



ASPECTS OF RECONFIGURING THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD ORDER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE EXISTING CHALLENGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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The struggle for supremacy dates back to ancient times, and the conquest of new territories or the desire to regain former affiliations is not new. Consequently, the central objective of the paper is to understand and review current geopolitical and geostrategic issues. At the beginning, the general framework of the research is pointed out. Although contemporaneity offers countless possibilities for states to have a prosperous and peaceful inner order, their tendency is different, in fact it is the same as always: territorial expansion and the obtaining of the scepter of international power. This scientific approach captures analytically and comparatively the attitude of two major state powers, from the Euro-Asian space, Russia and China, on the one hand, and the efforts of international actors, USA and NATO, which promote peace and stability and counteracts hostile actions that threaten its values. Following the results of this analysis, the conclusions of the research are drawn, accompanied by personal contributions, issues addressed and identified limitations.

Keywords: supremacy; order; territorial expansion; Russia; China; USA; NATO; peace; stability.

We are currently witnessing an endangerment of the order of the states of the world, supported by their actions or inactions, which tend to trigger a "tectonic movement" to resettle the current borders.

The dispute over supremacy, be it political, economic, geostrategic, technological or otherwise, stands out globally, so that the international goal of the existence of a deliberate, conscious interstate peace seems more like a utopian desire.

The purpose and research directions of the paper

Although the issue of changes in the international security environment has been and continues to be intensely addressed in national articles and publications and is also found in my area of scientific interest, there are areas of research that remain open due to international geopolitical and geostrategic uncertainty.

Taking into account our own research concerns regarding the transformation of the Romanian Army, a process with many elements tangential to changes in NATO, we identified as the main objective for this paper the review and

understanding of the reasons for hostile attitudes of some Eurasian states, Russia and China, compared to the Alliance's countermeasures.

The research directions for the proposed goal include: defining the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of the Eurasian space and the existence of a "balance of power", Russia's current position and requirements, China's actions, contrary to NATO's global order, US role in the Eurasian space. Following the analysis performed, through this paper I try to capture the trends and evolution of the contemporary security environment and possible solutions for restoring international relations.

This scientific path will be supported by up-to-date data, collected and analyzed through the online platforms of SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) and IISS (The International Institute for Strategic Studies), but also by the study of official documents and literature from domain. SIPRI is an independent international institute established in 1966 with the mission of conducting research on conflicts, armaments and arms control and disarmament. IISS, founded in 1958, is a British institute that aims to do research in international affairs. Both institutes provide valid and globally recognized information and databases and are benchmarks for various specialized studies in the field.

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Preliminary considerations on the relationship between Russia, China and the United States

The starting point for the analysis of the three states, Russia, China and the United States, and the focus of the research directions inclusive, is the vision of futurists Toffler: "We all, civilians and military alike, need a deep understanding of the revolutionary new knowledge, wealth and war" (Toffler 1995, 290).

The personal interpretation given to this perspective, with an impact on the scientific approach taken, is the following: through "knowledge" we will achieve the geographical delimitation of the conflict area and the correct capture of current requirements and predict the intentions of states under analysis; the idea of "wealth" will highlight a comparative picture of the financial expenditures in the military field of the three state actors (Russia, China, USA); and in terms of the concept of "war" the military potential will be captured, expressed in this case by contextual comparisons at the level of armed forces. Broadly speaking, the last two aspects analyzed will define "hard power" (Nye 2012, 37-43), tangible resources, such as force and money, which can change territorial boundaries and extrapolate the idea of economic supremacy in the region.

The events of the XXth century also meant attempts to quantify the power of states through various formulas, one of the analysts who stood out during the Cold War, Ray Cline, published the following simplified version:

PERCEIVED POWER = (POPULATION + TERRITORY + ECONOMY + ARMY) x (STRATEGY + WILL) (Nye 2012, 20)

Applying the formula with the values of the two representatives of the opposing sides of that time, the USA and the Soviet Union, Cline concluded that the latter is twice as strong. Although plausible at first glance, history has shown otherwise. More recent efforts by economists in particular focus on the inclusion in the formula of all of a country's resources and national achievements (external constraints, infrastructure, ideas) and how they would influence military capabilities and combat performance.

The application of these formulas is not the object of study of this paper as they have not proved their usefulness over time, but the close follow-up of established research directions.

"The knowledge"

The general framework for the proposed analysis is metaphorically referred to as "the great chessboard" by political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Eurasia or the" supercontinent, "bounded on the west by Lisbon and on the east by Vladivostok" (Brzezinski 1997, 34). This territory is in a continuous process of reconfiguration, where hegemonic ambitions, economic disparities, civil unrest and acts of terrorism compete to restore new international influences.

Despite the fact that Eurasia occupies about 75% of the world's population, comprising the most politically, economically and financially active countries, which also have great nuclear power, it does not act as a whole for the common good, and states are individually wasting a vast array of resources in pursuit of their own interests and goals, sometimes to the detriment of neighbouring countries.

The Eurasian space is riddled with multiple conflicts, and misunderstandings are popping up everywhere. Frustration and rebellion of some states, manifested in the form of threats to the territorial integrity of other states or concrete actions in this regard, harming the competitive spirit or eliminating competition and extrapolating the idea of superiority and the concept of "overpower" (Marga 2017, 58- 71), disrupts the main strategic objectives of international organizations with responsibilities in the field of defence and security, to maintain a stable and secure climate.

Renowned American theorist Henry Kissinger considers Westphalian Peace to be the main model of world order, believing that Westphalian principles "are the only generally recognized basis of world order" (Kissinger 2021, 10). The idea is also reiterated by the Romanian political scientist Andrei Marga in a paper based on Kissinger's visions, stating that "the Westphalian system has been practically shared over most of the globe" (Marga 2017, 10).

A World War II theory had the Newtonian pendulum as its counterpart in the scientific world, in the sense that it proposed a "balance of power" (Kaplan 1957, 684-695). If one state stands out significantly from its power, the others will initiate a coalition to fight it and bring it back into its own orbit, thus restoring balance.

In a similar contemporary approach, Bohumil Doboš, a political scientist, talks about a Westphalian

system based on the existence of sovereign states that are independent in decision-making and are responsible for their own survival, as well as for all other domestic or international action. Moreover, he recalls the existence of a certain "balance of power", stating that "the balance of this system lies precisely in balancing power among the states of the world" and has as its "main characteristics sovereignty, territoriality and the state" (Doboš 2020, 20-21).

Therefore, in the light of this narrative, one can analyze the efforts to ensure and maintain peace and stability by NATO and the US specifically, in the new international context of conflict, caused by two influential politico-military and economic powers, Russia and China.

The strategic vision given by the interpretation of this map highlights the emerging dissensions

equipment on its border with Ukraine. In addition, there are large-scale armed deployments in Belarus in the form of joint exercises.

Amid talks in Brussels on January 12, 2022 between Russian and NATO officials, the Kremlin sees the Alliance's "open gates" policy of expanding to Eastern Europe in particular as a threat to its borders. In addition, it is believed that suppressing Russian influence in the area is in fact NATO's undeclared goal. Under this denunciation, Moscow blames the Alliance for both the aggravation of Europe's security and the emergence of its own sense of insecurity, due to the endowment of resources and military equipment of states in the vicinity of its territory.

Although the Kremlin supports its hegemonic claims, even resorting to force if its requirements are not met (withdrawal of NATO troops from former

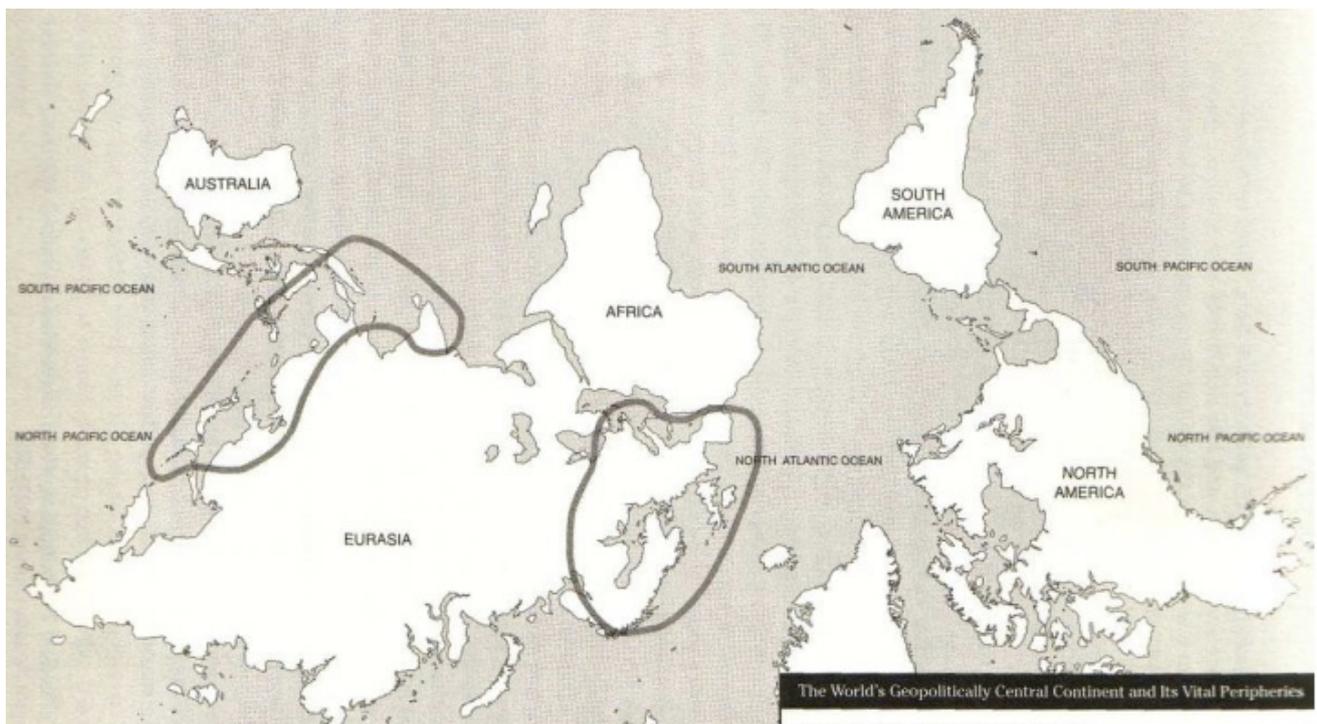


Figure 1 Inverted map to create a visual effect (Brzezinski 1997, 32)

and current challenges of the security environment, which begin, from left to right, with Russia's hostile attitude towards the West. Its expansionist trend became strong with the military intervention in Georgia in 2008, followed by the illegal annexation of the Crimea in 2014. The Kremlin currently maintains a Russian Troop Task Force in the Republic of Moldova, simultaneously with an aggressive accumulation of military forces and

Warsaw Pact countries, halting the Alliance's expansion in Eastern Europe and preventing Ukraine's accession to NATO), the Alliance does not seem to yield to concessions. A concrete measure in this regard was taken in February this year, by consolidating the Eastern Flank allied with additional military troops in Romania. NATO is still proposing a series of sanctions to counter Russian action if the diplomatic solution is not considered

by the Kremlin. The proposed sanctions include Russia's exclusion from SWIFT international payment system, used by all banks in the world to exchange information, and the blocking of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which is expected to deliver gas directly to Germany, bypassing Ukraine and Poland.

alliance, because that would be their biggest fear. It is this fear of forming a coalition between states such as Mongolia, South Korea, Japan and the Philippines that should be exploited by the United States. Even the threat of such a coalition, through concrete moves in this direction, could temper Beijing's actions. China knows how the U.S. and



Figure 2 *The split of the Soviet Union – 1991*
(Google 2022)

If Russia seeks to "dethrone" the entire allied politico-military power or at least weaken it and recognize its own supremacy, China will compete with the U.S. when it comes to the old paradigm of economic domination and testing their role as guarantors of Allied security. Through incursions into the South China Sea region and attacks on Taiwan, the People's Republic of China aims to "stir up the waters" in eastern Eurasia.

Former director of the Center for Chinese Strategy at the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC, Michael Pillsbury believes that "there is a reason behind Communist China's claims to the South China Sea, namely the desire to have unlimited access to resources", natural disasters in the region and intimidating neighbours into not forming an

its Allies have suppressed the Soviet Union, and it is aware that the same can happen to it" (Pillsbury 2016, 221).

It is noteworthy that the US renewed its Quad Leaders' Joint Statement (Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: The Spirit of the Quad 2022) strategic alliance with Japan, India and Australia in February 2021, and will carry out major naval maneuvers in the fall of the same year in Bay of Bengal. This collaboration is intended to be a counterweight to China's increasingly strong and ambitious policies in the region.

Given the simultaneous pressure from Russia and China, respectively, the US's ability to regroup its assets in the face of possible concurrent armed aggression is questionable. The order in the Eurasian

space, its borders, is therefore in a destabilized and unpredictable point and could be restored only by the mastery of the negotiations carried out by the main international organizations promoting global peace and stability.

From a negative but most likely realistic point of view, the American diplomat Richard Haass remarks fatefully that, given all these changes, a return to the old world order is impossible. It will also be insufficient if we think about the new challenges. The United States and its partners will need to establish arms storage and arms control agreements; will need to strengthen weak states that cannot control terrorism, cartels and criminal groups; and they will have to counterbalance the authoritarian powers that infiltrate democratic processes. Arguments that attempts to integrate China and Russia into the existing world order have failed should not become a pretext for rejecting future efforts to include them in creating and maintaining the future world order, as it will reflect these processes throughout the 21st century. Such efforts will be a mixture of compromise, incentives and brakes. Relationships will be a mixture of competition and cooperation, with the twin objectives that the former should not conflict or take precedence over the latter" (Haass 2021, 372-373).

"The wealth"

For the comparative analysis of the financial implications in the field of defence, we considered relevant for the axis of the research directions the last summary report of 2021 of SIPRI on armaments, disarmament and international security.

The United States ranks first in the world when it comes to defence spending. In 2020, they were in their third consecutive year of growth, reaching \$ 778 billion. Compared to 2019, they increased by 4.4% but decreased by 10% compared to 2011 (SIPRI Fact Sheet April 2021 2022). Elements that contributed to this increase include in particular the focus on research and development, the modernization of the US nuclear arsenal and the acquisition of armament.

China has distinguished itself worldwide by continued financial growth for 26 consecutive years. Compared to the USA, there is a certain stereotype, slightly variable, in terms of contribution in the period analyzed below, its ratio being on average 1/3 (30.86%) of the amount invested in defence by them.

Compared to the other two major powers, Russia is among the countries that saw a decline in defence spending in 2020, caused by the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking into account the same route, 2014-2021, Russia seems to follow China, a constant, slightly variable model, but it spends about 9.98% of the total US investment during the period for defence.

"The war"

Although it has the supremacy in terms of financial contribution to the defence, the credibility of US power has started being tested recently both within NATO and globally. The causes are many. From the failed attempt to rebuild Afghanistan using "unorthodox" methods by invading Iran and pursuing a regime change in Libya, to the reluctance to respond to issues that needed more attention, such as the case of Syria, then when the Syrian regime used chemical weapons against anti-regime groups.

The presidential administration itself raised doubts about the confidence in the US by withdrawing from certain international pacts (Global Climate Agreement-2017, Treaty with Russia on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces-2019), placing it under the spectrum of conditioning commitments of the Alliance considered sacred and intangible by its members, the removal of several partners from the Middle East, as well as the mismatch between rhetoric and action in the contemporary context of the situation in North Korea and Iran.

Regarding the conditions imposed by the US administration, it warned in 2017 that before coming to the aid of European allies in the event of a threat to them, for example from Russia, it will first check whether they have met their financial contribution of 2% of their GDP in the NATO defence budget.

This US approach has influenced public opinion, fuelling tensions across states. Russia's intervention in Syria and Ukraine and the Saudi-led military incursion into Yemen, defiance from China, are nothing more than expressions of a reality out of the control of the "balance of power" and peace of the United States and its allies. from Europe and Asia, plus conventional military forces and nuclear weapons.

The icon below (Figure 9) shows the numerical values of the armed forces of Russia, the USA and China. While the United States is a financial

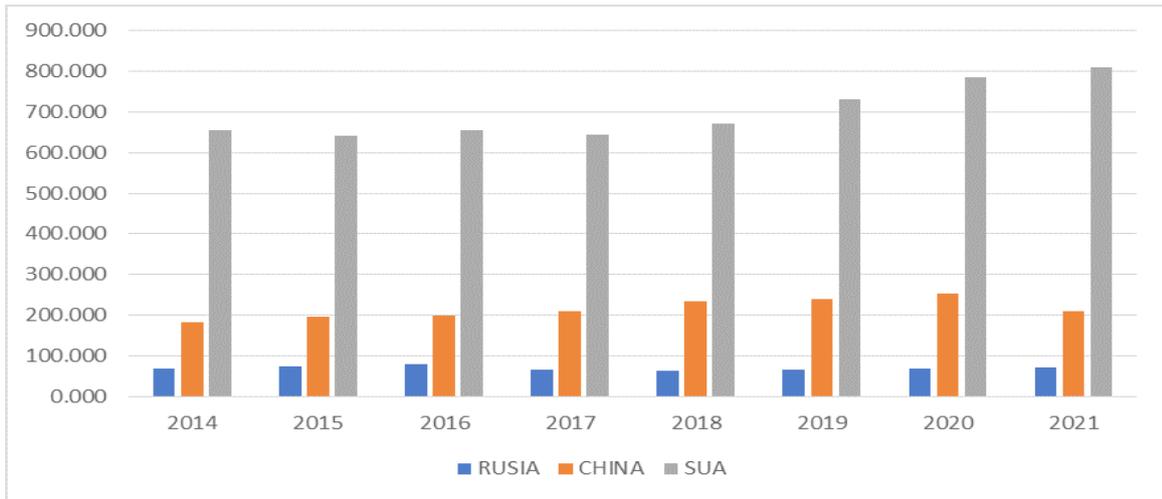


Figure 3 Financial expenses in the field of defence (Trading economics 2022)

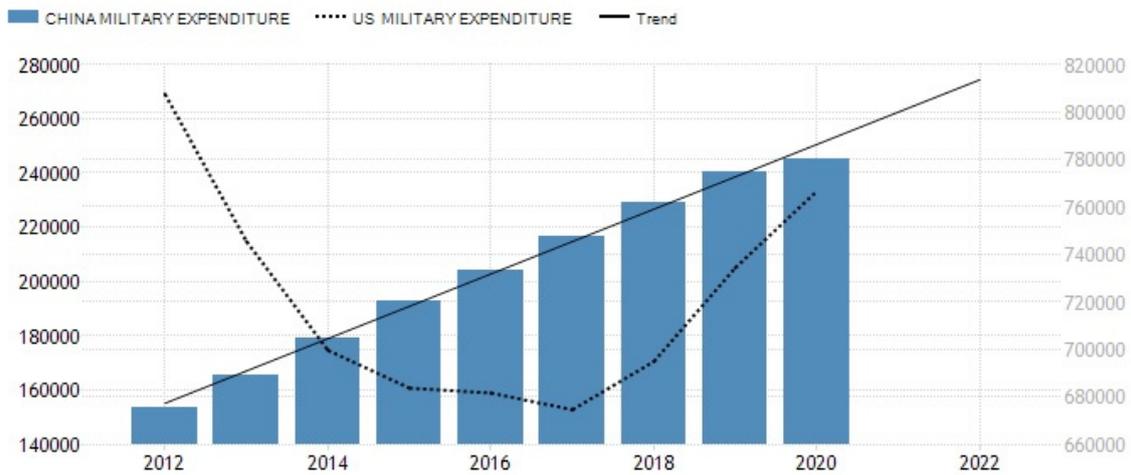


Figure 4 Development of financial expenditure in the field of defence (China-SUA) (Trading economics 2022)

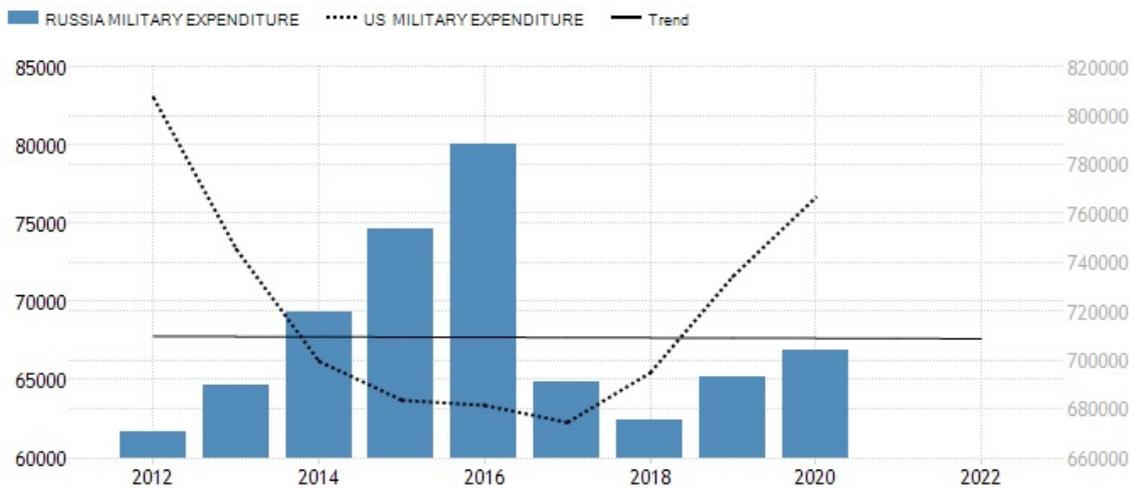


Figure 5 Evolution of financial expenditure in the field of defence (Russia-USA) (Trading economics 2022)

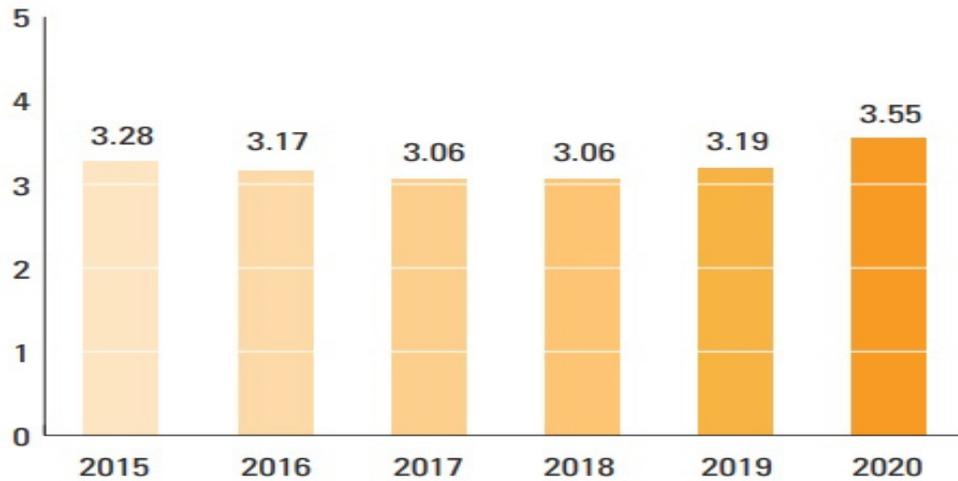


Figure 6 *Financial Expenditure on Defence – US (% share of GDP)*
(The military balance 2021, The International Institute for Strategic Studies 2021)

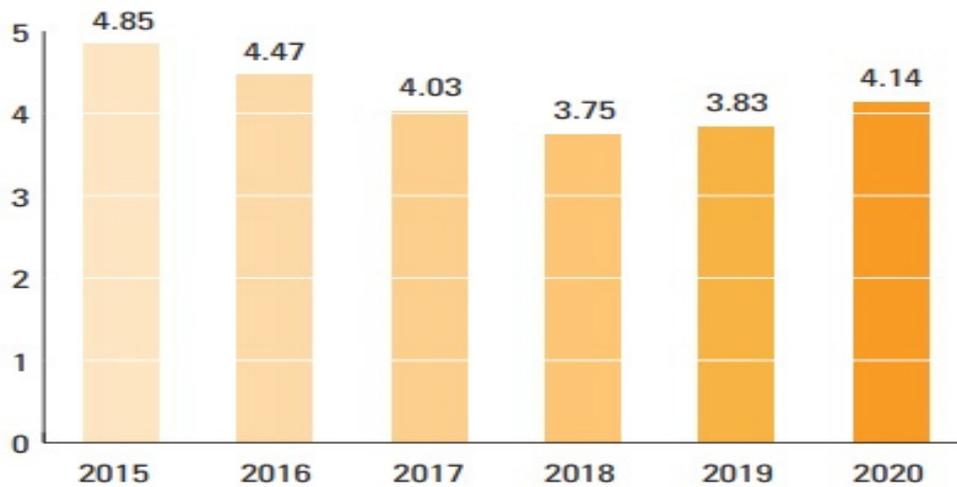


Figure 7 *Financial Expenditure on Defence – Russia (% share of GDP)*
(The military balance 2021, The International Institute for Strategic Studies 2021, 174)

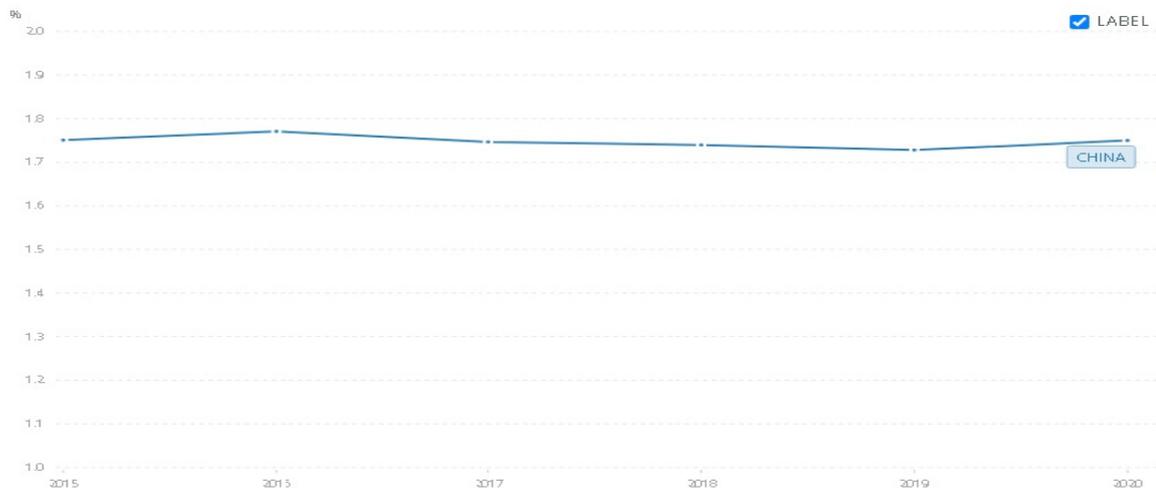


Figure 8 *Financial Expenditure on Defence – China (% share of GDP)*
(World Bank 2022)



leader in defence spending, China stands out as the world's largest active-duty military personnel with about 2 million active troops.

The military personnel reported are the following military branches: US Army, US Navy, US Air Force, US Marine Corps and US Coast Guard. The largest branch of the United States Armed Forces is the United States Army, which

also decreased between 1995 and 2015, although it began to increase slightly in 2015. In 2019, there were 327,878 active members of the US Air Force, compared to 396,382 in 1995 (Statista 2022).

Summarizing the above comparative analysis through the prism of the three distinctly approached ideas, it follows that the strength of a country's armed forces is determined not only by the number

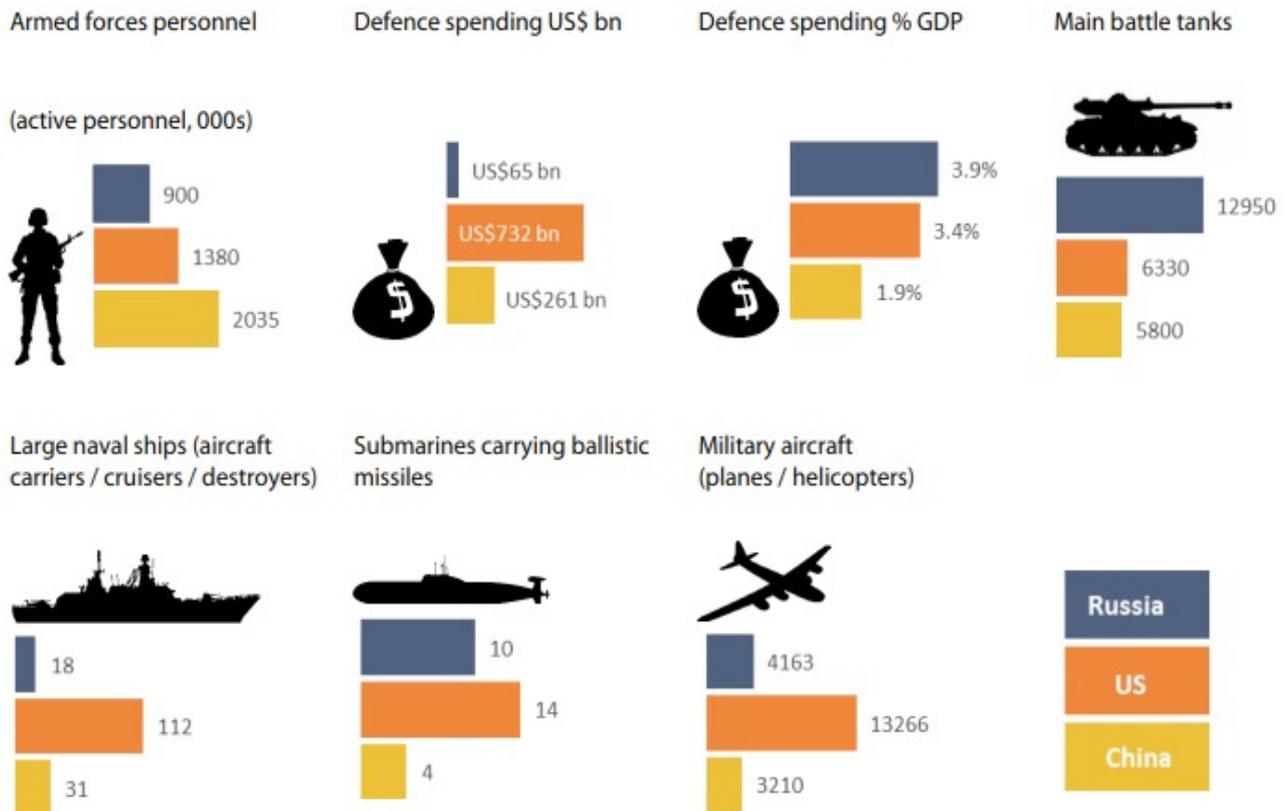


Figure 9 Numerical comparison of the Russian, American and Chinese armed forces (European Parliament 2022)

is responsible for ground military operations. The number of active-duty U.S. Army personnel decreased from 2010 to 2019, from 561,979 US Army active-duty members to 479,785 in 2019. The number of active-duty US Navy personnel has declined slowly over the past 20 years. In 2019, there were 332,528 active members in the US Navy. United States Navy personnel are enlisted sailors, commissioned officers and intermediaries. Sailors must take part in the Staff Qualification Standards to demonstrate that they have mastered the required skills. The United States Air Force is a branch of the United States Air Warfare Service. The number of active duty Air Force personnel

of personnel they maintain, but also by the number and quality of their military equipment.

For example, the comparative analysis of personnel does not take into account the overwhelming number of nuclear warheads held by Russia and the United States as compared to other countries. One way to answer this question is to look at the total amount of money each country spends on the military, as spending includes both personnel and technology. As for the countries with the highest military spending, the United States is at the forefront of the world with an annual budget almost three times larger than China, which ranks second, followed by Russia.

Conclusions

As the current world order seems to be a total collapse, we considered it necessary to review and analyze the main contemporary issues, by studying some official and specialized documents in the field.

As a summary, the personal contribution is distinguished by the analytical and comparative vision established by the research directions and the interpretation of the Russia-China-USA triad through the prism of the three concepts: "knowledge", "wealth" and "war".

The results of the scientific approach are shown in the form of points of view and proposals, but also open issues and limits of research.

First of all, the idea of cooperation is paramount in any type of relationship, be it political, economic, military or otherwise. Promoting cooperation between states in the South China Sea region could ease existing conflicts. A flexible and informal political platform, at the presidential level, similar to the Three Seas Initiative, aimed at increasing convergence and cohesion, while reducing the economic development gap, by increasing interconnectedness in the region, in the fields of energy, transport and digitalization. This would include the essential requirements for combating expansionist China.

Moreover, China's attitude could be tempered by encouraging cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. This would mean conducting joint military exercises aimed at increasing transparency and mutual trust, thus helping to promote stability and reduce tensions in the area.

Secondly, when it comes to the issue of Russia's insistent demands, things get complicated. From the perspective of the latest major events, also analyzed in the paper, there is a concern about the claim of the former territories of the Soviet Union and their isolation from the protection that could be offered by joining NATO and the EU.

In order to meet its requirements declared before the United States and the Alliance, the tendency of Russian expansion, even in the form of conventional or unconventional actions, is not excluded. A deployment of forces in the full force of the word, a "blitzkrieg" similar to the invasion of Georgia or a hybrid attack similar to the one in Ukraine are becoming more and more likely. By ignoring NATO warnings and sanctions, a

capitulation to the Kremlin's demands seems more distant than ever.

Russia's ferocity could be disarmed by the strength of NATO's response, which should be radical and politically, economically and militarily sustained. Isolation of Moscow economically first, by preventing the commissioning of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline and harsh economic sanctions, and then by resorting to the delivery of defensive military forces and equipment to the Alliance's Eastern Flank.

This audacity of states, such as Russia and China, to reconfigure the order of the contemporary world translates into a reduction in the credibility of NATO's defence in the event of an armed confrontation, a degraded image due to political, social and ideological divisions. Therefore, the best solution to stop the politico-military and economic aggression that threatens NATO's mission is for it to do everything in its power to ensure the freedom and security of all its members and partners.

The uncertainty of the actions in the battlefield and the unpredictability of the decisions of state actors, especially Russia and China, leave open some problems, which are also limits of scientific research. In what form the next conflicts will take place and in what direction the trends of the two states will evolve remain only dilemmas at the moment, but the possible scenarios should not be ignored.

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