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- ❖ **Post-Taliban Afghanistan**
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THIRD CONCEPT NOW UGC-CARE List

Designed by: Pt. Tejpal

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Global Defence Spending

Recently-released data by Stockholm-based SIPRI show that total worldwide military expenditure increased by 0.7 per cent in real terms in 2021, to reach a whopping figure of \$ 2213 billion. Record level increase in world military expenditure in the second year of the pandemic demonstrates that global military expenditure has continued to grow in 2021, reaching an all-time high of \$2.1 trillion, and this was the seventh consecutive year showing increased spending.

The United States, China, India, the UK, and Russia were the largest spenders in 2021 and they together accounted for 62 per cent of total global defence spending. This phenomenal increase in defence spending even amid the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with a slowdown in the rate of real-terms growth owing to inflation has puzzled many defence experts. Some defence critics have opined that as a sequel to a sharp economic recovery in 2021, the global defence spending as a share of world gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 0.1 percentage point, from 2.3 per cent in 2020 to 2.2 per cent in 2021.

The United States rules the roost as the world's largest defence spender. In 2021, US military spending amounted to \$ 801 billion. Nevertheless, the US military spending recorded a slight decrease from 3.7 per cent of GDP in 2020 to 3.5 per cent in 2021. According to SIPRI data, between 2012 and 2021, US funding for military research and development (R&D) recorded an increase of 24 per cent, while a decline of 6.4 per cent was visible in arms procurement funding over the same period. According to some defence experts, an increase in military R&D by the US denotes that it is focusing more on next-generation technologies

In the run-up to war with Ukraine, Russia also increased its military spending by 2.9 per cent in 2021 and its total military spending in 2021 amounted to \$ 65.9 billion. While attributing high oil and gas prices revenues spurring Russia to boost its military spending in 2021, defence experts also argue that 2021 was the third consecutive year of growth in Russia's military spending catapulting to 4.1 per cent of the GDP in 2021. According to SIPRI data, Russian defence spending witnessed a decline between 2016 and 2019 in the wake of low energy prices in tandem with sanctions imposed on Russia following of its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Interestingly, in the aftermath of the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, defence spending of Ukraine rose by 72 per cent; nevertheless, Ukraine's defence spending declined to \$ 5.9 billion in 2021 still accounting for 3.2 per cent of its GDP.

SIPRI data show China as the world's second-largest military spender, has allocated about \$293 billion in 2021 for its defence spending, thereby recording an increase of 4.7 per cent in 2021 in its defence spending as compared to 2020. An upward trend in China's defence spending has been going on for the past 27 years consecutively.

China's growing military prowess and assertiveness in and around the South China Sea and the East China Sea has spurred the countries like Australia and Japan to augment their defence spending. In 2021, Australian military spending increased by 4.0 per cent to reach \$31.8 billion. Japan made an addition of \$7 billion to its defence budget in 2021, and as such, defence spending by Japan rose by 7.3 per cent, to reach \$54.1 billion in 2021. One defence expert has opined that China's military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region has led to the formation of AUKUS, a trilateral security agreement between Australia, the UK, and the US that is said to ensure the supply of eight nuclear-powered submarines to Australia at an estimated cost of up to \$ 128 billion.

India's defence spending amounted to \$76.6 billion in 2021 and it emerged as the third-largest spender, albeit its defence spending in 2021 increased by a more modest 0.9 per cent. With its defence spending in 2021 amounting to \$ 64.7 billion, the UK emerged as the fourth-largest spender. The UK replaced Saudi Arabia which instead decreased defence spending by 17 per cent to an estimated \$55.6 billion in 2021.

Paradoxically, countries are prepared to spend on weapons rather than on medicine and climate change that could benefit the entire humanity.

— BK