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ABSTRACT:
This article aims to outline main directions of the security strategy of the People’s Republic of China based on the analysis of the Defense White Paper of July 2019, the political practice of the Beijing authorities as well as internal and international situation. Having analyzed the above mentioned areas, the author concludes that the contemporary strategy of the PRC is internally subordinated to maintaining territorial, political and social integrity, including primarily legitimization of the power of the Communist Party of China. Externally, the strategy is oriented at reversing the unfavorable balance of power in the Asia-Pacific and weakening of the US military advantage. Those two directions determine the activities of the Chinese state in such specific areas as: modernization of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), the relations with Taiwan and claims concerning South China Sea. The Defense White Paper is aimed at contrasting the unilateral and hegemonic policy of the United States (as the authors of the document see it) with the defensive and moderate activities of China. The narration serves to convince international players to remain neutral or engage in collaboration with China in the face of intensifying military, economic and political pressure on the part of the USA. China has entered a “critical moment” of its development, and the response of the Beijing authorities to the challenges of internal development and external pressures will determine whether in the 21st century it will become a superpower.

KEYWORDS:
China, strategy, security, White Paper, foreign policy
Introduction

The return of the People’s Republic of China to a big-power position constitutes one of the most important processes in contemporary international relations. It is reflected both in the opinions of researchers, as well as the weight attached thereto by strategic documents of the United States. Within the four decades since the initiation of the reforms of openness in 1978, China has reached the status of the second world economy in terms of: nominal GDP, outlays on research and development and military budget. However, measuring the size of the economy in terms of purchasing power parity, China has been the largest economy in the world already since 2014. The available forecasts predict that China may become the largest world economy in terms of nominal GDP by 2035, which would also involve the growth of its political, military and technological potential. Despite the fact that the possibility of China’s replacing the United States as the world super-power is questioned by many authors, there is no doubt that Washington recognizes the growth of its might as the greatest challenge for American politics in the 21st century.

The problem that is immanently inscribed into the growth of China’s power is a question about the future of the China-US relations and their implications for the stability of international system. Profound changes in the balance of power between the weakening hegemon and a state aspiring to this role led to enormous tensions in international relations in the past. Graham Allison says that in as many as twelve cases out of sixteen they resulted in a war. Referring to one of the most eminent works of ancient historiography – History of the Peloponnesian War, the author described this phenomenon as the “Thucydides trap.” Any attempt to find a way to avoid a conflict needs to consider how the Chinese leaders perceive the security of their own state, the roles of key international players and


3 International Monetary Fund, IMF Data Mapper, GDP current prices, access: https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPD@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/.

4 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Statistics, Main Science and Technology Indicators, access: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MSTI_PUB#/.

5 Stockholm International Institute for Peace Research (SIPRI), SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, access: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932018%20in%20constant%202017%20USD%2028pdf%29.pdf/.


how own interests are to be realized. These issues are combined into a whole by the security strategy of the PRC. The author believes that constitutes an art of a targeted selection, distribution and use of means that are at the disposal of the state, while its aim is to ensure its long-term security defined in the political process through the prism of national interest.

This article aims to outline main directions of the security strategy of the PRC basing on the analysis of the Defense White Paper of July 2019, the political practice of the Beijing authorities as well as internal and international situation. Having analyzed the above mentioned areas, the author concludes that the contemporary strategy of the PRC is aimed at maintaining territorial, political and social integrity of the state. In the perception of Chinese decision makers this requires containment of all centrifugal tendencies generated by the autonomy, religious and pro-democratic movements supported by the West. Besides separatism, the main threat to the PRC’s security is the American military domination in the Asia-Pacific region. The presence of US troops, legitimized and strengthened by the San Francisco system, constitutes a major obstacle to the incorporation of Taiwan and islands on the South China Sea. Gaining control over the airspace within the so-called first chain of islands constitutes a necessary precondition for the implementation of the “Great Revival of the Chinese Nation” and the “Chinese Dream” – the central ideas of the Xi Jinping government. Control of that airspace carries also significant strategic implications – greater hold over key sea routes and weakening of the hitherto position of the USA. In the military dimension, reversal of the regional balance of power has become the supreme objective of the strategy. Major modernization programs of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army embracing command systems, rocket forces, ocean-going and submarine navy as well as air forces have been also subordinated to this objective. Through White Papers, among other things, China aims at building a narration in which its actions constitute but a response to the unilateral and hegemonic US policies. These policies are contrasted with a vision of relations based on cooperation, respect for sovereignty and bilateral benefits. The narration serves to convince international players to remain neutral or engage in collaboration with China in the face of intensifying military, economic and political pressure on the part of the USA. International perception of the Chinese state will be one of the major factors determining the positions of states as regards the ongoing technological and economic rivalry.

**Literature – Overview**

In recent years, the problem of the security strategy of the PCR has aroused considerable interest of researchers both in Poland and in the West. The vast number of studies on this subject prevents their comprehensive discussion, nevertheless it is worth referring to the

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8 The author assumes that national security strategy is an art of directed selection, distribution and utilization of resources at the disposal of the state in order to ensure its long-term security defined in the political process through national interest (author’s definition).
most valuable works, among others those by Marian Mencel, Łukasz Gacek, Jakóbowski or Rafał Kwiecienśki. In the area of Western literature, the most widely acclaimed are the works by John Mearsheimer, Aaron Friedberg, Thomas Christensen or David Shambaugh. However, the author would like to make it clear that the list provides only his personal selection, and is by no means exhaustive.

Still however, although there is no shortage of general works on the subject, due to its topicality (the White Paper was published in July 2019) the number of specific studies on this document remains limited. This issue has so far encountered limited reception in the Polish academic community. An exception in this respect is the publication authored by Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar of the Polish Institute of International Affairs and short report written by Łukasz Kobierski. The report offers a set of valuable observations and conclusions which allow for better understanding of the major points and the context in which the document was drawn. However, due to its limited size it does not provide a detailed analysis of the contents and the accompanying conditions. For understandable reasons, bringing out of a successive Defense White Paper aroused greater interest in the United States. The renowned American think-tanks, such Jamestown Foundation, Center for International and Strategic Studies (CSIS), or International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) published short reports devoted to this issues,

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though like in the case of Szczudlik-Tatar’s text their briefness restricts the field of analysis. For the above reasons the author has decided to try to explain the contemporary security/defense strategy of the PRC on the basing on the 2019 Defense White Paper.\textsuperscript{22,23,24} It is important insofar as the processes connected with the dynamics of the China-US relationship exert an indirect though significant impact also on security of Poland. Taking into account indivisibility of security in a substantive sense (ensuring security exceeds the possibilities of a single entity)\textsuperscript{25} an in an objective sense (individual areas constantly interact with each other), the USA-China rivalry will also affect the shape of cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic space.

**Methodology**

As regards the analysis of the PRC’s Defense White Paper the primary role is played by interpretivist methods of discourse analyses used together with comparatist methods. Official documents, in particular those drafted within the Chinese cultural circles, contain numerous phrases the message of which is obscure and which may remain unclear for an external observer. Hence it is necessary to place a source in a concrete historical context, conditions of China’s internal policy and factors prevailing at the level of the international system. A cognitively productive action is to compare the statements found in the White Paper with its earlier versions and other strategic documents of the PRC. This makes it possible to identify any new ideas and concepts, and track their evolution in a chronological perspective.

Like similar other documents of this type the Paper is meant primarily for external addressees, signaling the most important trends of China’s security policy. This imposes certain restriction arising from the fact that its statements present the reality in a way desired by the Chinese authorities and not necessarily how it is objectively. The document was published at the time when the tensions between China and the USA reached a level unprecedented since the Cold War. Hence, despite the difficulties associated with the document, it constitutes an important point of reference in the study of the PRC’s strategy.

The author analyses the constituents of the PRC’s strategy through the realistic paradigm. It does not constitute a method in the strict sense, but rather a set of axioms underlying the analysis of international reality. This paradigm, formed in the Hobbesian spirit, accentuates the antagonistic nature of relations between states originating from their constant striving at maximizing power and security. Its representatives argue that international anarchy constitutes the fundamental principle governing international re-

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\textsuperscript{23} Cordesman, A.H., op. cit.

\textsuperscript{24} Nouwens, M., op. cit.

lations. It is not understood as chaos, but rather as an absence of the superior authority in relations between state, which implicates structural mistrust inscribed in the nature of those relations.26

Results and Discussion

In the preface to the White Paper its authors state that China is at a “critical stage” of completing the building of a “moderately prosperous society.” “The world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century” – they state, indicating at the same time that the international system is aiming at “multi-polarity.”27 Insofar, as the observation concerning “multi-polarity” in international relations has many times appeared in previous documents, the emphasis put on the current period as being a turning point in the growth of China is a novum. The invoked statements should be considered in reference to the current policy of the United States and the shifting strategic point of gravity from the Euro-Atlantic area to the Indo-Pacific region.28 The picture outlined in the document suggests that the dominant position of the West becomes gradually eroded, while the contemporary environment of security is ever more balanced as regards the might of states.

On the other hand, the “critical stage” mentioned by the authors should be considered from the viewpoint of enormous challenges and opportunities for national security of the PRC. In 2018, the rate of economic growth of China dropped to the lowest level in twenty eight years, dangerously approaching six percent. Democratic data are also unfavorable, unequivocally demonstrating the ongoing process of aging of the society and shrinking labor resources.29 These trends are accompanied by the growth of the middle class, whose social advancement results also in a growth of its consumer aspirations.30 This creates a serious challenge to the stability of the reign of the Communist Party of China, whose legitimization since the 1990s has been based on the combination of economic success and nationalism. At the same time, however, Chinese companies are among the leaders as regards implementation of 5G technology and stand real chances for gaining a leading position in the area of artificial intelligence. Apart from that, the Beijing authorities carry out a number of programs and initiatives which are meant to facilitate gaining technological advantage in the most profitable and innovative sectors of the economy in the future.31 The

accuracy of decisions made by the present authorities and the capability to implement them will decide whether China will join the group of most developed countries in the world or will fall into the so-called middle income trap. If the Chinese decision makers manage to maintain the high rate of economic growth thanks to the development and sale of most advanced technologies (AI, microchips, software, 5G telecommunications equipment), by 2050 China will receive the economic and military potential similar to that of the USA. Considering the scale of interdependencies in the contemporary global economy and the US potential to shape international situation, the effects of the CPC efforts will in a large measure depend on the actions of the present and subsequent American administrations. From the point of view of the Beijing authorities an important vector of security policy will be the weakening of American alliances and thwarting any attempts aimed at building a broad coalition for military, political and economic isolation of China.

The White Paper stresses the threats arising from the policy of force, hegemonism and unilateralism.32 The main source of those instabilities are actions undertaken by the government of the United States. “International strategic competition is on the rise. The USA have adjusted its national security and defense strategies, and adopted unilateral policies,” say the authors of the document. At the same time, they point out that the United States have significantly increased their military budget, modified their strategies of defense and security, and undertaken efforts aimed at enhancing their capacities with respect to nuclear weapons, outer space, missile defense and cyberspace.33 The Paper constitutes a response to actual actions of Donald Trump’s administration, which has undertaken unprecedented efforts aimed at halting changes in the balance of power that are unfavorable to the USA. Since 2017, the US authorities have imposed 5–25% customs duties on Chinese commodities worth US$334 billion and have introduced sanctions vis-à-vis key Chinese corporations such as ZTE and Huawei. Since 2017, also the military budget of the United States has significantly grown and is to amount to US$716 billion in 2019, which constitutes a major increase as compares with US$611 billion in 2016.34 Also the importance of US engagement in Europe has diminished in the American strategy in favor of enhanced concentration of forces in the Indo-Pacific region. It is also in this context that the signals from Washington addressed to the European members of NATO to increase their financial contribution to safeguard their own should be read.35 Worth noting is the fact that the USA left the INF Treaty (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty) in August 2019.36

32 The State Council (PRC), op. cit., “international security system and order are undermined by growing hegemonism, power politics, unilateralism and constant regional conflicts and wars.” Ibidem, p. 2.

33 Ibidem, “International strategic competition is on the rise. The US has adjusted its national security and defense strategies, and adopted unilateral policies. It has provoked and intensified competition among major countries, significantly increased its defense expenditure, pushed for additional capacity in nuclear, outer space, cyber and missile defense, and undermined global strategic stability.”


That decision was more a response to the potential threat on the part of Chinese rather than Russian rocket forces. Nevertheless, it was the Russian operations that were used as the main argument for taking this decision.37 With regard to cyberspace, in May 2018, the American cyber corps was granted the status of autonomous forces.38 This change in the organizational structure reflects the growing importance of this type of corps in the face of the technological revolution and evolution of contemporary warfare. First of all, however, the reform is to meet the growing needs of the American army in the area of rivalry with China in cyberspace. The decision of August 2019 taken by Donald Trump to restore Space Command, which is planned to begin formally its operation in 2024, should be interpreted in the same way. Efforts undertaken by the Americans may significantly restrict international conditions which have been so far favorable for China. The reduction of military presence in Europe and in the Middle East as well as intensification of engagement in the Indo-Pacific region may decidedly impede implementation of the Chinese security strategy. At the same time, however, American initiatives constitute a convenient resting point for the narration constructed by the Beijing authorities as to the defensive and peaceful nature of Chinese development.39 In this perspective, Chinese military modernization programs are proportionate to the international position of the Chinese state and its needs. They constitute rather a response to the aggressive moves of the American authorities oriented at halting comprehensive development of China.

Among threats to the security of China, next in a row is a threat from “separatists,” identified in the text as the Taiwan authorities striving for independence. Beside them, indicated are also movements in Tibet and East Turkistan (Xinjiang) striving for emancipation. The emphasis attached to those issues is a consequence of a long-standing tradition of centrifugal forces in China, which in the historical perspective constitutes a serious factor weakening the power of the state. For a considerable part of its over four thousand years long history, the Chinese civilization embraced in fact not a single statehood but a group of kingdoms fighting against each other. However, for the majority of Chinese politicians much more important are the experiences associated with the collapse of the USSR and further fate of the Russian Federation, whose power becomes gradually but successively eroded. For China, the specter of undermining the mono-party system by a democratic revolution and emancipation of regions seeking autonomy constitutes the main axis around which the entire security policy of the PRC is concentrated. In the case of Taiwan, Turkistan and Tibet, the issue of the United States (although directly unnamed) reappears in the document when it mentions about “foreign influence” backing the centrifugal tendencies in China. Since the time of the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Taiwan has always been

38 Ferdinando, L., Cybercom to Elevate to Combatant Command, Department of Defense, access: https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/News/Article/Article/1511959/cybercom-to-elevate-to-combatant-command/.
a priority issue for the Beijing authorities due to the factors of prestige as well as those connected with security. The authorities in Taipei, although unrecognized by the majority of states in the world, consider themselves as the legitimate Chinese authorities with rights to the entire territory. Incorporation of Taiwan would be a major step in the implementation of the “Great Revival of the Chinese Nation” program constituting the leading idea of Xi Jinping’s presidency.\footnote{Ferdinand, P., \textit{Westward Ho—the China Dream and ‘One Belt, One Road’: Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping}, “International Affairs,” Vol. 92, No. 4, 2016, pp. 941–957.} What is more, exclusion of Taiwan from the American system of alliances (so-called San Francisco system) would also improve the possibilities of presenting power by the Chinese Navy in the Pacific basin. The possibility of deploying rocket troops and naval bases in the island would also improve security of the Chinese coast, which lies in close proximity to the American army.

The attainment by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) of the capacity “to win local conflicts in the situation of modernization/informatization of warfare” has constituted a basis of the Chinese military doctrine since the beginning of the 21st century.\footnote{“1993 年，制定新时期军事战略方针，以打赢现代技术特别是高技术条件下局部战争为军事斗争准备基点,” \textit{China’s Military Strategy} (中国的军事战略), The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 10 May 2015.} A special function is to be performed in this strategy by rocket forces capable of destroying American aircraft carriers and bases. The Chinese program for the development of ballistic missiles is one of the most dynamic and diversified programs of this type in the world. From the beginning of the 2000s, the number of nuclear warheads at the disposal of the Chinese rocket troops almost doubled, from about 145 to 290 in 2019.\footnote{Kristensen H.M. and Korda, M., \textit{Chinese nuclear forces}, 2019, “Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,” Vol. 75, No. 4, 2019, pp. 171–178.} Apart from intercontinental missiles, an important role has been played by the development of carriers capable of launching missiles. As a result of those efforts, mobile missile launchers DF-31AG ICBM, DF-5B ICBM, DF-26 IRBM, DF-21 MRBM have been constructed.\footnote{Ibidem.} In recent years, a lot of attention has been given to the construction of the hypersonic conventional DF-17 missile capable of reaching the speed between 6,174 and 12,350 km/h. Chief of staff of the American Army – General John Hyten – in response to the news of operationalization of DF-17 stated that “We do not have any defense which could stop the use of that weapon against us.”\footnote{Panda, A., \textit{Hypersonic Hype: Just How Big of a Deal Is China’s DF-17 Missile? Is China’s DF-17 hypersonic missile a serious threat to the United States?} “The Diplomat,” 7 October 2019, access: https://thediplomat.com/2019/10/hypersonic-hype-just-how-big-of-a-deal-is-chinas-df-17-missile/.} The dynamics of changes which is unfavorable for the USA is also noted in the RAND Corporation report presenting evidence that from 1993 to 2017 the Chinese visibly diminished military advantage of the United States in the region.\footnote{The US-China Military Scorecard. \textit{Forces, Geography and the Evolving Balance of Power 1996-2017}, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica 2017.} In light of those findings, it should be assessed that with respect to the objectives mapped out by the security strategy the Chinese authorities have been measurably successful.
The problem of supremacy on the South China Sea remains in close relationship with the issues outlined above. The document leaves no room for interpretation in this respect unequivocally stating that “the South China Sea islands and Diaoyu Islands are inalienable parts of Chinese territory.” This area does not play such a significant symbolic role as Taiwan and the Chinese territorial claims demarcated by the “nine dash line” are contested by the neighboring countries. The common denominator of those two areas is their strategic importance for China’s security. Submitting them to the sovereign power of the PRC would allow for stepping up control over marine transport routes and building a strategic depth in relation to the United States.

The first precondition for attaining autonomous control over the Strategic Lines of Communications (SLOCs) is for China to build the capacity to project power over long distances. Following the example of the United States, it will require building a blue-water navy and comprehensive adjustment of military strategy to the technological evolution of the theatre of warfare. Already in 2004, the Defense White Paper indicated that development priority would be “given to the Navy, Air Force and Second Artillery Force.” In 2015, the Chinese authorities clearly declared that that “The traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests.” The 2019 White Paper confirms this direction by declaring: “[the People’s Liberation Army Navy] is speeding up the transition of its tasks from defense on the near seas to protection missions on the far seas.” That narration is supported by real actions – according to the available reports in the Chinese shipyards work is in progress on the construction of five aircraft carriers. It is appraised that they are likely to attain combat capability by 2035, which would significantly change the regional balance of power.

Another precondition necessary to reach this goal is to gain effective control of the South China Sea. About 80 percent of all raw materials decisive for the economic success and energy security not only of China but also of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are transported across that sea. The routes that in their major parts run across the Indian Ocean lie at a considerable distance from China. Despite modernization of the Chinese and Indian navies, the only force capable of ensuring safety of those routes continues to be the US Navy. Former President of China – Hu Jintao described this situation as the “Malacca Strait di-

46 “China resolutely safeguards its national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The South China Sea islands and Diaoyu Islands are inalienable parts of the Chinese territory.” The State Council (PRC), op. cit.
47 “The PLA will promote coordinated development of firepower, mobility and information capability, enhance the development of its operational strength with priority given to the Navy, Air Force and Second Artillery Force, and strengthen its comprehensive deterrence and warfighting capabilities.”. The State Council (PRC), op. cit.
48 “The traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests”. Ministry of Defense (PRC), China’s Military Strategy, 2015.
49 “In line with the strategic requirements of near seas defense and far seas protection, the PLAN is speeding up the transition of its tasks from defense on the near seas to protection missions on the far seas.” The State Council (PRC), op. cit.
50 Mizokami, K., China is on Track to Have Four Total Aircraft Carriers in the Next Two Years, “The National Interest,” 6 September 2019, access: https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/china-track-have-four-total-aircraft-carriers-next-two-years-78446/.
China’s dependence on sea routes controlled by the US Navy constitutes a “soft underbelly” of Chinese defense strategy. In the case of a conflict, gaining control of the strategic straits would be of vital importance for its ultimate resolution. For this reason, under the presidency of Xi Jinping China is implementing extremely ambitious programs of modernization of its navy intended to change these unfavorable conditions. Realization of the ambitions to incorporate the South China Sea would equip the Beijing authorities with powerful instruments of pressures on the states of East Asia. In this hypothetical scenario, it would be China to exercise control over major routes and could effect a marine blockade of states dependent on raw material imports such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

The scenario in which China gains control of Taiwan and South China Sea continues to remain purely theoretical. Although the US regional advantage has eroded, but still remains sufficient to maintain the present architecture of security. The strength of the USA are also their allies, who offer support to the American military presence. The authors of the White Paper repeatedly underscore their importance, e.g. by saying: “The USA are strengthening their Asia-Pacific military alliances and reinforcing military deployment and intervention, adding complexity to regional security.” They also noticed the increasingly ambitious defense policy of Japan and consent of South Korea for installation of the THAAD system. As long as the United States maintain the functioning of the San Francisco system, the sense of endangerment shall prevail in the Chinese decision making circles. Only incorporation of Taiwan and the South China Sea, and the disintegration of the San Francisco system will definitively improve the strategic situation of the PRC.

A significant novelty in the White Paper is the emphasis placed on the importance of the application of latest technologies in the process of modernization of the People’s Liberation Army. The authors straightforwardly state that “the application of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum information, big data, cloud computing and the Internet of Things is gathering pace in the military field.” At the same time, the document sets a goal of comprehensive modernization of the military doctrine and equipment of the PLA by 2035. The authors perceive present weaknesses of the Chinese army, which “still lags far behind the world’s leading militaries,” but at the same time that by 2050 the PLA shall become a “world-class” formation. The invoked

53 “The USA are strengthening their Asia-Pacific military alliances and reinforcing military deployment and intervention, adding complexity to regional security.” The State Council (PRC), op. cit.
54 “Driven by the new round of technological and industrial revolution, the application of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum information, big data, cloud computing and the Internet of Things is gathering pace in the military field. International military competition is undergoing historic changes. New and high-tech military technologies based on IT are developing rapidly.” The State Council (PRC), op. cit.
55 “still lags far behind the world’s leading militaries,” The State Council (PRC), op. cit.
56 “to fully transform the people’s armed forces into world-class forces by the mid-21st century,” Ibidem.
accents fit into broader modernization trends in the Chinese army aimed at overpowering the domination of the United States in the IT area, increasing anti-access capabilities (A2/AD), universal introduction of the fifth generation fighter planes and building of a blue-water navy.

In the propagandist dimension, the document tries to present China as a peace-loving country whose military doctrine is defensive by its very nature. US activities are criticized in an oblique manner, which is in sharp contrast to the 2017 US National Security Strategy, where China was named “revisionist power.” The authors argue that the Chinese defense spending remains proportionate to the general rate of development of the state. According to the document, since 1979 the share of defense spending has dropped from 5.43% to 1.26% of the GDP and from 17.37% to 5.14% of government spending. These data have been compared by the authors of the report with what is spent by other major military powers, such as: the USA (3.5%), Russia (4.4%), India (2.5%) or the UK (2%). Those figures should be treated skeptically and assumed to have been purposefully understated so as to support the narration about peaceful growth. Official government estimates mention US$175 billion, which the Stockholm International Peace Research Institutes (SIPRI) has estimated the Chinese military budget at US$250 billion. As noted by Jean-Pierre Cabestan, the block structure of the Chinese budget spending is exceptionally unclear, which restricts the possibilities to count how much funds are exactly in the disposal of the Chinese military.

Conclusions

The China National Defense White Paper of July 2019 is an attempt to answer the new international conditions arising from the growing pressure exerted on China by the Washington administration. The reorientation of the American security strategy from global war against terrorism to balancing the threat from China was the main cause for drafting the Paper. In many aspects, the document constitutes an ideological continuation of the concepts initiated at the beginning of the 21st century, while if differs from earlier documents by greater stress is placed on the rhetorical/propagandist domain and more pessimistic assessment of the international environment. In the opinion of the authors, China is at a “critical stage,” which will determine its future position in the international system. The author of the article accepts this opinion as correct since the consequences of the ongoing trade war and confrontation in the area of advanced technologies will be the keynotes of the strategic rivalry between China and the United States. These issues overlap with social and economic challenges associated with the imperative to transform Chinese economy, aging of the society, expanding middle class and increasingly oppressive political system.

The document is meant to picture the activities of the Beijing authorities as defensive by nature and constituting a moderate response to the aggressive policy of the United States. Its authors make a significant observation as regards the international environment indicating that it experiences the most far-reaching changes in the last one-hundred years. The West becomes clearly weakened in favor of emerging powers, which is a harbinger of

the rise of a “multi-polar” system. The policy of Donald Trump’s administration is described as based on “hegemonism, power politics, unilateralism” and indicated as a main source of instability in the international environment. The document contains references to the main direction of PRC’s security strategy. A crucial place is occupied therein by the problem of centrifugal movement connected with Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, which are backed by “foreign influence”. Taiwan and South China Sea are the critical areas in the PCR’s security strategy, whose incorporation constitutes a *sine qua non* condition for the “Great Revival of the Chinese Nation.” Also from the viewpoint of military strategy they are to play a significant role – without them it will be impossible to construct the strategic depth and step up control over major sea routes. The main instrument for the implementation of those plans is to be the Chinese People’s Liberation Army capable of challenging the American troops in the region. This, however, requires a radical increase of the combat valor of the Chinese army, of which the authors of the document are well aware. This is to be served by ambitious, comprehensive armed forces development programs which have been implemented since the late 1990s. They are aimed at overpowering the domination of the United Stated in the IT area, increasing anti-access capabilities (A2/AD), universal introduction of the fifth-generation fighters and building of a blue-water navy. The Chinese leaders expect that thanks to those efforts by 20150 the PLA shall become a “world-class” formation capable of winning in practically every conflict.

The position of regional powers and middle-rank states remains an extremely important factor for successful implementation of PRC’s security strategy. Singlehandedly the United States stands radically lesser chances to impede China’s development than in collaboration with a broad coalition of partners. It becomes of key importance to convince those states to remain neutral or offer support to the Beijing authorities. The White Paper is an attempt to construct a positive vision of China’s relations with the rest of the world, which would be an alternative to the widely criticized policy of Donald Trump. However, the success of the strategy will not be determined by the narrative but whether the Beijing authorities back the created vision with material incentive.
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