

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

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

**Key words:** nuclear weapon, international politics, foreign policy, military strategy, defense strategy, Russia, NATO, Baltic countries.

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