (e.g., no military conflict on the territory of a potential member or no unresolved territorial dispute).

In 2007, in Munich, Putin called for building international relations on the principles of democracy. "We must not forget that a democratic way of acting in politics necessarily involves discussion and painstaking decision-making," he assured. Putin would continue to talk about the value of discussions after 2007, but this did not seem to apply to Russian domestic politics: the "white ribbon" protests in 2011, the murder of Boris Nemtsov in 2015, then the poisoning of Navalny and the trials of opposition figures, and the mass branding of "foreign agents". No "discussions".

Ironically, Putin condemned the "growing disregard for the fundamental principles of international law". "Unilateral, illegitimate actions have not solved a single problem. Moreover, they have become a generator of new human tragedies and hotbeds of tension," he argued. However, such considerations are only about the West and for the West, and they do not stop the Russian president himself. In 1.5 years, Putin will invade Georgia, in 7 years - contrary to international laws and agreements - he will annex Crimea, and then start supplying weapons and little green men to Donbas.

In 2007, Putin assured: "The use of force can only be considered legitimate if the decision is made on the basis of and within the framework of the United Nations." The Kremlin will not wait for UN approval for any of its future military operations. In 2020, the Russian Constitution will enshrine its priority over international law. In 2007, Vladimir Putin called for disarmament and stressed the need to "ensure the continuity of the nuclear arms reduction process". "We cannot allow the emergence of new destabilising high-tech weapons," Putin said in 2007. Instead, a decade later, the Russian media will be talking about hypersonic Zircon, combat lasers and domestically produced intercontinental missiles.

In a separate speech in Munich in 2007, Putin addressed the issue of "star wars". "The militarisation of space, in Russia's view, could provoke unpredictable consequences for the international community," he warned. However, despite Putin's previous assurances, Russia will test anti-satellite weapons in space starting in 2021.

As for energy, in Munich, the Russian president spoke about the transparency of the energy market and stated: "The price of energy should be determined by the market and not be subject to political speculation, economic pressure or blackmail." In reality, the Kremlin has been blackmailing Europe with Russian gas for the past few years, while claiming that nothing of the sort is happening. The Kremlin regularly resorts to such tactics of denial: according to the Russian authorities, there were no "little green men" in Donbas in 2014, nor was there a concentration of troops near the Ukrainian border in 2022.

Putin's other theses cannot be ignored: "The only mechanism for making decisions on the use of military force as a last resort can only be the UN Charter." "We cannot but be concerned about the plans to deploy elements of the missile defence system in Europe. Who



needs another round of the inevitable arms race in this case?" (Representatives of Western countries claimed that this system is not directed against Russia, but to protect Europe from possible attacks by North Korea and Iran).

"For the modern world, the unipolar model is not only unacceptable, but impossible," said Putin at this conference in 2007. "Certain norms, almost the entire system of law of one state, first of all, of course, the United States, has crossed its national borders in all spheres: in the economy, politics, and humanitarian sphere and is being imposed on other states." "Russia is a country with more than a thousand years of history, and it has almost always enjoyed the privilege of pursuing an independent foreign policy. We are not going to change this tradition today." "They are trying to turn the OSCE into a vulgar tool to ensure the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries in relation to other countries."

At the time, Europe did not properly respond to Russia's hints. It continued to tolerate Putin's diplomatic antics. And even the Georgian and Ukrainian wars failed to convince the West to exercise caution. Now Europe is forced to pay the price. But it is clear from Zelensky's words that *even today's critical situation is not a call to action for some. But we cannot delay any longer, we are now at a critical point, and Europe has the only chance to correct the mistake of the past by taking active and urgent action.*



Source: Army FM

#### ■ Changes at the front

**Trend:** *After withdrawing from Avdiivka, the Ukrainian Defence Forces are trying to hold back the advancing Russian troops in unprepared positions.*

**The operational environment in eastern and southern Ukraine remains challenging.**

*In the Kupyansk direction*, Ukrainian army repelled attacks by Russian troops near the towns of Sinkivka and Ivanivka in Kharkiv region, where Russians unsuccessfully tried to break through the defences of Ukrainian troops. The Russian military also carried out air strikes near the towns of Kupiansk, Ivanivka, Kyslivka, Tabaiivka, Pishchane in the Kharkiv region. About 15 settlements came under artillery and mortar fire, including Sinkivka, Ivanivka, Kyslivka, Kotlyarivka in Kharkiv region.

*In the Liman direction*, Ukrainian army repelled attacks by Russian troops in the areas of Serebryanske forestry in Luhansk region, Terniv and Yampolivka in Donetsk region, where Russians, with the support of aviation, tried to break through the defences of Ukrainian troops. Russian artillery and mortar shelling hit about 15 settlements, including Bilohorivka in Luhansk region; Terny, Yampolivka, Torske, Serebryanka, Verkhokamianske, Vyymka in Donetsk region.

*In the Bakhmut direction*, the Ukrainian Defence Forces repelled Russian Federation's attacks near Bohdanivka and Klishchivka in Donetsk region, where the Russian army unsuccessfully tried to improve its tactical position. More than 10 settlements came under

artillery and mortar fire, including Hryhorivka, Ivanivske, Klishchivka and Andriivka in Donetsk region.

*In the Avdiivka direction*, Ukrainian army repelled attacks by Russian troops near Avdiivka and Pervomayske in Donetsk region, where Russians, supported by air power, tried to break through the Ukrainian defences. More than 15 localities came under artillery and mortar fire from the Russians, including Novobakhmutivka, Berdychi, Stepove, Avdiivka and Pervomayske in Donetsk region.

In the Mariinsky direction, the Ukrainian Defence Forces continue to hold back Russian troops in the areas of Krasnohorivka, Heorhiivka and Novomykhailivka in Donetsk region, where the Russian occupiers, with the support of aviation, unsuccessfully tried to improve the tactical situation. Such settlements of Donetsk region as Krasnohorivka, Heorhiivka, Pobeda, Novomykhailivka, and Paraskoviivka came under artillery and mortar fire from the Russian occupiers.

*On the Shakhtarsk defence line*, Russian attacks were repelled in the area south of Zolota Niva in Donetsk region. The Russian army conducted air strikes near the settlements of Staromayorske, Vuhledar and Urozhayne in Donetsk region. About 10 localities came under artillery and mortar fire, including Vodiane, Prechystivka, Staromayorske, and Rivne in Donetsk region.

*In the Zaporizhzhya direction*, Russian troops did not conduct any offensive (assault) operations. More than 20 localities came under artillery and mortar fire, including Poltavka, Malynivka, Gulyaypole, Bilohirya, Robotyne, Pyatikhatky in Zaporizhzhia region.

*In the Kherson direction*, Russian troops have not abandoned their intention to drive Ukrainian units from their footholds on the left bank of the Dnipro River. However, all of their attempts to storm the positions of Ukrainian troops have been unsuccessful. The Russians launched air strikes near the towns of Chervonyi Mayak, Krynyky, and Zmiivka in Kherson region. The city of Kherson and the settlements of Chervonyi Mayak, Tokarivka, Sadove, Kizomys in the Kherson region came under artillery and mortar fire. The Russian occupiers also fired from multiple rocket launchers near the settlements of Ivanivka, Krynyky, and Inzhenerne in the Kherson region.

#### ■ *Military assistance*

**The USA.** Despite the absence of a decision by the US Congress on additional funding for Ukraine, the production and some supplies of military equipment and ammunition for the Ukrainian Defence Forces continue under previously concluded contracts. This includes artillery shells, missiles for HIMARS, air defence capabilities and other military equipment.

**The Czech Republic** has found a way to supply 800,000 shells to Ukraine. According to the President, the country is looking for military supplies around the world and sending them to the Czech Republic with the assistance of NATO partner countries.

**Sweden** has allocated a new aid package worth approximately \$683 million for the Ukrainian Defence Forces, which includes:

- 10 Stridsbåt 90 amphibious assault boats;
- 20 Gruppbat boats;
- underwater weapons, including mines and torpedoes;
- portable anti-aircraft systems RBS 70;
- TOW anti-tank systems;

- grenade launchers and ammunition for them;
- artillery ammunition;
- hand grenades;
- Carl Gustaf grenade launchers;
- medical equipment;
- ambulances.

The Swedish government has also allocated \$96.2 million for the purchase of military equipment through various funds and the same amount for the order of new CV90 infantry fighting vehicles for Ukraine.

**The UK** has announced the supply of 200 more Brimstone missiles to Ukraine, with a range of 20 to 60 km, depending on the launch platform.<sup>4</sup>

## ■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

### ***Trend: Putin's Address to the Federal Assembly of Russia: How it Threatens Ukraine and the World***

As he did last year, Putin began his address to the Russian parliament on 29 February 2024 with nuclear threats against both the West and Ukraine. He said that NATO countries risked causing a nuclear conflict if they sent their troops to Ukraine. "There is talk of sending NATO contingents to Ukraine. But we remember the fate of those who sent the contingents. Now the consequences for the interventionists will be much more tragic... They must finally realise that we also have weapons that can hit targets on their territory. Everything that the West comes up with creates a real threat of a conflict with the use of nuclear weapons, and thus the destruction of civilisation," Putin said.

He also claimed to have deployed the "latest" nuclear weapons that Russia now has. Although most of these missiles were announced by the Kremlin in 2018, there is still no evidence that any of them are actually operational. Nevertheless, Putin emphasised that all strategic goals from 2018 had been achieved.

Putin threatened that Russia's strategic nuclear forces were on full alert and once again boasted of the development of new weapons, which, according to him, are either already being used in the war against Ukraine or will be delivered to the troops in the near future. He also said that "a number of other promising systems are in the process of being armed".

Justifying his large-scale aggression against Ukraine, he traditionally repeated the lie that **"we did not start this war in Donbas"** and once again stated that the Russian army **"would do everything to end it, to eradicate Nazism, to solve all the tasks of the World War II"**. At the same time, he assured that Russia was not going to deploy nuclear weapons in space. According to him, these are all allegedly "throw-ins" that the United States allegedly needs to draw Russia into negotiations favourable to America.

ISW's conclusion from this speech is that **Putin is putting all his efforts into sowing panic among Western audiences and undermining Western support for Ukraine**. However, it remains to be seen how credible a nuclear threat from Russia really is.

Information about the Sarmat, Avangard, Burevestnik and Prometey missiles came to light after Vladimir Putin's speech to the Federal Assembly in March 2018, which took place before the Russian presidential election. Much of the speech was dedicated to the new weapons that would soon be available to the Russian army. Putin's main message was: "No one has been listening to us. Listen now". During this speech, Putin also mentioned the Kinzhal and Zircon missiles. However, subsequent events have shown that the characteristics of these weapons claimed by Russia are partially untrue. For example, as the experience of the

<sup>4</sup> <https://zaxid.net/news/>



war with Ukraine has shown, both civilian and military targets have been targeted by Kinzhal and Zircon attacks, although Putin claimed that these weapons are used only to strike military targets.

Burevestnik is an unlimited-range nuclear-powered missile, as described in Russia. It has similarities to the X-101 cruise missile but is larger. There is little information available about this missile. The New York Times last year confirmed the test using satellite imagery. It is mentioned that there were at least 5 failed tests. On 8 August 2019, an explosion occurred near Severodvinsk, Russia. It is likely to have occurred during an attempt to lift a Burevestnik missile with a nuclear power plant from the bottom of the White Sea. The explosion killed seven people.

Another type of weapon is the Poseidon, a "nuclear drone submarine". In Russia, it is described as: "a fundamentally new type of naval submarine weapon based on the use of unmanned underwater vehicles, it will be able to fight enemy aircraft carriers and hit their coastal targets at intercontinental range". The Russian media mention two factors of defeat from this "superweapon": the force of the explosion with contamination of the area and the subsequent tsunami up to 500 metres high, which, according to the claims, can reach the mainland at a distance of 500 km in the presence of flat terrain.<sup>5</sup> Although foreign experts are not sure that the tsunami effect will be so strong every time, they suggest that it is possible if the explosion occurs in a specific place at a given depth, which can be very difficult. Foreign scientists also refute claims that this equipment is silent and has high speed. According to them, Poseidon can have a speed of up to 130 km/h, but will not move silently, or it can be silent, but then there are questions about the data on its speed.

Assessing the purpose of such threats, European Commission spokesperson Peter Stano said during a daily briefing in Brussels: "This speech should be seen in the context of the upcoming presidential elections in Russia. This is part of Putin's re-election efforts." *On the other hand, he said, it is one of many examples of Putin trying to shift the blame for the war he started against Ukraine, for the instability he is trying to create around Ukraine in the whole region.* "It's another opportunity for him to spread a well-known lie. He continues to deceive his own nation and mislead the public abroad, because there are those who still continue to listen to him," the spokesman said. According to him, it was Putin who started the war against Ukraine and he is responsible for all the consequences: internal in Russia, regional in Ukraine, as well as global consequences. Stano also emphasised that all of Putin's nuclear threats are completely unacceptable and inappropriate. "Putin is deceiving the nation, the nation is living under an iron fist and Stalin-style repression, the army is in a catastrophic state, the economy is collapsing, trust in the country is completely destroyed, and his efforts to destroy Ukraine have failed," he said.<sup>6</sup>

The US Department of State reacted to Russian President Vladimir Putin's statement about the threat of nuclear war. "This is not the first time we have heard irresponsible rhetoric from Vladimir Putin. This is not the way a leader of a nuclear power should speak. We have spoken privately and directly with Russia in the past about the consequences of using nuclear weapons," said State Department spokesman Matthew Miller during a briefing.<sup>7</sup> He added that the United States sees no signs that Russia is preparing to use nuclear weapons. Thus, given the diplomatic constraints, the response from the Western powers was quite expected. But we should not forget that in 2024 we are seeing the continuation of the same policy as in 2018. This could have been prevented a long time ago, but neither the EU nor the US, nor even Ukraine, had the determination to do so. **Now the situation cannot be delayed. Russia**

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<sup>5</sup> Путін лякає новітньою ядерною зброєю: наскільки серйозна загроза? 01.03.2024. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/yaderna-zbroya-rosiya/32844106.html>

<sup>6</sup> ЄС про погрози Путіна: Частина зусиль з переобрання і давня брехня. 29. 02. 2024 <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2024/02/29/7180754/>

<sup>7</sup> У Держдепі США відреагували на заяву Путіна про загрозу ядерної війни 29.02.2024. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-derzhdep-putin-yaderna-zbroya/32842900.html>

has shown that it is completely irrational and unpredictable, so we should not take such statements from Putin lightly. **The most important thing now is to unite our efforts to prevent an escalation of the threat.**