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CHINA AND ASIA-PACIFIC REGION IN CHINA'S MILITARY STRATEGY

ABSTRACT

The growing power of the PRC implies a change in the international and security policy of the country, and even the perception of the international environment by the members of the CPC. The *White Paper of Defence*, published every two years by the Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China aims to explain the ongoing evolution. The present paper studies in depth the Chinese point of view of the potential challenges for security in the region of Asia and the Pacific.

Keywords: China, the White Paper, the region of Asia and the Pacific, international environment, security

1. INTRODUCTION

The twilight of the cold-war era competition, according to many observers of the international political life, was supposed to be the final victory of the liberal view of the world. Francis Fukuyama announced “the end of history”, and the world lived in a blissful ignorance and complacency. Politicians, journalists and experts claimed that soon the western model of liberal democracy would dominate worldwide, and that other countries, instead of investing large amounts into arms, would soon focus on free and unrestricted trade which would create enormous wealth for everyone. Although the vision was beautiful, it lasted for a little longer than two decades – until around the so-called *Arab spring* (Dzisiów - Szuszczykiewicz, 2011; Jankowski, 2011; Kumelska, 2012). Moreover, it seems that the awareness of the fact that “something wrong is happening to the world” has been growing in the citizens of the Western world since the end of 2001 and the attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon. The war in Ukraine and Syria (and the increasing Russian presence there), the refugee crisis in Europe, the emergence of the Islamic State or the countless conflicts in Africa and the Middle East are only a few examples of what has kept the Europeans involved in terms of widely understood security since 2010. Somewhat in the shadow (especially from the point of view

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of the inhabitants of Central Europe), China has been growing in strength. Suddenly, when the country surprised everyone with its assertive attitude in the continuing conflict on the South China Sea or implemented its first aircraft carrier (Szulc, 2013), the future of the region of Asia and the Pacific became very topical. According to the authors, it implies the need to conduct extensive research into the security situation in that region, which will allow for a better understanding of the upcoming events. The present paper is a summary of one of these stages, as this work is extended analysis of actual situation in Asia-Pacific region, condition and the potential threats to the security of the PRC - all specified in the *White Paper of Defence* published in 2015 (Adamczyk, 2017). Apart from the official document issued by the Ministry of National Defence of the PRC (published on the institution's website in English), the authors has also used numerous research papers in Polish and English (including the results of own research), as well as a plethora of electronic resources such as the analyses of major foreign *think-tanks* and specialist websites. Due to the editorial policies, some issues are only signalled, and the references provided in the work will allow the reader to become acquainted with an elaboration on the issues discussed in the paper.

2. THE PREFACE TO THE *WHITE PAPER*

In the analysis of the security level of China, it is impossible to omit the preface to the tenth issue of the *White Paper*, which draws attention to several significant declarations already in the first paragraph. Its authors indicate that unprecedented changes are taking place in the international environment, and the People's Republic of China is at a critical stage of reforms. Next, the "Chinese Dream about a great national rejuvenation" (Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2015) is discussed, i.e. a peculiar equivalent and at the same time the opposite of the well-known *American Dream*. As Zheng Wang underscores, the Chinese, in contrast to the Americans, do not strive to achieve personal wealth and success, but they want to serve "[...] the greater, national good" (Wang, 2013). The authors of the concept of the *Chinese Dream*, Xi Jinping, is the current General Secretary of the CPC and has spoken about "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" on numerous occasions since he took control of the country. Dr Wang draws attention to the fact that although outsiders always speak of China's *rise*, the Chinese themselves prefer to use the term *rejuvenation*, thus referring to their imperial past (Mosher, 2007; Kagan, 2009; Xuetong, 2001). Secretary Xi's idea can be compared to the campaign slogans of two American presidential candidates from the Republican party – Ronald Reagan's and Donald Trump's *Make America Great Again*. However, it must be noted that the slogan of the future American presidents was a response to the deteriorating economic, political and military position of the USA, and Xi Jinping's call to collective effort has emerged when China is developing rapidly (despite some perturbations in the last months) (O'Reilly, 2015; Heath, 2015; Lee, 2015), and their significance on the international front is increasing.

Apart from the reference to the *Chinese Dream*, the preface to the *White Paper* of 2015 does not differ considerably from the edition published two years earlier. Similarly to the edition of 2013, the readiness to cooperate with the rest of the international society in order to maintain the world peace and the pursuit towards development were underscored (Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2013). The topics which are also discussed in the preface include China's striving to peaceful development, maintaining

independent foreign policy and security of a purely defensive nature, opposing hegemony and the *policy of force* (implicitly the American hegemony)(Smith, 2015), the lack of Chinese hegemonic aspirations, a strong army as an essential aim of China (and simultaneously a guarantee of its further peaceful development), or the need of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to adapt to the changing security environment. What is interesting is the fact that the latest issue of the *paper* does not include the typical formula for the Chinese diplomacy about not interfering with the domestic affairs of other countries(Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2015). The rule of no interference used to constitute a dogma in the Chinese international and security policy, that is why, among others, PRC engaged to a very limited extent to the solution of the conflict in the East of Ukraine and simultaneously did not support any of the parties of the conflict. It is widely held that the Chinese policy-makers are still afraid of the Western interference with the Chinese domestic affairs under the guise of, e.g., respecting human rights and implementing some variant of secession of Tibet or Xinjiang(Adamczyk, 2015a).

3. CHAPTER ONE – CHANCES

The next part of the *Paper* is entitled *National Security Situation* and focuses on the description of the state of the international environment from the Chinese perspective. The authors note that processes such as globalisation and multipolarisation are deepening, and the vision of the information society is quickly becoming reality. States all around the world are tightening the connections which they have established, and are aiming at preserving peace, further development and beneficial cooperation. It is underscored that the external conditions are generally advantageous, and China is at a critical developmental moment – its internal strength and stability are growing, similarly to its position and influence on the international front. The Chinese society is growing richer and, as a whole, remains stable(Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2015). It is worth noting the both the elites and common Chinese people are becoming aware of their strength. Robert Kagan speaks about it clearly, somewhat referring to the notion of *Chinese Dream* which had not formulated at that time (Kagan, 2009). What is also interesting is the more and more visible transformation in the mentality of the policy-makers from Beijing with regard to boasting about their doubtless economic successes or growing military power in front of the international community. Until recently, they were mainly used to build the national pride internally; externally, China wanted to appear as a moderately wealthy country. A country which basically did not differ from the rest of developing countries and which only had peaceful intentions of coexistence with the rest of the world (Brunet & Guichard, 2011; Cardenal & Araújo, 2012)The aforementioned narration is also still present in the last and previous issues of the *Paper*. The example proves that China signals the awareness of its own strength in official documents.

3.1. CHINA – A DEVELOPING COUNTRY?

A certain digression is necessary to obtain the full picture of the peculiar economic situation of China. GDP *per capita* in China is actually still on a relatively low level – according to the World Bank's statistics, in 2015 the GDP amounted to not more than \$8,000. Thus, China was on 74th place in the world and was behind Lebanon, but ahead of Saint Lucia – a Car-

ibbean Island. However, it is noteworthy that according to this criterion, the first places are occupied by such countries as Luxembourg, Switzerland, Macau, Norway and Qatar (World Development Indicators, 2016) – although all of them are wealthy, it is clear that none of them can be qualified as an economic power (even in their region). At the same time, in 2013, 2% of China's population lived for less than \$1.9 a day (World Development Indicators, 2016), which is below the level of income established by the WB determining abject poverty, which was calculated according to the prices as of 2011 and measured in purchasing parity power (Ferreira & Jolliffe & Prydz, 2015). However, the CIA states that even 6% of the Chinese population lived in abject poverty (The World Factbook, 2015). The difference results from the criterion applied by China to determine abject poverty, which qualifies to this group everyone whose salary is lower than ¥2,300, i.e. \$360 (Meng, 2016). Moreover, as Bert Hofman, the regional director of the WB responsible for the areas of China, Mongolia and Korea, emphasises, 7% of people who live in abject poverty live in China. It should be kept in mind that in the last few decades the country has made a major progress in terms of eliminating poverty – in 1981, 85% of the society lived in abject poverty, in 1987 the number dropped to 55%, and at the end of the first decade of 21 century (in 2008), the level dropped to 13% (which still included over 200 million Chinese people), (Pisarski, 2016).

3.2. CHINA AS A DEVELOPED ECONOMY

There is also the second face of the Chinese economy, which can be used as a criticism of the declarations of the Chinese leaders who state that China belongs to middle-income, developing countries, which needs many more years to achieve the level of economic development of the western countries. First of all, it should be noted that basing on the GDP, China has been the second economy of the world since 2009 and although there is a huge gap between China and the USA (as of 2015, the GDP in the USA was at the level of \$18.036 billion, and in the PRC \$11.007 billion, so the difference between the two was over \$7 billion), then the Chinese economy is 2.7 times bigger than the Japanese one, which occupies the third place – despite the fact that in 2008 Japan was still slightly ahead of China (World Development Indicators, 2016). However, the GDP calculated on the base of purchasing power parity indicates that the Chinese economy has overtaken the American one in 2013, and in 2015 it was 10% bigger than in the USA – the GDP calculated on this basis amounted to \$19.814 billion in China and \$18.036 in the USA (World Development Indicators, 2016). Since Deng Xiaoping took over power in China, its economy grew 10% every year, and on several occasions, the GDP was 15% YoY (Kolka, 2016) – therefore, the abovementioned results are not surprising. Two French economists, A. Brunet and J.P. Guichard, underline that China is the biggest producer and consumer of electrical energy in the world (Brunet & Guichard, 2011; Gacek, 2013; Kozłowski 2013), coal (China uses nearly as much coal as the rest of the world combined (Kozłowski 2013), cement, steel, copper and aluminium (Brunet & Guichard, 2011). Although China consumes approximately 50% of the world metal production (Brunet & Guichard, 2011), it is simultaneously the biggest producer of, among others, wolfram or antimony (Osoba, 2008). Moreover, China has completely dominated mining of rare earth elements, widely used in modern electronics and aeronautic industry – it is responsible for 95–97% of the global mining, at the same time owning 35% of the known minerals (Bureau of Research, 2012). China, right after the USA, is the second largest consumer of oil (Brunet & Guichard, 2011; Gacek, 2013), and since 2013, when 20 million

new cars were sold in China, it has been the largest car outlet (Kublik, 2014; Young, 2014; Kennedy, 2014). However, it should be borne in mind that the PRC has, for many years, noted surplus in international trade amounting to several hundred billion dollars (Białowas, 2016; Brunet&Guichard, 2011); in 2014, the foreign reserve assets amounted to \$3.9 billion and were the highest in the world (Białowas, 2016; Zieliński, 2015). Since then, the level of assets has significantly decreased due to the economic turmoil in China over the last several months (Kolany, 2015; Żuławiński, 2016). In this context, positioning China among developing countries is quite disputable.

4. CHAPTER ONE – THREATS

Similarly to the previous issue of the *White Paper*, such problems as the increasing threat of hegemony, the use of force in politics and the phenomenon of *neo-interventionism*, or the increasing terrorist activity (it should be noted that China, just like the USA and European countries, faces the issue of Islamic terrorism) (Adamczyk, 2016a) and the dangers of local conflicts are raised. It is also indicated that the existence of complex border, ethnic and religious disputes is a possible source of instability (Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2015). In the subsequent part, the authors underscore the fact that the region of Asia and the Pacific is on its way to become the economic and strategic point of gravity of the world; they also specify the areas and subjects who, according to Beijing, have a destabilising effect on the situation in the region.

4.1. THE USA AND CHINA – CONGAGEMENT OR CONTAINMENT ALREADY?

The USA is indicated to continue its policy of turning towards Asia (Congressional Research Service, 2012; Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2016; Rice, 2016) by increasing its military engagement and reinforcing the alliances (Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2015). It should be noted that the policy-makers from Beijing view Obama's policy as a manifestation of the strategy of *containment*, i.e. the most offensive variant of conceptualising the American-Chinese relations, in which the USA is aiming at weakening China economically and militarily, at the same time opposing China's union with Taiwan by creating a system of anti-Chinese alliances in the region (Gawron, 2003). From China's point of view, the policy of the American administration is caused by the combined result of the US concerns about losing its hegemonic position and the dynamic development of the PRC which implies China's pursuit to achieve an international position, which corresponds to its potential (Pham, 2016). It should be noted that although the USA undoubtedly perceives the threat of China's excessive power, it still maintains a vivid trade (The World Factbook, 2016) and investment (Dollar, 2015) activity in that region. The activity is significant because it indicates that the American policy towards China, despite some amendments, follows the *congagement* strategy, which is a synthesis of political and military containment (with a limited cooperation in selected areas, for instance, preventing terrorism or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction) of China with an economic engagement. The policy has technically defined the contemporary relations between America and China since their beginnings, i.e. at the beginning of 1970s (Halizak, 2001; Gawron, 2003).

4.2. JAPAN AS A THREAT FOR THE COUNTRIES OF ASIA AND PACIFIC

The authors of the report criticise Japan's policy as well, accusing it of trying to review the limitations imposed on Japan after WW2 (Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2015). These accusations are not entirely unfounded because Japan has successfully evaded the regulation which banned it from owning aircraft carriers by acquiring 4 carriers of two types: *Hyuga* and *Izumo* (Adamczyk, 2015b). Despite the fact that their deckspace may be slightly smaller than the space of a Russian aircraft carrier, *Admiral Kuznetsov* (Adamczyk, 2015b) (although because of the lack of a catapult, only STOVL-type planes (Warchoń, 2013; Dryjańska, 2008), e.g. F-35B, can operate from the deck of the Japanese carriers), they have been classified as "helicopter destroyers" (DDH). It should be remembered that China regularly uses historical arguments termed "dealing with the past" as a smokescreen in their relations with Japan. The Chinese leaders use the argument that an apology and admitting to being guilty of crimes (which undoubtedly took place and their scale was similar to the German crimes in Eastern Europe) will ensure that Japan will dispel its neighbours' fears. However, China is the reason of growing concern among the leaders of Asian countries, and the aforementioned dynamic development of the Chinese economy is only one of the reasons for this state of affairs.

4.3. CHINESE MILITARY BUDGET – IS IT A CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

Concern is also induced by the rising Chinese investment in defence – according to the data collected by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the expenditure grew from \$18.336 billion in 1989 to \$171.381 billion in 2013, that is nearly nine times. In comparison, Japan increased its military investment in that period only by 27%, from \$46.592 billion in to \$59.431 billion (Adamczyk, 2015b). Although China's defence budget in 21st century has grown on average by ten or so per cent a year, it officially has not exceeded the level of 2.2% of its GDP (Adamczyk, 2015b; Karczewski, 2012, Annual Report to Congress, 2016; Adamczyk, 2017). However, the problem with stating the actual size of the defence budget should be noted – in 2013, according to Beijing, it did not exceed the amount of \$120 billion, but according to Pentagon, the sum amounted to \$145 billion (Palowski, 2014), the SIPRI, on the other hand, has estimated the sum to be over \$170 billion (Adamczyk, 2015b). In 2015, respectively: officially \$144 billion, over \$180 billion according to the American Department of Defence (Annual Report to Congress, 2016), and nearly \$215 billion according to the analysts from the SIPRI (SIPRI Military Expenditure Database; 2017). As it can be seen, the discrepancy between the sums is quite major – the estimations of the analysts from the RAND Corporation can suggest which of the figures regarding Chinese investment in defence is the most relevant one. In their 2005 report on the modernisation of the Chinese military, they indicate that the official military budget is not only divided between several ministries, but it also excludes (Modernizing China's Military Opportunities and Constraints, 2005):

- a) the purchase of arms from foreign countries (according to the data of the SIPRI, China was the third largest importer of equipment and arms in the world between 2011–2015, which constituted 4.7% (*International arms transfers, 2017*) of the total global market, which translated into the value purchases of approximately \$6.7 billion (TIV of arms exports to China, 2011–2015, 2017). Moreover, since the early

- 1990s, China has spent for this aim from approximately \$1 billion to \$4 billion per year) (Modernizing China's Military Opportunities and Constraints, 2005; Adamiec, 2008);
- b) expenditure on paramilitary organisations (including on the biggest formation of this type in the world – the People's Armed Police, which may have over 1 million officers) (Yang, 2016; People's Armed Police, 2017), which amounted to over \$3 billion in 2003 (Modernizing China's Military Opportunities and Constraints, 2005);
 - c) the cost of maintaining and modernising the nuclear arsenal and strategic rockets (Skrzyńska-Kudelka& Skrzyńska& Tkaczyk, 2011; Adamiec, 2008; Szulc, 2010);
 - d) subsidies for state businesses from the defence industry (at the beginning of 21st century, the sum was about \$4–5 billion per year) (Modernizing China's Military Opportunities and Constraints, 2005);
 - e) expenditure on research and development in the defence sector (RAND estimates the amount of \$4 billion in 2003), (Modernizing China's Military Opportunities and Constraints, 2005);
 - f) other income, e.g. the local investment in military security (\$1 billion in 2003) or the profit from the export of arms (in 2011–2015, China were the third largest exporter and had the share of 5.9% (International arms transfers, 2017);SIPRI estimates that in total, the PRC exported arms and military equipment with the value of approximately \$8.5 billion in this period) (TIV of arms exports from China, 2011–201, 2017).

In 2005, the RAND analysts forecast that the Chinese expenditure on military would have reached nearly \$114 billion by 2015, and the *maximum* estimate was \$207 billion (Modernizing China's Military Opportunities and Constraints, 2005). In the case of the forecast with the maximum estimate, their predictions from a decade ago are approximate to the values estimated by Pentagon or the SIPRI in 2015. In this context, it is worth mentioning the forecast for 2020 – the RAND forecasts the maximum value of the Chinese defence budget to be \$287 billion (Modernizing China's Military Opportunities and Constraints, 2005); IHS Jane's estimates it to be \$260 billion (Annual Report to Congress, 2016). To compare, the American budget, according to the Department of Defence of the USA's predictions, should amount to approximately \$598 billion (Annual Report to Congress, 2016), i.e. it will be higher only by \$2 billion than the one from 2015 (SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2017), which would mean that since 1989 (Adamczyk, 2015b) it has increased by a little more than 8% – in the case of China, the increase is by approximately 1465% (the RAND's maximum prognosis) (Adamczyk, 2017) and by approximately 1320% (IHS Jane's prognosis) respectively. On the other hand in year 2017, Donald's Trump administration and Republican's majority in Congress increased Pentagon budget up to \$700 billion already in 2018 (Shear& Steinhauer, 2017; Daniels, 2017; Superville, 2017).It is worth mentioning that the PRC has more or less serious territorial disputes in Kashmir and the Tibetan Plateau (with India) (Okraska, 2013; Okraska, 2014), on the South China Sea (with Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Taiwan) (Śliwa, 2010; Kościelniak, 2014; Symonides, 2012; Zhang, 2006; Simon, 2012) and on the East China Sea (with Japan) (Bronicki, 2008; Szczudlik, 2012; Wangrat, 2008; Pan, 2007; Kubiak & Kustra, 2005). In this context, many of the concerns of the American administration or of the countries of Asia and the Pacific regarding the future Chinese policy towards the region and the world become understandable. For

this reason alone, Beijing attempts to lower its economic growth or military expenditure in official statistics (at the same time, for example, in some EU countries *creative accounting* is present and income from prostitution, drugs or smuggling cigarettes is taken into account in calculating the GDP) (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2014), or it publishes the *White Paper* on a regular basis in which it ensures about its peaceful intentions, simultaneously indicating the threats which the American or Japanese policies may cause. It is worth noting that in the *Paper* published in 2013, less space was devoted to them than in the current issue – one sentence was devoted to the USA and it concerned correcting their political pivot towards Asia, and Japan was only mentioned in reference to the conflict for the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands (Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2013). Although such a change seems significant, it should be perceived through the context of the escalating conflict for the islands on the South and East China Sea (Keck, 2014a; Keck, 2014b).

4.4. RELATIONS IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT

Robert Kagan draws attention to the fact that the issue of Taiwan in Chinese mentality and politics is actually more a matter of honour than material reasons. He also points out that China still has not renounced the use of military force in order to incorporate the island and, as he says, “it is a war which the Chinese government would rather avoid, but thinks that one day it may become unavoidable” (Kagan, 2009). The latest *White Paper* does not leave any doubt that the “rebel island” still constitutes not only a key challenge for the PRC's security, but, as Ankit Panda emphasises, it also constitutes one of the most important aims in the potential future war for the People's Liberation Army (Panda, 2015). Robert D. Kaplan draws attention to the fact that the strategic situation of the Chinese fleet is bad because the so-called “first line of islands” (which includes: the Korean Peninsula, the Kuril Islands, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia) is a peculiar “Great Wall in reverse”, i.e. a system of well-organised US allies, who can monitor and completely block China's access to the Pacific Ocean (Kaplan, 2010). It is also significant that China can thereby be cut off from supplies of energy fuels by sea (e.g. in 2008, 78% of imported oil was supplied to China via the Strait of Malacca) (Bednarz, 2015), and the export of goods from China can also be prevented. It seems that the Chinese attempts to realise the New Silk Road (Niemiec, 2016; Jędrzejewski, 2016) and engagement in the construction of the energy and transmission infrastructure in Central and South Asia should be viewed through this prism (Książopolski, 2017; Gacek, 2013; Kozłowski 2013). In this perspective, Beijing tries to protect its alternative ways of import and export in case of a conflict with the US and its Asian allies, whose vital element may probably be the effort to use naval blockade. The crisis in Philippine-American relations must have brought a lot of joy in Beijing. The crisis was caused by president Rodrigo Duterte's policy of combating drug-related crime, and it may lead to the classic (although it remains unclear whether it will be permanent) reversal of alliances (Studio Wschód, 2017). Thereby, China has acquired the second (after the Spratly Islands) and a far bigger “breach in the wall” constructed by the USA along the Chinese sea coast.

In the context of Taiwan, it is worth noting that in 2006 professor Zhang Wenmu not only used the term “the great historical mission”, but also “the foundations to safeguard China's sea rights” to refer to the issue of “unifying Taiwan with the motherland” (Zhang, 2006). The professor is equally frank in saying that the issue of Taiwan is not only a question of Chinese sovereignty, but also to be or not to be of the PRC naval power. According to him,

losing the island (which should be understood in terms of Taipei remaining independent) can be connected with the loss of the Spratly Islands, maybe the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, which would undoubtedly lead to the loss of the ability to secure the cities on the eastern coast of the country (Zhang, 2006). After ten years, professor Zhang still postulates incorporating Taiwan to continental China because, in his view, not only will it ensure an easier way to solve the problem of the islands on the South China Sea, but it will also allow China to acquire a proper area to defend and further projection of forces (implicitly beyond the “first line of islands”) (Gitter, 2016). Zhang Wenmu from Beihang University is not only a classic realist in the area of security and international relations, but also an admirer of the policy of Russian president Vladimir Putin, probably a significant person in the Beijing's establishment – considering the Chinese reality, it seems to be impossible that he could voice his firm opinions without the silent acceptance from the highest country authorities (Goldstein, 2015). It is probable that professor Zhang and his colleagues perform a role similar to the Chinese state media – an alternative channel of diplomacy via which these views of the Chinese administration which cannot be conveyed in the official channels are communicated (Adamczyk, 2016b).

The case of Taiwan is also evidence which shows that realism, which is looked down upon in the western world, is a vital part of the Chinese foreign policy. Trade between the two Chinese countries blossoms and new trade deals are concluded, and broad economic and social linkages are created bottom-up (Albert, 2011). However, it does not prevent Beijing from upholding the narration about the need of reunification (Panda, 2017) and conducting next military manoeuvres (whose scenario assumes a naval landing operation on the island) (Gady, 2015; Cole, 2015) or directing the first aircraft carrier towards Taiwan's immediate neighbourhood (Dura, 2017; Yeh, 2016).

4.5. TIBET AND XINJIANG

The *White Paper* devotes a fragment to the China's strong objection against “separatists” who seek to regain independence in Tibet and Xinjiang. Although these two regions are mentioned in the same breath in the context of internal threats for the stability of the country, they should be discussed separately. Tibet, because of the “good press” that it has in the west, is more of a burden to China's image rather than a real problem. The situation is completely different in the case of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region whose Muslim population is remembered about only by such Islamic countries as Saudi Arabia or Turkey, as well as organisations similar to the Islamic State which incite the Uyghurs to perform acts of terrorism in order to defend Islam, thus realising their own geopolitical interests. Today, it is becoming more and more difficult to say whether the Chinese policy, which leads to the assimilation of the minorities inhabiting the area, should be blamed for this development of situation, or whether the policy was a response to the growing radicalisation of Muslims in Xinjiang (Adamczyk, 2016a; Botobekov, 2016; Tiezzi, 2016; Tiezzi, 2015). However, a similar policy in Tibet has brought the effects which the government expected – the indigenous population is often said to see its future as being a part of the PRC and, apart from few groups of monks and aristocracy in exile (supported by western intellectuals), does not seek to modify *status quo*. Notwithstanding the attitude of the inhabitants, China will not accept the independence of any of the troublesome provinces because the problem of losing image, of the so important in the Asian societies “face”, would not be the only problem (Jacoby, 2016). Most of all, Beijing would risk launching the processes developing from within which it would not

be able to control, and would lose access to the extremely valuable strategic resources and control over the oil and gas transmission from Central Asia, an important point on the New Silk Road (Kubiak, 2008; Hudzikowski, 2015; Dziągielewski, 2013; Specjalski, 2013). The risk that countries which compete with China will fill the emerging geopolitical vacuum is also significant – it is quite probable that after China has withdrawn from Tibet, India would replace China in this strategic region in continental Asia (Kaplan, 2017; Adamczyk, 2016c). What is more, Tibet plays an important role in the Chinese policy of nuclear deterrence (Kubiak, 2008).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The PRC is undoubtedly the fastest growing country in Asia, both economically and militarily-wise. The buoyant economy is not only a source of wealth for some members of the Chinese elite and a means to bring the rest of the society out of poverty, but most of all a tool to create an important military potential in the region and the world. The policy-makers in this country make a lot of effort to create the image of a responsible member of the international society who does not have any imperial ambitions. However, the depreciation of the emerging power is becoming more and more difficult, and the fear among the elites and the societies of the neighbouring countries is growing. The subsequent editions of the *White Paper* (among others, by clarifying Beijing's intentions) were supposed to minimise the fears (Adamczyk, 2017), but their efficiency, as the development of situation in the region shows, is rather disputable. The new geopolitical reality is becoming a doubtless challenge for the USA. Washington has recently viewed the Pacific Ocean in terms of an "internal sea" and not as a new field of geopolitical competition. China views the USA as a weakening hegemon who wants to prevent the inevitable increase of the Chinese power and its natural aspiration to "take their due place in the world". To prevent this, the USA is supposed to create a system of alliances in Asia which are based mainly on Japan and Taiwan. Japan, according to Beijing, is a significant threat to the stability and security on the Pacific because it still cannot dispose of its memory of its imperial past and by reinforcing its military power, Japan raises concerns among its neighbouring countries. "The rebel island", on the other hand, should join the PRC because it is inevitable, and the separatist forces which strive to achieve the independence of Taiwan are the biggest threat to the relations in the Taiwan Strait. According to Beijing, the separatists in the provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang are also a threat to the security of the PRC, and the undefined "anti-Chinese" forces are striving to foment another one from the series of "colour revolutions" (Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2015). The authors of the *White Paper* draw also attention to the challenges for China's security which the "revolution in military affairs" constitutes) Kamiński, 2007; Lekowski, 2011; Górka, 2016; .

Finally, it is worth to quote Marcin Kaczmarek's words:

"The strategy demonstrates the two-faced characteristics of the Chinese thinking about the international environment. On the one hand, the document indicates the growing economic and political ties of China with the external world, including the

western worlds and connections of the Chinese development with the global one. On the other hand, the mentality of 'a stronghold under siege' (Kaczmariski, 2015)

and Robert Kagan's:

"Like all rising powers throughout history, like the United States, Japan, and Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, they fear that the rest of the world may conspire against them. Like the Russians, the Chinese believe that to be a great power they must be independent and self-reliant." (Kagan, 2009)

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