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SECURITATE EUROPEANĂ ȘI EURO-ATLANTICĂ

Probleme de actualitate ale arhitecturii de securitate în Europa – mize înghețate, dezbateri în impas*

Cristian Alexandru EREMIA

Modificarea arhitecturii europene de securitate

Criza de securitate din Ucraina și anexarea Crimeei de către Rusia în anul 2014 au reprezentat cu certitudine un punct de discontinuitate strategică pentru evoluția sistemului european de securitate, construit după mulți ani de negocieri dificile occidental-ruse în cadrul Procesului Helsinki. Simultan a fost înregistrată una dintre cele mai profunde involuții în cadrul relațiilor Rusiei cu Occidentul - în general, și cu SUA, în mod particular. În timp ce în interiorul Rusiei evenimentele menționate mai sus erau evaluate ca acte de "restaurare a justiției istorice", în Occident aceleași evenimente erau etichetate, fără echivoc, ca o încălcare a suveranității și integrității teritoriale a Ucrainei și, în esență, o primă retrasare prin forță a unor frontiere de stat în Europa de după al Doilea Război Mondial. Anexarea Crimeei a indicat fără dubii că arhitectura europeană de securitate, guvernată de principiile Helsinki, a fost afectată și nu mai este de actualitate.

Subminarea stabilității și securității în Europa de către Moscova a devenit treptat o problemă cronică. Conflictele nesoluționate din Transnistria, Abhazia și Osetia de Sud, Nagorno-Karabakh și ce a mai rămas nerezolvat din problematica similară în Balcanii de Vest au devenit mize înghețate, prezentând acum noi riscuri la adresa securității europene, al căror potențial se amplifică. La toate acestea s-a adăugat din 2014 criza ucraineană, care, până

în prezent, deține cele mai periculoase și profunde consecințe asupra arhitecturii securității europene pe termen mediu și lung.

Adoptat în 1975, "Actul Final de la Helsinki"² determinase un set de principii care guvernau ordinea europeană și o arhitectură europeană de securitate stabilă în Europa. Cele mai importante principii-pilon din perspectiva apărării și securității statelor europene erau "inviolabilitatea frontierelor", "integritatea teritorială" și "neintervenția în afacerile interne ale altui stat". Occidentul reușise (cu greu) să includă "respectul pentru drepturile și libertățile omului", ca principiu european fundamental. La 20 de ani de la război, Moscova obținea deci o adevărată victorie diplomatică asupra statelor occidentale: principiile de mai sus ofereau garanții internaționale și legitimitate privind inamovibilitatea imperiului sovietic, incluzând sfera sa de influență cu statele satelit din Europa Centrală și de Est, lăsate sub controlul Moscovei. Dar, după 39 de ani, întreaga Europă asista³, stupefiată și imobilizată, la încălcarea acestor principii tocmai de către Moscova - modificarea unilaterală a granițelor ruso-ucrainiene și imixtiunea nejustificată a Rusiei în afacerile interne ale Ucrainei. Era limpede pentru toți politicienii și observatorii realiști occidentali că sistemul de securitate europeană primise o lovitură fatală din partea Moscovei.

Cum se explică acțiunile externe politice, militare și unilaterale ale Rusiei începând cu 2008, fără avertizarea prealabilă măcar a uno-

ra dintre partenerii europeni cei mai preferați de Moscova? Răspunsul s-ar putea afla re-memorând intervenția președintelui Putin la Conferința de securitate de la München din anul 2007: "Se încearcă transformarea OSCE într-un instrument vulgar⁴ pentru a asigura interesele politicii externe a unuia sau a unui grup de state în raport cu alte țări....Rusia este o țară cu o istorie de peste o mie de ani și aproape întotdeauna s-a bucurat de privilegiul de a avea o politică externă independentă. Nu vom schimba această tradiție astăzi."

Confruntarea ruso-occidentală și degradarea securității europene

După aplicarea unei strategii neconvingătoare de a pune țara sa pe picior de egalitate cu puterile occidentale – tentativă resimțită inclusiv în cadrul instituțiilor fundamentale euro-atlantice, președintele rus, V. Putin a optat finalmente pentru o politică externă ostilă, de confruntare, dirijând Rusia departe de orbita prosperității și securității occidentale. Astfel, a trecut la reconstrucția accelerată a organismului militar și a structurilor de forță ale statului rus, ca apoi să întrebuințeze această putere pentru a redobândi, inclusiv prin metode și mijloace hibride, zona de influență ex-sovietică și pentru a proiecta forța militară în vederea atingerii intereselor Kremlinului în teritorii îndepărtate. A redeschis linii politice mai vechi, *în care politica externă rusă se impunea prin folosirea forței militare*. Dosarul Ucraina, cu anexarea Crimeei și conflictul deja cronicizat din Est, rămân elemente de referință ale unui comportament agresiv, condamnat de altfel și prin sancțiuni economice de lumea occidentală. Ținta principală a noului război nedeclarat, dar purtat de câțiva ani cu întregul arsenal de sorginte sovietic (modernizat și actualizat desigur cu tehnologii noi), a redevenit SUA și puterile occidentale care au refuzat capriciile geopolitice ale Moscovei.

SUA au fost criticate de Kremlin pentru retragerea unilaterală, în anul 2002, din Tratatul ABM și reînceperea de noi activități militare. Ostilitatea strategică rusă față de SUA are, cel mai probabil, rădăcini adânci și cu o vechime cel puțin egală cu timpul scurs de la prăbușirea

statului sovietic: a rezultat că Putin este ferm convins că, din momentul destrămării statului sovietic, SUA nu au mai ținut cont de opțiunile, obiecțiile și interesele de securitate ale Rusiei, trecând la construcția unei superiorități⁵ militare americane unilaterale, pe baza căreia "tot SUA ar fi urmat să dicteze" Moscovei termenii de abordare a tuturor celorlalte dosare internaționale. În context, este de menționat că președintele rus nu s-a referit în acești termeni și la state occidentale europene, probabil tocmai pentru faptul că nu ar fi avut credibilitate dacă blama și state ale UE, în condițiile în care acestea reduseseră de mulți ani finanțarea apărării și investițiile în securitate, la o limită aproape nepermis de mică.

În marja Conferinței de la Moscova pentru Securitate Internațională⁶ (3-4 aprilie 2018), *secretarul general al OSCE, Thomas Greminger, a confirmat existența crizei în sistemul de securitate european și realitatea că această situație continuă să se degradeze, invocând faptul că există "neînțelegeri absolute, calcule greșite pentru decizii cheie - toate formează o atmosferă de tensiune"*. Potrivit acestuia, europenii ar trebui să treacă la reducerea confruntării, explorarea posibilităților de de-escaladare, pentru a se reveni la un sistem de securitate unificat și indivizibil în Europa. Marcat probabil de tonul anti-occidental al părții ruse, oficialul OSCE a reliefat diplomatic că "avem nevoie de Rusia... să discute și să coopereze în domeniul militar...", reitărând convingerea că redresarea relațiilor ruso-occidentale "va influența pozitiv activitatea OSCE și securitatea în Europa".

Tezele diplomației ruse despre care anume abordări occidentale nu convin din perspectivă politică rusă sunt centrate pe (1) comportamentul SUA, care ar impune cu forța altor state ceea ce decid în toate domeniile (economic, politic, militar etc.), (2) NATO se extinde - contrar unor promisiuni occidentale anterioare, și dislocă forțe avansate spre frontierele ruse, încălcând, totodată, Tratatul CFE. Aceleași teze susțin permanent că, în cadrul sistemului relațiilor internaționale, singurul mecanism de adoptare a unei "decizii de folosire a forței militare" ar trebui să fie cel prevăzut de Carta ONU. Se insistă ca occidentalii să respecte Tratatul CFE.

Tezele ruse privind ordinea mondială și securitatea internațională au fost reiterate recent la Conferința de la Moscova pentru Securitate Internațională⁷. Potrivit oficialilor ruși, lumea se află actualmente într-un moment critic datorită faptului că relațiile dintre state se modifică substanțial - conflictele sunt rezolvate mai ales prin forța militară, iar revendicările făcute de un număr de țări în privința "exclusivității" lor ar încuraja o nouă cursă a înarmărilor. S-a insistat pe faptul că SUA și aliații acestora ar folosi toate instrumentele de forță - politice, economice, propagandistice și chiar militare, pentru a-și impune hegemonia globală în afacerile internaționale. A fost criticată așa-zisa politică a Washingtonului de "pace prin forță", care, potrivit Moscovei, nu ar fi adus rezultate concrete în zona Orientului Mijlociu și Nordul Africii (MENA).

Pe ansamblu, a rezultat că Rusia (n.n. - și statele sale partenere) nu vor accepta "hegemonia globală a cuiva", motiv pentru care se pronunță pentru o nouă "ordine internațională echitabilă"⁸, în care soluțiile pentru asigurarea păcii și securității să fie adoptate în comun, prin dialog politic extins. Ministrul rus al apărării, Serghei Shoigu, a subliniat faptul că, având în vedere multiplele confruntări și tensiunile tot mai pronunțate la nivel global și regional, *Rusia este motivată pentru "tentații de a utiliza factorul de putere în asigurarea intereselor întemeiate"*. În absența unor soluții concrete pentru dezvoltarea dialogului politic internațional, Rusia s-a orientat deja pentru ridicarea unilaterală a potențialului apărării și securității naționale.

Rusia invocă lipsa de semnale că SUA (sau NATO) ar avea vreo intenție de a trece la tratative concrete cu partea rusă, în sensul de a se accepta materializarea intereselor și pretențiilor Moscovei în legătură cu inventarul geopolitic revendicat. Cel mai probabil, ultima chestiune va fi utilizată diplomatic ca și justificare la nivel internațional pentru trecerea accelerată la o nouă cursă a înarmării și la o remilitarizare a statului.

Prin urmare, o confruntare militară directă, premeditată sau pur și simplu accidentală, între SUA (ca garant al securității în spațiul european și protector al lumii occidentale) și Rusia nu mai pare imposibilă, având în vedere

escaladarea stării conflictuale a relațiilor dintre SUA și Rusia. Terenul cel mai propice în prezent este, fără nici o discuție, Siria. Lipsa unei comunicări strategice normale și a elementelor care pot genera un minim de predictibilitate în relația bilaterală este, poate, cea mai alarmantă problemă care marchează, în general, securitatea internațională și, în mod particular, degradarea securității și ordinii în Europa.

Cel mai mare pericol cu care s-a confruntat securitatea internațională în primăvara anului 2018 a fost generat de perspectiva unui conflict militar direct americano-rus în Siria, deopotrivă îngrijorând escaladarea¹⁰ confruntării. Rusia a amenințat fără echivoc partea americană cu angajarea în acțiuni militare împotriva forțelor americane care ar urma să aplice măsuri militare de retorsiune asupra Damascului (acuzat de folosirea de arme chimice în localitatea siriană Douma). Fie și numai la nivelul unui discurs politic dușmănos, această amenințare a indus un registru extrem de periculos, acela al confruntării militare bilaterale. Este cunoscut faptul că Rusia și SUA s-au manifestat constant prin poziționări politice diametral opuse și acțiuni divergente asupra dosarului sirian și cu privire la soarta lui Bashar al Assad. Și totuși, dacă până la atacul cu substanțe chimice din 2018, partea rusă a reacționat numai politic și declarativ la alte acțiuni militare americane de sancționare a Damascului, de această dată Rusia a amenințat SUA cu ripostă militară. Se poate deduce deci că Moscova se consideră acum pregătită să treacă disputele cu SUA pe un alt palier, acela al confruntării militare. Moscova pare sigură de influența pe care o deține în Siria, precum și de puterea combatantă reală a forțelor sale militare.

Primăvara anului 2018 a adus un nou episod de deteriorare a relațiilor Rusia-Occident (atacul împotriva celor doi Skripal, atacul cu arme chimice din Douma-Siria, răspunsul militar SUA-Franța-Marea Britanie împotriva regimului sirian, noi sancțiuni americane împotriva Rusiei), ceea ce face și mai anevoios un proces de "deconflictizare" între Washington și Moscova. În aceste condiții, nu mai poate fi vorba despre trecerea la negocieri pentru un nou sistem de ordine globală. Și cu atât mai puțin a unei noi arhitecturi de securitate în Europa.

O chestiune la fel de alarmantă este aceea că, din punctul de vedere al securității europene și internaționale, concretizarea opțiunii ruse ar atrage consecințe grave, greu de estimat pe termen mediu și lung. Și aceasta nu numai în planul relațiilor americano-ruse, ci și în cel al relațiilor Rusiei cu Europa.

Prin urmare, abordările pan-europene ale Rusiei în probleme de politică externă și de securitate sunt fundamentale generatoare de tensiuni. Chiar în condițiile în care câteva state europene acceptă și se bucură de gesturi particularizate de prietenie din partea rusă, pe ansamblu, **acțiunile Rusiei vizează permanent și deja de mulți ani, slăbirea coeziunii¹¹ între statele membre UE și NATO**, reducerea potențialului de extindere și de integrare a noilor state membre și exploatarea vulnerabilităților interne de tot felul ale unor state membre. Rusia opune o retorică de dezamăgire nejustificată și desconsiderare față de refuzul îndreptățit al Uniunii de a o accepta în instituțiile sale, cu argumentul diplomatic "emoțional" că Rusia vrea să fie parte¹² a unei Europe Mari. Deși au fost ani buni în care UE a manifestat deschidere aproape totală față de Rusia, refuzându-i numai apartenența ca atare la bloc și solicitarea, mai mult sau mai puțin vocală în diferite perioade de timp, ca SUA să fie eliminate din afacerile sistemului european de securitate¹³.

Moscova a dorit permanent un statut de egalitate, în termeni de responsabilități dar mai ales de privilegii, cu marile puteri occidentale, să fie parte egală alături de Bruxelles la gestionarea sistemului de securitate european, fără a se permite statelor europene mai mici un statut similar. A folosit un întreg arsenal de instrumente și metode pentru a dezagrega treptat sistemul european de securitate, ordinea internațională liberală și valorile democratice statuate de Occident. A valorificat sistematic orice neînțelegere sau ignorare de către Occident a mizelor Kremlinului de importanță tactică și strategică și a exploatat orice oportunitate creată, implicit sau explicit, de lipsa unor reacții proporționate din partea marilor puteri occidentale. Iar miza cu cea mai mare valoare strategică era redobândirea statutului de putere mondială, în cadrul unui sistem de relații internaționale revizuit.

În orice caz, Rusia a devenit extrem de vocală, solicitând imperativ să se treacă la un dialog politic internațional, de natură a explora, gândi și negocia un **"sistem reînnoit și promițător de securitate internațională"**¹⁴. Rusia este interesată numai de abordări de pe poziții de egalitate, în mod centrat și explicit de o "interacțiune normală" cu SUA și UE. Moscova nu a detaliat în ce ar consta această "normalitate". Declarativ, nu se invocă pretenții de exclusivitate, dar se solicită imperativ o singură manieră de pre-poziționare politică acceptată de Kremlin: numai pe baza principiilor și normele de drept internațional care guvernează ONU. Aceasta doarece numai în acest mod Moscova se poate exprima independent ca un pol mondial de putere, pe baza dreptului exclusiv la un "veto" unilateral. Argumentul geopolitic invocat de Putin este acela că "Rusia nu poate fi dominată!". Se induce ideea că marea problemă a Kremlinului¹⁵ privind abordarea securității și ordinii internaționale o constituie numai Occidentul și organizațiile pe care acesta le patronează - NATO și UE.

În concluzie, pentru următoarea etapă, între Rusia și Occident se va menține o neîncredere profundă și gândirea că fiecare parte dorește dominarea (dacă nu chiar distrugerea) celeilalte părți. Ca atare, oportunitățile de cooperare¹⁶ dintre cele două părți vor fi extrem de reduse. În rarele cazuri în care anumite formule situaționale de cooperare internațională vor fi accesate pe fondul convergenței unor interese conjuncturale, cooperarea va cunoaște cu certitudine limitări politice substanțiale. Nu vor fi acceptate de partea rusă cooperări în probleme care vizează zona comună de vecinătate cu UE și NATO (Zona Mării Negre este inclusă permanent de Moscova în această vecinătate), respectiv pe chestiuni care pot avea cea mai mică tangență cu afacerile politice și economice interne ruse.

Integrarea europeană și sistemul european de securitate

După ce a traversat două războaie mondiale devastatoare, șase state din Europa Occidentală au început un proces de integrare ambițios, cu două obiective fundamentale:

prosperitate și securitate. Primul se referea la un angajament al statelor de a construi și dezvolta împreună un spațiu economic prosper, un spațiu social liber și democratic. Cel de-al doilea obiectiv viza construirea și instalarea unui nou sistem de securitate europeană, din care să fie eliminate orice porniri violente însoțite de acțiuni militare, sau manifestări revanșarde ale unor state europene contra altora. Spațiul economic democratic a devenit, simultan, și un spațiu al păcii și stabilității. De pe aceste baze s-a început construirea unei noi ordini europene liberale. În următoarele decenii, s-a încheiat Războiul Rece, s-a produs reunificarea continentului, au avut loc mai multe runde de extindere a UE (și a NATO, ca umbrelă europeană de securitate), a fost realizată piața unică cu cele patru libertăți bine-cunoscute acum, a fost implementată libera circulație prin dezvoltarea spațiului Schengen fără controale la frontieră, a fost constituită Zona Euro și introdusă moneda unică europeană. Primul obiectiv fusese atins. În paralel, a fost interzis orice conflict militar sau securitar între statele membre UE, ceea ce vorbește de la sine și despre atingerea celui de al doilea obiectiv strategic.

Aderarea statelor din centrul și estul Europei la proiectul european integrator s-a realizat prin exprimarea liberă a voinței popoarelor, care doreau să acceadă la "Clubul european", să îmbrățișeze valorile acestui club și toate dimensiunile de integrare incluzând dimensiunea apărării și securității. Toate acestea se constituie în realizări remarcabile care indică succesul proiectului, un proiect demn de învidiat de oricare altă regiune a planetei.

În Rusia, nimeni nu a observat (de recunoscut nici nu se pune problema) un adevăr istoric absolut, anume acela că extinderea NATO și a UE s-a realizat pe baza solicitărilor exprimate suveran de către națiunile respective, și nu prin dictat și sub presiunea ocupației militare așa cum a fost cazul statelor ex-comuniste din Europa Centrală și de Est, care au fost ținute cu forța în zona de influență sovietică. Probabil că tocmai de aceea, așa cum constata în luna martie a.c. și secretarul american al apărării, Jim Mattis, strategia Rusiei față de Occident constă în derularea de acțiuni cu scopul de a diviza și a slăbi democrațiile occidentale, pe ansamblu un comportament catalogat a fi "periculos".

În ceea ce privește dimensiunea apărării și securității, procesul de integrare europeană a fost marcat permanent de blocaje politice de tot felul, începând, de exemplu, cu imposibilitatea materializării proiectului din anii 1950 de constituire a unei Comunități Europene de Apărare și crizele din ultimii 20 de ani marcate de respingerea unor tratate UE noi (inclusiv a Tratatului Constituțional). S-au produs și unele distanțări regretabile între instituțiile europene și unele guverne, pe fondul manifestării curentelor naționaliste, sau în virtutea dreptului la "protejarea suveranității naționale". După revoluțiile anticomuniste din Europa Centrală și de Est, dinamica Europei devine fără precedent de intensă. Crizele multiple care au marcat UE în anii 2008-2010 au adâncit însă problemele sistemice manifestate cu diferite amplitudini, dar nesoluționate în aceeași perioadă de referință. Indiscutabil, dincolo de aspectele politice și tehnice ale momentului, Brexit-ul va rămâne un punct de inflexiune strategică și un reper psihologic pentru proiectul de integrare europeană. Deoarece proiectul european este pentru prima dată respins de un stat foarte important pentru economia și securitatea europeană. Europeanii recunosc că integrarea europeană nu este un proiect perfect, dar nu au un proiect alternativ mai bun.

Ce s-a întâmplat cu arhitectura de securitate pan-europeană în acești ani ?

Până în anii 1990, înțelegerile realizate cu Rusia sub egida OSCE (organizație internațională preferată de diplomația rusă până în anul 2005), fie la Helsinki, fie la Viena, au asigurat pacea și securitatea pe continent, inviolabilitatea frontierelor stabilite după ultimul război mondial, precum și integritatea teritorială a statelor europene. Destrămarea URSS a adus o atmosferă de relativă deschidere între statele occidentale (inclusiv SUA) și noua Rusie condusă de Elțin. Deși Moscova începuse să se exprime din ce în ce mai dur împotriva NATO – ca organizație, dar mai ales a extinderii acesteia, primele state ex-comuniste au fost primite în organizație. Relația Rusia – UE se înseninase, ceea ce a favorizat, dintr-un anumit punct de vedere, extinderile succesive.

Statele europene din NATO au trecut, în anii 90, la ample reforme militare interne. Pe baza destinderii relațiilor cu Rusia și asumării

oficiale a evaluărilor că Europa nu se mai confruntă cu amenințări militare, forțele armate au fost reduse și profesionalizate parțial sau total. Dar elementul cel mai grav a fost cel al reducerii fără precedent a cheltuielilor militare la niveluri foarte joase. Statele europene au răsuflat liniștite de dispariția Cortinei de Fier și de eliminarea perspectivei unei confruntări militare iminente cu rușii, concentrându-se pe problemele sociale și economice. În consecință, ani la rând, domeniul apărării și securității a fost neglijat. La nivelul UE – ca organizație, apărarea era, de asemenea, neglijată. Destabilizarea situației de securitate din Balcanii de Vest pe fondul destrămării fostei Iugoslavii, acțiunile revanșarde ale tinerelor state, sau revendicările de teritorii, inclusiv pe calea armelor, au fost considerate la Bruxelles ca fiind cauzate numai de incapacitatea evidentă a tinerelor națiuni ex-iugoslave de a se separa amical. Nicidecum că ar fi vorba de o degradare nepermisă a situației de securitate din Europa de Sud-Est, cu potențiale implicații negative la nivelul întregului sistem european de securitate. Ca atare, măsurile luate la nivel european au fost suficient de relaxate și permissive pentru a permite ca unele conflicte din această zonă, teritoriale sau etnice, să se prelungească până în prezent. Totuși, menținerea conflictelor înghețate în spațiul de securitate european și din vecinătatea sa strategică, a obligat liderii politici de la Bruxelles să ia primele măsuri pentru agregarea unui sistem mai coerent de apărare și securitate al UE.

Cooperarea NATO – UE pentru securizarea spațiului euro-atlantic

Intervenția Rusiei cu forța militară în Georgia, în august 2008, a constituit prima surprindere strategică de proporții pentru Occident de după 1990, în ceea ce privește modificarea abordărilor ruse a problemelor de securitate europeană, revenirea unilaterală la întrebuițarea forței militare pentru reglementarea unor afaceri în vecinătatea comună a Rusiei și UE. Tot o "surpriză" strategică a fost să se constate remilitarizarea (treptată, dar certă) a Rusiei și reluarea de către Moscova, în

manieră modernizată și adaptată, a metodelor tradițional-sovietice de confruntare și conflict, de angajare a afacerilor externe și de realizare a intereselor sale naționale în zone predilecte, cu precădere în Zona Mării Negre. A trebuit însă și de această dată să treacă ani de zile până când marile puteri occidentale au înțeles ce urmărește Rusia și ce se întâmplă cu securitatea europeană.

NATO și UE au fost luate din nou prin surprindere de Moscova în momentul Ucraina 2014, lucru despre care s-a vorbit mai sus. Era deja suficient pentru cele două organizații ca să înțeleagă definitiv că sistemul de securitate pan-european fusese fracturat. Ambele organizații au mai înțeles că trebuie să acționeze energic, separat și în cooperare, pentru a fi capabile să consolideze un sistem de securitate pentru spațiul euro-atlantic.

NATO a luat măsuri imediate pentru ridicarea nivelului de apărare pe flancurile de est și de sud, precum și de adaptare la noile amenințări cu caracter hibrid. Nu au fost neglijate măsuri de natură a produce descurajarea Rusiei. UE nu a mai ignorat lipsa de strategii sinergice și politici unitare proprii de apărare și securitate. Mai ales că se produsese unele situații de securitate în care intervenția NATO nu era suficientă în termeni politici, sau chiar nu era acceptată politic de state cu care UE intra în anumite interacțiuni. Prin urmare, UE a trecut la consolidarea accelerată a pilonului de apărare și securitate, la dezvoltarea de capacități, mecanisme și instrumente pentru creșterea capacității de reziliență la schimbările din mediul regional și internațional de securitate. De altfel, una dintre prioritățile¹⁷ Strategiei Globale a UE stabilește reziliența ca fiind o prioritate în gestionarea relațiilor în vecinătățile sale. Elaborarea Strategiei Globale a avut loc într-un moment când, pe de o parte, puteri globale precum SUA, Rusia, China sunt angajate într-o competiție geopolitică acerbă, iar multe alte state, mai mici sau mai mari, se străduiesc cu eforturi colosale pentru garanții de securitate cât mai trainice, sau chiar pentru supraviețuire. Uniunea a înțeles că punctul de start pentru elaborarea noii agende a apărării și securității trebuie să fie securitatea internă, respectiv construirea de politici și capacități proprii solide, bazate pe determinarea fermă

de a face mai mult pentru protecția cetățenilor și apărarea teritoriilor UE.

În paralel, cele două organizații au trecut la o cooperare avansată. Unul dintre momentele de referință pentru consolidarea securității teritoriilor UE (post-Ucraina) a fost cel al adoptării de către UE și NATO a "Declarației Comune de Cooperare"¹⁸, în marja lucrărilor summit-ului NATO din iulie 2016 de la Varșovia. Acest moment a survenit totuși cu o întârziere considerabilă față de declanșarea de către Rusia a "aventurii" ucrainiene, detaliu care l-a determinat pe președintele Consiliului European, D.Tusk¹⁹, să constate, emblematic, răspunsul disociat la criza ucraineană al celor două organizații internaționale, și anume faptul că UE și NATO s-au comportat ca două organizații "de pe planete diferite". Deși atât statele membre NATO, cât și UE s-au confruntat, în principiu, cu aceleași riscuri și amenințări de securitate, fie că acestea provin din est, sau din sud.

Cele două organizații au adoptat ulterior circa 40 de măsuri de cooperare consolidată în domenii concrete pentru a răspunde provocărilor comune la est și la sud, inclusiv în ceea ce privește contracararea războiului hibrid, consolidarea rezilienței, consolidarea capacităților de apărare, apărarea cibernetică sau securitatea maritimă.

Motivația principală pentru lenta mobilizare și cooperare a fost aceea că, deși cele două organizații au cea mai mare parte dintre state ca membri comuni, includ unii membri cu abordare diferită a Rusiei, cu interese diferite față de partea de est sau de sud a Europei, cu culturi de securitate diferite, sau chiar cu rivalități neconsumate (cum este cazul²⁰ Ciprului din UE și Turciei din NATO), care au blocat, într-o anumită fază, o cooperare sistematică a celor două organizații în probleme de apărare. Și aceasta pentru că nu toate statele percep în același mod amplitudinea riscurilor și pericolelor manifestate pe vectorul estic al securității europene. Remarcabil este faptul că, deși cel mai probabil mizele strategice sunt înghețate sau nu au fost asumate ca atare de toate statele membre, solidaritatea și coeziunea organizației au prevalat, rezultatul fiind cel cunoscut și aplaudat pe flancul de est al NATO și UE: sancțiunile au fost adoptate, toate state-

le membre și instituțiile celor două organizații conștientizând implicațiile periculoase ale războiului hibrid, a celui cibernetic și ostilităților militare unilaterale declanșate de Rusia împotriva Occidentului.

În fond, analizele comune UE-NATO se pronunțau din ce în ce mai pronunțat asupra necesității ca cele două organizații cu competențe complementare în chestiuni de apărare (și într-o formulă "NATO – hard power cu UE – soft power") să nu-și mai permită luxul să acționeze separat. Apărarea valorilor și intereselor fundamentale ale lumii occidentale, evitarea duplicărilor inutile, precum și disiparea inadecvată a costurilor și resurselor de tot felul, deveneau argumente raționale, de netăgăduit.

Totodată, decenii la rând a fost ignorat faptul că o cooperare coordonată între UE și NATO este în măsură să-i genereze Rusiei probleme greu surmontabile pentru acțiunile sale constante de a distruge coeziunea celor două organizații, de a le destabiliza sau diviza, sau de a afecta lumea euro-atlantică, țintă prioritară permanentă a politicii externe și de securitate a Rusiei. Există așadar evaluări potrivit cărora o amplificare considerabilă a cooperării UE-NATO ar impulsiona aripa atlanticistă²¹ din UE, în condițiile în care Brexit sau unele probleme de comunicarte apărute în dialogul Europa Occidentală-SUA ar afecta dimensiunea trans-atlantică.

Mai mult, s-a putut constata că și state neutre militar, cum este cazul statelor nordice din UE, Suedia și Finlanda, au fost determinate (indirect) de acțiunile ruse de destabilizare a sistemului european de securitate către reevaluări naționale ale situației geostrategice. Revizuirile strategice respective au condus la o (re) poziționare politico-militară a acestor state, în sensul trecerii la o cooperare mai apropiată cu Alianța și activării unui sistem european de apărare și securitate mai cuprinzător și complementar cu cel al NATO.

Fără discuție, atât UE, cât și NATO au acționat cu promptitudine și suficient de energic pentru consolidarea securității europene, mai ales din perspectiva apărării propriilor teritorii și interese. Miza esențială pentru o nouă arhitectură stabilă a securității pan-europene rămâne însă imposibil de luat în calcul actual-

mente. Sunt mai multe absențe la demersurile politice și diplomatice care ar trebui produse în această direcție. În primul rând Rusia are în continuare interese proprii și o agendă unilaterală independentă și imuabilă, care intră profund în contradicție cu viziunile majorității statelor membre UE și NATO, dar și cu ale altor state europene din Zona Extinsă a Mării Negre, din Balcanii de Vest, sau din "vecinătatea vitală" a Rusiei.

Obiectivele și mizele Rusiei în confruntarea cu Occidentul

Moscova urmărește acum realizarea a două obiective strategice fundamentale, ambele cu extensie internațională. Primul obiectiv este acela de a arăta la nivel global că Rusia este o putere mondială²², de aceeași anvergură cu SUA și UE. Moscova nu mai are nicio rețineră de a se confrunta simultan, pe mai mulți vectori, cu orice subiect internațional care nu rezonază cu politicile sale. De aceea, în ultimii ani a realizat cu insistență adevărate demonstrații de forță, cu încălcarea regulilor care guverneau sistemul de securitate în Europa. În plan economic, Moscova a dorit să arate că este capabilă să formeze un bloc economic comparabil cu UE, trecând la dezvoltarea Uniunii Economice Eurasiatice. În plan militar, Rusia conduce OTSC, organizație pe care a încercat, fără vreun succes notabil, să o aducă la un dialog orizontal cu NATO. A dorit să semnaleze Occidentului că poate declanșa și controla un conflict de proporții în spațiul ex-sovietic, în Estul Ucrainei, în paralel cu anexarea ilegală și prin forță a Crimeei, și modificarea unilaterală, respectiv prin mecanisme caracteristice războiului hibrid, a frontierelor stabilite după ultimul război mondial. Miza puterii la nivel internațional a determinat implicarea militară ca "jucător" de talie mondială în Siria, stat în care interferența complexă a unor mari puteri mondiale și regionale este deja o realitate de necontestat.

În paralel, Moscova a vrut să demonstreze lumii occidentale²³ că nu poate fi izolată și ignorată fără asumarea de consecințe în termeni de costuri strategice. De aceea, Kremlinul nu

a mai avut nicio rețineră de a bloca sau îngreuna inițiative occidentale. S-a mizat pe faptul că o astfel de conduită va determina puterile occidentale să accepte negocieri în condițiile și termenii prestabiliți de Rusia.

Deci obiectivul strategic de natură globală al Moscovei este acela de a i se recunoaște un rol activ esențial în relațiile internaționale, pentru a-și asigura un loc dominant în viitoarea arhitectură globală de securitate. După o perioadă lungă în care i s-a părut că ar fi cantonată de Occident într-o "pasivitate internațională", Moscova a efectuat manevre ofensive, interferând în procesele politice din multe state și deținând "proprietatea" asupra unui model original de război informațional, care a atins limita de a crea un fel de isterie (nejustificată) în Europa și America de Nord.

Pentru a atinge obiectivele de politică externă, Rusia a arătat în ultimii ani că deține capacități avansate de a duce cu succes războaie cibernetice și războaie informaționale, cu campanii de dezinformare, propagandă și manipulare complexe, care să pună probleme serioase statelor occidentale, inclusiv în sfera afacerilor interne sensibile. În paralel, Kremlinul a demonstrat că poate face față la presiuni occidentale, fie acestea și sub forma unor sancțiuni economice aspre. Moscova nu a mai acceptat imixtiuni occidentale considerate periculoase în economia și problemele politice interne.

Un obiectiv colateral de politică externă este acela de a determina Occidentul să vină la masa tratativelor cu Rusia, unde recunoașterea intereselor ruse "ar fi singura precondiție" de natură a pava calea unui dialog constructiv și a unor negocieri reciproc avantajoase. Liderul rus a subliniat această pretenție la modul cel mai categoric în mesajul²⁴ său de bilanț de la începutul acestui an. ***Rusia a devenit extrem de vocală, solicitând imperativ să se treacă la un dialog politic internațional, de natură a explora, gândi și negocia un "sistem reînnoit și promițător de securitate internațională"***²⁵. Putin a mizat la acel moment pe faptul că "Rusia nu poate fi dominată!". Si a mai mizat pe ceva important: pe absența unei coeziuni și unități a lumii occidentale de a prezenta o ripostă coordonată la acțiunile Moscovei de subminare a sistemului de securitate din Europa, acțiuni de

altfel ingenios mascate de lipsa transparenței politico-diplomatice.

Ultima s-a dovedit a fi o miză falsă, fiind spulberată de poziționarea Occidentului în dosarul Skripal. O mare parte dintre statele membre UE, SUA, Canada și Ucraina au declanșat în semn de solidaritate cu Marea Britanie un război diplomatic internaționalizat împotriva Rusiei, soldat cu expulzarea unui număr record de diplomați ruși în condiții de pace, cum numai pe durata Războiului Rece s-ar fi putut imagina. Diplomația americană a încadrat acțiunea rusă la un nou *"model al activităților ruse de destabilizare a întregii lumi"*, iar diplomația irlandeză a cotoat *acțiunea rusă mai sever, ca fiind "un afront la adresa sistemului internațional bazat pe reguli"*. Cazul Skripal rămâne un reper distructiv pentru evoluția relațiilor diplomatice dintre Occident și Rusia, aducând tensiuni politice suplimentare într-un peisaj și așa marcat de turbulențe greu de anihilat.

Cazul în sine a dus la o manifestare exemplară a coeziunii lumii occidentale în raport cu comportamentul rusesc, dar are și o componentă mai puțin transparentă, înconjurată de elemente neelucidate²⁶, datorită poziționării opace a Moscovei. Constatând lipsa unor reacții solidare din partea unor state asiatice importante și chiar parteneri ale Occidentului, Rusia va profita pentru a-și construi o variantă de a evita izolarea internațională, apelând la vectorul asiatic²⁷ de cooperare internațională. Indiferent de clarificările ulterioare, Rusia a subminat din nou sistemul de relații pan-europene și internaționale stabilit în a doua jumătate a secolului XX.

Este posibilă proiecția unei noi arhitecturi europene de securitate?

Degradarea sistemică a arhitecturii europene de securitate deplasează inevitabil părțile implicate către zona unui nou război nedeclarat, îndepărtând perspectivele de angajare în negocieri. Este o situație limită creată de numeroasele încălcări a regulilor care guvernau sistemul de securitate european.

Nivelul de toleranță pentru Occident este deja saturat, ceea ce ar putea genera o masă

critică a voinței politice a marilor puteri occidentale de a testa modelarea²⁸ unei noi ordini globale, implicit și a unei noi ordini europene. O nouă ordine pe care Vestul să o poată controla în condițiile existenței acestui "inamic" comun, în fața căruia lumea occidentală pe ansamblu să fie foarte unită. Occidentul are standarde democratice și nu poate da un răspuns inițiat prin metode netransparente, în oglindă la stilul rusesc. Totuși, toate acțiunile ostile, revizioniste și revanșarde ruse ar trebui să cunoască limitări severe din partea lumii democratice. Aplicarea permanentă și la nesfârșit a unor măsuri de retorsiune sau sancțiuni nu s-a dovedit a fi vreodată o soluție viabilă și validată în timp pentru interzicerea unor discontinuități strategice "perenizate" în sistemul de securitate european. Și nu vor avea efectul scontat nici în cazul războiului hibrid nedeclarat, dar dezlănțuit și întreținut de ani de zile de Rusia.

În esență, relațiile dintre Occident și Rusia au cunoscut o nouă fază de degradare, iar relațiile dintre SUA și Rusia se află la cel mai scăzut nivel după anul 1992. Tocmai în aceste circumstanțe, senatorii democrați americani au publicat (10.01.2018) un raport amplu de peste 200 de pagini intitulat "Asaltul asimetric al lui Putin privind democrația din Rusia și Europa: implicații pentru securitatea națională a SUA". Raportul²⁹ cere înăsprirea regimului de sancțiuni împotriva Rusiei și solicită crearea unui nou front global împotriva "amenințării rusești".

Toate acestea împing lucrurile către abordări de confruntare în spiritul unui "război rece" (nu neapărat în varianta bipolarismului), și nicidecum către o "reală destindere". În această atmosferă generală europeană, se mai poate spera pe termen scurt și chiar mediu că se pot crea condițiile necesare pentru a se trece la negocierea măcar a unui nou sistem de securitate? Poate fi posibilă pe termen scurt negocierea și implementarea unei noi arhitecturi pan-europene de securitate?

Răspunsuri prudente la întrebările de mai sus ar trebui să includă afirmația că, deocamdată, nici Rusia și nici Occidentul nu sunt în măsură să avanseze și să negocieze o strategie coerentă de redefinire a unui nou sistem de securitate și consolidarea unei noi ordini mondiale.

Putin a șocat cercurile politice cunoscătoare ale ordinii europene și a celei internaționale, practic unipolare. Putin a demonstrat că Moscova are capacitatea de a reveni din nou la politici externe independente de orice instanță internațională, la politici "reci" de confruntare pe toate planurile cu Occidentul. Moscova își va permite din nou orice fel de politică externă și de securitate, fără a mai ține cont de marile capitale occidentale. Ca atare, instrumentele existente de menținere a unei arhitecturi de securitate europene și mondiale au fost abandonate unilateral de partea rusă: Europa este din nou expusă unor dezvoltări arbitrare și nicio parte interesată, fie aceasta din occident sau dintre vecinii cu "vulnerabilități", nu a dat semnale de alarmă cu privire la posibilele consecințe pentru securitatea lor și a Europei. Deși, cel puțin la nivel teoretic, un exercițiu de identificare a riscurilor la care V. Putin expune securitatea europeană și cea internațională ar fi trebuit făcut (de exemplu, în paranteză fie spus, în Ucraina sunt acuzați și acum politicienii anilor dinainte de 2014 pentru că nu au deslușit mesajele lui Putin ca să poată operaționaliza la timp mecanisme de apărare).

Astfel, timp de peste zece ani (după cum avertizase în anul 2007), Putin a gândit și implementat o strategie geopolitică revizionistă și revanșardă. Toate acțiunile agresive și de anvergură ale acestuia au găsit comunitatea internațională, în marea sa majoritate, nepregătită. Nicio mare putere, chiar "emergentă" nu a condamnat cu fermitate Moscova, lăsându-se mereu punți diplomatice generoase, care să dizolve orice referiri la "Noul Război Rece"³⁰. Prima reacție omogenă a venit din partea occidentală, și aceasta după se s-a produs prima modificare de frontieră și anexare teritorială ilegală în Europa postbelică – "Crimeea 2014".

Între timp, cu excepția cancelarului german, A. Merkel, în celelalte mari capitale occidentale, inclusiv la Washington, au sosit la putere lideri politici noi. Merkel este deci singurul lider occidental care cunoaște perfect cum să relaționeze cu Putin și nu are nevoie să mai experimenteze ceva. De aici probabil și poziționarea sa clară față de nevoia de sancționare a Rusiei, dar în condiții de neescaladare a situației spre un război rece auten-

tic. La Kremlin, schimbările democratice la vârful ierarhiilor statelor occidentale au fost "tradițional" considerate ca o vulnerabilitate majoră a statelor occidentale "adverse", care trebuie exploatată pe măsură. Poate tocmai de aceea, după ce "a scăpat" de lideri incoezi și (sperând) de experiența acestora în dialogul cu Rusia, la începutul anului 2018, Putin a revenit cu mesajul³¹ său dur, adresat probabil cu premeditare tocmai noilor lideri occidentali.

Pe de altă parte, până în nivelul anului 2014, atât în Occident, cât și în rândul unor elite ruse mai optimiste, existau unele speranțe cu privire la normalizarea relațiilor Occident-Rusia. Dar propaganda oficială împotriva Occidentului "inamic" a fost atât de susținută și bine orchestrată, încât a produs reacția scontată de Kremlin la nivelul societății ruse: să nu fie diminuat sprijinul pentru Putin și să se producă o unificare a poziției anti-Occident la nivelul societății ruse, pe principiul "dacă nu în jurul lui Putin, atunci de partea Rusiei".

Și aceasta nu pentru că elitele ruse ar considera că există o amenințare iminentă de "invazie" din partea unor puteri occidentale (în mentalul colectiv rus această teamă este instalată suficient de bine), ci pur și simplu de teama oricărei amenințări moderne cu dominația externă, cum ar fi impunerea unor forme noi de dominare economică, sau provocarea cu schimbarea „verticalei puterii” în Rusia. În analizele rusești privind politica externă rusă din anul 2017, se constată că, la modul general, dincolo de realizările politicii externe din Siria, accentuarea contracarării acțiunilor SUA, distanțării în relațiile cu UE și menținerea "status quo" în spațiul ex-sovietic, ar fi apărut un "contrast puternic între ambițiile externe și limitările dictate de puterea economiei ruse"³² de a susține aceste ambiții.

Unele concluzii

Evaluarea politicilor externe, militare și de securitate ruse demonstrează că forța militară a redevenit instrumentul de bază pentru susținerea ambițiilor de politică externă. Conduita de după martie 2014 din Ucraina, intervenția militară din septembrie 2015 din

Siria, precum și amploarea manevrelor militare ostile și provocatoare pe direcția Vest (ca să nu mai vorbim de numeroasele manevre riscante ale unor avioane și nave militare ruse în imediata apropiere a frontierelor cu state occidentale NATO sau UE) pun în evidență o mărire fără precedent a frecvenței întrebuintării provocative a instrumentelor militare ruse peste frontierele naționale – sau la limita acestora pentru a demonstra ostentativ noua manieră de asigurare a ”apărării Rusiei”. Militarismul rus a fost reactivat, militarizarea zonelor aflate spre teritoriile NATO și UE s-a intensificat, ambele fiind noile realități cu care se confruntă securitatea europeană, într-o nouă logică rusă de folosire a forței militare pentru a realiza constrângerea statelor-țintă și adversarilor, fie și numai pe palierul politic.

Pe de altă parte, se remarcă faptul că, după instalarea administrației Trump, a început o nouă perioadă de confruntare SUA-Rusia, datorită multiplicării intereselor divergente³³ ale celor două state. Se creionează o previziune cu mult mai pesimistă pentru viitorul acestor relații, din care este absentă perspectiva unei înțelegeri bilaterale pozitive pe problemele de referință cu impact la nivel mondial. Dimpotrivă, evoluțiile vorbesc de la sine despre continuarea procesului de deteriorare a relațiilor.

Sosirea lui Macron la putere a creat o dinamică nouă a relațiilor franco-ruse, care separă viziunile politice ale celor două capitale în ceea ce privește securitatea europeană, procesele din Europa de Est sau ridicarea sancțiunilor post-Crimeea. De acum, Franța se va implica profund, împreună cu Germania, pentru dezvoltarea securității spațiului UE și euro-atlantic, respectiv a vecinătății sale apropiate, în măsura în care noile condiționări geopolitice vor permite acest lucru.

Evoluții negative se înregistrează și la nivelul relațiilor germano-ruse, relații care au constituit, până la momentul Crimeea, filonul principal al alimentării stabilității în Europa. Acum aceste relații sunt inflamate și marcate de un nivel ridicat de neîncredere a Berlinului în planurile mascate ale Rusiei. Germania rămâne însă consecventă asupra politicilor de apărare și securitate ale axei franco-germane de întărire a securității pe teritoriile UE. În ceea ce privește Marea Britanie, este evident că, în UE

sau în afara acesteia, relațiile politico-militare ruso-britanice nu au nicio șansă de ameliorare, starea precară a acestora fiind o constantă pe întregul parcurs al ultimelor decenii.

Alte state europene importante, cum ar fi Italia și Spania, susțin coeziunea europeană și euro-atlantică, dar nu manifestă un interes special față de problematica relaționării NATO sau UE cu Rusia, fiind mai degrabă preocupate de amenințările care provin din sud asupra Europei și, evident, asupra propriilor teritorii. Oricum, agenda³⁴ relațiilor Rusiei cu Europa Occidentală are un conținut diluat, care nu permite Moscovei să speră că o va putea utiliza pentru a compensa pierderile înregistrate pe vectorul american. În plus, UE are propria sa agendă cu probleme interne care își așteaptă soluționarea și așteaptă apariția unor condiții propice pentru angajarea Rusiei la negocieri concrete asupra problemelor de securitate europeană. Desigur, excepție fac statele de pe flancul estic al Uniunii și al NATO, care percep cel mai acut presiunea amenințărilor la adresa propriei securități. Aceste state acționează, în format național și colectiv, pentru adoptarea cât mai rapidă a măsurilor concrete de consolidare a apărării.

Desigur propagandistic, încă din anul 2016, Putin anunța cu fermitate că sarcina principală a forțelor armate ruse pentru următorii ani va fi „neutralizarea eficace a oricăror amenințări militare la adresa securității naționale”, menționând aici în primul rând amenințările occidentale legate de construirea apărării strategice antirachetă, dezvoltarea concepției loviturii globale și promovarea războiului hibrid. Totodată, acesta a amenințat că, în situația în care securitatea sa națională va fi afectată, Rusia va întrebuinta armamentele cele mai tehnologizate³⁵.

Rusia nu mai pare însă interesată de negocierea unei noi arhitecturi de securitate pan-europene. Acum tranșează negocierea unei noi ordini mondiale, în care să aibă un loc de mare putere. Sau, în lipsa disponibilității SUA pentru negocieri, mizează pe emergența liberă, nenegociată, a unui nou sistem de relații internaționale avantajos Rusiei. Dar, până în acel moment, este de așteptat ca starea de confruntare să se mențină. Această realitate l-a determinat, probabil, pe Secretarul General

al ONU, Antonio Guterres, să concluzioneze recent că lumea cunoaște azi un alt război rece³⁶. Acesta ar fi diferit de cel anterior (Larvov consideră că "relațiile Rusia-Occident sunt mai proaste decât în epoca Războiului Rece"). Inexistența pe mai departe a două blocuri omogene controlate numai de SUA și Rusia a făcut posibilă apariția unor state care sunt foarte active, independent de Washington și Moscova (de exemplu, Iran sau Arabia Saudită). În altă ordine de idei, este suficient să amintim că în timpul Războiului Rece au existat mecanisme funcționale de comunicare și proceduri de acțiune care asigurau că este diminuat la maxim riscul de incidente de securitate. Cunoscut fiind că în prezent nu există convenite între părți mecanisme bine determinate și funcționale pentru a nu fi scăpate lucrurile de sub control, nivelul general de așteptare de la evoluțiile internaționale de securitate trebuie să includă și perspectiva unor situații mai periculoase.

Totodată, având în vedere comportamentul internațional din ultima perioadă al Rusiei, se poate trage concluzia că sunt de așteptat și alte acțiuni ruse montate tactic pe același model. Ceea ce, în lipsa unei diplomații preventive, va crește evident probabilitatea unor incidente de securitate sau a unor ciocniri ruso-occidentale, chiar și numai accidentale. În perioada următoare, zonele de flanc din Europa de Est și Europa de Sud-Est vor rămâne expuse acestor politici ruse. Se poate lansa deci întrebarea: în ce termeni ar putea diplomațiile occidentale să abordeze cu șanse reale de succes restabilirea unei arhitecturi funcționale și stabile a securității europene? Deși punțile de dialog par a fi blocate de bariere grele, miza restabilirii durabile a ordinii europene merită orice efort politic și diplomatic.

Note

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⁹ Mesajul anual cu privire la starea națiunii al președintelui Rusiei către Adunarea Federală, 1 martie 2018, Moscova, accesat la 12 aprilie 2018 pe <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>.

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ABSTRACT

It is a fact that the pan-European security architecture is going through a very complex period. In the last four years these problems have been put back on the table, particularly the need for Europe to have credible security system. But things have been pushed to confrontation approaches in the spirit of a “cold war”, and not to a “real relaxation”. In this general European atmosphere, can we hope in the short and even medium term that the necessary conditions can be created to negotiate at least a new security system? Can it be possible in the short term to negotiate and implement a new pan-European security architecture? Answers must be prudent to the questions above. However, for the time being, neither Russia nor the West appear to be able to advance and negotiate a coherent strategy of redefining a new security system and consolidating a new world order.

Keywords: European security system, European order, new world order, resilience, confrontation, cold war, international relations.

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The Security Dilemma: a comparative conceptual apprehension through the lenses of Neo-Realism and Constructivism¹

Raluca-Andreea MANEA

Mainstream Conceptual Apprehension of the Security Dilemma. The Neo-Realist Approach

The security dilemma has been regarded by many scholars as one of the most important concepts in international relations theory and security studies.² Its formal emergence and conceptualisation in the academic field and subsequent development in the twentieth century largely coincides with the dynamics of the Cold War. Nevertheless, in terms of practices not officially formalised within the framework of a specific concept, the origins of the security dilemma are to be found much earlier in history.

Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler recall Thucydides's interpretation of the Peloponnesian War between the ancient Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta as the first account of the potentially tragic implications of the security dilemma.³ Similarly referring to what he labels "Thucydides's Trap", Graham Allison evokes Thucydides's causal argument underpinning the inescapability of the conflict in ancient Greece – "It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this instilled in Sparta that made war inevitable".⁴ Allison explains the logic of this assessment through certain interlinked variables – national interests, fear, perceptions and honour. Briefly put, fear driving (mis)perceptions that often exacerbate objective realities – namely Sparta's judgement of Athens's quest

for power and expansion as threatening its survival as well as sovereignty – coupled with the sense of honour, ultimately entailed the protracted competition between Greece's two major powers to evolve into a full-scale war.⁵ By means of an incursion into the history of the past five hundred years, the Harvard Thucydides's Trap Project identified sixteen episodes that were largely shaped by similar dynamics, ranging from the contest between the French and the Habsburgs for pre-eminence in Europe in the sixteenth century to the Cold War bipolar competition between the two superpowers.⁶

Robert Jervis has likewise emphasised in one of his works that Cold War dynamics frequently amplified tensions between the two superpowers, stimulated misperceptions and thus undermined the potential for cooperation and settlement of disputes, given the failure of each side to effectively and genuinely comprehend the other's anxieties and interests.⁷ The most straightforward example in this respect could be the Cuban missile crisis, described by Jervis as a result of "a combination of U.S. misperceptions of the pace of the Soviet missile program (exacerbated by domestic politics) and exaggerated Soviet concerns about the security of both Cuba and the USSR".⁸ The author further points out that it was due to the broader policy of restraint that the transformation of the ensuing crisis into the self-fulfilling prophecy of war has been avoided.⁹ Though his controversial analysis on whether

the Cold War could be classified as a security dilemma poses certain challenges to generally-held assumptions about the nature of super-power competition, it is not the purpose of the present analysis to go into details on this subject-matter – rather, what is of particular interest is Robert Jervis' contribution, complementing the works of other two pioneers of the concept, Herbert Butterfield and John Herz, to the development of the security dilemma in the broader theorising of international relations and security studies, respectively.

Herbert Butterfield was the first scholar to conceptualise the security dilemma as the “key variable” facilitating the understanding of international conflict dynamics.¹⁰ Butterfield put forward six underlying propositions about the security dilemma – (1) fear, derived from the “universal sin of humanity”, is its ultimate source; (2) one necessary condition is uncertainty over the intentions of other actors; (3) it is unintentional; (4) it entails tragic outcomes; (5) psychological factors can amplify its severity; (6) given its potential to “drive states to war even though they may not want to harm each other”, it is the fundamental cause of all human conflicts.¹¹ On one hand, a simple reflection upon Butterfield's arguments leads us to conclude that he has been indisputably inspired and influenced by the classical realist school of thought. On the other hand, there are certain inconsistencies to be observed in his definition – the argument that the security dilemma is rooted in the “universal sin of humanity” automatically invalidates at least two of his other propositions, namely that it is unintentional and that it is fuelled by uncertainty.¹² Moreover, as subsequent scholars have emphasised, it is largely hyperbolic to claim that the security dilemma lies at the origins of all human conflicts.

John Herz, another founding father of the concept and actually the one who coined the term “security dilemma” provided the pioneering definition of the concept, asserting that “groups or individuals (...) must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated or annihilated by other groups (...) striving to attain security, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the power of others

(...) rendering the other more insecure and compelling them to prepare for the worst (...) since none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on”.¹³ What depicts a radical shift from the approach of his predecessor is Herz's argument that the emergence of security dilemma is not the outcome of the sinful human nature, but of the anarchic structure of the international system which stimulates states' security-seeking behaviour and the subsequent competition for power.¹⁴ Building upon the six propositions put forward by Butterfield, Herz proposes a re-conceptualisation of the basic elements of the security dilemma – (1) anarchy rather than the “universal sin of humanity” is the source of the security dilemma; (2) the latter is driven by uncertainty and fears about other's intentions within the context of anarchy; (3) states' attempts to escape the security dilemma through self-help generates a cycle of power competition; (4) the accumulation of power might end as self-defeating and potentially entail tragic results; (5) the security dilemma can but does not necessarily cause war; (6) the self-reinforcing vicious cycle constitutes the dynamic of the security dilemma.¹⁵ From a strictly IR theory-related point of view, Herz's work pre-dates the emergence of the neo-realist theory of international politics, if only we are to take into account concepts such as anarchy and self-help that would later constitute the main pillars of Kenneth Waltz's neo-realist theory.

Robert Jervis has largely transposed into his work the arguments of Herz but has nevertheless refrained from embarking upon a clear-cut definition of the concept – rather, he proposed various definitions of the security dilemma as “these unintended and undesired consequences of actions meant to be defensive”, “many of the means by which a state tries to increase its security decrease the security of others” and “one state's gain in security often inadvertently threatens others”.¹⁶ Through agreeing that the underlying cause of the security dilemma is anarchy, Jervis infers that the latter is structural in origin, adding that it is not only the uncertainty over current intentions of counterparts that forms and perpetuates the

security dilemma, but also the prospects of the changing nature of such motives underpinning state behaviour – thus, states “can neither neglect the possibility that the others will become aggressive in the future nor credibly guarantee that they themselves will remain peaceful”.¹⁷ A visible exponent of defensive structural realism, Jervis reinforces Butterfield’s original arguments that, on one hand, the security dilemma is unintentional, given that it is the result of defensive actions pursued by states their security-seeking endeavours and, on the other hand, it is influenced by psychological factors (perceptions), to which he adds the physical or material ones. Jervis further embarks upon an in-depth examination of the variables that influence the magnitude and nature of the security dilemma, in view of additionally shedding light on the potential for cooperation in an anarchic international realm. Jervis highlights, in this respect, the function of the differentiation between offensive and defensive weapons and employs the offense-defense balance, reaching at least two conclusions. On one hand, if defense has the advantage, states’ endeavours to enhance their security do not necessarily endanger their counterparts, a condition which automatically entails a reduction in the magnitude of the security dilemma and an increase in the potential for cooperation.¹⁸ On the other hand, the severity of the security dilemma augments as the offense-defense balance inclines towards greater offense advantage which inhibits cooperation and makes it difficult for states to reconcile their security policies and interests, ultimately increasing the chances for conflict.

In his analysis of the security dilemma, Shiping Tang elaborates a review of the arguments of the aforementioned pioneers of the concept and provides a comprehensive definition, concluding that there is a causal link between anarchy and the security dilemma, the latter being fuelled by fear and uncertainty that are inherent in the nature of the international system and create a vicious cycle of power accumulation that in certain situations can prove to be counter-productive and even engender tragic results such as unintended and avertable wars.¹⁹ Tang’s additional major contribution to the mainstream theorising concerns the clear

distinction between the regulators and the essential elements of the security dilemma, in view of avoiding what he deems as the process of “over-psychologising the concept”.²⁰ Contesting Jack Snyder, who identified three typologies – structural, perceptual and imperialistic –, Tang argues that it is only within the framework of a competitive, self-help and anarchic system that the security dilemma can emerge and thus it can only be structural in origin, adding that the role of psychological factors such as fear and uncertainty and of the ensuing perceptions or misperceptions would rather be a secondary, regulating one.²¹

The emphasis upon the structural origins of the security dilemma is indicative of the aforementioned authors’ adherence to the theoretical ideas of the neo-realist school of thought which, needless to say, embraced the security dilemma amongst its main concepts. While it is not the purpose of the present analysis to provide an overview of the neo-realist theory of international politics, some brief remarks would be undoubtedly useful for clarifying the connection between the latter and the security dilemma.

First of all, there is widespread agreement in the academic realm of social sciences as concerns the main contribution of neo-realism to international relations theory, consisting in the identification of systemic forces constraining and shaping actors’ behaviour on the international arena and marking thus a radical shift from the unit-level approach of classical realism.²² Kenneth N. Waltz developed a deductive perspective to the study of international politics which emphasised the central role of anarchy as the ordering principle of the international system shaping, together with the distribution of capabilities amongst differentiated units, the structure of the international realm.²³ Accordingly, the absence of a central authority, as opposed to the domestic society, creates a self-help environment in the framework of which states’ “quest for survival requires them to seek security through the accretion of military power”.²⁴ It is in this context that the emergence of the security dilemma is to be placed – under a condition of anarchy which induces self-help, actors experience uncertainty vis-à-vis each other’s present or

future intentions which in turn generates fear and subsequent power competition, as a means towards augmenting and maintaining security.

Quoting Herz, Waltz likewise asserts that the security dilemma is “a condition in which states, unsure of one another’s intentions, arm for the sake of security and in doing so set a vicious circle in motion. Having armed for the sake of security states feel less secure and buy more arms because the means to anyone’s security is a threat to someone else”.²⁵ From this standpoint, the security dilemma has been regarded as an essential component of Waltz’s theory given its potential to constitute an explanatory ground for the neo-realist convictions regarding the perpetual existence of a state of war among states and the possibility that “war might at any time break out”.²⁶ Though fear holds a peripheral role and is far from being considered a structural factor in Waltz’s scheme, certain scholars have been inclined to link the dynamics of war and the vicious cycle of security competition with the level of fear that states experience in relation to one another – for instance, John J. Mearsheimer posits that “fear is endemic to states in the international system” and that its centrality derives from its potential to determine the intensity of the quest for security as well as the probability for war.²⁷ Mearsheimer further argues that “international relations take place in the existential condition of uncertainty” which is described as an essential condition, together with anarchy and capabilities, to generate fear amongst the actors in the international system.²⁸ In asserting that, in turn, fear leads to power competition in view of ensuring survival and security, Mearsheimer provides not only an insight into the implications of fear at the international level, but also unveils a link between offensive realism and the security dilemma.

Mearsheimer’s perspective corresponds to one of the three logics through which different scholars have described the security dilemma – fatalist, mitigator and transcender.²⁹ Offensive realism aligns with the fatalist logic since it postulates that, given the condition of structural anarchy and the inability of states to trust their counterparts, international relations are shaped by insecurity and com-

petitiveness, with the composing units of the system continuously striving for the maximisation of power.³⁰ Fatalists additionally concur on the pervasiveness of insecurity in international politics which subsequently makes the security dilemma “the *modus operandi* of the system”.³¹ The mitigator logic, on the other hand acknowledges that the security dilemma emanates from the anarchic nature of the international system, but argues that both security competition and uncertainty can be ameliorated through the development of international norms, rules and institutions.³² This approach is analogous to the English School of International Relations, having at its core the concept of the international society – accordingly, advocates of this theoretical tradition contend that “a society of states can exist with predictable order, and hence the amelioration of the security dilemma”.³³

The Constructivist Challenge to Mainstream Theorising about the Security Dilemma

The transcender logic revolves around ideas postulating that “human society is self-constitutive, not determined” and since “humans have agency (...) human society can seek to become what it chooses to be”, regardless of prevalent structural constraints.³⁴ It is this core assumption of the transcender logic placing an emphasis on agency to the detriment of structure that does not only reveal the other facet, not discussed so far, of the prolonged sociological (later transposed in the academic realm of international relations) debate between structure versus agency, but also aligns with the essence of theory that has emerged in the last decade of the 1990s to challenge the mainstream paradigms that have dominated up to that moment the study of international politics. Through asserting that “anarchy is what states make of it”, Alexander Wendt advances an indisputably as ground-breaking perspective as the corresponding international context, disrupted by profound structural changes – the fall of the Iron Curtain, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dismantlement of the bipolar order, that neither the neo-realists nor the neo-liberals had the ability to predict.³⁵

According to scholars of international security studies, the development of constructivism in their discipline can be regarded as a consequence of the over-arching debates in international relations in the early 1990s juxtaposing the mainstream rationalist and emerging reflectivist approaches.³⁶ Alexander Wendt, soon to become one of the most prominent exponents of this paradigm, points out in his seminal work the early mission of constructivism to “build a bridge between (...) the realist-liberal and rationalist-reflectivist debates”.³⁷ In this endeavour, Ted Hopf underlines, constructivism’s research agenda provides alternative insights into the essentials of international relations theory, through the reconceptualization of key elements such as anarchy, structure or the security dilemma, the assessment of the relation between identity and interests or of the probability for change in world politics.³⁸ Apart from the optimism stemming from their potential, if not to apprehend, at least to offer an alternative explanatory line of argument for major evolutions taking place in a crossroads of history, constructivists have been mostly commended for their staunch commitment to the social dimension of analysis, having been inhibited for decades by the rigid materialist approaches of mainstream theories – “materialism denied the causal significance of shared ideas, norms and values whereas rationalism reduced the social to the strategic and ignored the particularities of community, identity and interest”.³⁹

The importance of shared beliefs, norms and values, on one hand, and of identity and interest, on the other, constitutes thus an essential premise of the ontology of constructivism. Advocates of what is also known as the social theory of international politics posit that the influence of normative and ideational factors upon both social and political behaviour is not to be de-emphasised nor superseded by material structures.⁴⁰ Moreover, many of the constructivists’ endeavours are directed towards understanding international phenomena through a rather state-centric approach, rather than a structural one, focusing on the manner in which the social identities of states, determining their interests and behaviour, are formed and to which extent they are shaped

by patterns of interaction, such the distribution of knowledge and the circulation of ideas within the system.⁴¹ Last but not least, constructivists address the long-standing debate concerning the agent-structure question through acknowledging the mutually constitutive relation between the two – accordingly, up to a certain extent, they share the traditional neo-realist proposition that there is a certain structure of the international system (differing nevertheless over the very nature of this structure, which they deem as social rather than material) that shapes actors’ behaviour and interaction, but they argue that the actors can, in turn, alter and reshape this structure.⁴² The latter conflicts with the neo-realist conviction in the immovable condition of anarchy at the international level, since the belief in the social construction of world politics and in the mutual constitution of structures and agents ultimately unveils the potential for structural change, an argument confirmed by and which explains the very changing nature of the international system in the last decade of the twentieth century.⁴³

In as much as they believe that “the character of international life is determined by the beliefs and expectations that states have about each other”, the constructivist understanding of security is likewise revolving around the assumption that the latter is “a social construction mediated through different understandings of identity”, understood primarily as the manner in which states perceive who they are and how they relate to their counterparts in the system, most often as a result of social interaction.⁴⁴ Indicative of this approach is, for instance, Ted Hopf’s assertion that the designation of “friends or enemies” on the international arena is based on conceptions of identity and shaped by a particular social and historical context underpinning social interaction.⁴⁵ The importance of identity, surpassing that of power, as a determinant of how states relate to their counterparts is further underlined in David L. Rousseau’s argument that the “perception of threat is a function of the line drawn between self and the other” leading him to conclude nevertheless that “power influences threat perceptions only after identity between the self and other has been established”.⁴⁶ Matt

McDonald, in his synthesis of constructivism, likewise highlights the centrality of identity to constructivist understandings of security as a social construction, rejecting the mere focus on material capabilities.⁴⁷ The aforementioned arguments allow us to infer that an assessment of actors and of their behaviour within the international system, regardless of it being in positive (friends or allies) or negative (enemies) terms, is to be largely associated with dynamics of threat perception. Such a conclusion further aligns not only with the constructivist approach on ideational factors to the study of world politics, but also with core theoretical assumptions underpinning the study of the security dilemma amongst international relations scholars.

It is in this context that the constructivist challenge to mainstream, as previously noted, largely neo-realist theorising about the security dilemma is to be understood. While rejecting the argument that the security dilemma is a structural consequence and an inherent element of the anarchic nature of the international system, constructivist scholars propose an alternative viewpoint and a slightly different conceptual apprehension. Alexander Wendt defined the security dilemma as “a social structure composed of intersubjective understandings in which states are so distrustful that they make worst-case assumptions about each other’s intentions and as a result define their interests in self-help terms”.⁴⁸ Constructivism retains at least two elements from the works of Herbert Butterfield, John Herz and Robert Jervis – the role of uncertainty and the function of psychological factors, perceptions in particular. Nonetheless, it is their very conceptualisation that reveals the most radical differences between neo-realist and constructivist approaches to the security dilemma.

The condition of uncertainty in international relations generally entails that states often find themselves in the situation of being unable to assess nor be certain about the current and future intentions of their counterparts. Realists define uncertainty as the absence of information about the intentions, interests and power of the units of the system and explain through this condition the conflictual dynamics in international relations, precluding the potential

of cooperation between actors.⁴⁹ Indicative of this viewpoint is Waltz’s assertion that “the condition of insecurity, at least the uncertainty of each about the other’s future intentions and actions, works against cooperation”.⁵⁰ Focusing on power, realists do not solve the issue of unresolvable uncertainty through the accumulation of information (known as the process of “learning”), but rather through the accumulation of power, likewise illustrated by the arguments of the pioneers of the security dilemma.⁵¹ The drawbacks of this approach are often highlighted by rationalist scholars who address its potentially counterproductive outcomes, namely the emergence of arms races and the intensification of general instability. Whereas rationalists argue that “overestimating hostility is often as dangerous as underestimating it” they advocate for an alternative approach to reducing uncertainty that is based on collecting information that contributes to developing objective beliefs about the units of the system – their conclusion is that power, not alone but along with the distribution of information determines the behaviour of states and their response to the challenges of anarchy.⁵²

Despite constructivists share with rationalists the emphasis on the importance of the distribution of information, they refute the possibility to develop an objective understanding of information – whereas both realists and rationalists claim that information is evaluated by the actors objectively, constructivists posit that such information is filtered through “belief systems, identities and norms that often vary across actors and states”.⁵³ Accordingly, the latter argue that both information and behaviour have no inherent meaning outside the human interpretation constructed in a specific social context and mediated by identities and norms. Subsequently, uncertainty appears as a natural outcome of the fact that “perception and interpretation are a function of socially constructed understandings through subjectivity”.⁵⁴ As a result of the myriad of potential ensuing interpretations, complexity in world politics is described by constructivists as an outcome rather than an independent variable or problem that states have to cope with.⁵⁵ The distribution of information, in this context, amounts not to the technical knowledge

that the units of the system acquire in view of grasping such complexity, but to the development of “understandings about self and other” as well as shared meanings which in turn allow for the reduction of uncertainty.⁵⁶ Moreover, constructivists emphasise the importance of interaction in empowering states to develop a basis of information to evaluate the probability of their counterparts’ intentions and develop expectations – accordingly, the “security dilemma is man-made” since, once constituted, such expectations often impose barriers to the other’s signalling of intentions as they form assumptions about the manner in which one state relates to the others, which in turn influence perception and behaviour.⁵⁷ To a certain extent, this argument recalls Wendt’s claim that “anarchy is what states make of it”.

The articulation of the role of interpretation as a factor in driving understandings about the system and its units as well as behaviour is another contribution of the constructivist school of thought. Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler provide an insight into the manner in which interpretation can have an impact upon the security dilemma through pointing out the process of evolution from a dilemma of interpretation to a dilemma of response. The dilemma of interpretation refers to the situation in which an actor finds itself in the situation of assessing whether the actions of its counterpart(s) are driven by defensive or offensive purposes. Once the dilemma of interpretation is sort out, it leads to the emergence of another dilemma – that of response, in which the first actor is compelled to conceive its reaction based on its perceptions. Booth and Wheeler present two potential scenarios – on one hand, if the dilemma of interpretation entails that the actions of one state (or the state, itself) poses a threat, the security dilemma results in a strategic challenge. On the other hand, if the other state’s defensive policies are misinterpreted and perceived as aggressive, the action-reaction cycle entails a security competition which does not only augment mutual hostility but also insecurity – Booth and Wheeler refer to this situation as a security paradox, indicative thus of the situation in which attempts at enhancing security have the opposite unintended outcome of fostering insecurity.⁵⁸ The security paradox

is portrayed by Booth and Wheeler as an outcome of what they designate as the “unresolvable uncertainty” which, often undermines on one hand actors’ capacity to effectively signal defensive endeavours and, on the other, their ability to “get fully into the minds of their counterparts and thus understand their genuine motives and intentions” – the latter situation amounts to what scholars refer to as the “Other Minds Problem”.⁵⁹ The convergence of the “ambiguous symbolism of weapons” – the perplexity of differentiating between offensive and defensive actions based on subjective interpretation – and the Other Minds Problem lead Booth and Wheeler to conclude that:

“The security dilemma is the most fundamental of all concepts in security studies because it describes the existential condition of the future environment in which political groups frame their thinking”.⁶⁰

Dealing with the Security Dilemma. Prospects for Mitigation

Constructivists argue that the apprehension of the process of developing state interests is crucial for explaining a wide range of international political phenomena – accordingly, their analytical endeavours are based on examining non-material structures, namely the social identities that are constitutive of state interests, subsequently determining state action and shaping overall behaviour.⁶¹ In this regard, the constructivist approach might provide valuable insights into the relation between security and identity and, in particular, the role of identity politics in conceiving and/or exacerbating the security dilemma. Critical constructivism proposes an even more intricate approach – relying upon post-positivist epistemology, its main concern is to delineate how narratives of national identity, including specific representations of security and threat, become dominant in a particular context thus setting the framework, and even legitimising, a certain course of political action.⁶² Indicative of this approach is the Copenhagen School of Security Studies’ discursive construction of threat, known as securitization – “a process in which an actor declares a particular issue,

dynamic or actor to be an existential threat to a particular referent object" which, in turn, if appealing to the intended audience, can legitimise policies aimed at responding to perceived crisis situations.⁶³

Confidence-building initiatives are essential in transcending the dilemmas of interpretation and trust and eventually in mitigating the security dilemma. Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler approached the concept of security dilemma sensibility, defined as the "ability to understand the role that fear might play in the attitudes and behaviour of other actors, including the role that one's own actions may play in provoking that fear".⁶⁴ They stressed, in this respect, the imperative of surpassing the idea of "security against others" and mitigating its impact – they employ the example of Mikhail Gorbachev's rapprochement with the West in the 1980s largely determined by his discernment of the West's anxiety as caused by Soviet forces and postures and of the ensuing mistrust and suspicion fuelled by security dilemma dynamics.⁶⁵ While it is not the purpose of the present analysis to evaluate the impact of Gorbachev's policies on the Soviet regime per se, one cannot dispute that his confidence-building measures have had a considerable impact on ameliorating the security dilemma between the two camps and indirectly upon eventually bringing the Cold War to an end.

Both cooperation and dialogue are therefore essential for ameliorating the tensions engendered and fuelled by the security dilemma. Constructivists equate the latter mechanisms with the distribution of knowledge between the units of the system. The flow of information, they argue, ultimately operates in the direction of developing and changing identities which subsequently adjust the ways in which states conceive their relations to their counterparts.⁶⁶ Various scholars have further emphasised the importance of reassurance and signalling peaceful intent, both aimed at augmenting trust.⁶⁷ Particular challenges to mitigating the security dilemma nevertheless emerge in the situation of an incompatibility of security priorities, often giving rise to conflicts of interest. In this context, the divergence between actors' interests further complicate the security dilemma, depending on whether the ensuing conflicts of interests can be reconciled or not. Shing Tang proposes two scenarios

– on one hand, if actors believe that the conflict of interest is reconcilable, the severity of the security dilemma is diminished, so being the potential for a clash between the two parts; on the other hand, it suffices that just one of the parties believes that the conflict of interest is irreconcilable to exacerbate the security dilemma and to increase the potential for actual, though avoidable, conflict.⁶⁸ Signalling of intentions and dialogue are crucial, at this stage, for averting tragic evolutions, potentially driven by misperceptions. *It is in this very context that, for instance, NATO's decision to retain open channels for political dialogue with Russia, notwithstanding the cessation of bilateral civilian and military cooperation in the aftermath of the latter's illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression against Ukraine, must be understood.*

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of the present paper has revolved around providing a rigorous, though definitely not exhaustive, overview of the main theoretical ideas underpinning the neo-realist and constructivist approaches to the concept of the security dilemma. Whereas both academic traditions largely acknowledge the impact of the security dilemma upon the broader domain of international politics and the imperative of understanding the underlying dynamics, they fundamentally differ in their apprehension and conceptualisation of the origins and means of dealing with the security dilemma. The different takes in the agency-structure debate have played an important role in shaping the differences between the two approaches. Indicative of this argument are the contentions of the pioneers of the two schools of thought – Kenneth Waltz's inescapable structural anarchy as the ordering principle of international politics, on one hand, and Alexander Wendt's assertion that anarchy is what states make of it. Accordingly, neo-realists find implausible any explanation that contests the structural origins of the security dilemma, which is primarily the point from which constructivists start to build their apprehension of the concept. The conclusion is that the neo-realist approach provides rather limited insights into understanding the dynam-

ics of the security dilemma and that, in this endeavour, the constructivist challenge to mainstream theorising deserves further attention.

Endnotes

¹ The content of the present paper represents one of the chapters of the author's Bachelor's Thesis, entitled "Divergent Threat Perceptions and the Security Dilemma in NATO-Russia Relations" and coordinated by Dr. Șerban Filip Cioculescu, delivered at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest in June 24, 2018.

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¹⁷ Tang, *The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis*, 592.

¹⁸ Jervis, *Cooperation under the Security Dilemma*, 186-200 and Glaser, *The Security Dilemma Revisited*, 185

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³¹ Szalai, *Coping with the Security Dilemma: A Fundamental Ambiguity of State Behaviour*, 108.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Booth and Wheeler, *Uncertainty*, 140.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁵ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics" in *International Organization* 46:2 (The MIT Press, 1992); and Christian Reus-Smit, "Constructivism" in *Theories of International Relations 2nd Edition*, first published in July 1996, ed. Richard Devetak, Andrew Linklater, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 216.

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³⁹ Reus-Smit, *Constructivism*, 225-226.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 216.

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⁵⁰ Waltz, *Anarchic Structures and Balances of Power*, 105, quoted in Rathbun, *Uncertain about Uncertainty: Understanding the Multiple Meanings of a Crucial Concept in International Relations Theory*, 538.

⁵¹ Rathbun, *Uncertain about Uncertainty: Understanding the Multiple Meanings of a Crucial Concept in International Relations Theory*, 540-541.

⁵² Ibid., 542-543.

⁵³ Ibid., 535.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 549.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 549.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 549-551.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 550.

⁵⁸ Booth and Wheeler, *Uncertainty*, 137.

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⁶¹ Reus-Smit, *Constructivism*, 217.

⁶² McDonald, *Constructivism*, 62.

⁶³ Ibid., 69.

⁶⁴ Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 8, quoted in Booth and Wheeler, *Uncertainty*, 141.

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⁶⁷ Jervis, *Cooperation under the Security Dilemma*, 175; and Szalai, *Coping with the Security Dilemma: A Fundamental Ambiguity of State Behaviour*, 110-117.

⁶⁸ Tang, *The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis*, 598-601.

ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to analyse the concept of the "security dilemma" through the lenses of two key theories for approaching and understanding international politics – namely, neo-realism and constructivism. While acknowledging the fondness of the pioneers of the concept for the neo-realist theory for which it subsequently evolved as one of the key elements, the paper further proposes and comparatively analyses an alternative approach shaped by the constructivist tradition. In this regard, it focuses on the manner in which the security dilemma emerges as a result of the social construction of world politics, the subjective understandings conceived by actors on the international arena and the ensuing perceptions about their counterparts and their actions, which in turn influence the former's behaviour. The conclusion of this analysis is that the mainstream neo-realist approach provides rather limited insights into understanding the dynamics of the security dilemma and processes of threat perception, respectively. Subsequently, in this endeavour, the constructivist approach deserves further consideration, as it allows for a proper apprehension of the security dilemma through transcending its rigid understanding as an outcome of structure of the international system.

Keywords: security dilemma, rivalry, war, peace, fear, Constructivism, Neorealism, Russia, NATO.

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SECURITATE INTERNAȚIONALĂ

Spratly Islands, a landmark of regional security in the South China Sea

Alexandra DAN

1. Spratly Islands, vindication for the territorial competition

Located in the Southeastern Asia, on the crossroads of the strategic interests that perniciously hinder South China Sea waters, over 100 small, flat islands, islets, cays, and reefs¹ gathered together to settle the tenor of the Spratly Islands. Spread over an area of 410,000 square kilometers of sea zone, the Spratly Islands entail a conspicuous significance in disposing the stability of the region. With its largest land congregation covering up to five square kilometers, the Spratly Islands dot the southern half of the South China Sea, approximately 555 kilometers east of Vietnam, 370 kilometers west of the Philippines, and 1480 kilometers south of the Chinese mainland².

The portrait of the South China Sea carries on a sorrow liability not only for the regional security, but also for the order of international community inflicted by the competition whose core is focused upon the Spratly Islands. Being fully claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam and partially by Malaysia, Philippines and Brunei, on various historical, geographical, and legalistic grounds, the disputed islands whittle away the serenity among the Asian countries, thrusting them toward an unabated quarrel. According to the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative³, a subsidiary of the US-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies, in the Spratly Islands, China owns seven outposts and has built nearly 3,200 acres of

new land, Taiwan occupies the largest natural feature, Itu Aba Island and in 2015 completed the construction of an eight acres wharf, Vietnam occupies 21 rocks and reefs on which it has built military facilities, Philippines holds nine features and Malaysia occupies five that are clustered in the southern part of the archipelago. The gravamen of the friction that encompasses the islands lays within their natural resources and geostrategic position.

Whereas the ongoing dispute cumbers the efforts to conduct accurately assessments concerning the quantities of natural resources, the estimations regarding the amounts of oil and gas resources vary widely. According to a 2013 report issued by the U.S. Energy Information Administration (USEIA), the South China Sea lodges about 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in proved and probable reserves⁴. Regarding undiscovered resources, a study released by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) posits that South China Sea platform comprises in terms of oil assets 95 percent chance to bear 764 million barrels, 50 percent chance of about 2000 million barrels and 5 percent of approximately 5000 million barrels. The same study discloses that there is 95 percent chance of undiscovered gas resources to reach 4600 billion cubic feet, 50 percent chance of around 8800 billion cubic feet and only 5 percent of 22600 billion cubic feet.⁵ Nevertheless, estimations provided by further agencies show a wealthy potential of the basins in the South China Sea that comprises

up to 125 billion barrels of oil and 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas⁶. However, the above-mentioned report of USEIA estimates that the surrounding waters of the Spratly Islands hold none proved and probable reserves of oil and less than 100 billion cubic feet of natural gas, although the potential for undiscovered oil ranges between 0.8 and 5.4 billion barrels and between 7 to 55 trillion cubic feet for gas⁷.

The economic importance of the region lays on the hydrocarbon dependency that peaked over the years as the concerned states swiftly increased their energy consumption. In 2016 China's primary energy consumption accounted for 3053 million tons of oil equivalent (MTOE), depicting an increasing trend with a 5,3% growth rate per annum in 2005-2015 period and a 202,9% growth from 2000 and remaining the world's largest energy consumer with 23% of global energy consumption. Moreover, China's oil import dependency ratio rose to 68% in 2016, registering the highest peak in its history. The primary energy consumption for Malaysia grew on an average growth rate of 3,3% in 2005-2015, reaching 99,5 MTOE in 2016. In the case of Philippines, the primary energy consumption increased on an average growth rate of 3,6% in the same period, reaching a total of 42,1 MTOE in 2016 and for Vietnam, the consumption grew with an average growth of 7,5, reaching 64,8 MTOE in 2016. Taiwan's energy consumption grew on an average rate of 0,7% in 2005-2015, attaining a value of 112,1 MTOE in 2016.⁸

Extraction of the oil and gas resources have driven the adjacent states into a rampant competition that every so often led to violent skirmishes. Although prior to 1969, the region was disturbed only by scanty tensions, with the disclosure of a report issued by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East and the Committee for Coordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas regarding oil prospecting, the relations between the countries sank into an embittered path. Furthermore, along with China, both Vietnam and Philippines increased their efforts to attract foreign oil companies to exploit the contested region, diminishing what has been left of the prospects for even a slightly co-operation. Nevertheless, international energy

companies showed reluctance to engage in the area due to its lack of stability but this didn't stop the competition to reach violent encounters. In 1992 China became the first country, apart from the 1974 episode, to act unilaterally to explore natural resources in the Spratly Islands by awarding a contract to the US energy company, Crestone. China's action, denounced by Vietnam, came to an end after two years but not without impairing the dispute regarding the Wanan Bei block, a site claimed by both countries but which sheltered an oil rig established by Vietnam and developed by a consortium of foreign oil companies. Most recent incidents involve the 2011 quarrel between a Vietnamese oil and gas survey vessel and Chinese ships that concluded with mutual indictments of sabotage and mass anti-China protests in Hanoi and Ho Cih Minh and the 2014 harmful clash between Vietnam and China that led to the sinking of a Vietnamese fishing vessel near to a Chinese set up oil rig.

Besides hydrocarbons, the tropical waters that surround the Spratly Islands are a part of the copious and sundry ecosystem of the South China Sea that hefty stands as one of the most various and lush marine ecosystem of the world, hosting 76 percent of the world's coral species and 37 percent of reef-fish species⁹. The biodiversity of the waters enticed commercial interests from the neighboring countries where the fishing revenues provide an important contribution to the national economy. The fishing industry accounts for about three percent of China's GDP, two percent of Malaysia's GDP and Philippines' GDP and nearly five percent of Vietnam's GDP.¹⁰ Being historically used by fishermen from the adjacent countries, the Spratly Islands became subjected to a rising demand for fish consumption that gradually jeopardized the manifold marine life. Due to perilous methods used by fishermen, to which is added the artificial expansion of the archipelago and taking advantage of the deficiency of adequate international governance, China convicted the entire region to permanent degradation while disguising its pernicious involvement in a "green" rhetoric. The occasionally clashes over resources involving mainly Chinese and Vietnamese vessels clouded the water with hostility and bitterness, they

broadly inflicted not only shipwrecks but also the loss of human lives.

The importance of the Spratly Islands is enhanced not only by the bountiful arsenals of hydrocarbons and marine life, but also by the strategic position they hold in the region and the opportunities they provide for power projection in the area by converting the islands into military bases. Being located at the meeting of significant maritime trade routes that are carrying approximately one-fifth of the global shipping¹¹, the islands facilitate an enforced authority over the transit routes and commercial shipping. A report¹² issued by a group of experts of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, busting the myth of the annually 5.3 trillion worth of goods, estimated that nearly \$3.4 trillion in trade passed through the South China Sea in 2016, representing almost 21 percent of global trade in 2016. Assessing the trade percentage that pass through the South China Sea of the total trade of the regional countries, the report depicted that only two claimant states exceeded the threshold regarding the 50 percent: Vietnam with 86 percent and Malaysia with 58 percent, while China accounted for only 39 percent.

As the core of the strategic competition that aggrieves the Southeast Asia, the Spratly Islands provide the prime grounds for imbruing the waters of South China Sea with grievous rampages. The pestilent archipelago stands as the foremost rationale that drives the regional states into a realist subsystem imbued with fear and distrust where economic interests, national identity and security concerns prevail. On an assertive background, the geopolitical significance of the Spratly Islands entails vicious shows of power and revived historical enmities that increasingly draw the attention of the international players.

2. The engine of the strategic competition: militarization and retaliation

As the most important player in the region, China has always found itself in an agonizing posture regarding its national boundar-

ies. Although China's current map reveals a wide territory that underpins today's most debated emerging power, it also embraces a beleaguered nation with a tumultuous history. Following Thongchai Winichakul's concept of "geobody"¹³, William A. Callahan posits that China is "*still neither stable nor hegemonic; it faces cartographic resistance on many fronts*"¹⁴. China's layout has been subjected to a taut string of challenges that inflicted its transmutations from the eminent impeller of the *Pax Sinica* to a subjugated nation, only to ascend into today's rising power. Its rampant timeline depicts a turbulent path that led its nation through plentiful appalling ordeals and atrocities that could only reveal its great capacity of resilience. The intrusiveness of the Western imperialism that concluded with the Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860), the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), followed by the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) and the Russian invasion of Manchuria (1900), the Mukden Incident (1931), the Nanjing Massacre (1937) and the ruthless revolutions succeeded by dreadful reforms ingrained deep into China's remembrance and shaped its present ideology.

The sizeable place China holds on the map is strengthened by its assertive behavior that undermines its customary "*peaceful rise*" discourse. The narratives of the past border wars that China engaged against India (1962), Soviet Union (1969) and Vietnam (1979) lay out an aggressive track record upon which today's China's approach of the South China Sea is shaped. Beijing's increasing military presence, enriched with its island building program facilitates power projection in order to gain full control over the claimed territories, thus surpassing the century of national humiliation and gaining influence over the region.

The modernization of the People's Liberation Army that has been ongoing for nearly 25 years¹⁵ aims toward achieving an efficient capability to "*effectively control major crises, properly handle possible chain reactions and firmly safeguard the country's territorial sovereignty, integrity and security*"¹⁶. Underlying with Liu Huaqing's "*Offshore Defense*" strategy¹⁷, China's efforts incentivize its naval forces to achieve the goal of becoming a genuine global force capable of conducting blue water opera-

tions. Improving the PLAN's performance is based on a qualitative more than a quantitative endowment. China commissioned its first aircraft carrier, Liaoning, a refurbished Ukrainian vessel starting with 2012 and not until recently, it conducted a first trial with its first home-grown aircraft carrier, Type 001A, while working on a third vessel. The updates entail acquiring naval platforms, weapons and military technology, increasing the Navy forces logistics and combat capabilities. The end of the last year found PLAN's fleet endowed, besides the two aircraft carriers, with 43 modern submarines that hold offensive capabilities (Shang 093-093A SSN, Kilo SS, Song 039/039G SS, Yuan 039A/B/C SS) and 26 destroyers armed with Anti-Ship Cruise Missiles (the Russian made destroyer Sovremenny, Luhai – Type 052A, Luhai – Type 051B, Luyang I – Type 052B, Luyang II – Type 052C, Louzhou – Type 051C, Luyang III – Type 052D), 41 frigates (Jiangwei I – Type 053 H2G, Jiangwei II – Type 053H3, Jiangkai I – Type 054, Jiangkai II – Type 054A).¹⁸

The modernization process made PLAN to be one of the world's greatest navy and the "*largest navy in Asia, with more than 300 surface ships, submarines, amphibious ships, and patrol craft*"¹⁹. Its military strength covers the claimed islands by building harbors, underground storages, administrative buildings, radar arrays, communication systems, structures that shelter surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems and electronic warfare systems. The Chinese presence is underlined by its recently marine rescue squadron subordinated to the Chinese South Sea Fleet, J-11 fighters deployed on Woody Island and SU-35s fighter jets, the use of unmanned aerial vehicles for monitoring and supply actions, the naval exercises and the seven newly built military bases²⁰. Furthermore, establishing in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong the world's biggest test site for unmanned vessels, Beijing managed to display the enhanced PLAN's operational capabilities on the worldwide stage.

China's assertiveness that culminated with violent skirmishes like the 1988 China-Vietnam clash or the 1996 China-Philippines confrontation, had been enforced on the legislative sphere with the passing of the *Law on Ter-*

ritorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone"²¹, which includes the Spratly Islands in China's territorial land. In reply, after the 2011 dispute with China, Philippines basing its claims on legislative ground, began to officially refer to the South China Sea as the West Philippine Sea. Moreover, the next year, Vietnam passed the "*Law of the Sea of Vietnam*"²² through which its sovereignty is spread over the Spratly archipelago.

China's augmenting military presence in the Spratly Islands, together with its belies ambitions, rise concerns among the neighborhood countries and not only. The most prominent answers to China's assertiveness came from Vietnam whose earnestness is bounded to the nationalism feelings shaped on decades of rivalry. With completing the commissioning of the six Kilo-class submarines in the early 2017 that were ordered from Russia in 2009²³, Vietnam submarine fleet became the largest in Southeast Asia²⁴ and increased its ability to generate power over the contested islands. According to a report issued under the *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*²⁵, by 2017, Vietnam had acquired four 2,100-ton Gepards, five Petya-class frigates, 13 missile corvettes with the individual displacement of around 600 tons, about 17 fast attack crafts, 43 inshore patrol crafts, 36 landing crafts, and about 11 minesweepers.

To counter China's assertiveness, Vietnam engaged in trade deals with India, in joint-exercises with Japan in the South China Sea and deepened its defense agreements with the US. Moreover, Vietnam also sought a tighter cooperation with its' former rival, Philippines, shored up on mechanisms such as hot lines, working groups, exchanges and agreements that came to a climax with the 2015 strategic partnership. The intended purpose of the maritime collaboration was drawn on mutual interests to improve ties and build confidence. The fortuitous cooperation between the two countries faded as fast as it lit up in the following period of the election of president Rodrigo Duterte. The modernization program of the triggered Armed Forces of the Philippine by China's approaching the Philippine coast in 2012, envisaged an increased military budget and the renewal of the 1995 Armed Forces of

the Philippines Modernization Act. Although consistent efforts were put in order to upgrade Philippine Navy, it still remains an obsolete tool of projecting power as its largest ships are three former U.S. frigates, five operational corvettes and two strategic sealift vessels. Despite Duterte's constructive steps toward China, the modernization program of the AFP remains on the political agenda as one of the top priorities. Manila's ties with western countries follow a dithering trend that encompasses closer cooperation with France whereas progressively throwing reproofs towards the United States. While establishing the Filipino-French joint cooperation committee, Philippines is also directing its efforts for strengthening the defense ties with Japan on the bilateral strategic partnership background.

The appointment of Rodrigo Duterte as president may be perceived as a watershed in the development of Philippines' foreign policy, reversing its view toward a closer cooperation with China. Although audacious at first, Manila gradually adopted a compliant stance with its exposed position, the South China Sea Arbitration instance certifying the trend. In 2013 backed up by the United States and other claimant states, Philippines filed a complaint against China under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea concerning the sovereignty claims in the South China Sea. The hearings concluded in 2016 with the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Hague award²⁶ which disavows any legal basis for Chinese assertion of historical rights. Regarded by China as a mechanism intended to embolden the western system of power, Beijing boycotted the international tribunal and acted in defiance with the decision. Nevertheless, Philippines re-focused its foreign policy and not only it left to quench the international unrest triggered by the Hague tribunal decision, but it also agreed, together with China, to set up a framework regarding peaceful ways to jointly explore for off-shore oil and gas in features both sides claim.

Malaysia's plans to modernize its armed forces remain underdeveloped and distorted from a disturbing reality. The Royal Malaysian Navy is endowed with two submarines, two frigates, 12 missile corvettes, six of which entered service in the late 2000s. In 2011 Malay-

sia signed a deal to build six frigates called Second Generation Patrol Vessel-Littoral Combat Ship (SGPV-LCS) of which the first delivery is expected in 2019²⁷. Although Vietnam occupies two out of six features which Malaysia claims in the Spratly Islands, their relationship broadened considerably, starting with the 2008 memorandum of understanding on bilateral defense, as both states are keen to emphasize productive cooperation. Until today, Malaysia and Brunei remain the quietest brawlers of the Spratly Islands dispute. Both countries have refrained from provoking China in order to safeguard their comprehensive relationships with Beijing.

The sole player that could make a difference in the region remains the United States. The presence of the U.S. Navy is being felt due to the capabilities display undertaken under the aegis of "freedom of navigation operations" (FONOP). For Washington, the South China Sea entails highly significant assurances for maintaining its dominance in the Asia-Pacific grounded on its alliances concluded in the post-war period. From the beginning of the year, the U.S. strained its military muscle and proffered an utter show of strength by employing in the already hectic waters of the Spratly Islands two nuclear-powered carriers, which convey supersonic jets, spy planes and helicopters and two more warships within 12 miles of the Paracel Islands. The showcase of the US armed forces capabilities had been reinforced with naval exercises conducted with Japanese forces and patrols nearly the contentious islands. The lingering American forces in the South China Sea became the prime justification for the Chinese expansion of hard-power assets in the region. Denouncing the American military presence as encroachments on Chinese sovereignty and infringements of the international laws that inflict impairment of the regional stability, Beijing disposed large-scale combat drills featuring its operational carrier, and engaged on a race of force displays with Washington.

Despite the military assets exhibitions that spatter the South China Sea in a rattled climate of a mangling competition, China unflinchingly follows its interest to reinforce its authority over the claimed islands by continuing its

military build-ups and reinforcing its presence on the occupied land features. With its extensive military exercises and a newly constructed monument on Fiery Cross Reef on the Spratly Islands, China marks its determination in further domination of the region. In its quest of regaining its self-proclaimed historical legacy, China pursues a growth of its military capabilities that embitters the prospects even for the world's leading power, evincing a dismal truth that leaves *"no guarantee that the United States would win a future conflict with China"*²⁸.

3. Nostalgia for older times: revisionism and national interests

China's rise attracted its neighboring states that had easily fallen prey into Beijing's grandest economic web. Its increasing soft power became a vivacious tool in appeasing the other claimants of the Spratly Islands, including Vietnam that, despite its nationalism unrest, refrained from advancing with its rowdy rhetoric. The trade relations between China and Vietnam accounted for \$93,69 billion in 2017, representing 22% of Vietnam's total import-export value. The bilateral trade followed an upward trend, China being one of the ten biggest foreign investors in Vietnam, with a total registered investment capital of more than \$12.1 billion²⁹. China is also one of the largest bilateral trading partner for Philippines and Malaysia. Philippines' total export value to China accounted for 6.192 million of US\$, reckoning at about 11% of Philippines' total export value in 2016. Malaysia's merchandise export reached 23.753 million of US\$, totalizing 12% of Malaysia's total export value in 2016.³⁰

Although in 2005 China and Philippines signed an agreement that allowed both states' companies to survey for energy reserves, to which Vietnam joined six months later, the tension between the parties persisted to cloud their relationships and, with the end of the agreement that came three years later, the dispute tarnished once again the islands. A more recent initiative of collaboration was issued between China and Vietnam in 2011, which aimed toward a peaceful resolution of

the dispute. Their efforts were materialized into a six-point agreement that conveys a set of principles destined to guide a deeper cooperation. As the previous failed attempts, the China-Vietnam agreement did not manage to attenuate the conflict, nor to contain the parties for further provocative actions.

Although Beijing preferred to engage mainly in bilateral negotiations with the claimants, it broke the rule in 2002 when, for the first time, it accepted to take part to a multilateral forum. ASEAN and China issued the *"Declaration on the conduct of parties in the South China Sea"*³¹ to mitigate the conflict and promote directions for a peaceful resolution. However, starting with the 2005 incident between China and Vietnam, the normative power of the declaration proved to be unable to alleviate the eagerness of national interests. The declaration did not provide specific guidelines to implement its ten points enacting terms, nor did it generate legally binding documents. Its lack of coercion made room for further antagonistic relations that dimmed the future of the region.

Despite ASEAN's failures to efficiently address the territorial issue, it remains an important tool in untangling the tensions. The cooperative relations that are encouraged through ASEAN framework pursue economic growth and regional peace and stability. The efforts of its member states are blended together to embody the economic and security cooperation into a reliable security community. To do so, ASEAN had been focusing on the agitated waters of the South China Sea, which have been splotching its agenda since the end of the Cold War. The prospects of the strategic competition regarding the Spratly Islands may be sweeten with the enacting of the Code of Conduit in the South China Sea of which the start of negotiations was announced on the 31st ASEAN Summit Meeting. Although as a milestone of the diplomatic advancement, the Code may provide a slender enforcement mechanism, as the past attempts confess, and only sustain the Beijing's delaying maneuvers.

In addition to minimize the impact of ASEAN upon its core interests, China adopted a rising focus on multilateral organization to enhance its regional influence. The Asian

Infrastructure Investment Bank enticed the ASEAN members with new opportunities for infrastructure funding, making all the claimant states to sign up (except for Taiwan). China's Maritime Silk Road initiative, intended to boost the maritime cooperation and not only, entails infrastructure investments, joint development and mutual benefits which the neighborhood countries contentedly welcomed. Moreover, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership between the ASEAN members and Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, which is expected to come into force at the end of 2018, is supposed to strengthen the economic ties between the signatories while providing an open window for Beijing to augment its influence.

The path for China's influence over the region had been eased with the withdrawal of the United States from the Trans Pacific Partnership. The shallow approach of the United States shaped a new reality for the claimant states from which the major benefits are seized by China. United States' lack of military support in behalf of Philippines during the skirmish with China in the Scarborough Shoal undermined its liability that has been arising from the Mutual Defense Treaty. The consequences were highlighted during a freedom of navigation operation near the Scarborough Shoal and, while being scolded by China, the reaction of the Philippines had been null and void. The passiveness of the United States had been revealed again in the aftermath of the 2016 decision of The Hague Arbitration Tribunal. The ephemeral bustle of China's approach had been escorted by void rhetoric of Washington who demonstrated once again its unwillingness to intervene militarily on behalf of its allies. United States' force displays in the region will hardly recover its lost ground and rebuild its jolted trust. The faith of the regional order is progressively drown by China's liking, although Washington's retaliatory militarized appearances in the troubled waters still fuel the tensions and prolong the hardships of the strategic competition between the two.

With China's setup for regional economic integration, the South China Sea conflict has become less violent in terms of death toll and sunken ships. Although China got less pugna-

cious and eager to spill blood, it augmented its militarization program and modernization of the army and is suspected to continue reinforcing its strength in the region. With its incessant shows of force, enlarged power projections and sabotage acts, Beijing suppressed the opportunities for other players to take advantages of its passiveness. China's rise is focused on the domination of the region which implies a decreasing U.S. influence to its nadir while luring its neighbors with its soft power. Not only Malaysia, who long ago withdrew from the race, but also Philippines, who has adopted a China friendly policy since 2016, have come to embrace a strategy of bandwagoning. China has gradually imposed its will over all the claimant states, as it does now with Vietnam, coercing it to suspend its oil drilling project in the South China Sea and to accept the reality of China's rule. By adopting a joint strategy of soft power and hard power, Beijing has successfully managed to blend the water and the cement, procuring the mortar required for building its sinocentric system. Derived from a strong sense of nationalism, China's assertiveness is directed to erasing its vulnerabilities and to enriching the international relations with its updated tributary system whose viability depends on its capability to entice the world.

Notes

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¹⁷ Stacy A. Pedrozo, *China’s Active Defense Strategy and its Regional Impact*, Council on Foreign Relations, 27.01.2010. “Offshore Defense” is a set of principle outlined by the former commander of PLA Navy, Liu Huaqing, which enrich China’s maritime doctrine with new concepts that deem a great naval power for China’s Navy forces.

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ABSTRACT

The decades of strategic competition that are deep buried into the gunpowder and blood stained water of the South China Sea are foremost rooted in the extensive value of the Spratly Islands. From economic to geopolitics, with a nod to national value, the Spratlys encompass the embodiment of national interests that aroused dreadful tempests over the Asian continent.

The timeline of the past narratives depicts rampant clashes that still tarnish the memories of the claimant states that are gradually drawn into a new reality forged on the China's stunning rise. Outlined on the assumption that the states' interests are rendered with respect to the system dynamics, the main objective of the paper is to investigate the evolution of the dispute shaped on antagonistic views, national pride and interdependencies. Pinpointing the grounds for the strategic competition, identifying the levels of the main players, the research attempts to depict China's power projection in the Spratly Islands as the prime incentive on the regional scene.

Keywords: competition, cooperation, interests, militarization, security, sovereignty, territorial disputes.

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American and Chinese perceptions and calculations regarding the North Korea's nuclear and missile crisis

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There is a long and agitated history of the small but turbulent communist state called the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)¹ trying to survive and assert itself as a regional player in East Asia, by getting benefits from South Korea without unification, by receiving full support from China (and Russia from time to time) and by deterring USA from any possible military intervention. The possible acquisition of nuclear weapons by a country which already possessed some types of vectors (missiles) could in theory ensure security against any foreign intervention.

Domestically, the communist leadership got submission from the population by a mix of terror and propaganda, specific to any totalitarian regime. North Korea as a regime and a state has a double-goal: to ensure the survival of the regime (embodied in the ruling Kim „dynasty” – all the leaders came from the same family since the country exists) and to achieve the unification of the whole peninsula, by peaceful or non-peaceful means. After the failure to capture all the Korean peninsula in the 50's of the past century, the North had to assume that the US protection made the South (the Republic of Korea) almost invulnerable to a conquest and to regime change. The forced reunification was put on a remote agenda.² Historians stated that Kim Il Sung was the communist leader who pushed Stalin and Mao to agree and prepare for a Northern attempt to conquer the South and that he went beyond their wish, as Stalin and Mao were both reluc-

tant to a rapid attack by the North (guessing that the Americans will not let the North triumph, otherwise it would have been a blow to the „containment strategy”). After this intra-Korean war which attracted foreign states with troops and even allowed bloody clashes between Chinese and American forces, the North Korean society became heavily militarized, a garrison-society impregnated by the mentality of the fortress under siege – official propaganda usually used the phrase “made the entire country an impregnable fortress”³ At the same time, the North has been deterred by the proximity of US forces (deployed in RoK and Japan), and the huge modernization of RoK armed forces, with American full support.

Having to choose between the Stalinist and the Maoist patterns of Communism, the NK leaders preferred the Chinese model in the 50's and 60's, as a more pure and radical one, since the post-Stalin Soviet leaders had embraced a more tolerant attitude towards the society. The South was in such need for the US protection that it had sent thousands of soldiers (50.000) to support US war effort in Vietnam, between 1965 and 1973, while in 1967 a number of pilots from the Korean People's Liberation Army were sent to Vietnam to support the Communist side against the US troops.⁴

Despite joining the NPT, in 1993 the IAEA accused DPRK of violating its treaty obligation and secretly developing a military nuclear program. In 1994 Pyongyang stated it is no more bound by the NPT rules. As Ian Bremmer said,

“America can’t enforce the NPT alone. If it could, Pakistan and North Korea wouldn’t have nuclear weapons.”⁵ But no NPT would have existed without US’ efforts. Some US strategists like Richard Haass, Arnold Kanter and Brent Scowcroft publicly asked the Republican president Bill Clinton to initiative a pre-emptive strike and destroy DPRK nuclear laboratories.⁶ But Clinton preferred to negotiate and sign a treaty with DPRK, a fact which allowed the communist regime to continue its subterraneous program. Between 2006 and 2017, about six or seven nuclear tests has been carried by the DPRK, which clearly improved the effectiveness of its missiles and loads. DPRK leaders clearly imitated states such as Pakistan, India and Israel, which refused to adhere to the NPT and even suffered US sanctions (Pakistan and India). Pakistan became in the end the owner of about hundred nuclear bombs and also a proliferator, helping other states to do the same. Another example is Iran, who proliferated nuclear materials in spite of signing the NPT but in 2015 signed a complex agreement with the six UNSC permanent members plus Germany, the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), to put an end to military nuclear activities and be allowed to have some civilian nuclear capabilities.⁷ Iran has been a target of Trump’s threatening speeches on breaking JCPOA and reinforcing the economic sanctions, but not for nuclear activities, instead for its support for radical Shi’a jihadist groups and criminal regimes such as that in Damascus. Incited by Israeli Prime Minister, B. Netanyahu and the Republican “hawks”, Trump eventually broke the agreement and asked Iran to come and negotiate another more comprehensive and constraining treaty. North Korea and Iran have in common the fact that they had signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) but later decided to proliferate with military nuclear programs and came under international sanctions.

The main problem is that if DPRK nuclear adventure is left unbalanced by the USA and states such as Japan and South Korea do not feel enough protected by Uncle Sam, the leaders of these countries could convince their otherwise mainly pacifist populations on the need to have their own nuclear loads and missiles.

And having four nuclear states in East Asia instead of two could create the circumstances for a war by accident/provocation/miscalculation or, on the contrary, to absolute deterrence and more security for all of them. The condition is that all have capabilities to hit the other’s territories and populated centers, to absorb a first strike and then be able to retaliate, plus a “no first use” doctrine for reassurance. An incident like the November 23, 2010 Yeonpyeong island bombardment, that means a DPRK’s surprise artillery/missile attack on the RoK or on Japan, could trigger in the end a local war and then even a nuclear one.

In September 2017, US president Donald Trump gave some tweets and spoke about “allowing Japan and South Korea to buy a substantially increased amount of highly sophisticated military equipment from the United States”.⁸ The THAAD anti-missile system is designed to secure both states – it has been installed in ROK⁹ and Japan is willing to have its own. Trump initially asked 1 billion USD for THAAD from ROK then backed away. Washington announced Seoul that it will deploy missiles with payloads of up to 1,000kg (2,205lb), and offer huge bunker-busting bombs, to protect this country against his communist neighbor. Some politicians in ROK (like Song Young-moo, the Defense minister) want the US to deploy US nuclear weapons in their country, but also nuclear submarines and B-52 bombers. President Moon Jae would accept them only for a limited period.¹⁰ The problem is that a huge part of ROK’s population is against increasing US military presence there, fearing a war with DPRK. Anyway, US has some restrictions to selling highly developed missiles technologies, only some key allies are allowed to have them. Japan asked the powerful modern radar, called “the Spy-6”, in order to increase the effectiveness of a land-based Aegis ballistic missile defence system.

The threatening and irresponsible behavior is a characteristic of NK leadership since decades ago: kidnapping foreign (Japanese, South Korean) citizens, destroying civilian air jets by terrorist acts, poisoning members of the northern exile, and launching missiles over or towards their so-called “enemy” countries are well-known and documented facts. Pyongyang

is really behaving like a “rogue” state¹¹ (a label used by US presidents towards states which break the American defended norms) and always invoke defensive reasons – they feel their country is under constant siege by foreign enemies. Generally, the measures proposed by other states or by so-called adversaries to deflect the tension and build the trust do not work. Why? Because apparently DPRK leaders do not let themselves convinced of the good faith of these actors and continue their “security dilemma” mentality. We must also mention the official “Juche” doctrine, established by former chairmen Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong-Il, who asks for independence in politics, quasi-autarchy in economy, and self-reliance in the realm of defence, stipulating that popular masses must be creative while giving precedence to ideological consciousness over day to day issues.¹² Possessing nuclear weapons could be seen as a culmination of Juche (“*chawi*” means in Korean self-reliance in defence issues), guaranteeing the invulnerability of national territory to foreign invasions.

Last year, the Stalinist regime was especially active in experimenting missile launches and detonating nuclear loads. On the morning of August 29, North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un ordered his army, one of the world’s largest (more than a million soldiers), to carry up a rocket shot over the Japanese island of Hokkaido¹³ in a gesture of extreme defiance not only to Japan, but also to the main protector of the Japanese and South Koreans, the USA. The missile flew undisturbed by anyone around 2,700 km, at an altitude of 550 km. And the reason seems clear - US and South Korean military forces were participating in intense military exercises in the peninsula, to the despair and anger of the Pyongyang „red” leader. The new South Korean president, the pacifist Moon Jae-in, eventually accepted the need to bring new US military platforms to the peninsula after initially opposing the installation of the THAAD anti-missile system. He had done it in particular not to jeopardize the thriving economic relations of the South with China, and hoping that Beijing would finally quell the deviant ally. A hope that has yet to be confirmed. The missile launched later in November 28 was a Hwasong-15 type, with an long ran-

ge of action (intercontinental ballistic missile), able to hit US territory. According the the DPRK officials, the missile reached an altitude of around 4,475 km and traveled some 950 km downrange with a flight time of 53 minutes. Experts think it could travel about 13.000 km and hit Washington. The payload would be probably around 150 kg (330 lb) but some experts indicated even a maximum load of 1000 kg.¹⁴

It is easy to see that Japan is the favorite target for DPRK provocations, probably because more than 70 years ago, Japanese soldiers committed atrocities against civilians and enslaved local women in Korea for the military brothels. Japanese are frequently hated also in South Korea for the same reason. In 2017 it was not the first time the Korean Communists crawled their missiles over the Japanese territory or territorial waters. Each time Tokyo protested, but avoided direct defensive maneuvers in order not to antagonize the communist regime. Japan avoids open conflicts with China and also with other neighbors, from which DPRK is the most dangerous.

The „natural” result of DPRK’s behavior regarding nuclear proliferation was repeated punitive measures, economic sanctions that have weakened the economy of the North, but for a long time have not diminished their will to continue ballistic and nuclear experiments. The Northern-Korean population is starving (with some dramatic episodes of thousands of dead in recent history), but the army will always find lots of money coming from northern workers send by the regime to work in foreign countries such as Russia and China, and from exports (coal, oil, seafood etc). And the stalinist leader who is violating the international rules seemed unwavering. No domestic plot, no revolution / insurrection has been seen on the horizon.

Recently, however, in March 2018, a South Korea’s delegation (led by national security director Chung Eui-yong) who visited Pyongyang for an exploratory dialogue announced that Northern leader Kim wants to personally meet US president Trump for bilateral talks. To the great surprise of everybody, Trump almost immediately accepted the North Korean offer and the US-DPRK summit will be held on

June 12, in Singapore. It will be the first time that a US president will meet a North Korean leader and the outcomes could range from sudden unfreezing of the bilateral relations (with DPRK giving up its nuclear weapons and exercises, while Washington would eliminate the economic sanctions and offer security non-aggression guarantees – this scenario seems highly unrealistic now, when writing this study in May), gradual progress based on small steps towards trust-building or it could be a strategic trap by Kim Jong Un trying to play the reformer while gaining legitimacy and money from the dialogue with Washington.

Kim led a Communist Party meeting on April 9 and explained his willingness for negotiating with USA and South Korea. North Korean sources stated that Kim is willing to agree with suspending nuclear and missile tests “because it had completed its goal of developing the weapons”, as the state-run Korean Central News Agency stated. Nam Sung-wook, professor of North Korean Studies at Korea University in Seoul outlined that it is not clear what Kim really wants to do: not pursuing further developments or totally shut down all the existing facilities?¹⁵ Koh Yu-hwan, professor of North Korean Studies at Dongguk University in Seoul, thinks that Kim “is just saying that now that the nuclear development is complete, he will put all the efforts toward building the economy.”¹⁶ In 2011 when Kim took power his goal was to simultaneously develop the military and the economy (strategy of *byungjin*), in spite of the 2006 UN sanctions regime following the first nuclear test. Now if Trump and Kim manage to find a common ground for agreement, it is almost certain that denuclearization will be very slow, progressive and accompanied by many security guarantees and money offered by USA (maybe also by other rich states such as Japan and Germany). Kim will ask two kind of guarantees: one set for his own regime and dynastic power, the other one for the state. Then a lot of money from external donors. And it will be impossible for DPRK to give up forever the nuclear technology: once acquired, the scientist men and women cannot really forget the nuclear scientific algorithms and procedures. Probably, like in the case of Iran, DPRK will be allowed to develop nuclear ci-

vilian technology under strict UN supervision. It seems that the North is willing to dismantle its only nuclear test site at Punggye-Ri. This site has been severely damaged in September 2017 by a huge blast and landslide which killed hundreds of people. The regime has to invest a lot of money to make it again functional or to give up and expect (international/US) money as a reward.

It seems certain that People’s Republic of China supports such an evolution, since it could lead to a reduced risk of regional war, to a decreasing of nuclear proliferation and even a possible withdrawal of some of the US 25.000 soldiers from South Korea.

However, as British strategist Julian Lindley French remarked, the US-DPRK presidential meeting is full of risks:

“However, the danger of such high-level gambles is that when they fail there is no other diplomatic route to follow and all diplomatic room for manoeuvre closes. In such circumstances, relations can drop of the edge of a diplomatic cliff and could tip Korea back onto the verge of war.”

In order to ensure better chances of success “At the very least President Trump would be wise to emphasise that the meeting is but a first step, that it is ultimately the responsibility of the Korean people to decide the future of the Korean Peninsula, the road ahead will be long, and the US is going nowhere until a lasting peace has clearly been established.” The problem is that Trump and Bolton asked Pyongyang to give a commitment of rapid and total disarmament, Libya-style, and Kim does not want to agree with that before the meeting.

China as the main DPRK’s backer

China developed over time a traditional friendship with North Korea, but in 2017 Beijing has been visibly angered by DPRK’s nuclear missiles development and backed successive rounds of U.N. economic sanctions. Of course, Kim Jong Un decided to put an end to this dangerous situation of losing its only ally. On March 26-27, 2018, Kim Jong Un was se-

cretely in China, heading a delegation from DPRK, likely to get approval for the US-North Korean summit and to forge a common strategy towards the Trump administration. Kim met Xi Jinping and they talked about this issue. It was the first trip outside his country by the North-Korean communist leader since he took power in 2011. And it could mean that Beijing began to have again a control on Pyongyang strategic movements after Northern missile launches at the end of last year gave the impression that China had lost control on Kim. Of course, conspiracy theorists will maintain that all that Kim did was with the secret approval of Beijing, in order to hit the American interests. But China at the beginning of April decided to strengthen the economic sanctions to exportation to DPRK of dual-use items, a sign that Xi is pushing Kim to continue the diplomatic opening and negotiations with USA. Between November 2017 and April 2018, China imported no coal, iron ore or lead from North Korea and send only 457 tones of rice, 3 tons of jet fuel and 55 tons of liquefied petroleum gas. As a Reuters analysis showed “the value of China’s trade with North Korea was \$155.3 million in March, down from \$442 million last year and up from February’s \$112 million.”¹⁷ The sanctions will be eliminated only after Pyongyang accepts a deal on nuclear proliferation limits. Before that moment, DPRK is still in a technical state of war with ROK and USA, thus being a potential target for American strikes.

However, the question is: how much would Beijing agree to risk to protect its turbulent ally? Could China let itself engaged in a regional war? China is afraid of a sudden regime collapse in Pyongyang, leading to rapid unification with SK/ROK, under US supervision. To prevent this „black scenario”, Beijing was thought to even tolerate a NK nuclear program (in spite of criticising it). But under US pressure, China became less and less tolerant with DPRK on the nuclear issue.

Let us remember that the North Korean communist state had just been created some 70 years ago and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) felt compelled to intervene in the ferocious war that opposed Pyongyang to a US-led coalition under the aegis of the UN, after the northern communist state had erroneously

hoped to conquer the southern capitalist Korea using the blitzkrieg and Soviet plus Chinese support. The PLA likely lost thousands of soldiers in 1951-1953 (but causing serious damage to the US Army), and although the USSR also supported the communist satellite, the PRC remained the main economic and political protector and supporter of Pyongyang in recent decades. But the DPRK-PRC relation was not protected from conflicts and mistrust: in 1958, „chairman” Mao Zedong ordered Chinese troops to withdraw from Korean territory, punishing Kim Il Sung for the purge of a political faction who was supported by Beijing. In spite of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance signed in 1961, there were North Korean-Chinese sporadic fighting episodes on a disputed border in the Mount Baektu (Changbaishan) region. Kim Il Sung refused to support Mao against Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and indeed after the Sino-Chinese split in the seventies, DPRK maintained relations with both the big communist states that were its direct neighbors.¹⁸ After Xi Jinping become chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, in 2012, Beijing allowed the Chinese bloggers to softly criticize the DPRK’s actions and some of them complained about nuclear tests polluting air, increasing the risk of a regional war (involving the USA against China) and about Chinese fishermen being arrested and mistreated by North Korean navy military.¹⁹ The sarin gas killing of Kim Jong-Nam, brother of Kim Song Un, by two non-Korean women in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur airport, in February 2017, further strained the DPRK-PRC relations, since the victim was living in China, under Beijing protection (and was seen by some experts as a potential rival for the current DPRK president, even if he had refused, when his father, ex-president Kim Jong-Il, was still alive, to assume power).²⁰

In the era of Mao Zedong, the “great chairman”, China embraced a rather aggressive military doctrine, which was a massive recourse to force when the country was pushed to fight and the war was just.²¹ That is why he came to fight against India in 1962 to adjust the boundaries inherited by Indians from the British colonial era, then against Vietnam in 1979 to

punish it for his invasion in Cambodia against the Khmer regime and its transformation into a de facto satellite (1978-1989), not to mention the bloody fighting on the Ussuri River against the Soviet forces (1969). But after the Cold War, Beijing refrained from such military actions against other states, preaching harmony and regional peace and stability.

Although it has been consistently said that People's Republic of China is a peaceful country without hidden intentions and its rise is „peaceful“ unlike the other challengers to world hegemony in the past (official doctrine in Beijing), statistics shows that China has had military border clashes/wars with several of its neighbors, during the past century, and has not been so reluctant to attack when it considered it morally right to do so. By example to change „unfair“ borders or punish countries that attacked their protégées. Why would it now hesitate to defend North Korea in case of an American attack? Especially because apart from Pakistan and North Korea it has no other allies (Russia being only a strategic partner), so it would be difficult to accept this loss.

As we mentioned, Pyongyang sometimes launched ballistic missiles through the airspace of neighboring states like Japan (1998, 2017), and it tested in September 2017 an extremely powerful 50-kilotone hydrogen bomb. We do not know exactly whether it was such a bomb or a very large nuclear one, but anyway, evolution is extremely worrying. Neither China nor the US should accept the Pyongyang's attempt to miniaturize the H bomb to use on intercontinental ballistic missiles. It is worth mentioning that when DPRK first tested nuclear weapons in October 9, 2006 and May 25, 2009, China condemned these tests and voted for sanctions within the UN Security Council – the proof are resolutions no. 1718 and 1874. Chinese analysts explain the reasons why Beijing is very unhappy with DPRK's nuclear, missile and satellite activities: missiles are dangerous and part of them could fall on Chinese land and maritime waters, their nuclear loud is polluting the waters, the nuclear tests determine other states to try to have their own nuclear weapons and this leads to proliferation, the aggressiveness of DPRK is used by US and Japan as a pretext to develop their own mili-

tary capabilities near China and the DPRK's satellites give US and Japan the chance to “carry out tests targeting China's missile defense and interception systems, using North Korea's missile threats as an excuse, thereby enhancing the missile monitoring and intercepting capabilities of Japan and South Korea, as well as increasing the chances for the expansion of American deployments of anti-ballistic missile system in Asia Pacific.”²² Regional conflict and turbulence are associated with DPRK's activities, and this is against Chinese interests.

The problem is that now North Korea is an extremely aggressive and unpredictable state, and threats to the US have become routine. North-Korean president and the American president frequently exchange swears and threats, increasing the perception of highly mutual hostility. At the same time it is obvious that DPRK and China have a common strategic goal: to separate RoK from USA, either by fear of a war or by offering promises of normalizing bilateral relation (and avoiding war). Of course, we still don't know if Beijing and Pyongyang have a concerted secret strategy to do that or simply their actions converge to this end.

At the XIXth congress of the Chinese Communist Party, held in October 2017, president Xi Jinping in his very long speech underlined the guiding principles of PRC's foreign policy and even if DPRK was not expressly mentioned, the legitimate Chinese behavior to neighbors may be seen in this guiding text of highest political relevance:

– “China remains firm in its commitment to strengthening friendship and cooperation with other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and to forging a new form of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation.”²³

– “We call on the people of all countries to work together to build a community with a shared future for mankind, to build an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity.”²⁴

– “We should respect each other, discuss issues as equals, resolutely reject the Cold War mentality and power politics, and take a new approach to developing state-to-state relations

with communication, not confrontation, and with partnership, not alliance.”

– “China remains firm in pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace.”

– We respect the right of the people of all countries to choose their own development path.”

– “China will never pursue development at the expense of others’ interests, but nor will China ever give up its legitimate rights and interests. No one should expect us to swallow anything that undermines our interests.”

– “No matter what stage of development it reaches, China will never seek hegemony or engage in expansion.”

– “China will deepen relations with its neighbors in accordance with the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness and the policy of forging friendship and partnership with its neighbors.”²⁵

– “China will increase assistance to other developing countries, especially the least developed countries, and do its part to reduce the North-South development gap.”

– “China stands for democracy in international relations and the equality of all countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor.”

– “China supports the United Nations in playing an active role in international affairs, and supports the efforts of other developing countries to increase their representation and strengthen their voice in international affairs.”²⁶

So, according to this official text, if DPRK begin to behave like a friendly, cooperative, sincere neighbor, producing mutual security benefits, PRC will increase its assistance and deepen the bilateral relations, but if DPRK continues to behave in a irresponsible way, and sabotaging UN resolutions, Beijing may not fill obliged to apply these positive principles to Pyongyang anymore. Beijing already supported two UNSC resolutions imposing economic sanctions on DPRK. On the long term, China would like to see a separation of RoK and USA, an end of this alliance and Beijing would gladly agree to offer security guarantees to Seoul against DPRK and even against Japan. But it is not a foreseeable evolution on the short term. Even if economically speaking PRC and RoK are heavily connected, from a security point of

view, RoK still counts on US military protection against some of its neighbors.

Pyongyang behaves like an aggressor but invokes defensive goals

At least at the verbal level, Pyongyang is already an aggressor and the UN Charter prohibits not only the use of force but also the threat of it („threat against the peace”) – states must refrain from using threats against others.²⁷ A state threatening other in a credible way could be the (legitimate) target of a pre-emptive strike if the targeted state feels that its national security is at stake. Ballistic missile tests and accelerated nuclear arming have transformed the Korean Communist state into the greatest challenge of the international community nowadays. China is irritated by US pressures on it, to persuade the DPRK not to conduct ballistic tests and nuclear disarm, insisting that it does not have enough leverage to radically change the actions of Pyongyang. On 17 November a Chinese delegation went in Phiongyang to discuss with the NK president on the recent Communist Party Congress and likely also made a proposal – NK to stop its nuclear and missile experiences while USA and South Korea should abstain from organising military exercises near the Korean Peninsula. Before we can see the outcomes of the Trump-Kim meeting, in our opinion it is doubtful that this „mutual suspension” will be agreed by both DPRK and USA as long as they do not minimally trust each other. Accepting it, could be seen by domestic constituency in USA (by example the hawkish Republicans) as a sign of weakness, while Kim legitimates himself by intransigence towards the USA and other „capitalist” powers.

Anyway, on 5-6 August 2017 P. R. China voted alongside the USA an UN Security Council resolution that imposed new sanctions on North Korea, severely affecting its economy (by reducing incomes from three to two billion USD). Exports of coal, iron, copper, seafood from the North Korean state were forbidden, and third countries are not allowed to

hire other North Korean workers on their territory, nor are joint venture partnerships with North-Korean. The Chinese vote in UNSC. of the UN showed either that Beijing has lost control of its little rebel ally, or that it wishes to prevent an American military attack by taking multilateral measures. Beijing is unhappy that the US is bringing additional military equipment to South Korea and Japan to counter North Korea, including the THAAD anti-missile system and the apparently installed radar in South Korea, which can actually act to block the Chinese attacks in response to possible US aggressions. China complains that by implementing the embargo decided by UNSC, it will bear an increased cost because of its traditional economic relations with Pyongyang (e.g. the import of cheap Korean coal). The North's threats to the US and the South are linked to the presence of American troops in the peninsula, taking part in exercises with the southern troops - Pyongyang would like to see these troops leave and the US to withdraw the 28,000 soldiers from the southern area before

accepting any discussions on nuclear disarmament. Obviously, China would like this too, so there is no reason to deny the Pyongyang demands...

Although heavily pressed by the United States, China knew that in the end it is able to influence the behavior of the North Korean leader to stop him from continuing the nuclear program and aggressive ballistic missile testing. Officially Beijing is also asking the denuclearization of North Korea. The missile launched in July 2017 has shown that the Korean communist state can reach targets in the US, which is considered unacceptable by many American decision-makers and citizens. On August 9, the President of DPRK allowed general Kim Rak Gyom, commander of the Korean People's Army's Strategic Force, to threaten the US that the DPRK will send Hwasong-12 ballistic missiles 30-40 km from the Guam Islands ("They will fly 3 356.7 km for 1,065 seconds and hit the waters 30 to 40 km from Guam") after Donald Trump said the communist state risks a devastating war (" fire



Sursa: CNN și <https://theintercept.com/2017/05/03/north-korea-wants-to-convince-the-world-it-can-nuke-hawaii-donald-trump-is-happy-to-oblige/>

and anger“). There are US soldiers in Guam, and killing one of them as a result of Korean shooting would certainly force Washington to give a vigorous response.²⁸ Of course, there is no evidence that the Hwansong 12 missiles can go that distance and can be precise. But it became crystall clear that the possibility of an American attack against Pyongyang has increased. China cannot remain impassable in the event of a US attack producing a massive material and human destruction, with North Korean refugees storming Chinese (and Russian though access is much more difficult) borders, or in a somewhat less plausible hypothesis that the North Korean population would try the expulsion of the Pyongyang communist regime and ask for the eventual reunification with South Korea.²⁹ Some researchers stated that China lost control on DPRK during the last years and is tired of Pyongyang excesses and brutal/insolent movements, so, in case of an internal rebellion and even regime change, Chinese would intervene only to secure their interests there.³⁰ But this was seen as not true: Kim visited China twice in the Spring of 2018 and had consultations with president Xi Jinping.

What if the communist regime crumbles

Something seems sure. A large Korean state dominated by the US and Japan would be unacceptable to Beijing (meaning the lost of a valuable strategic buffer),³¹ which would tolerate foreign intervention only if receiving credible guarantees for the preservation of its sphere of influence in the peninsula or the perpetual neutrality of the new unified state, and even guarantees from the other permanent members of the UNSC. May be also a guarantee regarding a likely unification with Taiwan. But it would not be rational to expect a military intervention by PR China (not even with Russia) to defend North Korea from a US attack, provided Pyongyang attacks first and is widely seen as aggressor. China will not risk the devastation of its economy and material assets for defending a turbulent and unreliable ally. But on the other hand, it seems now unlikely

that Washington will decide on a preemptive attack on Pyongyang (especially since it may be internationally condemned as an aggressor, and risks not convincing all other permanent members of the UN Security Council that the attack is justified, not to mention the real risk that Pyongyang will strike with missiles and heavy artillery targets in South Korea and Japan), thus it is clear that the risk of a Sino-American or Sino-Russian-American-Korean war (with or without the presence of NATO states such as the United Kingdom and Canada) is low.

Donald Trump was in Beijing on November 8-10, 2017 (part of a 12 days trip in Asia) and again urged China to determine Pyongyang to drop its nuclear program and ballistic missiles. According to Trump, “China can fix this problem quickly and easily” but Beijing is not so optimistic. The US seems willing to accept negotiations but also has the military solution. Trump condemned the atrocities committed by Pyongyang against its own civilian population, calling it a totalitarian criminal regime.

I think the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is certainly in possession of intervention plans in North Korea in order to prevent regime change and rapid reunification under Washington’s control. It may intervene in a situation of civil war and even subtle external intervention (hybrid war), but we believe it will not risk a war against US-led states (Japan, Australia etc.). But on August 11, one of Beijing’s semi-official newspapers, the Global Times, said the PRC should remain neutral if Pyongyang attacks the US unprovoked: “China should also make it clear that if North Korea launches missiles that threaten US the first and the US retaliates, China will stay neutral.” Yet China will likely intervene if Washington and Seoul will try to change the political regime in the North and change the status quo in the peninsula. But it is possible to intervene using hybrid-specific methods, camouflaging her presence in the battle zone as well as possible.

What becomes clear on the day is that China and Russia have tolerated the development of nuclear armed forces in a state led by an irresponsible leader, building its legitimacy by cultivating highly conflicting behavior with the world’s greatest military power.

Beijing cannot be a hundred percent sure that a loyal Communist regime will control North Korea in the future, that is why the possibility of a hostile regime having access to the nuclear weapons that the communists now develops is worrisome for it. Logically, China is likely sincere when stating it did not want the DPRK to have access to nuclear weapons but could not block this evolution without the risk of losing its small strategic partner, one of the few that it has. China's worst fears concerns a full-fledged war against the US, which would probably involve the use of nuclear weapons at some point – an example is a Chinese striking attack against Taiwan, to force reunification after Taiwan announces that reunification is no more a valid scenario.

To avoid any such accident leading to war with nuclear powers, the Chinese have the official doctrine of “no first use” (NFU), meaning they will never use the first such weapons unless they are attacked by a state equipped with nuclear weapons. Beijing lacked nuclear weapons in the years 50's and was unable to counter US military superiority in technology otherwise than sacrificing large amounts of infantry. Then in the 60's it developed its own atomo-nuclear weapons (first nuclear test in 1964) first to “curb and stop nuclear blackmail”, then to maintain “effective counter-nuclear attack deterrence” – decision-makers thought it as absolutely necessary to prevent nations owing nuclear weapons from “blackmailing” those without them. Since the 80's, the official concept is “effective counter-nuclear attack deterrence.”³² It means that PLA must possess enough nuclear counter-attack capabilities able to survive an enemy first nuclear attack and immediately to launch retaliatory nuclear strikes. Radar, satellites (surveillance capabilities), survival capabilities (including an anti-missile modern system), effective strategic communication and precision strikes are vital, but also the deterrent – China must be credible and effective in its threats, and, if war breaks, be able to destroy about 30% of the enemy's main targets such as cities and big military bases.³³ Some military high officers in PLA would like China to abandon the NFU doctrine so as to make the nuclear deterrent more credible and the decision-making procedure more quick in

case of need, but the mainstream, including president Xi Jinping, prefer to keep the NFU. A US-based Chinese analyst, Nan Li, who opposes the idea of abandoning NFU, stated that, since the US has a big advantage over China in nuclear capabilities, “an additional concern is that if the gap in nuclear capability is too large, if the weaker side abandons NFU, it may trigger a pre-emptive nuclear strike by a superior opponent”³⁴

It is important that Beijing convince Pyongyang to accept the same NFU nuclear doctrine, but the problem is that DPRK likely managed to possess missiles and loads able to rich US territory or is very close to that. China also possess them, in much greater quantity (American territory is vulnerable to Chinese missiles fires from submarines and also from the land), but I think the US will not allow DPRK the same level of existential threat as allowed to People's Republic of China.³⁵ *Quod licet Jovis not licet bovis*. It is likely that some Chinese decision-makers are not unhappy with the fact that DPRK could hit US territory and militaries capabilities, with the condition that DPRK leader remains a rational actor and does not initiate a war by itself.

US as the big „nemesis” for DPRK

Various polls such as that of Gallup (September 2017) show that even if most of the Americans are against foreign military adventures, they would agree even with a US pre-emptive strike on North Korea if “the U.S. cannot achieve its goals by more peaceful means first.” About 58% of them are ready to accept such an outcome. One should remember that in January 2003 Gallup indicated only 47% support for a pre-emptive attack.³⁶ But nowadays only 38% of the Americans think that Kim Jong Un could likely launch a nuclear missile attack on US territory, while 59% see this as a bluff. Especially the Republican electorate is more open to the military solution, mirroring Trump's declarations. The general American hostility towards DPRK has been increased by the existence of some American hostages, people who came in North Korea and were imprisoned in harsh conditions. The truth is that

among the 14 US citizens who were detained there, many crossed the North Korea border illegally and went for religious (Christian) proselytism, which are forbidden by the local laws. One student-tourist, Otto Warmbier, was put in jail for “stealing” a propaganda poster from a hotel and after more than a year in prison, he suffered a coma and died immediately after the repatriation in USA. Any attempt at normalizing US-DPRK relations have to begin by the Northern release and repatriation of the hostages (the same is true with Japanese and South Korean ones). Pyongyang indeed freed the American hostages to ease bilateral negotiations for peace. North Korea has abducted during the last decades a lot of foreigners, among other Japanese, to make them teachers of foreign languages for local spies/intelligence centers.

On the other side, the stalinist leader of DPRK considers not only one but some states to be enemies for his homeland but among them, the USA is by far perceived as most dangerous and this has good historical and ideological reasons. USA was the actor which successfully blocked the unification of the peninsula under the communist regime in 1950-1953 (dropping perhaps as much as 635,000 tons of bombs on the northern cities and military bases, more than the quantity dropped on Japan during W.W.II) and put resistance to DPRK claims under the UN umbrella. But Washington was reluctant in the years 90's to launch a pre-emptive strike and prevent DPRK from becoming a nuclear state because that could lead to a war in that peninsula and put at great risk US local allies, Japan and South Korea.³⁷ The new National Security Strategy endorsed by the Trump presidential administration at the end of 2017 is extremely tough on DPRK issue and mentions this trouble-maker state („rogue state”) about 17 times in its 55 pages:

– „We are rallying the world against the rogue regime in North Korea.”³⁸

– “At the same time, the dictatorships of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran are determined to destabilize regions, threaten Americans and our allies, and brutalize their own people.”³⁹

– “Access to technology empowers and emboldens otherwise weak states. North Ko-

rea—a country that starves its own people—has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons that could threaten our homeland.”⁴⁰

– “North Korea seeks the capability to kill millions of Americans with nuclear weapons.”⁴¹

– “As missiles grow in numbers, types, and effectiveness, to include those with greater ranges, they are the most likely means for states like North Korea to use a nuclear weapon against the United States. North Korea is also pursuing chemical and biological weapons which could also be delivered by missile.”⁴²

– “Three main sets of challengers— the revisionist powers of China and Russia, the rogue states of Iran and North Korea, and transnational threat organizations, particularly jihadist terrorist groups—are actively competing against the United States and our allies and partners.”⁴³

– “North Korea is ruled as a ruthless dictatorship without regard for human dignity. For more than 25 years, it has pursued nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in defiance of every commitment it has made. Today, these missiles and weapons threaten the United States and our allies. _ e longer we ignore threats from countries determined to proliferate and develop weapons of mass destruction, the worse such threats become, and the fewer defensive options we have.”⁴⁴

– “North Korea and Iran also pose the greatest menace to those closest to them.” (45)...

– “ North Korea’s pursuit of these weapons poses a global threat that requires a global response. Continued provocations by North Korea will prompt neighboring countries and the United States to further strengthen security bonds and take additional measures to protect themselves. And a nuclear- armed North Korea could lead to the proliferation of the world’s most destructive weapons across the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.”⁴⁵

– “We remain ready to respond with overwhelming force to North Korean aggression.”⁴⁶

The NSS tells us that the USA general goal in the Korean Peninsula is denuclearization and a non-proliferation regime, and that DPRK’s negative aims have to be countered by

a coalition of states, not only by Washington. The cooperation with local power poles Japan and South Korea will prepare them for installing anti-missile defensive systems (“are defense capability”⁴⁷) thus countering aggressive DPRK goals. Also Europe is seen by the NSS as a key partner in countering threats from Russia, North Korea and Iran.⁴⁸ US knows that its alliance system is an important element of national power: the National Defence Strategy (2018) stated that “Mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are crucial to our strategy, providing a durable, asymmetric strategic advantage that no competitor or rival can match. This approach has served the United States well, in peace and war, for the past 75 years. Our allies and partners came to our aid after the terrorist attacks on 9/11, and have contributed to every major U.S.-led military engagement since.”⁴⁹ At the same time, the military budget within the proposed 2019 Trump administration budget rose to 686 billion USD, that means a 15% increase compared to 2017. About 10 billion will be allocated for financing the fifth-generation F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and new B-21 Long Range Strike bomber who are destined to strike targets and escape anti-aircraft advanced systems like those operated by China, Russia and perhaps, in the future, DPRK.

All the missile and nuclear loads experiments made in DPRK are aimed at preventing an US attack, thus having a deterrent role. Western experts, including the CIA analysts, generally agree that Kim Jong Un is a **rational actor** who will not risk a devastating war against USA and its allies. His main goals are preservation of his political power and his family dynastic grip on power⁵⁰, and the increase of DPRK power status in international relations. He did not launch any missile during the great congress of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2017 or during Trump’s visit in China (November), knowing that this would extremely anger his Chinese protectors. The only problem is that his actions could push towards an unintended war, if he misinterprets the American words and facts and try to push the limits to get more benefits. There are two main scenarios for an US attack on DPRK: if the Americans believe that Kim is irrational and

prepares for an attack, the best answer would be a pre-emptive strike. Or, if Kim’s actions put the US leadership (president Trump and his circle) under such pressure that doing nothing would result in extreme decredibilization (and image loss), thus Trump may feel obliged to initiate a punishing attack. Their mutual jokes about „who has the bigger nuclear button” could turn into a tragedy for their nations.

The well-known American international relations professor Kenneth Waltz, when analyzing the risks for a nuclear war among states in the last 80’s of the previous century and envisaging the situation of revolutionary regimes facing great or regional powers stated that :

“...many fear that states that are radical at home will recklessly use their nuclear weapons in pursuit of revolutionary ends abroad. States that are radical at home, however, may not be radical abroad. Few states have been radical in the conduct of their foreign policy, and fewer have remained so for long. Think of the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China. States coexist in a competitive arena. The pressures of competition cause them to behave in ways that make the threats they face manageable, in ways that enable them to get along. States can remain radical in foreign policy only if they are overwhelmingly strong—as none of the new nuclear states will be—or if their radical acts fall short of damaging vital interests of nuclear powers. States that acquire nuclear weapons will not be regarded with indifference. States that want to be freewheelers have to stay out of the nuclear business. (.....) **Nuclear weapons induce caution, especially in weak states.**”⁵¹ So, more caution and less miscalculations for any leader of a nuclear state, in his opinion.

Of course, one of the US’s main concerns is not to antagonize China on DPRK issue, as many American officials claim the need to keep open the strategic dialogue with Beijing and integrate China into the regional and global arrangements, avoiding conflicts and zero-sum security patterns. Also, as R. Haass emphasized, the US must „dissuade its friends and allies from acting unilaterally or provocatively” and make them understand that sometimes it is better to accept the existence of long-term conflicts rather than resolving them with hard

means.⁵² In the future, Washington must ask Beijing what kind of guarantees it would be ready to accept for a US-China consensual regime change in Pyongyang and maybe also a peaceful reunification of the peninsula. Seoul must know the American long-term intentions towards a post-Communist North Korea and even a reunified Korea.⁵³ On the other side, if US will attack using a pre-emptive pattern, and DPRK would immediately retaliate by destroying civilian targets and killing lots of people in RoK (also killing some of the US military located in RoK), then US could be sure of losing RoK as an ally, since polls have shown that at least 59% of the South-Koreans oppose an American first strike against the North.⁵⁴ No future South Korean president could convince the population to support US military plans after such a catastrophe. Nowadays, the US National Security Strategy states that: „Our alliance and friendship with South Korea, forged by the trials of history, is stronger than ever.”⁵⁵ Losing South Korea would be a huge geostrategic blow for Washington in the power game with China and Japan.

The US decision to demand and impose sanctions on Russia and North Korea in August 2017 also clearly affected Russia's calculations, not just China's one. Russia is a strategic partner and possibly ally of China in a confrontation with the US (if China gives up its official doctrine of opposing to any permanent military alliance), also the main source for Chinese import of weapons/military systems, plus natural gas, but the Russian economy is getting weaker (because of the sanctions related to the aggression in Ukraine), so it can only give Beijing a convenient access to natural energy (oil, gas) and conventional weapons (submarines, planes, etc.). We also know that Russia does not have the ability/will to calm Pyongyang, nor are viable solutions in case of exacerbation of East Asian tensions. President Putin seems to admire some of the skills of Kim Jong Un. He stated that : “I think that Mr Kim Jong Un has obviously won this round. He has completed his strategic task: he has a nuclear weapon, he has missiles of global reach, up to 13,000 km, which can reach almost any point of the globe.”⁵⁶ Speaking about the need for negotiations, he presented Kim in a positive tone,

suggesting he is rational and efficient: “He is already a shrewd and mature politician.”⁵⁷

USA is the main military sponsor and protector of RoK, providing it with weapons, ammunitions and missiles, installing even an anti-missile shield and helping Seoul be able to target all DPRK's territory. The Americans are also wary because of the cyber-threat related to DPRK: an US cyber-security monitoring group Fire Eye announced that a NK hacker network that it has labelled “APT37” (from “Advanced Persistent Threat”) is using various viruses like Wannacry, likely on orders from the communist regime.

Obviously, China and Russia acknowledge and accept this situation, since they cannot do something to reverse this trend and determine US not to interfere in the relations between the two Korean states.

Kim Jong Un always stated that the denuclearization is not a negotiable issue and that the people will not accept being put in a dangerous situation by giving up these weapons and missiles. He invokes the cases of Iraq and Libya, where dictators without nuclear weapons had been removed from power by US/Western military interventions. But he is a dictator, not an elected leader, therefore, if he changes his opinion and allow quick denuclearization in exchange for money, peace and legitimacy, his nation will not have the classical tools to remove him from power. Of course, a coup d' état is not entirely impossible in the future, more likely than a mass revolt.

Who could convince Pyongyang to negotiate and accept a compromise?

People's Republic of China would likely prefers a **Washington-Pyongyang agreement leading to NK giving up nuclear weapons if the US accepts to withdraw the 28,500 troops from South Korea, uninstall the THAAD system, and give up the military exercises with the South and Japan in the Korean peninsula.** It would also push for the US to give up its support to Taiwan, in which case China could eventually tacitely accept the elimination of the Pyongyang regime, but not

the unification of the Korean peninsula under American control. President Xi Jinping's position has been clearly strengthened by the CCP congress in October and he will control Chinese foreign and security policy more strictly, unhindered by his colleagues in the CCP. The communist regime of DPRK is against any compromise. Being a totalitarian regime, it abhors even the idea of a compromise with the enemies.

One should also mention that NK chairman Kim Jong Un used a lot of gross insults and ironies towards US's leader Trump („old, dottard, mentally ill" etc), as he probably thinks that the US will not dare attack his country and that his nuclear program cannot be blocked by a foreign intervention because the enemies estimate that the cost of their intervention would overpass the advantages to be obtained. So, Kim looks like a rational actor, but it's possible that he does not really understand the patterns of domestic politics in USA and the D. Trump's need for prestige and legitimacy towards his own citizens. And maybe he is too convinced that China will risk a war for him, which likely will not be the case. Thus, his deterrent capability could be over-estimated. But around 20-23 November, Trump will decide

if US puts North Korea on the list of terrorist states (with Syria, Iran, Sudan). It has been on the list between 1998-2008, after Phyongiang shot down a civilian South Korean airplane in 1987, making 115 dead. G. W . Bush Jr agreed in 2008 to take it from the list in exchange for promises of nuclear facilities control. A promise which was not kept. More than that, in 2010 DPRK was blamed for the sinking of a South Korean navy ship that killed 46 sailors. Anyway, D. Trump said that he will abstain from calling Kim the „short and fat man", but he labelled him „rocket-man". In the end, even if killing/assassinating a foreign political leader is not allowed by US laws, it is technically possible for Washington to try to eliminate the dictator using a precision strike. DPRK is still in a state of war with the United Nations powers, no peace treaty was signed after 1953, only an armistice, so Kim Jong Un is not totally covered and protected by international laws of war. Ideally, such a strike must destroy also the politician or military that Kim may have prepared to succede him – an internal strife could begin and end in a civil war or in a national compromise.

But the fact is that on 29 November 2017, DPRK may have tested its most advanced in-

North Korean missile



Sursa: <http://www.herald.co.zw/latest-north-korea-fires-ballistic-missile-over-japan/>

tercontinental ballistic missile until now, one which could be capable of reaching the United States. It flew at a very high altitude. The solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missiles are the most dangerous, as their launch is difficult to anticipate and detect.

If the “dual suspension” proposal, made by Beijing and Moscow, is not accepted by Pyongyang and Washington, then the risk of a violence spiral leading to war becomes more and more visible. Such a missile could hit an American plane⁵⁸, even a civilian one, flying over Japan and Trump will not play the moderate in such a situation. The Vigilant Ace exercise deployed by US and South Korea (December 2017) was vehemently criticized by Kim Jong Un, on defensive grounds, but his critics are seen in US as marks of offensive behavior. US senator Lindsey Graham spoke about a preventive war, since DPRK could hit US territory. Even HR McMaster said that the likelihood of a war increases each day, while James Mattis said in mid-December 2017 that in his opinion North Korea “has not yet shown to be a capable threat against us right now.”

The negotiation of the two Korea leaders to ensure future DPRK participation in Winter Olympics in South Korea has been a good beginning for trust-building process. US encouraged this initiative, China also did. Pyongyang has eventually agreed to take part in the Pyeong Chang Olympics games, while Seoul convinced Washington to postpone the South Korean-US common military drill until the end of March 2018. If the USA would accept another postponement, this could be seen as a sign of weakness by DPRK leadership, this increasing its aggressiveness. RoK's President Moon Jae-in, who is a liberal and pacifist, is constantly under the pressure of hawkish conservative opposition politicians, who disapprove any sign of “appeasement” given to Pyongyang. But one must know that former conservative presidents Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye were not able to deter North-Korean military adventurism, in spite of their harsh rhetoric and intransigence. Now, Moon and the North Korean leader Kim had managed to agree even on a telephone red line which relies the Blue House and the North Korea Commission for

State Affairs. This is a sign of common will to avoid unnecessary and accidental escalation, to maintain the political dialogue.

If, in spite of all risks (and against any predictions specific to rational actor model in the social sciences), Kim Jong Un would decide to attack an American target (or targets in South Korea or Japan), China will be put into dramatic situation to decide quickly whether he supports his ally with the risk of engaging in a devastating and unwanted regional war (especially an economically unnecessary action) or stay apart and lose a strategic pawn, assisting in the thwarting of the last Stalinist communist regime of the world and the transformation of Korea into a large pro-American state (with yankee troops also reaching the border with China in the north of the peninsula). Keeping the proportions in another strategic context, it would be like Tsarist Russia in July 1914, when Austro-Hungary was preparing to attack Serbia after Belgrade had partially rejected the ultimatum. Certainly, the Beijing regime is not yet facing massive revolutionary risks among its own population, as was the case with Russia more than a century ago.

The main questions to be asked are: what is really thinking Kim Jong Un, what are his aims? What think the Chinese decision-makers (especially Xi Jinping) about DPRK and how they interpret the actions and words of Kim? How the American decision-makers (especially D. Trump but not only him) see the DPRK's actions and Kim's words? What the Americans and Chinese leaders know about the way each of them sees North-Korean aims, actions and words?

I think DPRK is a troubling factor for the long-term rivalry-cooperation mix which characterizes USA-PRC relations after the Cold War. China and US are engaged in an enduring security dilemma mechanism and in spite of their strong economic interdependence, they perceive each other as geopolitical rivals in East Asia. The US National Security Strategy (2017) and US National Defence Strategy describe PRC as a strategic competitor which seeks for regional hegemony in a zero sum strategic game with Washington:

“As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an

all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future. The most far-reaching objective of this defense strategy is to set the military relationship between our two countries on a path of transparency and non-aggression.”⁵⁹

The PRC’s desire to control 80% of the South China Sea, to create artificial islands on former reefs, is linked to the need to keep the US navy far away from this area and prevent US local allies to interfere in it. The same goes for the Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in East China Sea. China expects the US at some point to allow its unification with Taiwan and a more equitable redécoupage of spheres of interest. It foresees that USA will have to allow or to be constrained and retreat from the region. While the US wants the „Indo-Pacific region” to stay „free and open”, Beijing sees this huge area as its natural area of expansion and claim sovereign rights on some islands and waters.

PRC’s official security/defence documents generally do not present USA as an enemy or threatening rival but the statements of main politicians allow us to see the high level of irritation and anxiety generated by American positions and actions. In this game, North Korea is theoretically kept as a valuable asset to negotiate but DPRK leader seems willing to play its own political-strategic game and not to accept Chinese scenarios. He perceived his country and USA as caught in a conflict spiral and he is reluctant to appease and de-escalate, fearing to be seen as a coward and Washington to interpret this as weakness. Of course, Kim Jong Un would be extremely happy if the USA would withdraw its forces from East Asia and abandon South Korea and Japan, without a war. He is not really disturbed by prospects of a Chinese hegemony. In fact, it is likely that both PRC and DPRK have the geopolitical aim to break the strategic triangle USA-RoK-Japan. There are strategists who think that Kim Jong Un’s real design is to achieve the unification of the Korean Peninsula under communist rule, using the Chinese strategy to block US sea and air access east of the Korean space and preparing for a war.⁶⁰

But now, Kim is playing the Chinese against the Americans, claiming he is free to conduct any nuclear exercise as long as his state is sovereign and is under constant threat. This means that Beijing may feel irritated, frustrated, by the lack of response by Pyongyang and see that it really lost control on Kim’s regime. The fact that Tokyo and Seoul may decide to arm themselves with nuclear weapons (some experts say that Japan could convert its civilian capabilities in military ones and have even an arsenal of 6.000 nuclear weapons while South Korea has 24 nuclear reactors and enough spent fuel to extract plutonium for 4.300 bombs)⁶¹ is a worrisome perspective for Beijing and Moscow, but also for Washington. It is true that during his electoral campaign Trump asked these states to get ready to acquire nuclear military devices (on the condition they pay more for the presence of US troops on their territory)⁶² but later he refrained to repeat his call. But beyond that, China is not willing to accept a Korean reunification under the US umbrella and the USA knows this aspect. The only way to prevent a war in Korea, which could expand in other areas, is to build confidence and trust while keeping enough deterrence forces. Negotiations among the great powers, sometimes with support of UN and other institutions, could help get a positive result.

Conclusions

It is the political and moral duty of USA and China to encourage an open political dialogue between DPRK and RoK even after the winter Olympic Games in which the North send sportman and sportwomen, a cheer-squad, an orchestra and also some top-politicians (Kim Jong Nam, the ceremonial head of state, and the sister of Kim Jong Un, Kim Yo Jong). There has already been an inter-Korean summit at Panmunjom on 27 April 2018⁶³, the previous one being held in 2007 (and the first in 2000), even if, from a technical point of view, the two Koreas are still in a state of war. The South Korean president Moon and the Northern communist leader Kim Jong Un met face to face and symbolically crossed together, hand in hand, the border near the demilitarized zone,

in both senses and pledged to work for a total denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. They committed themselves to end all hostile activities on earth, on the sea and in the air and then begin the denuclearization process for all the peninsula. The final statement contains a non-aggression agreement "that precludes the use of force in any form against each other".⁶⁴ Obviously, the main priority is a final peace agreement to replace the current armistice, plus denuclearization guarantees, then cultural-economic exchanges and perhaps negotiations for the reunification. Moon is certainly waiting for the US approval to continue this process.⁶⁵ The final statement speaks about trilateral or quadrilateral meetings of RoK, DPRK, USA and China, also about phased disarmament and confidence-building. On May 7 and 8, Kim again went in China and met Xi Jinping in the city of Dalian, likely to prepare the US-North Korean summit and ask China to give him diplomatic support.

On the other side, the hawkish camp within the Trump republican administration still continues to contemplate a pre-emptive strike and managed to block the nomination of Victor D. Cha as Ambassador to South Korea due to his opposition to the idea of a preventive attack. Cha is a notorious Asian security expert, an American academic with good reputation, and he is an adept of negotiations with the DPRK, while Mc Master, the former national security adviser, would have accepted the strike (the so-called "bloody nose" strategy)⁶⁶, believing that the North Koreans stands only some months away from the ability to hit U.S. territory using a nuclear weapon. His successor John Bolton is also a very hawkish politician and an adept of violent sanctions imposed on DPRK. In an article published in February 2018 in Wall Street Journal he asked for a pre-emptive strike on DPRK, seen as "imminent threat". Bolton is president Trump's third national security adviser after Michael Flynn and Mc Master, and probably the most conservative of all of them.

Now, Washington is preparing in details the Trump-Kim meeting of June and Mike Pompeo, then CIA head, stated on Fox News channel on March 11 that "President Trump isn't doing this for theater."⁶⁷ He's going to solve a problem". Pompeo replaced Rex Tillerson as

state secretary and is favorable to the Trump-Kim summit, while ousted Tillerson was not. The US press disclosed the fact that Mike Pompeo, then still the CIA head, had made a secret visit in North Korea and met Kim Jong Un, in the beginning of April. Trump also alluded to Pompeo's mission when he stated on tweeter that the United States was in direct talks with North Korea at "extremely high levels," and that the White House was examining five sites for a potential meeting of the two leaders.⁶⁸ Then, Pompeo again flew to Pyongyang (from Tokyo) and met Kim Jong Un on May 9 to discuss the bilateral incoming summit and he managed to obtain the immediate release of the three American citizens who were still in North Korean jails. He probably also mentioned that US stands for the legitimate security interests of Japan.

If DPRK agrees to promise to halt all nuclear and missile testing the meeting will be held, otherwise it will be cancelled. One possible huge blow for the USA would be if the summit begins and then Kim orders a missile launch during the workings. This could be a humiliating posture for Trump and his Republican Party. I think USA will not agree with less that DPRK giving up its nuclear program (under international/UN supervision), while Kim is ready to agree with a diminution/slowing of nuclear and missiles programs but in the end if China stands with USA, Kim will likely accept an agreement similar to the Iran-UN powers JCPOA signed in 2015. It would be a sign that the North Korean economy is really bankrupted and the communist regime risks a collapse. It is possible that Kim follows the example of Iran and accepts to give up the nuclear tests but keeps alive the missile experiments and the terrorist/rogue activities against other states' interests. But the fate of JCPOA (denounced/rejected by USA in May 2018) is a warning for Kim Jong Un that the Americans may not respect their commitments in the near future! If Iranian leaders approve new nuclear experiments, the North Korean top leader could do the same. Trump will probably ask Kim to give up quickly some of its missiles (like Hwasong 14 and 15), abandoning the submarine-launched ballistic missiles with long range, while Kim will ask first a reduc-

tion of economic sanctions. If Kim complies, US could even offer a non-aggression treaty, after some verifications (inspections) rounds if Pyongyang proves its good faith.⁶⁹

The maximum that Kim could obtain would be: to get prestige from face to face meeting a US president, legitimacy for his regime, avoid war, manage to keep part of its nuclear program untouched and be able to drive a wedge between South Korea on one side and US plus Japan on the other side, while also determining Trump to withdraw some economic sanctions in exchange for promises. He could even share with Trump a Nobel prize for peace, if their cooperation become spectacular... Also he would like a definitive cancellation of US-South Korean-Japanese military exercises near the peninsula. The maximum that Trump could obtain from Pyongyang would be a commitment for nuclear disarmament and giving up inter-continental ballistic missiles, while US would manage to keep some of its troops as a peace-force in South Korea. But why would Kim Jong Un suddenly agree to give up the nuclear program, when him and his predecessors (including his father) made such tremendous efforts and allocated huge resources to research and production of nuclear substances? He saw what happened to Libya, whose dictatorial leader accepted to give up all the WMD technologies in order to have good relations with the Western states – after that he was killed by rebels with American and European support. I don't think a solution like that of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis could be easy to reach because of the huge power asymmetry between USA (the world number one in military affairs) and DPRK (one of the poorest country but with some strong military advantages). **It is highly unlikely that Kim will accept a real and rapid nuclear disarmament of his country – this would contradict all his previous actions, behavior and rationality.** He will probably win time and some funds, while improving his country's image.

The solution to the Korean crisis will also have a certain effect on Iran crisis: if there will be a peaceful resolution of the Korean conflict, then the Iranian regime may also try to re-negotiate another denuclearization agreement, seeing that the possession of nuclear weapons

is no more a sine qua non for the security of countries which have tensions with Washington. Even if Trump rejected the JCPOA, a future US democrat president (if elected) will probably agree with another treaty (JCPOA 2) in order to avoid a serious split with EU western states. But if Kim manages to diplomatically win a victory without nuclear disarmament, then the Ayatollahs' regime in Tehran may be tempted to resume at some point the nuclear activities for military purposes.⁷⁰ In the recent history, Iran and North Korea kept close relations and even exchanged expertise on nuclear and missile issues. They both see the USA as their main enemy. If Pyongyang normalizes its relations with Washington, pressure will increase on Tehran to do the same and prepare for more concessions.

Of course, irrespectively of the Trump-Kim summit (or a possible Trump-Moon-Kim summit as proposed by South Korean leader), Washington and Beijing must trust each other more and also rely on strong deterrence capabilities and this is the most difficult issue to achieve because they tend to perceive the security matrix in East and South-East Asia as a zero-sum game. Only a common pressure put on DPRK could achieve results such as Pyongyang agreeing to give up its nuclear program.

Note

^{*} J. Lindley French, "North Korea: My Big Bang Theory", <http://lindleyfrench.blogspot.ro/>, April 29, 2018.

^{**} Idem.

¹ DPRK is a 25 million people communist state in East Asia located in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula.

² Darcie Draudt, . John K. Warden, "The Strategic Rationale for Maritime Tension Reduction in the Yellow Sea", *The Washington Quarterly* No. 40:4, pp. 183–197, see page 184, https://twq.elliott.gwu.edu/sites/twq.elliott.gwu.edu/files/downloads/TWQ_Winter%202018_DraudtWarden.pdf.

³ Andrei Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2013, p.16.

⁴ Merle Pribbenow, "North Korean Pilots in the Skies over Vietnam", <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/north-korean-pilots-the-skies-over-vietnam>, published on December 1, 2011.

⁵ Ian Bremmer, *Superpower. Three Choices for America's Role in the World*, Portofolio-Penguin, UK-US, 2015, p. 133.

⁶ R. Haass, *A World in Disarray*, Penguin Press, New York, 2017, p. 127. Haass regrets the decision not to strike pre-emptively DPRK in the 90's.

⁷ The time limit for non-proliferation of centrifuges in 2025 and for enriched uranium the time limit in 2030.

⁸ Julian Borger, "Trump offers to sell 'sophisticated' military gear to Japan and South Korea", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/06/donald-trump-north-korea-arms-deal-japan-south-korea>, 7 September 2017.

⁹ After the RoK's agreement for US to install the THAAD, PR China implemented informal economic sanctions on South Korea accusing US for using the radar from Korea to spy on Chinese missile facilities. Seoul agreed to refrain from additional THAAD deployments because it suffered heavy economic losses, a proof that the economies of RoK and PRC are interdependent but RoK is in fact more dependent on PRC. Washington is not able to offer RoK enough economic benefits to compensate for Chinese sanctions – on the contrary, president Trump has threatened Seoul with a not so favorable economic regime because US has a trade deficit not only with Beijing and Tokyo but also with Seoul

¹⁰ The US had around 100 nuclear weapons in South Korea until September 27, 1991, then president G. W. Bush removed them as part of the plan to remove and destroy all US nuclear weapons deployed in important regions, including Northeast Asia. Using nuclear bombs from R.O.K., the US Army could attack DPRK in maximum 3 minutes and destroy all the targets in 20 minutes. Thus, the deterrence could be improved towards the DPRK. But moving these weapons in R.O.K. is highly provocative also for China and Russia. DPRK leader will feel no incentive to negotiate a disarmament agreement if US brings nuclear weapons in R.O.K. **Thus, deterrence works against confidence building and enhances proliferation.** Preferring one or the other entails costs and risks, in an uncertain environment.

¹¹ It should also be noted that the Pyongyang regime in the past has ordered its agents to kidnap Japanese and South Korean citizens as hostages or to use them in propaganda - only some were then returned, other were declared dead.

¹² "Juche Ideology", http://www.korea-dpr.com/juche_ideology.html, retrieved on February 10, 2018. Juche ideology, which was inscribed in the 1972 Constitution, puts the leader on the central place, as a guide of the people. See also <https://www.thoughtco.com/juche-195633>, accessed on February 12, 2018. One should mention that the economic autarky adopted by DPRK prevented it from following China in the movement towards becoming one of the main winners of globalization. North Korea remained poor, isolated from the world market, not being able to increase the living standards of the majority of its population.

¹³ "North Korea's 'reckless' missile launch over Japan sharply escalates tensions", <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-idUSKCN1B8283>, 29 august 2017.

¹⁴ Michael Elleman, "North Korea's Third ICBM Launch", 38 *North: Informed Analysis of North Korea*, 29 November 2017. See also "US missile expert: N. Korean missile larger than thought, could carry decoys", *Asia Times*, 28 December 2017, accessed on 19 December 2017.

¹⁵ Soyoung Kim, Cynthia Kim, "North Korea says will stop nuclear tests, scrap test site", <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles/north-korea-says-will-stop-nuclear-tests-scrap-test-site-idUSKBN1HR37J>, 21 April 2018.

¹⁶ Idem.

¹⁷ Reuters staff, "China keeps fuel exports to North Korea low in March as sanctions bite", <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-economy-trade-north-korea/china-keeps-fuel-exports-to-north-korea-low-in-march-as-sanctions-bite-idUSKBN1HV0KK>, 24 April 2018.

¹⁸ Carla Freeman, "Introduction. Continuity and Change in Chinese Expert View on North Korea" in Carla P. Freeman (editor), *China and North Korea*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp.1-2.

¹⁹ One example given by Freeman in her book is Deng Yuwen, deputy editor of the journal *Study Times* (*Xueshi Shibao*), who published in 2013 an editorial in the *Financial Times* advocating that China "should consider abandoning North Korea" and instead help the two Koreas reunify and thus RoK will not need anymore USA and Japan, since the unified Korea will be secure and prosperous. This way, China will get the unification of Taiwan without such a strong US opposition. After the publication, Deng was quickly fired, a proof that such ideas are still tabu in China. Idem, p. 3.

²⁰ The two female murderers – one young Vietnamese and one young Indonesian - are widely seen as agents of Pyongyang (or paid killers, supervised by at least seven North Korean agents in Kuala Lumpur) and the crime is seen as a political one, ordered personally by Kim Jong Un. President Kim has also ordered the execution of his uncle Jang Song-thaek in the past, thus his family male members are or will always be under threat.

²¹ Alastair I. Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China" in Peter Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 216-269.

²² Yu Shaohua, "Chinese Views of North Korea's Regional Role" in Carla P. Freeman (editor), *China and North Korea*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 81-90. See p. 82. Shaohua also stated that "North Korea believes that a tough attitude and behavior is beneficial to its own safety...it is undeniable that North Korea's extreme words and drastic measures have had negative impacts." (p. 83)

²³ Xi Jinping, "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era", Delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Beijing, October 18, 2017, pp. 52-54, available at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf (retrieved on January 29, 2018).

²⁴ Idem.

²⁵ Idem, p. 54.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Art. 39 of the UN Charter did not clearly defined aggression but it is clear that threatening is forbidden – "The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42,

to maintain or restore international peace and security.” UN Charter, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-viii/>, accessed on February 7, 2018. Article 2.4 prohibits the threats: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations **from the threat or use of force** against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.” This is an imperative obligation, of a negative type (not to do something) and is part of a *Jus Cogens* (peremptory) norm which forbids aggression against other states otherwise than for self-defence and UN collective security operations. Of course, DPRK always invokes the self-defence but it is not credible, since nobody attacked it after 1953. Even the war of 1950-1953 was provoked by DPRK aggression.

²⁸ NorthKoreagetsspecificwithitsGuamthreat, https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/north-korea-gets-specific-its-guam-threat?utm_source=Topics%2C%20Themes%20and%20Regions&utm_campaign=610a01c390-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_08_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_743c2bc617-610a01c390-53665973&mc_cid=610a01c390&mc_eid=e458c217a3, 19 August 2017.

²⁹ Valentin Naumescu, Este posibilă schimbarea regimului din Coreea de Nord? Momentul „exploziei” în Asia se apropie, <http://www.contributors.ro/global-europa/este-posibila-schimbarea-regimului-din-coreea-de-nord-momentul-%E2%80%99Exploziei%E2%80%9D-in-asia-se-apropie/>, 16 august 2017.

³⁰ Oriana Skylar Mastro, “Why China Won’t Rescue North Korea: What to Expect If Things Fall Apart”, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2017-12-12/why-china-wont-rescue-north-korea>, FA, January-February 2018 issue.

³¹ The US strategic thinker Richard Haass assumes that China is not ready to accept a US-umbrella unification of Korean peninsula but it is not willing to put an exaggerated pressures on DPRK because this “would trigger instability in NK, which would create a refugee crisis or more seriously, lead the North to do something desperate with its conventional armed forces, its nuclear weapons, or both.” R. Haass, *A World in Disarray*, Penguin Press, New York, 2017, p. 88.

³² Nan Li, “China’s Evolving Nuclear Strategy: Will China Drop “No First Use?”, *China Brief*, Volume 18, Issue 1, January 12, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-evolving-nuclear-strategy-will-china-drop-no-first-use/>.

³³ Idem.

³⁴ Idem.

³⁵ Serban F. Cioculescu, “Evoluții majore recente în politica de apărare a R.P. China, corelate cu marile configurații de securitate în Asia de Est”, *Monitor Strategic*, nr. 3-4/2017, pp. 37-59.

³⁶ More Back U.S. Military Action vs. North Korea Than in 2003, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/219134/back-military-action-north-korea-2003.aspx>, 15 September 2017

³⁷ R. Haass, op. cit., pp. 126-127.

³⁸ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, the President of the USA – White House, December 2017, <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017.pdf>, p. 3.

³⁹ Idem, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Idem, p. 3.

⁴¹ Idem, p. 7.

⁴² Idem, p. 8.

⁴³ Idem, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Idem, p. 26.

⁴⁵ Idem, p. 47.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Idem, p. 48.

⁴⁹ See the US-NDS, <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>, 2 February 2018.

⁵⁰ Nancy A. Youssef, US Officials See Kim as “Rational Actor”, http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/print/WSJ_-A008-20171206.pdf, published on December 6, 2017.

⁵¹ Kenneth Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Better,” *Adelphi Papers*, Number 171 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/waltz1.htm>, accessed on May 3, 2018. Among his main ideas, we can also quote these ones: “Where nuclear weapons threaten to make the cost of wars immense, who will dare to start them? Nuclear weapons make it possible to approach the deterrent ideal” and “nuclear weaponry makes miscalculation difficult because it is hard not to be aware of how much damage a small number of warheads can do.” Waltz is the best known proliferation optimist but there are also pessimists in this area of study. The nuclear asymmetry between two or more states could increase the risks of accidental war by miscalculation. Some leaders are more risk-takers when their states owns nuclear weapons than otherwise, thus over-estimating their deterrence force. See Robert Rauchhaus, “Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis. A Quantitative Approach”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Volume: 53 issue: 2, page(s): 258-277, April 2009.

⁵² R. Haass, op. cit., p. 263. He supports also China’s inclusion with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, if the Chinese are ready to fulfill the requirements.

⁵³ Ian Bremmer, *Superpower. Three Choices for America’s Role in the World*, Portofolio-Penguin, UK-US, 2015, pp. 180-181.

⁵⁴ Source: “Gallup Korea Poll”, September 2017, in Richard Bush, Michael O Hanlon, “Navigating Options on North Korea”, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/01/22/navigating-options-on-north-korea/>, 22 January 2018.

⁵⁵ NSS of the USA, idem., p. 46.

⁵⁶ “Putin says ‘shrewd and mature’ North Korean leader has ‘won this round’”, published by Reuters Staff, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-south-korea-talks-putin/putin-says-shrewd-and-mature-north-korean-leader-has-won-this-round-idUSKBN1F029U>, accessed on January 14 2018.

⁵⁷ Idem.

⁵⁸ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42218615>, accesat pe 20 martie 2018.

⁵⁹ Summary of the US National Defence Strategy, <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>, 30 January 2018.

⁶⁰ Julian Lindley French, “Korea Prospects?”, <http://lindleyfrench.blogspot.ro/>, 25 January 2018. “War is certainly a possibility in Korea, but not an option. First, Kim

could only achieve his objectives via some form of war. Second, any campaign or operational analysis suggests inevitable mass destruction in the event of a war with South Korea's capital Seoul dangerously vulnerable to massed artillery and missile attack."(...) There is some room for optimism. Evidence suggests that Chinese President Xi Jinping has little regard for Kim Jong-un and that a war on the Korean Peninsula is seen by Beijing as a potential nightmare."

⁶¹ David E. Sanger, Choe Sanh-Hun, Motoko Rich, "North Korea Rouses Neighbors to Reconsider Nuclear Weapons", 28 October 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/28/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-weapons-japan-south-korea.html>, accessed on January 16, 2018. Japan already has 10 tons of plutonium stored at home and 37 tonnes overseas. Both Tokyo and Seoul possess highly advanced missile technology. It seems that the future constitution of Japan will allow nuclear weapons but only for self-defence. Fewer than 10% of Japanese agree with owning nuclear weapons.

⁶² Idem.

⁶³ The intra-Korean summit in April, if really held, would be remembered as the first time a North Korean leader entered on South Korean territory since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. RoK's president Moon and the Northern leader Kim Jong-un, will meet at the Peace House, a South Korean facility located within the joint security area of Panmunjom, very close to the inter-Korean border. If it will end with a success, this will be a sign that the US-DPRK summit in May could also achieve a positive result.

⁶⁴ Two Koreans leaders joint statement, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea-statement-factb/factbox-two-korean-leaders-joint-statement-from-historic-summit-idUSKBN1HY16A>, accessed on April 27, 2019.

⁶⁵ Some days after this historic meeting, on May 2, a spokesman for the presidential Blue House stated that irrespective of the final agreement between Seoul and Pyongyang, the American troops must stay in RoK. In a press article, days before, South Korean presidential adviser and academic Moon Chung had said that if the inter-Korean deal would be signed it will be difficult for the South to justify why it keeps US troops on its territory. But Moon

would likely invoke the tense relations between Japan and China as a good reason. Jim Mattis, chief of Pentagon, suggested that US may be willing to negotiate with DPRK this sensitive topic. However, we think the level of these forces have to be reduced from 28.500 to half or less, otherwise China could pressure the North to refuse the deal.

⁶⁶ North Korea, Iran, and the Nuclear Posture Review, <https://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2018/02/16/north-korea-iran-nuclear-posture-review/>, 16 February 2018.

⁶⁷ Regional experts state that DPRK's successive leaders have sought for a direct meeting with US presidents for decades but issues regarding human rights and nuclear ambitions have prevented such an outcome. Recently, there has been three Americans arrested in North Korea and in 2017 an American student Otto Warmbier died of illness after being freed from North Korean custody. Trump accepted to meet Kim without prior asking the liberation of these hostages or a beginning of easing the human rights abuses. In May, Kim let the three Americans return in the USA with secretary of state Pompeo. The possibility to cut a deal with DPRK and do what other US presidents couldn't was a big temptation for Trump, according to Eurasia Group President Ian Bremmer speaking on CNN's "Fareed Zakaria GPS.. See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles/not-just-theater-u-s-officials-defend-trump-kim-meeting-idUSKCN1GN0J3>, accessed on March 12, 2018.

⁶⁸ M. Lander, M. Rosenberg, Mike Pompeo, "C.I.A. Director, Met With Kim Jong-un in North Korea", <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/17/world/asia/trump-japan-north-korea-summit-talks.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news>, accessed on April 19 2018.

⁶⁹ Three Objectives for the Trump-Kim Summit – Dr. Martin S. Navias, <https://besacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/781-Three-Objectives-for-the-Trump-Kim-Summit-Navias-final.pdf>, 27 March 2018.

⁷⁰ Eytan Gilboa, "The Trump-Kim Jong-un Summit: Nuclear Disarmament for Regime Survival?", BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 773, March 19, 2018.

ABSTRACT

There is a worldwide strong preoccupation with the scenario of a regional East-Asian war starting with a military confrontation between North Korea and USA. Washington has been the main adversary of DPRK since the beginning of the communist republic and the recent evolution in the peninsula, especially the frequent military exercises involving long-range missiles and nuclear loads tested by Pyongyang in spite of US, South Korea's and Japan's protests and UN resolutions, could eventually produce a war if the USA decides to use a pre-emptive strike against DPRK. People's Republic of China is the main political and economic backer of DPRK but Beijing agreed to contribute to US-led sanctions regime against most of Northern goods in order to make Northern leader Kim Jong Un comply with UN resolutions. It seems almost sure that at the end of May/beginning of June 2018 a presidential summit between USA and DPRK will be held, and this could be a great chance for peace and confidence-building, for a gradual disarmament. China must support this trend and discourage Kim to try to do another military provocative steps.

Keywords: North Korea, USA, China, security, nuclear, war, peace, arms-race, deterrence, reunification, negotiations.

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PUNCTE DE VEDERE

Pe buza prăpastiei. De la mare la mic, noi riscuri de securitate

Mirel ȚARIUC

Introducere

Lumea întreagă pare îngrijorată de localizarea ordinii internaționale de tip liberal pe marginea unei prăpastii¹. Cu alte cuvinte, se presupune că un pas făcut în direcția greșită ar putea însemna sfârșitul. Într-o primă concluzie, poate ar fi nimerit să stăm pe loc. Dar poate lumea să stea pe loc? Poate îngheța universul într-o situație care este departe de a-i mulțumi pe toți? Evident, NU! O alegere mai înțeleaptă ar putea fi reîntoarcerea cu câțiva pași – atâția cât prăpastia să nu mai fie atât de periculoasă sau măcar să uităm de existența ei. Pentru guverne, întoarcerea înseamnă sinucidere. Și, vrem nu vrem, în amenințata ordine liberală, guvernele decid. Decid democratic, firește, pe baza curentului popular care ne-a adus Brexit-ul, pe Donald Trump și, nu cu foarte mult timp în urmă, pe Adolf Hitler. Rămâne să o luăm la stânga sau la dreapta, pe buza hăului, atenți să nu alunecăm și dornici să ajungem undeva, unde este mai bine. Trebuie însă răspuns la o întrebare tranșantă: la stânga sau la dreapta?

În principiu, situația trebuie analizată meticolos, astfel încât alegerea să fie corectă și argumentată. În realitate, există pericolul, poate chiar certitudinea, că munca noastră va aduce situației exact ceea ce îi trebuie mai puțin: ceața. De atâta timp vorbim foarte mult spunând foarte puțin, încât pare că unicul nostru scop este de a convinge audiența că suntem grozavi, nicidecum de a-i face pe cei ce ne as-

cultă să înțeleagă ceva din opera noastră (pseudo) științifică. Explicăm la nesfârșit impactul pe care l-ar putea avea drobul de sare asupra existenței noastre, încercăm stocarea luminii într-un lighean, facem apologia furcii ca instrument ecologic și tradițional pentru depozitarea nucilor în pod². Respingem, desigur, deteriorarea echilibrului planetar prin îndepărtarea „bolovanului sărat”, risipirea cărămizilor prin tăierea ferestrelor, adoptarea de metode sau unelte străine identității noastre culturale multimilenare. Cu timpul, ceața devine negură, iar direcția eventual aleasă va trebui urmată pe pipăite, dar cu speranțe noi: să nu înceapă să bată vreun vânt prea puternic.

Totuși, pe modelul *trădătorului*³ Churchill, care a catalogat democrația *ca cea mai rea formă de guvernare, cu excepția tuturor celorlalte*, vom spune că analiza este, într-adevăr, timp pierdut, dar graba nu este justificată în momentele de cumpănă. Mai mult decât atât, vom afirma că analiza nu conține în sine nimic morbid și are chiar rost atunci când este obiectivă și poate conduce la soluții alternative. Pentru a ajunge la o soluție (și nu la soluția deja stabilită, așa cum se practică adeseori) este nevoie de o serie de răspunsuri la o serie de întrebări. Ei bine, acesta este primul pas către a face utilizabilă o analiză: formularea clară a întrebărilor. Și cum o întrebare poate duce la mai multe răspunsuri posibile, dar și la noi întrebări, vom începe, oarecum desuet, cu o primă întrebare: ce înțelegem prin *ordine internațională de tip liberal*?

Ordinea internațională pe buza prăpastiei

În general, ordinea internațională înseamnă o colecție de instituții și norme care permit statelor și altor actori internaționali să existe și să se dezvolte în pofida intereselor particulare, adeseori diferite. Constatând împrejurarea că sistemul internațional este anarhic⁴, statele sunt preocupate prioritar de propria supraviețuire și abia după aceea de creștere și, evident, reproducere, asemenea oricărui organism viu. Așadar, mijlocul cel mai important pentru realizarea misiunii lor constă în sporirea puterii pe care o dețin în sistem. *Mereu mai puternic* ar putea fi deviza oricărui stat, înlocuirea sa cu sloganuri legate de armonie, pace sau bunăstare fiind o opțiune cu iz electoral. Puterea este însă o noțiune relativă, ea putând fi măsurată numai în raport cu puterea celui alt și, ca urmare, apare concursul general. Concurs care, evident, costă, fapt care atrage abandonul (nedeclarat, dar ușor de observat), al multor competitori. Pentru cei care nu pot sau nu vor să cheltuie foarte mult pentru a ajunge pe podium, există două soluții prin care să renunțe la concursul înarmării, fără a renunța la unicul sens al existenței lor: să folosească surse alternative de putere (cât mai puțin costisitoare) sau să impună sistemului reducerea anarhiei. Mai clar, să promoveze ideea unor instituții și norme care să le faciliteze supraviețuirea pe termen lung. În condițiile existenței balanței de putere, este evident că o astfel de impunere nu poate avea loc fără sprijinul (complicitatea) unor mari puteri. Cointeresarea acestora din urmă provine din dorința conservării propriilor poziții la un moment dat și evitarea apariției unor noi competitori.

Începând cu cea de-a doua jumătate a secolului trecut, instituția cea mai importantă la nivel mondial este Organizația Națiunilor Unite⁵, iar normele cele mai importante sunt conținute în Carta ONU. Organizația a fost creată la sfârșitul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, înlocuind Liga (Societatea) Națiunilor, instituția responsabilă cu reducerea anarhiei după Marele Război. Cele două instituții au avut o soartă diferită, deși au avut o mulțime de lucruri în comun. În primul rând, au avut

țeluri extrem de asemănătoare: pentru a *promova cooperarea internațională și a asigura pacea și securitatea mondială*⁶, respectiv *să mențină pacea și securitatea internațională*⁷ și *să realizeze cooperarea internațională*⁸. Simultan, ambele instituții au fost create inițial cu sprijinul major al Statelor Unite ale Americii, cea mai puternică națiune a lumii în cele două perioade, care însă nu și-a ocupat locul cuvenit în L.N. din motive de politică internă. Din nefericire, membrii fondatori ai celor două instituții au neglijat să înzestreze cele două organizații cu pârgii capabile să impună membrilor deciziile luate în comun. Mai mult, atât Societatea Națiunilor cât și ONU au practicat un sistem de luare a deciziei complicat și înșesat de constrângeri, care a dus la nemulțumiri privitoare la funcționarea lor.

Ni se pare normal să ne întrebăm de ce Liga Națiunilor a ajuns la eșec în numai două decenii, iar ONU (încă) nu. Pe de-o parte, un merit îl au Statele Unite, care sunt membru al ONU⁹ și membru permanent al Consiliului de Securitate și finanțează organizația în proporție de 22%, în condițiile în care celelalte patru mari puteri membre ale Consiliului de Securitate (Franța, Regatul Unit al Marii Britanii, Federația Rusă, Republica Populară Chineză) asigură împreună 18,4% din bugetul organizației¹⁰. Două dintre statele care au pierdut războiul (Japonia și Germania) se află pe locurile doi și trei la contributori, iar Italia, Canada, Spania și Brazilia contribuiau, în 2013, mai mult decât Federația Rusă. Trebuie spus și faptul că ONU are un grad mai mare de acoperire a lumii decât Liga Națiunilor (193 față de maximum 58 state membre). Pe de altă parte, ONU a rezistat și ca urmare a propriei fragilități și propriilor slăbiciuni, reușind să navigheze în ape calde, fără să supere puterile cu adevărat importante. Astfel, membrii Consiliului de Securitate s-au folosit din plin de dreptul lor de veto, iar puterile din afara Consiliului au avut grijă să se alieze cu unii dintre cei cinci, în cazul în care au avut nevoie. Un exemplu edificator pentru posibilitatea compromisului la vârf este cel al Republicii Populare Chineze, care a înlocuit China (Taiwan) în Consiliul de Securitate (1971), pe măsură ce influența sa internațională a devenit considerabilă.

Ei bine, să spunem că ONU reprezintă exponentul cel mai vizibil al ordinii internaționale liberale fiind fundamentată pe valorile și principiile recunoscute dintotdeauna ca liberale: drepturile omului, libertatea, deschiderea economică. Așa cum știm cu toții, acest mod de tratare a lumii presupune democrație, stat de drept, disponibilitate la dialog etc. De asemenea, cum știm cu toții, chiar dacă majoritatea statelor afirmă astfel de valori, nu toate sunt dornice să le aplice cu strictețe. Carta ONU permite fiecărui stat să își aleagă liber forma de regim politic, fără interferențe din exterior.

Prăpastie sau simplă renegociere?

Ei bine, lumea este îngrijorată teribil de faptul că însuși simbolul ordinii internaționale de tip liberal, Organizația Națiunilor Unite, este atacat tocmai de principalul său sponsor, Statele Unite ale Americii. Pe fondul unei decizii mai mult decât discutabile a Washingtonului (recunoașterea Ierusalimului drept capitală a Israelului), Adunarea Generală a adoptat o rezoluție (A//RES/ES-10/19 din 21.12.2017) în cadrul unei sesiuni extraordinare în care *cere statelor membre să se abțină de la stabilirea misiunilor diplomatice în Ierusalim*¹¹. Evident, adoptarea acestei rezoluții cu un scor usturător (128 voturi pentru, 9 împotriva, 35 abțineri) a provocat mânia Statelor Unite (chiar dacă textul nu numește nicăieri SUA), care a amenințat cu represalii, o primă măsură fiind reducerea contribuției sale cu 285 de milioane de dolari pentru bugetul organizației în exercițiul 2018-2019. Ambasadorul american la ONU, Nikki Haley a amintit că *ineficiența și cheltuielile exagerate ale organizației sunt binecunoscute*¹² și a precizat cerințele țării sale: *Nu vom mai lăsa generozitatea poporului american să fie abuzată și necontrolată. Cât timp suntem multumiți de negocierile bugetului pentru anul acesta, fiți siguri că vom continua să aplicăm metode care să intensifice eficiența ONU, în timp ce ne vom apăra propriile interese*¹³. De notat și faptul că, în ajunul adoptării rezoluției, consecvent stilului său neconformist, Donald Trump amenințase referitor la atitudinea națiunilor în această problemă, considerând votul pentru rezoluție ca

lipsă de loialitate a statelor respective. Și mai explicit, Nikki Haley a trimis o scrisoare statelor membre ONU, în care descria situația: *în momentul în care luați în considerare opțiunile dumneavoastră pentru acest vot, vreau să știți că președintele și Statele Unite vor trata acest vot în mod personal*¹⁴. Amenințările, așadar, nu au vizat exclusiv organizația, ci și statele care votează rezoluția. Același ambasador declarase, de altfel: *În cadrul ONU ni se cere constant să facem mai mult și să dăm mai mult - iar în trecut am făcut acest lucru. Așa că, atunci când luăm o decizie, în concordanță cu voința poporului american, cu privire la locația ambasadei NOASTRE, ne așteptăm ca cei pe care i-am ajutat să nu fie împotriva noastră.* Ori, la ONU va avea loc un vot ce critică decizia noastră. Și da, Statele Unite își vor nota numele statelor¹⁵. Putem aprecia că aceste amenințări au avut efect, din moment ce 35 de state au decis să se abțină de la votarea unei rezoluții care cere respectarea unor rezoluții anterioare. 22 de state membre ale Uniunii Europene au votat pentru, 5 s-au abținut (România, Cehia, Ungaria, Polonia și Letonia), iar una (Lituania) a lipsit de la ședință. S-a dovedit, încă o dată, precauția diplomației românești; *MAE apreciază că promovarea astăzi, 21 decembrie 2017, a proiectului de rezoluție pe tema statutului Ierusalimului survine într-un moment în care ar trebui manifestată prudență. MAE consideră mai degrabă necesară, în această etapă, relansarea dialogului direct în vederea deblocării procesului de pace*¹⁶. Ar mai trebui menționat și faptul că SUA a utilizat dreptul său de veto pentru a bloca o rezoluție similară în Consiliul de Securitate.

Așadar, un prim atentator la liniștea Națiunilor Unite și, implicit, la ordinea internațională liberală ar fi cea mai importantă țară (economic și militar) de pe glob, care contribuie cu mai mult de o cincime la bugetul ONU. Comportamentul său agresiv, justificat prin această contribuție, denotă un respect discutabil acordat tocmai valorilor liberale care fundamentează existența și funcționarea ONU. Dar nu este singura țară care desconsideră întrucâtva Națiunile Unite și, mai mult, nu este prima oară când liderii americani procedează astfel. De fiecare dată, lucrurile s-au liniștit în timp, pentru că (revenind la afirmațiile lui

Churchill) ONU este plină de defecte, dar altceva nu avem și, deocamdată, ne convine. Mai degrabă, susținem noi, cu elanul său nestăvilit, președintele Trump a decis să renegocieze (să se târguiască din nou) relațiile dintre țara sa și Națiunile Unite și să își exprime cunoscuta sa opinie referitoare la egalitatea statelor și la modul în care aceasta va funcționa în viitor. ONU rămâne încă un instrument important pentru marile puteri, care pot să blocheze tentativele ostile asupra propriilor interese și relativ important pentru puterile mijlocii și mici, care pot să își facă auzit glasul în cadrul organizației și, mai departe, în întreaga lume.

Reforma Organizației Națiunilor Unite

Lipsită, ca și predecesora sa, de pârghiile necesare impunerii ordinii internaționale, ONU pare extraordinar de stabilă tocmai datorită slăbiciunilor pe care le manifestă. Dacă dezacordul cu Liga Națiunilor a obligat unele state să o părăsească, dezacordul cu Adunarea Generală trebuie ignorat. Cum altfel ar putea fi încălcate frecvent și la înalt nivel rezoluțiile referitoare la sancțiunile împotriva Coreei de Nord, în afara înțelegerii nuanțate a prevederilor sau prin negarea evidențelor? Totuși, pentru că nemulțumirea statelor față de activitatea Națiunilor Unite este justificată, s-a născut ideea cvasi-permanentă a reformării organizației. Nu numai americanii vor o astfel de reformă, în viziunea lor aceasta fiind dedicată repartizării echitabile a cheltuielilor de funcționare. În alte viziuni, alte state propun schimbări care ar putea duce, poate, la reforma ordinii internaționale. În cadrul organizației, structura cea mai vizată este Consiliul de Securitate, în condițiile în care calitatea de membru permanent permite blocarea deciziilor considerate defavorabile.

Aspiranții cei mai vocali sunt tocmai statele care contribuie foarte serios la finanțarea organizației mondiale: Japonia, Germania, India și Brazilia¹⁷. În afara fondurilor cu care contribuie la ONU, principalul lor argument formal este legat de *rolul tot mai important pe care îl exercită la nivel regional și global*¹⁸.

Pe de altă parte, consecvente *tradiționalei* diplomații liberale, cele patru state reclamă împrejurarea că actuala structură a Consiliului nu reflectă schimbările la nivel global care au avut loc timp de decenii. Ca urmare, în 2015, s-a propus creșterea numărului de membri ai Consiliului la 25 (de la 15), simultan cu creșterea numărului de membri permanenți (cu drept de veto) la 11. Cele șase noi poziții ar reveni Asiei (Japonia și India), Africii (două locuri), Americii Latine (Brazilia) și Europei (Germania). Nu sunt previzibile cu exactitate statele din Africa, dar opinăm că multiplicarea dreptului de veto ar face și mai dificilă luarea deciziilor.

În ceea ce ne privește, dezbaterea referitoare la lărgirea Consiliului de Securitate are un caracter teoretic, menit să întrețină ideea (mai mult sau mai puțin falsă) a unei democrații de tip liberal la nivel global, în care statele, de pe poziții de egalitate, decid asupra viitorului comun. Atâta timp cât membrii permanenți actuali ai Consiliului vor reprezenta un procent semnificativ în balanța de putere, se va păstra un *status-quo* care permite funcționarea ONU în condiții mai bune decât cele oferite de "înmulțirea" dreptului de veto. Pe de altă parte, o schimbare majoră a echilibrului la nivel global va duce, în timp, la modificări asemănătoare aceleia din 1971, când Republica Populară Chineză a înlocuit Taiwanul. În privința României, în stil caracteristic și deplin compatibil Uniunii Europene, ea „se alătură eforturilor generale de identificare, negociere și aplicare a unor formule eficiente de reformare a sistemului Națiunilor Unite”¹⁹.

Ca să răspundem, totuși, întrebării propuse, fără a avea pretenția unui răspuns exact și cuprinzător, ordinea internațională de tip liberal se bazează pe o democrație fundamentată pe valorile liberale (întotdeauna la nivel declarativ și de multe ori la nivel juridic), cu unele aspecte originale născute din inegalitatea puterilor statelor membre. Formalizate încă de la începuturile organizației pe fondul încheierii unei conflagrații cu învingători și învinși, privilegiile marilor puteri (ca și numele acestora) vor suferi schimbări numai ca urmare a înțelegerii între respectivele state, nicidecum ca efect al aplicării conceptelor fundamentale. De altfel, precizăm punctul nostru de vedere

conform căruia o organizație mondială necontrolată deschis de mari puteri ar avea soarta Ligii Națiunilor. Desigur, rolul și datoria noastră sunt evidente: ne vom alătura eforturilor ca să fie bine.

Europa, pe buza prăpastiei

Începând cu rezultatul referendumului din Marea Britanie (Brexit), ideea unei Uniuni aflate într-un echilibru precar pe buza unei prăpastii s-a dezvoltat, în ciuda multiplelor declarații referitoare la coeziunea statelor rămase. Astfel, oarecum neașteptat, UE a devenit ceva mai mică (pentru prima dată în istorie) și ceva mai săracă. *Europa zguduită întră în derivă!* s-a bucurat concurența. *Nu mai avem stavilă în a conduce!* au gândit cele mai puternice state ale continentului. *Este momentul să ne impunem!* au constatat liderii unor țări emergente. La fel de diferite au fost cauzele (și pretextele) apariției unor tendințe contradictorii în sânul organizației care ar fi trebuit să fie deja cea mai puternică putere economică a lumii²⁰. Construită pe baza valorilor occidentale și a principiilor de sorginte liberală, Uniunea Europeană a preferat să pună între paranteze eșecuri și dezamăgiri istorice provenite din astfel de filozofie, pornind de la premisa că interesul comun al statelor membre este superior intereselor particulare ale fiecărei țări (provincii, formațiuni politice, persoane). Astfel, principalul liant al organizației îl constituie *coeziunea*, fundamentată pe *solidaritate* și colorată cu *subsidiaritate*. Din punct de vedere teoretic, asta înseamnă că marea majoritate a entităților (de la individ la stat) merg de bună voie pe un drum comun, pentru a ajunge la o destinație stabilită. Evident, unii sunt mai rapizi, alții mai lenți și, nefiind vorba de vreun concurs, cei dintâi îi ajută pe cei din urmă să țină pasul sau chiar să îi ajungă din urmă. Acest ajutor nu este însă nici simbrerie nici pomană, cei mai lenți nefiind nici împinși de la spate, nici trași cu arcanul. Cei aflați în urmă au libertatea să aleagă metodele prin care devin mai performanți. *Minunat!* - am exclama cu entuziasm, dacă nu am observa atent statisticile europene care continuă să evidențieze ecarturi proporționale între participanți. Coeziunea are probleme. Să

fie ele generate de solidaritate? Sau de subsidiaritate?

Spre deosebire de mașini, oamenii și organizațiile lor au educație, gândire și sentimente. În consecință, au obiective (mai mult sau mai puțin înscrise în obiectivul de nivel superior), au metode, au un trecut și o memorie genetică. De aceea, în organizațiile de tip liberal, solidaritatea excede sacrificiul lui Danko, cel care luminează drumul tovarășilor săi cu inima sa arzătoare²¹, și pornește abia după satisfacerea unui nivel de bunăstare stabilit destul de arbitrar. Chiar și atunci, renunțarea la surplus este motivată de creșterea viitoare a acestui nivel²². În momentul în care respectivul surplus este transferat, furnizorul are pretenția să aibă un cuvânt de spus asupra modului în care este folosit acesta, fapt care generează, în realitate, un noian de frustrări în ambele părți. De cele mai multe ori, frustrările sunt legate de sentimente, răscolind trecutul și trezind memoria genetică.

Răspunsul la această solidaritate născută de interes²³ se materializează în interpretarea subsidiarității ca fundament al refuzului sau ocolirii unor principii și/sau valori deja acceptate²⁴. Desigur că discursul evită acest cuvânt ceva mai complicat și se referă la altul, capabil să genereze sentimente colective care pot naște, la rândul lor, acțiuni de ripostă: suveranitatea. Așa cum libertatea este un atribut restricționat de libertatea celorlalți, suveranitatea este restrânsă într-o lume interdependentă, guvernată de tratate semnate de bunăvoie, care îți cer să o practici într-un cadru conform cu regulile existente. Prin aderarea la Uniune, statele membre au consimțit afectarea propriei lor suveranități, acceptând, spre exemplu, ca legislația națională să o respecte pe cea europeană. Uneori, mai mult sau mai puțin argumentat, prevederile europene stânjenesc și, atunci, liderii politici invocă suveranitatea pentru a stârni naționalismul exacerbat. Evident, mai mult decât anterior, coeziunea nu mai reprezintă nimic, importantă fiind numai satisfacerea unui interes local, dar realizabil pentru orgolii adeseori nejustificate.

Așa apare iliberalismul – respingerea directă sau indirectă a fundamentului acestei construcții complicate care este Uniunea Europeană. Constatând că propria putere este mai eficace și mai stabilă prin întărirea exage-

rată a propriei autorități, fără a reflecta la trecut (mai recent sau mai îndepărtat), unele state europene au decis că suveranitatea nu este întreagă dacă nu este absolută și este valabilă numai atunci când este exercitată individual sau de un grup restrâns. Această tendință nu este vizibilă numai la statele din afara așa numitului Occident (China, Federația Rusă, chiar Japonia), ci și la state din inima Europei sau la Statele Unite. După modelul răsăritean, în care președintele chinez strânge în mâinile sale, pe termen nedefinit, întreaga putere (asemănat fiind cu Mao Zedong), iar probabilitatea ca președintele Putin să piardă vreodată alegerile este infimă, Polonia și Ungaria își reconstruiesc propriul stat neglijând evident principiile clasice ale democrației liberale.

S-a așternut, în mare măsură, uitarea, astfel încât apariția și dezvoltarea iliberalismului a fost exclusiv o revenire la atitudini statale mai vechi, având la origine, de cele mai multe ori, nesecatul izvor al suveranității și independenței naționale. Încercând, cu timiditate, să pătrundem în realitatea simplă a filozofiei UE, observăm că atât valorile cât și principiile, dar mai ales cei trei piloni care susțin impresionantul edificiu²⁵ au în comun folosirea unui liant discutabil, pe care unii îl numesc coeziune și pe care noi îl definim, aici, ca demagogie. Unicul pilon interesant al Uniunii este, evident, cel economic. Indiferent că ținta finală a fiecărui guvern este creșterea bunăstării populației, dezvoltarea culturală etc., autoritățile naționale sunt interesate în primul rând de avantajele economice ce decurg din statutul de membru al Uniunii Europene. Evoluția procesului de negociere a Brexit-ului pune în evidență cu claritate cum aspectele de altă natură decât cea economică nu constituie altceva decât accesorii și decorațiuni ieftine, menite să *cosmetizeze* miezul de interes. Dacă pilonul referitor la securitate și apărare a stat întotdeauna la umbra Alianței Nord-Atlantice, din motive lesne de înțeles, pilonul justiției și afacerilor interne pare a fi cel mai șubred și mai ușor de atacat, statul de drept fiind înțeles diferit de statele membre. Ar trebui să ne amintim că și România de dinainte de 1989 era declarată o democrație (cam originală, nu-i așa?), iar statul de drept era fără cusur, la cheremul unor structuri totalitare.

Conferința de la Davos, 2018

În perioada 23-26 ianuarie 2018 au avut loc la Davos, în Elveția, lucrările ediției a 48-a a Forumului Economic Mondial, reuniune la care participă, anual, lideri importanți ai planetei din domeniul politic, economic și social. Dintre personalitățile politice care au participat în acest an, amintim pe Donald Trump, Jean Claude Juncker, Angela Merckel, Emmanuel Macron. Forumul Economic Mondial (World Economic Forum – această denumire a fost adoptată în 1987²⁶) este, în fapt, o organizație neguvernamentală (din 2015 recunoscută oficial ca organizație internațională) fondată în Elveția, în 1971, de profesorul german Klaus Martin Schwab. Organizația este cunoscută în primul rând ca organizatoare a întâlnirilor anuale de la Davos, care reunesc lideri și specialiști din întreaga lume.

Actuala ediție a urmărit revenirea atenției liderilor din diferite sectoare de activitate asupra ideii de îmbunătățire a situației la nivel global. Umbrela întâlnirii – *Crearea unui viitor comun într-o lume divizată* – sugerează necesitatea subscrierii politicilor sectoriale, regionale și naționale (deseori diferite și din ce în ce mai contondente) unui țel global: *un viitor mai bun pentru omenire*. Ca semne evidente ale unei stări actuale necorespunzătoare, organizatorii enumeră: erodarea contractului social între state și cetățenii lor; limitarea obligațiilor referitoare la dezvoltarea durabilă, creșterea incluzivă și a patra revoluție industrială; revenirea principiilor *Realpolitik* la nivelul leadership-ului națiunilor, reparația și/sau agravarea fisurilor geostrategice.

Din intervenția Angelei Merkel, cancelarul federal al Germaniei, sunt de interes pasajele referitoare la îngrijorarea sa privitoare la populism, la menținerea punctului de vedere referitor la migrație, la apărarea europeană și la economia digitală. Făcând apel la istorie, cancelarul a denunțat *populismul* actual, capabil să diminueze serios efectele reconstrucției europene și ale edificării instituțiilor internaționale bazate pe multilateralism, prin polarizarea excesivă a oamenilor și a statelor. Deschiderea Germaniei pentru emigranți și chemarea spre cooperare intensă pentru rezolvarea pro-

blemelor s-au susținut, de asemenea, prin istorie: *Încă din vremea Imperiului Roman, sau a zidului chinezesc, știm că închiderea nu ne ajută să ne protejăm frontierele. De fapt, avem nevoie de o bună cooperare cu vecinii, avem nevoie de acorduri bune, de acorduri valabile, care să fie respectate.* Merkel a cerut o politică externă și securitate mai solidă a Uniunii Europene, punând în evidență *convergența semnificativă* înregistrată în UE, privitor la această chestiune. *Trebuie să ne asumăm mai multă responsabilitate; trebuie să ne luăm destinul în mâinile noastre*, a adăugat cancelarul, revenind la punctul de vedere al Germaniei referitor la apărarea europeană. În final, premierul german a atins problema economiei digitale, afirmând ferm că *Uniunea ar putea trece la o piață digitală unică*.

Emmanuel Macron, președintele Republicii Franceze, prezent de mai multe ori la Forum, dar pentru prima dată în această înaltă calitate, a fost prezentat de Klaus Schwab cu multă simpatie (*sunteți simbolul politicii de care avem nevoie pentru a ne ghida în noua lume*²⁷) și a stârnit simpatie în rândul auditoriului (sesiune plenară). Discursul său (care a durat în jur de o oră și a fost ținut, alternativ, în franceză și engleză) a navigat între *întepături* către președintele SUA, descrierea politicii franceze în vederea respectării acordului de la Paris (schimbări climatice) și poziția Franței referitoare la viitorul Uniunii Europene. Motto-ul discursului său ar putea fi *Franța se reîntoarce* (în Europa). În ceea ce ne privește, semnalăm punctul său de vedere legat de viitorul Europei, care trebuie neapărat reformată. Considerând că ar fi naiv să creadă că va putea exista o reformă reală în 27, Macron a cerut ca *cei care nu doresc să avanseze nu trebuie să blocheze pe aceia care sunt ambițioși*²⁸ să definească o strategie pe 10 ani pentru Uniunea Europeană. Totodată, el a denunțat *pasagerii globalizării*, care folosesc o politică populistă ce ar putea deveni câștigătoare în următorii ani, în cazul în care nu se vor lua măsuri corespunzătoare (printre care a amintit și de un nou contract mondial, afirmând că Franța va fi o campioană a luptei împotriva schimbărilor climatice, președintele francez a cerut Statelor Unite și Chinei să se conformeze cerințelor adoptate deja.

Europa reformată înseamnă, așadar, o Uniune ceva mai disciplinată, în care cei care nu pot sau nu vor au libertatea de a-și exercita în voie așa numita suveranitate, cu prețul de a-și recunoaște modificarea statutului de jucător titular cu cel de jucător de rezervă sau, mai dramatic, de chibiț. Organizația va avea o conducere bi-cefală, echilibrul său fiind asigurat de multiplele diferențe între viziunile franceze și germane și de celelalte state ale nucleului. Așa cum este de așteptat, indiferent de miza reală (cea economică), liantul va fi constituit de strânsa coeziune și de practicarea fără derapaje a principiilor democrației de tip liberal. Ușile vor rămâne deschise tuturor, dar pragul revenirii va fi, fără îndoială, din ce în ce mai înalt.

Încercând să fim raționali, recunoaștem că este o soluție posibilă pentru salvarea unei Uniuni Europene aflate, mai mult sau mai puțin, pe buza prăpastiei. Cheia succesului unei astfel de construcții selective constă în reușita armonizării intereselor celor două state care și-o asumă public. Între rigoarea și pragmatismul german și dorul nemărginit al unei Franțe mărețe se pot interpune (așa cum au început deja) sindicaliștii francezi și naționalismul german, segmente societale care, vrem nu vrem, au drepturi electorale în democrațiile europene. Mai greu de prevăzut este direcția în care vor hotări să meargă națiunile care nu vor sau nu pot să țină pasul cu Europa dură. Din nefericire, suntem convinși că, având în vedere turbulența globală și importanța lor la scară mondială, drumul lor va semăna cu o spirală, dacă nu cumva se va limita la a fi circular.

Concluzii

„Nimic nou pe lume!” a exclamat, cu miilenii în urmă, Ecclesiastul. „Deșertăciunea deșertăciunilor, totul este deșertăciune și vânăre de vânt.” Așa am fi tentați să spunem și noi, văzând cum marii susținători ai binelui general îl redefinesc în funcție de binele particular, ori de câte ori simt că ar putea pierde din putere. Nu avem ce face. Am putea striga din răspuțeri, dar ne-ar auzi cineva? Și dacă ne-ar auzi, în ciuda zgomotului asurzitor al declarațiilor de pace, nu s-ar simți deranjați? Și

dacă sunt deranjați, nu vor reacționa strivind micile noastre interese? Nu-i mai bine, chiar afoni și răgușiți, să ne înscriem în corul general al demagogiei electorale, zicând ca ei și făcând ca noi sau, și mai bine, nefăcând nimic? Vrem să supraviețuim și vrem să avem acces liber la frimiturile ce ni se cuvin sau mai bine zis la frimiturile ce ne sunt destinate pentru efortul nostru de adaptare.

Suntem într-o epocă ciudată, în care spunem ce vrem și facem ce putem. Dar știm cu adevărat ce vrem? *Știe cel mai puternic om de pe planetă ce vrea? Ce vrea cu China, ce vrea cu Rusia, ce vrea cu Coreea de Nord, ce vrea cu Germania, ce vrea cu Mexicul?* Iar dacă știe ce vrea (oricum noi nu înțelegem exact), *seamănă dorința lui cu dorința milioanele de americani care l-au votat* sau, măcar, cu ceea ce vrea organizatorul manipulării online? Vrea, desigur, ca America să rămână pe primul loc. Adică vrea să fie mai bine, așa cum crede el că este mai bine. Știe premierul Regatului Unit ce vrea? Vrea suveranitate sau vrea ca Marea Britanie să scape de povara emigranților care își permit, cu obrăznicie, să facă mai bine și mai ieftin toate muncile pe care englezii refuză să le mai facă? Și să nu ne oprim la căpșunari și instalatori, uitând de medici, ingineri, specialiști în IT. Vrea să se izoleze sau să se deschidă? Cât de tare seamănă prevederile negociate cu ceea ce spuneau în perioada anterioară referendumului?

Trecută cu bine printr-un proces electoral dificil și generator de compromisuri, Angela Merkel va trebui să fie foarte atentă la relația cu Franța, unicul său aliat major în condițiile în care SUA continuă o politică „rece”. La rândul său, Macron poate reuși în acțiunea sa numai prin găsirea unui echilibru între admiratorii seduși de discursul său și contestatarii cotideni care refuză cu tenacitate criteriile de eficiență. Noi ne împăcăm cu speranța unei Europe puternice, în care, cu ajutorul celorlalți și în pofida propriilor noastre acțiuni, va crește exponențial convergența. În continuarea acestui studiu vom analiza atent profilul unui stat membru al viitoarei construcții. Indiferent de alte caracteristici, el va avea ca monedă euro și va avea un sistem legislativ și juridic subordonat celui european. În fond, acesta ar putea fi unicul sens al dispariției Regatului Unit din Uniune.

Note

¹ Raport MSC 2018 <https://www.securityconference.de/en/discussion/munich-security-report/munich-security-report-2018/>, accesat pe 19 februarie 2018.

² În vederea evitării unor acuzații de plagiat grosolan, precizăm că ne-am inspirat serios dintr-o povestire celebră a lui Ion Creangă.

³ Se știe că, din prea mare dragoste pentru Grecia, Winston Churchill a *jerfit* România predând-o monstrului sovietic, chiar dacă... din nefericire, nu avem loc aici pentru a enumera multiplele motive care ar fi trebuit să sensibilizeze Aliații în acea perioadă.

⁴ Hans Morgenthau, *Politica între națiuni. Lupta pentru și lupta pentru pace.*, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2007.

⁵ Această ultimă propoziție poate fi declarată, desigur, un plagiat pur, deoarece eu însumi sunt convins că am citit-o în multe alte locuri. Neștiind, de fapt cine are paternitatea ei, pentru a nu produce nedreptăți sau disensiuni, îmi asum responsabilitatea, mai ales că am scris-o din propria minte, conform propriei opinii.

⁶ ***: *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, Preambul, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp, accesat pe 1 februarie 2018.

⁷ ***: *Carta Organizației Națiunilor Unite*, art.1, pct.1, http://www.anr.gov.ro/docs/legislatie/internationala/Carta_Organizatiei_Natiunilor_Unite_ONU_.pdf, accesat pe 1 februarie 2018.

⁸ Ibidem, pct.3.

⁹ Paradoxal, deși principal promotor al Ligii Națiunilor, SUA nu au fost membru al instituției, ca urmare a opoziției Senatului SUA.

¹⁰ Aceste date corespund anului 2013 și au fost preluate de pe https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organiza%C8%9Bia_Na%C8%9Biunilor_Unite, accesat la 28 ianuarie 2018

¹¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2017, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/ES-10/19, accesat pe 2 februarie 2017.

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¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Laura Sirbu, „Administrația Trump: Amenințări directe pentru statele ce vor vota rezoluția ONU ce condamnă decizia de recunoaștere a Ierusalimului”, 21 decembrie 2017, http://adevarul.ro/international/staatele-unite/administratia-trump-amenintari-directe-staatele-vor-vota-rezolutia-onu-condamna-decizia-recunoastere-ierusalimului-capitala-israelului-1_5a3b27765ab6550-cb86b8f6c/index.html, accesat pe 2 februarie 2018.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ *Comunicat de presă al MAE* (21 decembrie 2017) preluat de pe <https://www.mae.ro/node/44551>, accesat pe 2 februarie 2018.

¹⁷ Cele patru state formează grupul G4, trei dintre ele aflându-se (2013) în clasamentul primelor 10 țări finanțatoare: Japonia – locul 2, Germania – locul 3 și Brazilia – locul 10, înaintea Federației Ruse – locul 11.

¹⁸ „Reforma Consiliului de Securitate prin lentilele națiunilor G4. Secretarul general al ONU își dorește o

Germanie mai activă pe plan internațional”, http://ad-evarul.ro/international/foreign-policy/g4-reforma-onu-1_52f28838c7b855ff5619f0c5/index.html, 5 februarie 2014.

¹⁹ România în ONU, <https://www.mae.ro/node/1588>, accesat pe 20 aprilie 2018.

²⁰ *Declarația de la Lisabona*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_68828.htm, 20 noiembrie 2010.

²¹ Ideea este preluată dintr-o celebră povestire a lui Maxim Gorki, exponent al bolșevismului de început.

²² Simplificăm, propunând un exemplu: dacă Estul se dezvoltă, esticul va avea un nivel de trai superior, care să îi permită să cumpere produsele noastre, indiferent că ele sunt fabricate în Vest sau chiar în țara sa. Este vorba, din

punct de vedere teoretic de ilustrarea situației *win-win*, cea mai des invocată în zilele noastre.

²³ Poate părea paradoxal, dar este real.

²⁴ Toate statele membre ale UE au ratificat Tratatul Uniunii, deci ar trebui să le respecte în litera lor.

²⁵ Cei trei piloni ai UE (piața unică, politica externă și de securitate, justiție și afaceri interne) se ridică pe un fundament solid al valorilor și principiilor democratice.

²⁶ Klaus Schwab, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klaus_Schwab, accesat pe 3 aprilie 2018.

²⁷ A Davos, Macron propune un “nouveau contrat mondial”, <https://www.latribune.fr/economie/international/a-davos-macron-propose-un-nouveau-contrat-mondial-766035.html>, 25 ianuarie 2018.

²⁸ Ibidem.

ABSTRACT

The world is transforming itself faster and in a more and more radical manner. The Brexit, the US President's enthusiasm, the complications of the Korean conflict, the complexity of the situation in Syria, the North African and Middle East migrations, the evolvement and restauration in China, Japan's desire to keep up the pace, are only a few of the signals of these transformations in the recent period. Above all, the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation, used to neglect its own international agreements to maintain its Great Power status globally. Still, as a projection of these major changes able to induce major worries, the idea of abandoning (*de facto*, sometimes *de jure*) the systems of values, on which the fragile international order has been based, is coming up more and more.

This study tries to describe this situation and to evaluate the real dimensions of the dangers of a major conflict. Having in mind the complexity of this subject, the study has been structured in two parts, trying to focus the first part on the macro level, respectively on the increasing entropy at the macro level (globally and European-wide). In general, we intend to demonstrate that the actual situation is not radically different to that which existed years ago, the main worry coming from the change of perspectives of the Great Powers towards solving internal problems through external actions and statements.

Cuvinte cheie: democrație liberală, iliberalism, ordine internațională, drepturi și libertăți fundamentale, educație, migrație.

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RECENZII

War: Past, Present and Future. Learned Lessons and How They Can Sweeten the Tomorrow's Unknown

Lawrence Freedman – *The Future of War: A History*,
Public Affairs, New York, 2017, 376 pages

Future has always aroused mankind's inquisitiveness, spurring the academic community to enroll into an everlasting pursuit of the unknown. Futurology has steadily infiltrated into the science curricula as scholars, philosophers and artists enriched the academic environment with outstanding ideas meant to shape the grand patterns of a clouded tomorrow. Although consistent efforts had been brought forth for disentangling the conundrums of the future, hurdles cumbered the already diligent path of developing accurate foresights. The difficulty to envisage veritable scenarios is demonstrated by mispredictions hardly avoided in shaping the insights of political elite, scientists and even military professionals. As Neville Chamberlain gullible pursued a policy of appeasement in the forerunner period of the Second World War, speaking of „*peace for our time*“ to embrace his idealistically goal of taming German nationalism, the foresight of a world that once again found itself beleaguered in a prolonged onslaught narrowly had been debunked among strategic forecasting specialists. Such as the year 1939 engraved the history with the gory memory of the German blitzkrieg against Poland, the operation Barbarossa that enlarged the aperture of Death on the Eastern Front and the audacious attack on Pearl Harbor that dumbfounded American society, all ground on miscalculations that tainted the strategic predicaments of both sides of the belligerents. The timeline of forecasting conflicts continues

the erratic path stained with inconspicuous events that alter quixotic views of the policy-makers, ranging from the shooting death of an Austrian Archduke on the Sarajevo streets that led to the commencement of the Great War to hijacked planes crashing into strategically significant US buildings that established the primordial vindication for launching the War on Terror, and beyond.

Entrenched with uncertainty, the evolving face of war was accurately mirrored in a 400 pages study through which the author, Lawrence Freedman, explores nearly a century and a half of dreadful violence that indicted the mankind to self-destruction. Freedman is an emeritus professor of war studies at King's College London and starting with June 2009 serves as a member of the official inquiry into Britain and the 2003 Iraq War.¹ His main area of expertise includes contemporary defense and foreign policy issues, with regard to nuclear strategy and the Cold War². Unfolding his strategic thinking in books among which the most recent are „*A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East*“ (2008), „*Strategy: A History*“ (2013) and „*The Future of War: A History*“ (2017), Freedman paved a comprehensive requisite way for future generations of scholars and not only.

Availing of a great sense of erudition, „*The Future of War: A History*“ encompasses the changing nature of war, from European colonial wars to urban armed conflicts, hybrid wars and cyber wars that confirmed or refuted

the stories of those who intrepidly ventured the path of strategic foresight.

Although the book title may be perceived as a misnomer due to the lack of any prediction of forms that conflicts to come would adopt, it reveals insights postulated not merely by military strategists, but also novelists and filmmakers. From „*Battle of Dorking*”³ to „*World War 4*”⁴ Freedman explores the reflection of future warfare on the imagination of military thinkers, academics, fictional writers, monitoring the evolution of war theory and future scenarios portrayed in novels, films, official documents and statements.

Following the three chapters of the book, the author depicted in a climate of mutual distrust and apprehension the evolution of war impelled by motivations that range from territories to ideologies ingrained on various social and political backgrounds. In its densely storied scan of the causes and course of war, Freedman emphasizes the trajectory of means and methods of waging war, revealing the place held by assumptions of earlier time in today’s shape of war. Embodying a pessimist sense, the author exhorts to awareness of delusions imposed by knockout battles and denounces the idealistic visions of a war-free world such as those envisaged by Norman Angell who overestimated the power of economic interdependence or Steven Pinker who reposed excessive trust in the progression of civilization.

To stress the difficulty of anticipating the future, Freedman every so often refers to the writings of Herbert George Wells, an exponent of futurology who anticipated the mark aircraft and tanks would make in a battle by extending the violence across the borders of the classical battlefield, and even the pernicious nature of Germany. Nevertheless, Wells prophecy regarding that Germany’s defeat would convert the Great War into the last war did not endure through history, as settlements for peace have been soon disrupted by Germany’s realpolitik. Moreover, the history of future thinkers is pointed with studies that did not stand the test of time but provided eloquent insights to governments to reinforce military readiness. Among these, Freedman cites a former NATO commander, John Hackett and a civilian, Tom Clancy, who both envisaged a

struggle between NATO and Soviet forces but none of them anticipated the collapse of the Soviet Union that emerged nearly two decades ago, not to mention its infliction launched by the loss of legitimacy.

For the most part, prediction of war is, as Freedman stresses out, „*difficult and likely to be wrong*”⁵. The foulness of thoughts regarding the future war is entailed by optimism, underestimation of adversaries and extrapolation of the past into the future. In this regard, war theory was often caught by surprise. By the time the post-Cold War European continent submerged into what Mary Kaldor called “New Wars” or what Kalevi Holsti referred to as “People’s Wars”, the academic study had remained at an embryonic stage, unable to deliver relevant understandings. These wars comprising under the flag of Civil Wars put a burden on the shoulders of those who tried to depict a disciplinary model, due to their sheer variety of shapes and structures. Merging military, civilian and criminal elements into the same conflict blurred the possibilities to give a suitable approach as the combatants’ efforts to come to a quick conclusion succumbed into despair and foreign interventions only prolonged their agony.

Foregrounding the perpetual reality of war, Freedman has little faith that international law holds the capability to smother violence. While new technologies were being employed on the battlefields an acute wariness regarding collateral damage became a moral imperative. Dating from Vietnam war, the concept of “non-combatant immunity”, forged on a past narrative of slaughters and genocides, has gained piecemeal relevance in international conscience. The rigor of humanitarian law that restricts the options of Western armies expands the possibilities of insurgents and provides substance to the concept of asymmetrical war.

Freedman stresses the importance of learned lessons that were scarcely assimilated, recalling traumatic experiences like those in Vietnam, Somalia, Congo, Iraq and Afghanistan that still spatter American memory. As the faith of civilians gained impetus on the international agenda, the atrocities that engulfed the civilian population became a prime ratio-

nale for external support. With an upsurge of peacekeeping operations, the persuasion of Islamic radicalism gained momentum, generating a new era for terrorism. Such as the attack on Pearl Harbor quivered American peaceful repose, the 9/11 attacks shocked once again not only the American society but also the entire international community. As the image of a new type of war was emerging in front of the humankind, the academia found itself caught again on an obsolete path. The battles between conventional armies now made room to clashes involving irregular forces, non-state actors who operate in expanded battlefields that suited guerilla war and terrorism. The contemporary combat settings developed with the technologies and concepts behind the concept of revolution in military affairs, RMA testing the capabilities of modern armies beyond their high-tech training.

The impact of new technologies molded the features of insurgency that copiously unfolded in Iraq and Afghanistan wars where traditional armies had been caught in prolonged and attrited wars. Following the narrative of the "Ghost Fleet"⁶, Freedman warns of the allure of advanced technology that might spoil the strategic picture, blinding the efforts of the strategic planners. In the context whose core is deeply oriented toward the brittle benefits of advanced technology, Freedman also shows his contempt to those who personalize their thinking with an over-reliance on technology rather than assessing the consistency of the political context. Moreover, from muskets to artificial intelligence, with a nod to nuclear weapons, the study reveals the progress of technology that has benefitted not only conventional forces, but also terrorist groups that led to the hybridization of war.

With today's rife shifts of means and methods of waging war, the faith of international relations carries the unknown. Although contemporary studies of conflicts to come enforce situational awareness, today's reality stands as

testimony for the reliability of nonlinear dynamics of global politics. With the inconspicuous occurrences that unsettle the strategic environment, the central idea of the book regarding the unpredictable nature of war is indubitably strengthened. Lawrence Freedman grasps for drawbacks imposed by overreliance on technology, emphasizing the scanty ability RMA proved in front of contemporary insurgencies that unloose the cruelty of armed conflicts in urban predominant battlefields. The character of war has been tainted by technological developments only by a small degree, although the author recognizes the value of newfangled weapons, underlining the relevance of nuclear deterrence and betraying his appreciation for the tactical potential of drones. With the constant pursuit of developing new weapons and new methods of waging war, the violence encrypted in the genetic code of humankind benefits only the pessimist scenarios. As the future of international relations cannot be depicted without taking into consideration the inherence of war, the remaining prospects only entail the egoistic nature of humankind and its proneness to everlasting suffering.

Alexandra Dan

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