



Total War or Democratic Control: New Technological Challenges Between the USA, China and Europe

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Speaking at the *Air, Space & Cyber Conference*, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States, General Dan Caine, outlined a **radical paradigm shift for the American armed forces**, called to «**fight, resist and win from the ocean floor to cislunar space**».

This orientation does not merely represent strategic rhetoric, but captures the inevitable **expansion of the operational perimeter of modern defense**. Global geopolitical competition no longer stops at the terrestrial dimension: **extra-atmospheric space, satellite constellations and the underwater environment** are now essential theaters for reconnaissance, intelligence, tracking and engagement activities. Modern warfare **occupies space with unprecedented capillarity**, transforming orbital infrastructures and ocean depths into the new pivots of global deterrence.

Beijing's symmetric response and Europe's change in posture

This race toward extreme domains **is not an exclusive of Washington**. On the Indo-Pacific front, the Chinese People's Liberation Army is decisively accelerating technological integration in the field: as highlighted by *Asia Times*, Beijing's official channels are pushing to **rapidly transfer robotic and autonomous systems from research laboratories to military training and operational contexts**.

In this scenario of exacerbated competition, **Europe too is finding itself reconsidering its strategic positioning**. Facing an increasingly complex and assertive international context, the Old Continent is progressively **reshaping its defense posture**, seeking to balance its tradition with the pressing need not to remain on the margins of the global technological-military revolution.

Scientific progress, military spending and the issue of democratic governance

Contemporary technological and scientific acceleration appears increasingly linked to the **dynamics of sovereignty and military power**. Global macroeconomic data confirm this, with **military spending that reached the record amount of 2.887 billion dollars** on a global scale.

This imposing volume of resources and the growing autonomy of techno-military apparatus pose **crucial questions for modern democracies**. Public and political debate today must address three fundamental challenges: **bringing scientific and technological innovation within rigorous frameworks of democratic control**, balancing defense investments with the sustainability of public resources and **reaffirming the centrality of political decision-making** over mere force logic and strategic competition.