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STRATEGIC REPOSITIONING OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE 21ST CENTURY: IS THERE A 'TRUMP DOCTRINE' ON THE HORIZON?

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ABSTRACT: *The core interests, strategic guidelines of the United States and the priorities of the American president are also elaborated and expressed in the key documents of National Security and Defence Strategy, which are accurately scrutinized and analysed both by the allied and rival, challenging powers of the United States. Following the rather passive and restrained interest assertion of the Obama administration's foreign and security policies, the incumbent Trump presidency tends to show more power, resoluteness as well as quite unpredictable measures and controversial strategic framework in the ever-changing arena of international affairs. Many analysts claim that the new American administration tends to focus primarily on preserving the relative American economic and absolute military primacy, and the global status quo without any clear future vision or strategic set of objectives that would be desirable from a super-power. A question quite frequently emerges whether a Trump-doctrine is due to get into shape or it is rather totally out of scope for the time being?*

KEYWORDS: *American National Security and Defence Strategy, Trump, strategy, global affairs*

“As long as I am President, the servicemen and women who defend our Nation will have the equipment, the resources, and the funding they need to secure our homeland, to respond to our enemies quickly and decisively, and, when necessary, to fight, to overpower, and to always, always, always win.”

President Donald J. Trump¹

SETTING THE STRATEGIC AGENDA

Without doubt the Americans are considered to be masters of strategy making as well as of efficient implementation of theory in practice, as their militant historical records have significantly manifested it along the past centuries. The primary set of political thoughts and the important repository of special guidelines which would determine the national security concerns, the foreign political span as well as the various sector-driven professional military objectives are supposed to be elaborated and projected through the National Security Strategy

¹ President Trump's declaration from December, 2017, as also cited in the *National Security Strategy of the United States*. Washington D.C.: The White House Press Office, 2017. 24. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, Accessed on 12 September 2018.

(hereinafter, NSS) and the National Defence Strategy (NDS) of the American government. Furthermore, as far as military affairs are concerned, the National Military Strategy as the document of key military doctrines is of outstanding importance as well, though for the time being, the Trump administration has not presented a document of this kind, yet. The delivery of the forthcoming and similarly important legislatively mandated Quadrennial Defence Review² has also seemed to be delayed for the time being ever since 2018 by the incumbent Trump administration, which might as well reflect a certain level of vague reluctance from the part of the Defence community of the American administration.

The primary intention of this paper is to provide a brief analytic overview of the above-mentioned two key strategic documents and the intellectual setting behind them as well as to put their contents into the context of international affairs and security studies, concerning the position of the United States in the 3rd millennium. Moreover, we would like to inquire whether the decisions made in the foreign and security political dimensions of the new American administration may outline the formation of some sort of intellectual strategic framework that may be labelled as a new doctrine or it is just an exaggerated assumption, a perception without any sensible fundament.

A nationwide grand strategy, as Sir Basil Liddell Hart³ put it aptly, serves the long-term interest of any nation accumulating and aligning all the necessary resources for achieving the primary set of objectives of the strategy, elaborated by the civilian government and, nonetheless if necessary assisted and carried out by the military. Strategy, though its ancient Greek term “stratégos”⁴ derives from the context and sphere of military science, cannot be separated or analysed solely in itself without the broader dimensions of political science, international affairs, and security studies. As the two ancient Greek fathers of military historiography, Thucydides and Xenophon had already stated in their much-revered works from the 5th century B.C., without a solid strategy and political, military plans no state can exist or even survive. Based on their intellectual setting, according to many political realist theoreticians and strategists the rights of the states and their citizens derive basically from their power projection abilities, which implies the effective combination of political will and military might.⁵

This stance and condition have not changed significantly ever since the early times of humanity, when the first state formations got into shape about 5 thousand years ago in ancient Egypt, China or Mesopotamia up to the emergence of real global powers, like the British Empire, the Soviet Union, or predominantly the United States. Based upon the commonly shared neo-realistic political attitude as well as the classical idea of anarchistic global theatre determined by sovereign powers on the stage of international relations, the current position and strategic dimension of the United States deliberately fits into this old-new state-centric paradigm. Namely, the United States of America managed by the Trump administration tends to emphasize her inherent, primordial right and duty to protect and assert her genuine own economic and political interests through all means available and feasible.

² *Quadriennial Defence Review*. U.S. Department of Defense. <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/QDR/>

³ Hart, B.L. *Strategy*. London: Tannenberg, 2016. 490.

⁴ Greek term of military scientist often used by Thucydides in his master work. Thucydides. *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. London: Penguin, 1973.

⁵ Moran D. “A stratégiaelmélet és a hadviselés története”. In Bayliss, J. et al. (eds.). *A stratégia a modern korban: bevezetés a stratégiai tanulmányokba*. Budapest: Zrínyi, 2005. 30-35.

The new American national security and defence strategies were revealed during the first and second year of the incumbent Trump presidency, mostly reflecting the visions and strategic guidelines of the top American executives, think tanks in the new Republican government of Donald Trump, whose rather strident and scandalous presidential style has rung quite many bells among the military and national security leaders – also called as the community of intelligence services. As it is well known, the big news of the 2018 Christmas season from Washington proved to be that the outstanding “Triade of Generals”, as they were labelled by the media⁶, came to an end in the Trump administration with the rather forced resignation of General James Mattis, the former powerful Secretary of Defence of the US, also following the departure of general H.R. McMaster from the National Security Council, and of general John Kelly from the Chief of Staff position of the White House. Without any further investigation of the details and causes of their resignations, it can obviously be stated that the above-mentioned outstanding military leaders and scholars manifested enormous intellectual impact as well as practical importance in elaborating the above mentioned key national security and military documents of the United States.

Strategy analysis classically proves to be of outstanding importance in order to obtain a deeper insight into the thoughts, visions and presumably of the future measures of any country or organization, not to mention a super-power, such as the United States. Perhaps, when President Trump, before saying farewell to his top general advisors and secretaries, may have read about the famous witty remark attributed to former French president Clemenceau that strategy is much more important than to be allowed only for generals to deal with it.⁷ Among many others, even the great Prussian war strategist von Clausewitz confirmed that politics permeates the military, warfare and strategy making as well, essentially it is part of the political sphere, so, evidently it is not supposed to be the task of military leaders, either primarily or exclusively.⁸

The US proves to be a strategy-driven nation and this prevailing national trait presumably stems from the missionary Puritan tradition of many Americans, as well as their pragmatism of living up to certain objectives along clear-cut values and core interests. The extensive American state administration abounds in various national and sector-specific strategies. For instance, since 2005 even the large and highly influential Intelligence Community of the US, consisting of 17 different agencies and institutes, has had its own strategic document, the globally unique National Intelligence Strategy⁹ of the US, compiled by the Director of National Intelligence. The primary role of the Office of the DNI is to coordinate and adjust the operation of the various agencies in accordance with the previously elaborated strategic framework, similarly to the task of the Chairman of the Committee of Joint Chiefs of Staff (Gen. Joseph F. Dunford) to elaborate and implement the rather restricted operational guidelines of the National Military Strategy¹⁰ also outlined broadly and more overtly in the National Defence Strategy of the US.

⁶ Johnson-Freese, J. “Too Many Generals in the Trump administration?”. *Breaking Defense*. 7 August 2017. <https://breakingdefense.com/2017/08/too-many-generals-in-trump-administration/>, Accessed on 10 December 2018.

⁷ Brodie, B. *War and Politics*. London: Pearson, 1973. 12.

⁸ Clausewitz, C. *On War*. Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1989. 28-30.

⁹ *National Intelligence Strategy of the United States*. Washington D. C., 2005. <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/CHCO/nis.pdf>, Accessed on 12 September 2018.

¹⁰ Mehta, A. “The Pentagon’s National Military Strategy is done, and it’s unclear if the public will ever see it”. *Defence News*. 13 February 2019. <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2019/02/13/the-pentagons-national-military-strategy-is-done-and-its-unclear-if-the-public-will-ever-see-it/>, Accessed on 1 April 2019.

Notwithstanding, reading both recent American strategies, they quite share an abundance of much-quoted Trump remarks in first person singular and more than rhetoric guidelines, similarly to the famous 2002 America strategy, a collection of thoughts deeply influenced by president George W. Bush and his hawkish, belligerent neoconservative consultants. Compared to the blatantly militant administration of President George W. Bush, and the much more reserved, softer and even disoriented strategy of president Obama, the foreign political thinking of Donald J. Trump seems to be more realistic, pragmatically transactionist, as his critiques would put it aptly from an American, business-oriented point of view. The missionary and rather messianic Wilsonian idea of “making the world safe for democracy” and of spreading the American values and lifestyle seems to be neglected if not totally abandoned by the new American president, who is considered to be an outsider from the centuries old bi-partisan Establishment of Washington D.C. as well as quite an alien from the neoconservative, over-ideologized, even religious zeal of President Reagan and of George H. W. Bush.¹¹ Obviously, Donald Trump proves to be utterly different from his predecessors, not only in style and rhetoric but also in handling the state affairs of the United States, nevertheless, the set of priorities and strategic objectives for the state he presides seem to be remaining unvaried. Consequently, we can assert that the new, 21st century American strategic repositioning of the United States can be derived personally from the thoughts, political visions, and agenda of President Donald Trump as well as from the military expertise and academic education of his top general aides just recently abandoned. Taken into account the rhetoric manners of several presidents from the last century, the much cited catchy yet rather controversial and protectionist slogan of Trump, namely to “Make America Great Again” and “America First” actually proved to be the primary concern and political grand strategy of all American presidents in the 20th century, only not so much conspicuously or sometimes even frantically emphasized as done by President Trump. Moreover, his blunt remarks since October 2018 on the probability of a reinvigorated arms race as well as of nuclear missile build-up among the USA, China and Russia also reflect his resolute willingness to involve the US into a controversial and costly challenging game for global supremacy against his rivals.¹²

It is also noteworthy that despite the prevailing decline theory, particularly popular among neoliberal economists and challenging rival powers of the US – that would evidently include China, Russia or even the EU – in terms of global military power projection, political and even economic output and importance America is still the undisputed leading super power, also keeping the 20th century wisdom still valid that in global affairs no one can do politics without or against the will of the United States.¹³

¹¹ Schmitz, D. F. *Brent Scowcroft: Amerika a nemzetközi arénában Vietnám után*. Budapest: Antall József Tudásközpont, 2017. 270.

¹² Watkins, E. and Vazquez, M. “Trump threatens nuclear buildup until other nations ‘come to their senses’”. CNN. 24 October 2018. <https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2018/10/22/politics/donald-trump-russia-china-inf/index.html>. Accessed on 10 March 2019.

¹³ Nye, J. S. *Véget ér-e az amerikai évszázad?* Budapest: Antall József Tudásközpont, 2017.

THE 'OLD-NEW' STRATEGIC GOVERNING PRINCIPLES OF THE UNITED STATES

In the next pages we are going to scrutinize briefly the present and foreseeable future theory and practice of the American national strategies, considered to be the intellectual guidelines as well as the national security and military frameworks of the 21st century American global positioning, determined by the visions of the Trump administration.

Naturally, many international and domestic analyses have already dealt with presenting the detailed content-driven and semantic structure of the American strategies,¹⁴ thus in the forthcoming pages as projected above, we would like to focus on the strategic, national interest-centric analysis of these key documents in the matter, obviously with their global outlook and possible implications.

As also stated before and emphasized by many analysts and critics so far dealing with examining the foreign and security political agenda of the Trump administration, at first sight it seems to be a rather isolationist and protectionist policy reflected primarily in the renegotiated and reshaped American trade agreements with the European Union, Canada, Mexico and, most importantly with the great rival power, China.

However, taking a deeper and closer glimpse into the American stance and attitude in this respect, it might reveal that most of the reset deals and treaties were justified and necessary steps for asserting and protecting the core American interests. Naturally, the controversy arises as soon as we start to discuss about the nature of core interests of a super-power the size and influence of the United States, involving the abundance of versatile interests, political agenda and objectives.

According to several professional academic analysts out of the White House perimeter, like the outstanding liberal political scientist and security strategy analyst Barry Posen at MIT, the Trump administration is outlining the framework of a basically new kind of foreign and security policy paradigm, with new style and category without the ideological load and content and even visionary objectives of the previous American administrations. It may be too early to refer to this paradigm as Trump doctrine, though academics like Posen tend to label it, rather sarcastically as Trumpean “illiberal American hegemony”.¹⁵ Naturally, this political paradigm tends to rely on and stem from the odd, narcissistic personal features and the rather unique business-like attitude of the president, furthermore it is also based on the fundamentals of the previous administrations strategic foreign policy objectives with slightly restructured and repositioned priority ranks. Nevertheless, following the observation and thoughts of Posen on the new, post-modern American illiberal hegemony, it also suggests the idea that the United States reshaped by President Trump still wants to preserve the status of singular though pragmatic hegemon of the world without the ideological burden of the conservative Republicans, the missionary zeal of the neocons, or even much less of the liberal internationalist cosmopolitanism embodied by the leftist American Democrats.

¹⁴ See also among others the author's recent comparative analysis of the American strategies, Csutak, Z. “Az Egyesült Államok helye a világban az új amerikai biztonsági és védelmi stratégiák tükrében”. *Hadtudomány* 2018. http://mhht.eu/hadtudomany/2018/2018_elektronikus/2018ecsutak.pdf, Accessed on 10 December 2018. DOI 10.17047/HADTUD.2018.28.E.257

¹⁵ See Posen, B. R. “The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony. Trump's surprising Grand Strategy”. *Foreign Affairs* 97/2. 2018. 20-27. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-02-13/rise-illiberal-hegemony?fa_anthology=1123571, Accessed on 10 December 2018.

Furthermore, many strategic analysts like professor Posen and even the neocon ideologist William Kristol also assert that the military development projects of the incumbent administration as well as the newly shaped trade deals only tend to solidify and stabilize the present status quo and nothing else, without any clear-cut set of future strategic goals and, what is even more important, without visions for a 21st century United States. This argument, oddly enough, also nestles to the intellectual framework of the popular decline-theorists, who claim that the “Make America Great Again”-project basically deals with preserving and stabilizing the slow but sure decline of the United States, primarily in the global economic and political arena against the rising global powers of the East and the South.

The global direction of the American military and economic power projection seems to be consequently and increasingly significant as far as geopolitics is still concerned in the new era of global affairs. The old-new challenges and security threats posed by the rising powers of the East, namely by the global player China and the rogue state of North Korea with nuclear capabilities must be evidently addressed, strengthening the existing American ties with China’s rivals – India, Japan and naturally, Australia. Therefore, no doubt the importance of the Indo-Pacific region is emphasized and ranked as a key priority region also in the NSS,¹⁶ since the decades-old power shift from the West to the East is also manifested in the hot zone of the South China Sea, which proves to be a potential future conflict-driven area between the US and China. Taken into account the rather tensed conditions prevailing in that busy and strategically important geographic region, almost all factors are set for a direct or indirect kinetic conflict to burst out between the facing big powers any time in the near future. In other words, the actual assertiveness and power status of America will be most presumably directly tested and challenged, so the emphasized presence of the US as a game-changer power shield cannot be decreased or pulled back without extremely negative and irreversible consequences for her Far Eastern allies (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and even The Philippines) as well as for the global American power status and position.¹⁷

Similarly, the NSS also emphasizes the rehashed importance of the European arena – *nota bene* it was quite considerably neglected by the Obama administration – where the American power positions seem to have been critically challenged recently by the muscled-up, rather expansionist Russia of president Putin, particularly in the East European region, stretching down from Estonia, the Baltic Sea, to Romania and to the Balkan peninsula with Turkey and the land-locked Black Sea around. Decision makers in Washington tend to realize that for the safety and security of the United States, it is quite important that the countries along the globally expanded American *frontier* regions in the Far East or Eastern Europe must have confidence in the shield and might of the United States. This feeling of security and feasible perception of power, especially of hard, deterring – military – power must be built up, maintained and demonstrated both for the allies and particularly for the opponent forces. All it takes is a considerable amount of money and time. From this respect, the Trump administration reversed the gradual withdrawal strategy from Europe of president Obama and initiated a quite significant military build-up project in Central and Eastern Europe covered by the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) project, with an estimated annual

¹⁶ National Security Strategy... 45.

¹⁷ See Nye, J. S. *Végeit ér-e az amerikai évszázad? 70-75.* and Mitchell, A. W. and Grygiel, J. J. *The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies and the Crisis of American Power.* New York: Princeton University Press, 2017. 260-264.

budget of USD 7-9 billion for 2019,¹⁸ which is a bigger amount than the combined Defence budget of the three Baltic and three Central European NATO member states in a year (with the only exception of Poland). From this vast closing-up military allocation the Ukrainian forces alone are expected to receive a 200-million-dollar grant for military gear development in 2019. Initially, the European Reassurance Initiative program from 2016 aimed at only softly containing Russia's expansion in her near-neighbourhood, former Soviet republics like Ukraine. Yet, the new American NDS also highlights the increased importance of improving and developing the deterring and rather lethal striking combined force capabilities of the American military in all key regions, such as Eastern Europe. All the same, many strategists and critics of the growing EDI claim that the American military build-up in Europe basically weakens and even jeopardizes the development of the European allies' own military capabilities. Following this claim, the rich and developed small and medium-size countries, apart from Germany and Poland, continuously and predominantly fail to comply even with their decades-old NATO obligation of 2% GDP Defence budget allocation.¹⁹ This is, naturally a quite disillusioning fact that provides justified ground for the rather harsh, outspoken Trump arguments and critical remarks on the unwillingness and meek attitude of the European NATO allies to invest into their own defence projects.

As we referred to it, the personality and political philosophy of the president deeply affects the primary strategic guidelines and global positioning roadmap of the United States in many respects, thus it is advised to take into account the basic traits of President Trump, as well. From a military point of view, President Trump fits into the row of rather militant Republican presidents sharing their high respect and esteem towards the uniform and glorification of the American military achievements, nevertheless his presidential tenure seems to be overwhelmed by his defining trade-driven businessman-like attitude. Though the president used to be a very popular and even group-leader cadet in the prestigious New York Military Academy boarding school during his adolescence in the 1960's²⁰, he definitely lacks the highly appreciated military field practice experience – unlike the revered war hero Bush family, with both father and son military pilots and American presidents. That fact provided enough room for several defamatory media speculations²¹ and various gossiping in the Washington Establishment on his strategic decision making skills as commander-in-chief of the mightiest military force in the world.

As for his latest, the quite drastic and controversial order of partial withdrawal of the American ground forces from Syria and Afghanistan may not have been the best decision concerning the long-term American strategic interests in those war-stricken countries. Former Secretary of Defence Mattis also gently expressed his covert disapproval with??? the rather hurried executive order from December 2018 on the American troops' withdrawal lacking strategic reasoning and even forsaking key strategic partners of the US, like the

¹⁸ Judson, J. "Funding to Deter Russia reaches \$6.5B in FY19 defense budget request". Defense News. 12 February 2018. <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2018/02/12/funding-to-deter-russia-reaches-65b-in-fy19-defense-budget-request/>, Accessed on 20 December 2018.

¹⁹ Posen. "The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony..."

²⁰ See Robinson, M. "Trump says this private boarding school gave him more military training than the Army could — take a look". *Business Insider*, 15 December 2016. <https://www.businessinsider.com/donald-trump-attended-new-york-military-academy-2016-12>, Accessed on 2 December 2018.

²¹ Hart-Hunter, M. "What does 'Cadet Bone Spurs' mean? Trump's nickname was coined by Sen. Tammy Duckworth". 7 February 2018. <https://www.bustle.com/p/what-does-cadet-bone-spurs-mean-trumps-nickname-was-coined-by-sen-tammy-duckworth-8150101>, Accessed on 27 December 2018.

Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces group in Northern Syria.²² Acts like this do not really serve the amical trust building perception among the allied partners of America, small but really important they might be, especially in key war-torn regions. As General Mattis proclaimed, reasserting President Trump's well-known view that America should not and cannot be the world's policeman, yet the US "must be resolute and unambiguous" towards opponent and allied powers, as well.²³ However, typically to the rather contradictory presidential tweets the pompous proclamation on social media that "I will make our Military so big, powerful & strong that no one will mess with us" following his inauguration in January 2016 conveys the assumption of President Trump that the US would remain the "sheriff in town" the unchallenged strongman of the world, who cannot and, basically does not intend to get rid of this role.²⁴

When discussing grand strategies at national level and the ramification of the defined set of goals down to tactical and implementation levels, it is important for the decision makers to be consistent and reliable, otherwise it might result in strategic or operational malfunction and disorder. You cannot befriend with someone, even at state-level, whom you try to contain, deter and oppose at the same time, as it seems to be the case regarding the controversial relations of President Trump with Russia and even with some of her allies, not to mention the case of Syria and Afghanistan, without a clear strategic roadmap outlined for the United States.

As for the 21st century technological revolution and the expansion of the much-cited American frontier reaching up into the space, the festive proclamation of vice president Mike Pence as of August 27, 2018 about the inauguration of the American Space Force and the revitalization of the National Space Council was meant to be a noteworthy moment.²⁵ Although many experts regard the event as merely a symbolic act facing the future challenges from space posed by China and Russia rather than an effective and lethal 6th service branch of the American military as White House officials initially tended to label it. Nevertheless, it is a really significant step forward in transforming the military strategic thinking and focal points for the new, 21st century challenges, in accordance with the paradigm of Revolution in Military Affairs stating that non-kinetic power projection can be as important and efficient as the kinetic forces of conventional military units. The NDS as well as the NSS²⁶ emphasize the importance of new warfighting domains and types of warfare, such as cyberspace with electronic and cyber warfare, and the real space domain (which starts from an altitude of 100 km) around the globe, aiming to improve the competitive edge and deterrence, counter-strike operability of the American armed forces. Although the militarization of space *de jure* has still been illegal under the international Outer Space Treaty since 1967, practically

²² Mattis, J. N. "Jim Mattis's letter to Trump". *New York Times*, 20 December 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/us/politics/letter-jim-mattis-trump.html>, Accessed on 27 December 2018.

²³ Breuninger, K. "Mattis' Letter to Trump". CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/12/20/read-james-mattis-letter-to-trump-resigning-as-defense-secretary.html>, Accessed on 27 December 2018.

²⁴ Trump, D. J. "@realDonaldTrump: I will make our Military so big, powerful and strong that no one will mess us". Twitter, 24 January 2016. <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/691276412666261504>, Accessed on 10 November 2018.

²⁵ Lewin, S. "Plans for Space Force Laid Out at National Space Council Meeting". <https://www.space.com/42237-national-space-council-space-force-meeting.html>, Accessed on 2 December 2018.

²⁶ *National Defense Strategy of the United States*. Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, 2018. <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>, Accessed on 12 September 2018. 4-5. and *National Security Strategy* ... 31-32.

no state authority can really control or supervise outer space, *de facto* both the real as well as the cyber space domains are allegedly militarized and dominated by the three most significant global powers, namely the USA, China and Russia. Moreover, the elaboration and development details of the brand new space command or would-be 6th service branch are still unfolding with various pro and con arguments coming from the military command centres as well as from the Pentagon in this matter.

Another outstanding strategic defence issue concerns the modernization and development project initiative of the American nuclear triad, particularly of the quite sizable stockpile of obsolete, half-century-old Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) as well as the reinvigoration of the operational deployment of short and medium-range tactical ballistic missiles, also galvanized by the Chinese and Russian build-up in this regard.²⁷ The Trumpean trend of the relentless renegotiation of trade deals as well as of defence-related treaties also affects the 1987 Soviet – American Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). Since the American capabilities in this branch show considerable handicaps against the rising rival powers, this problem should be properly addressed from the perspective of revisited American security concerns. The treaty as considered *de facto* obsolete and ineffective was actually phased out in July, 2019 both by the US and Russia.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Despite the rhetoric arguments and shifts in the political trend, the Trump administration's national security and Defence strategies show basic consistency with the guidelines of the previous executive documents of the Obama administration, although reflecting some significant alterations and shifts in priority ranking as well as in the emphasized military capability build-up and technological development projects. According to the initial campaign slogans and preliminary political vision of Donald J. Trump, his presidency tends to preserve the core values and interests of the United States as a super-power, by putting it on the top of the priority list by “making America great again”, a message which unintentionally reasserts and suggests the declining power theory-concept of the liberal opponents of President Trump. In many respects the United States needs serious refurbishment, rejuvenating development projects, particularly in domestic infrastructural and economic areas, which are all considered to be national security priorities and concerns according to the trade-centric attitude of the president reflected in the NSS, too.²⁸ Furthermore, strengthening the vast American frontier-line stretching from the East European peripheries through the Far Eastern South-China Sea and even up to space is considered to be of outstanding importance in the 21st century, since protecting the American interests should start at the peripheries, as President Trump's former under-secretary for Central and East European affairs Wess Mitchell pointed out remarkably.²⁹ The classic, 19th- and 20th-century defence strategic idea of the two-ocean shield is not sufficient and, as also proclaimed in the NSS, the “home country is not a sanctuary, either” anymore, especially after 9/11, and particularly with the

²⁷ Johnson, J. “China's missile build-up: a threat to U.S. bases in Japan: likely a key factor in Trump plan to exit INF”. *The Japan Times* 22 October 2018. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/10/22/asia-pacific/russia-blamed-china-real-reason-u-s-inf-exit/#.XCyHoVzQjDc>, Accessed on 29 November 2018.

²⁸ National Security Strategy ... 16.

²⁹ Mitchell and Grygiel. *The Unquiet Frontier...* 220-223.

rise of cyber-age threats.³⁰ According to this paradigm, enhancing the military capabilities and boosting the home country economy go hand in hand, these measures strengthen and promote each other. On the other hand, this seems to be enough just for preserving the transient power balance and the status quo and not for setting a new agenda and future vision for the United States. That is the reason why the above mentioned critiques of the Trump presidency and analysts of his core security documents tend to emphasize and pinpoint the lack of coherence and long-term strategic vision presented to the nation. As the much-quoted MIT professor Posen put it bluntly “President Trump’s grand strategy is about preserving American hegemony without a purpose”.³¹ Obviously, being only at the mid-term of the Trump presidency, perhaps time is not ripening for making a statement on the existence of a possible Trump doctrine. Furthermore, other policy analysts like professor Brands from the Johns Hopkins University claim that the grand strategy of President Trump is basically the one also applied by his predecessor President George W. Bush and even partly by President Obama only in a much different political manner and coverage.³² Altogether, the new American strategies tend to reiterate and share the classic idea of peace and American prosperity through power as well as power-balancing by preserving American supremacy against the rising challengers from the Asia-pacific mega region.

From all aspects taken into account, we can firmly concur that the utmost priority of the Trump administration both in its security and foreign political strategy relies on the quest for preserving the political, economic as well as military primacy of the United States on the world stage, where the only real challenger in all terms proves to be China. As the Beijing bureau chief of *The Economist*, David Rennie tweeted aptly from the 70th anniversary of the Chinese Navy: “After millennia as an agrarian civilization that saw the sea as a source of threats, China is becoming a maritime power. That could help shape this century.”³³ This kind of strategic presumption also defines the re-orientation of the American defence and foreign political focus into the fermenting Indo-Pacific region.

All the same, considering the presidential decisions made, the strategic guidelines presented through the core national documents, the renegotiated deals and a plethora of rather contradictory presidential tweets, we can assert that, typically to Donald Trump’s personality features as a leader, his doctrine is basically not to have one and to reject any constraints in any matter and policy, making his allies and, especially his adversaries constantly feel unease and adapt to the pace and rhythm set by his presidency. This rather flexible, dynamic and transactionist business-type leadership attitude also genuinely reflects the postmodern, ever-changing and flexible fashion of international relations in the new cyber-era. Nevertheless, the classic wisdom of the great leader Napoleon Bonaparte should not be neglected by President Trump, either, namely that “You can lead a nation if you provide them a vision of the future; the Leader must provide hope and clear goals.” As we could realize, the popular yet rather superfluous slogan of “America First” and “Make America Great Again” may be sufficient on presidential election campaign trail, yet might not be enough to fulfil the role of this kind of strategic set of vision and objectives for a super power nation like the United States of America...

(The analysis manuscript was closed in July, 2019)

³⁰ National Security Strategy... 12-14.

³¹ Posen. “The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony...”

³² Brands, H. *American Grand Strategy in the age of Trump*. Washington D. C.: Brookings Inst., 2018. 65-70.

³³ Rennie, D. “@DSORennie: After millennia as an agrarian civilisation...”. Twitter, 26 April 2019. <https://twitter.com/DSORennie/status/1121686136244408320>, Accessed on 27 April 2019.

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