

## *Antonio Trogu: Cold War and Bipolar Confrontation: What Remains?*

The Cold War, which lasted from the end of World War II to 1991, characterized not only international politics, but also the domestic politics of many countries.

In those years there was a very strong competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in the design, construction and installation of nuclear weapons and delivery systems for nuclear warheads. The entire period of the "cold war" was marked and conditioned by the nuclear arms race.

With the end of the Second World War and the division of the world into two zones of influence, one American and one Soviet despite the consequent relative period of absence of world conflicts, a spasmodic competition for supremacy in the field of military arsenals began, which took the name of arms race . In the 1950s, the expression balance of terror began to be used to indicate the state of the balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union in the field of nuclear weapons . Both countries immediately made rapid progress in acquiring nuclear weapons, but the mutual vulnerability of the two superpowers and their allied nations led to a situation of immobility. The awareness of the devastation that a nuclear conflict would have caused to both blocs constituted the strong deterrent against the outbreak of a nuclear war.

After the Cold War, the improved international security situation allowed thousands of nuclear warheads to be eliminated, but since then the disarmament curve has flattened significantly. Today, the opposite trend is even being recorded.

New agreements seem impossible and the nuclear risk has never been so high since the end of the clash between the two blocs.

But after 33years,has the bipolar confrontation completely disappeared?

The crisis in Ukraine reignites tensions and inaugurates new global challenges in which Russia and the USA are not the only protagonists but now a new player has been added: China.

## World nuclear forces, January 2023 (ISPI source)

Country	2023	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
United States	1770	1 938	3708	<b>3708</b>	5428	<b>5244</b>
Russia	1674	2 815	4477	<b>4489</b>	5977	<b>5889</b>
United Kingdom	120	105	225 <sup>and</sup>	<b>225</b>	225	<b>225</b>
France	280	10	290	<b>290</b>	290	<b>290</b>
Country	2023	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
China	–	410	350	<b>410</b>	350	<b>410</b>
India	–	164	160	<b>164</b>	160	<b>164</b>
Pakistan	–	170	165	<b>170</b>	165	<b>170</b>
North Korea	–	30	25	<b>30<sup>s</sup></b>	25	<b>30<sup>s</sup></b>
Israel	–	90	90	<b>90</b>	90	<b>90</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3844</b>	<b>5732</b>	9490	<b>9576</b>	12710	<b>12512</b>

The crisis of the world order that we have witnessed in recent years has put the world in front of an increasingly multipolar and fragmented system, with the return of nationalisms. It is therefore necessary to consider China and especially Russia.

Russia is the major military power after the United States, but has remained substantially stagnant on an economic level, unlike China, which is the power that currently competes most with the United States and seems destined to become the first economy in the world in a few years. These are therefore two very different stories: the Russian one characterized by the disintegration of the Soviet Empire and the Chinese one by the achievement of a status of new world power.

According to what was reported in the 2023 China Military Power Report Fact Sheet, the PRC's national strategy is to achieve "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049. The strategy is a determined search for political, social and military modernity to expand the PRC's national power, perfect its governance and review the international order in support of the PRC's

governance system and national interests. The PRC sees the United States as a power that is deploying a whole-of-government effort to contain the PRC's rise, which presents obstacles to its national strategy.

The PRC characterizes its view of strategic competition in terms of rivalry between powerful nation states and a clash between opposing ideological systems. PRC leaders believe that structural changes in the international system and a confrontational United States are the root causes of the intensification of strategic competition between the PRC and the United States.

The PRC's strategy involves deliberate and determined efforts to accumulate, enhance, and exploit internal and external elements of national power that will place the PRC in a "leading position" in a sustained inter-system competition.

The Russian Federation, taking into account NATO's military superiority, has developed asymmetric means that are functional to an Anti-access/Area Denial policy.

Considering the strategic positions where the Russian A2/AD bubbles are positioned, namely in the Kaliningrad Oblast region along the Baltic Sea, in the north in the Arctic, in the south in Crimea in the Black Sea and in Syria in the Mediterranean, it is clear that they represent a threat to the logistical bases of NATO countries. In the Baltic they are close to Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, in the Arctic they confront Alaska, Canada and Norway, in the Black Sea and in the Eastern Mediterranean they are close to Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey.